



# Horicon Marsh

**H***N THE 1920s, DECADES BEFORE CNRA was formed, one of its founding members, Owen Gromme, made a lifelong commitment to work for restoration of Horicon Marsh as a wildlife preserve. Thirty years later, Wallace Grange, CNRA's first president, filed a lawsuit against the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for opening the refuge to hunting in violation of existing laws.*

*Grange and Gromme's interest in the marsh fit well with CNRA's mission to follow the principles of Aldo Leopold. Here was the largest freshwater cattail marsh in the nation, deep in the heart of Wisconsin, close to the urban areas where most CNRA members lived. The marsh sustained an abundance of wildlife and attracted thousands of migratory ducks and geese annually. Managing this marsh concerned conservationists statewide.*

*Grange and Gromme became leaders in CNRA's efforts to protect the marsh. In 1954 CNRA supported Grange's unsuccessful lawsuit against the Fish & Wildlife Service. Gromme painted a picture reproduced on stamps to promote public awareness of encroachment on refuges. Years later, in 1976 during "Goose War II," CNRA filed its own suit against the DNR and Fish & Wildlife Service to stop dewatering of the marsh and hazing of geese to disperse them. CNRA lost that suit also, but continued to fight these practices successfully in other ways. To pay expenses, Gromme painted "Requiem—Horicon Marsh 1916, 1976" and donated proceeds from the sale of the painting and prints to a special CNRA fund, the Horicon Defense Fund.*

*In the 25 years since establishing the Horicon Defense Fund, CNRA has continued to keep a protective eye on Horicon Marsh. We have contributed funds for research projects, reviewed management plans, supported protective legislation, initiated coordinative activities and sat on marsh committees. The Horicon Defense Fund has now become the mainstay of CNRA's environmental grant program.*

## *The Goose Wars*

by Leonie Vrtilek

**W**HEN I GREW UP IN Switzerland, I never saw a wild goose, let alone a migrating flock, and did not expect ever to see one. But maybe one of my favorite books by the Swedish author, Selma Lagerloef, Nils Holgerson's Journey with the Wild Geese, prepared me for experiences I was to make later in life when I emigrated to the United States with my husband, Mo.

We lived in Milwaukee for a while. Horicon Marsh soon became a special place for us for hiking and canoeing. Coming from a small mountainous country, I was thrilled by the wide open spaces and the sounds, smells and changing colors of the marsh. I will never forget the first time I witnessed wave after wave of Canada geese darkening the sky over the marsh and filling it with goose music. Like thousands of people all over the country, I will never get tired of it.

The early history of the marsh intrigued me. I often have wished it were possible to take a trip back into the past when Indian tribes lived there, in harmony with their environment and the abundance of wildlife, a time of glory for the marsh which will never return.

Drastic changes came around 1830 with the arrival of the white man with his restless drive to change the world around him and find ever new ways to exploit it. Repeated drainage schemes had destroyed the marsh by early 1900, leaving it useless for either agriculture or wildlife. Peat fires smoldered for years until people rallied to have the marsh rewatered. In the early 1940's, as a result of a long, public campaign,

the state acquired 10,000 acres of the southern part of the marsh, creating the Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area, while U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service purchased the northern 20,000 acres and established the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge. Over the next 20 years, Horicon Marsh developed into a magnificent refuge for ducks, egrets, muskrats, and hundreds of other species of birds and animals.

**W**hen geese began to stop in growing numbers, everybody was delighted. Goose food was planted to make the marsh still more attractive for geese. But when over 100,000 of them stopped at peak periods of fall use, pressures from various sides started to build up, with the strongest objections coming from wildlife managers and hunters in the southern states complaining that the geese were short-stopped in Horicon.

This set the stage for Goose War I in 1966, launched by both the federal and state agencies. Goose food was reduced and geese were hazed by helicopters, airplanes, motor boats and other devices, which injured livestock, increased crop depredation, and resulted in the destruction of sanctuary for all species dependent on the marsh. It failed to change migrating habits of the geese. The state pulled out and sued the Fish & Wildlife Service because hazing of waterfowl is illegal in Wisconsin. The 1966 fall hunting season had to be closed after 2 ½ days because 30,000 geese had been killed, with many more crippled or dead that were never found or counted. The political reason for the hazing, which proved very unpopular, was not revealed. It was a management disaster that should never have happened.



Leonie Vrtilek with Owen Gromme's "Requiem—Horicon Marsh 1916, 1976" in the background. For over 25 years, Leonie has kept her promise to Owen Gromme—to never stop her vigilance concerning the protection of Horicon Marsh.

In the 1950s while Wallace Grange was president of CNRA, our organization supported litigation against the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for opening Horicon National Wildlife Refuge to shooting of migratory birds on October 3, 1953, breaking federal and state laws. Some other inviolate federal refuges had already been opened before, starting in 1952. Thus began the willful destruction of the sanctuary concept with the resulting management of the waterfowl resource primarily for hunting purposes, which opened game management widely to political pressure. Today, on all but a very few of the federal refuges, hunting is allowed.

Ten years after Goose War I, the number of geese stopping at Horicon Marsh and other areas in East-Central Wisconsin had grown to 200,000, resulting in increased demands by southern hunters for their "fair share" of Mississippi Valley Population (MVP) geese. Despite the well-documented failure of Goose War I, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, joined by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, practically duplicated that program, only on a much larger scale and with a much higher price tag. It was planned to last five years. Goose food was to be eliminated and the marsh dewatered in 1976, ironically the year nationally and internationally dedicated to the preservation of wetlands.

The geese were to be hazed day and night by airplanes, helicopters, airboats, exploders and rockets, not only at Horicon Marsh, but on all the satellite marshes within a radius of 40 miles. By these means, the goose flock of 200,000 was to be reduced by half, with the rest moving further south than their wintering grounds in Illinois and Kentucky. The public was told that these measures were necessary to prevent disease outbreaks from over-population of geese on the marsh and to reduce crop depredation.

I remember what an impact it had on me when I read about this Goose Reduction Program in the newspapers. I considered it very inhumane and the reasons given to the public were not believable. This led me to write letters to the newspapers and to attend public hearings. One day, I happened to hear on the radio of CNRA filing papers against the Fish & Wildlife Service and the Wisconsin DNR on grounds that they had not submitted an environmental impact statement prior to implementing their program. I joined CNRA the same day. That was 25 years ago!

**M**y first CNRA meeting, where I met Owen Gromme, Fred Ott and Ron Sauery, took place at the Wild Goose Inn in the summer of 1976. Little did I know then on what an adventure I was embarking and that my life would never be quite the same ever after! Many of our old friends are not with us anymore. The Wild Goose Inn, our headquarters during Goose War II, burnt down ten years ago, and yet all the good memories of the battles fought together, the victories and the defeats, the many funny moments, are keeping them alive.

Although CNRA was supported by the Izaak Walton League, local chapters of the Audubon Society, and testimony from outstanding biologists throughout the country, we lost. Jack Hemphill, Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service declared by the power of his office that an environmental impact statement was not necessary. Two years later, during a Wisconsin State Senate investigation of the Goose Reduction Program, Jack Hemphill admitted that the primary objective of the

F&WS program was to provide Mississippi Valley Population geese for the southern states.

Losing at court did not discourage CNRA. With letters to newspapers, interviews, presentations to government agencies and testimonies at public hearings, we tried to get the truth about the Goose Reduction Program to the public. We widely distributed petitions against the dewatering of the marsh and the hazing of the geese. I fondly remember many weekends in fall of 1976 when my friend Catherine Lewis and I collected signatures for our petition along all the parked cars on Highway 49.

Every year thousands of people stopped there to see the spectacle of the migrating geese. Catherine then was in her 70s, a former teacher and writer, well known and liked in the Fond du Lac area. We did very well with our petitions. While we walked on one side of the highway, often in bitter cold weather, personnel from the USFWS and the DNR walked on the other from one parked car to another, explaining the lack of geese and water. From time to time, we exchanged friendly, albeit hesitant, smiles. When Catherine and I were nearly frozen, we would go to the Wild Goose Inn, where owner Ellen Bell would give us free hot chocolate.

I also remember receiving many letters of support, often with a dollar bill or two tucked inside, and a word of regret that it could not be more. I remember the phone calls offering encouragement, especially the one when a friendly voice asked me: "Are you the Goose Lady?" Nor will I forget the day I received a check for \$15 from the Capital Times newspaper of Madison for using one of my letters as a feature article. It was with great pride that I added this check to the Horicon Defense Fund.

On April 28, 1977, CNRA presented over 28,000 signatures on our petition against the dewatering of the marsh and the hazing of the geese to the Wisconsin Senate Natural Resources Committee.

In the fall of 1976, Chuck Collins of the Chicago public television station, Channel 11, visited the marsh to watch the goose migration, unaware of the Goose War. Stopping at the Wild Goose Inn, he

found the CNRA petition and some material with my name on it. He called me, suggesting a program on Goose War II for Channel 11. Some phone conversations later and well-equipped with CNRA documentation, Chuck Collins and his crew met with members of CNRA at the Wild Goose Inn on October 15, 1976.

Owen Gromme brought his still-wet painting "Requiem—Horicon Marsh 1916,1976," which Chuck Collins wanted him to display in the courtyard of a Horicon farm. This was done toward evening, in the light of the setting sun and a flock of geese flying overhead, creating a perfect frame for the occasion.

Maybe Owen Gromme had emotionally the highest stake in the CNRA battle, which he passionately supported. As a young man, he had taken part in a long and hard fight to have the marsh rewatered and to establish the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge. He could not tolerate seeing the marsh destroyed again.

To raise money for a Horicon Defense Fund he donated to CNRA the proceeds from the sale of this painting, and also granted us the right to sell the prints. He wanted, above all, to be sure that we always would have money to defend the marsh, if necessary. I well remember his statement that Horicon problems will never go away. With this in mind, Owen asked me to promise him I would never stop my vigilance concerning the protection of Horicon Marsh. I have tried to keep my promise to the best of my ability for the past 25 years.

Already, after one year, it was evident that the Goose Reduction Program was a disaster. Everything CNRA had predicted, happened. The geese did not leave Wisconsin as long as there was food and open water. Neither did they migrate further south than their traditional wintering grounds in Illinois and Kentucky. Illinois refused to have any follow-up plan as it was in that state's interest to keep the geese as a valuable economic asset. Some other flyway states did not comply either.



***Requiem—Horicon Marsh 1916, 1976***

This is a painting of protest by Owen Gromme against the damage he believed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Wisconsin DNR were doing to Horicon Marsh and its goose flock during the mid-1970s. Water was being drawn down, creating potential disease hazards, and geese were being hazed with air boats, airplanes and helicopters. The painting was intended to rouse citizen awareness and raise funds for legal fees in an effort to stop these practices. Proceeds from prints of the painting were donated to the Horicon Defense Fund, maintained by CNRA since 1976.

**VOICES FROM THE PAST**

*Owen Gromme*

**R**EQUIEM—HORICON MARSH 1916, 1976 is the only propaganda painting I have ever done. I depicted 13 tired, hungry geese in the painting as they fly in from the north, expecting food and a huge marsh full of shimmering, clean water. Instead, the geese are confronted with a pest hole—a drained, disease-ridden muck hole created for them by the government in an effort to drive them out to other areas.

— in *The World of Owen Gromme*

***Caretakers of the Gromme Prints***

SOME OF US REMEMBER Ann Friend, and others knew her by name only. For many years, she was the person who received orders to purchase Owen Gromme's print, "Requiem—Horicon Marsh 1916, 1976." Ann was much appreciated by CNRA for storing and caring for over 1000 prints and mailing tubes in her home.

In the mid-80s, the prints were transferred to David Kopitzke in Richland Center, who stored the tubes in his barn and the prints in his house, until, to ensure their safety, they were transferred to the M&L Bank. The CNRA Council has thanked David many times over for caring for the prints and finally negotiating their transfer to Meuer Art & Picture Frame in Madison, who verified the print's authenticity.

Gold-embossed signature prints of "Requiem—Horicon Marsh 1916, 1976" are now available retail to the public, and wholesale to galleries and dealers through Meuer: 608-233-3337.

The Wisconsin cohort of the MVP geese, which is programmed to come to East-Central Wisconsin and does not fluctuate with the MVP flock, suffered great losses from over hunting and crippling. The duck population was severely depressed. Muskrats had been decimated and cattails consequently encroached the dewatered parts of the marsh . The

entire ecosystem of the marsh had suffered by the dewatering, made worse by the fact that 1977 was a year of drought. Two outbreaks of botulism and one of fowl cholera killed a great number of birds during a program allegedly intended to lower the danger of disease outbreaks. Crop depredation went up, as no goose food had been planted on the Refuge. Goose

#### VOICES FROM THE PAST

*Kurt Remus*

**K**URT REMUS WAS A CNRA ADVISOR during the *Goose Wars*. The brief statement here is only a few paragraphs from an 11-page statement he presented at a meeting on January 24, 1977, sponsored by the USFWS and DNR to evaluate the results of their Canada goose reduction project in East-Central Wisconsin. Remus, a businessman from Milwaukee and a waterfowl hunter, was also on the boards of the Milwaukee Audubon Society, Ducks Unlimited, and the Milwaukee Zoological Society. When testifying he usually said he was representing himself, interested sportsmen and the Milwaukee Audubon Society, but, in fact, his position was CNRA's position. He was responsible for the extensive research that formed the basis for CNRA's actions. Ron Sauvey, in The CNRA Report, August 1981, gave him and Leonie Vrtilek equal praise for the time they devoted to Horicon. Both attended countless hearings and meetings, made lengthy trips across the state and beyond, interviewed numerous government officials, farmers, sportsmen and waterfowl researchers, and wrote voluminous reports.

**T**HE DEWATERING OF THE Horicon Marsh and other refuges in East-Central Wisconsin in 1976 has, without a doubt, been one of the most criticized portions of the game management plan of the State of Wisconsin and the Fish & Wildlife Service to reduce the number of geese and duration of Canada goose use in East-Central Wisconsin by 1980. Even the deer hunting issues have not been nearly as controversial as this one is. I can't recall anything having so negative an impact on so many people and so much resource as this project. To my knowledge, this is the first time in this state that the environmentalist, the hunter, the scientist, the citizen, the merchant, and the farmer have

ever been as united in their criticism of a game management project.

There have been over 30,000 signatures collected condemning the dewatering of the marshes and the hazing of geese in East-Central Wisconsin. Both of these management practices have had no positive effects and many adverse effects that, if continued, could be irreversible. . . . In conclusion, my observation is that research of the M.V.P., its subspecies, wintering grounds, migratory patterns, and studies on stress and distribution of transient cohorts would be a wiser investment in the resource than to spend almost \$1,000,000 in four years on a project that includes management practices that have already been proven unsuccessful in East-Central Wisconsin.

War II was an enormous waste of money and resources, and did not help the public images of either agency. But it did, for the first time in history, unite all elements of the Wisconsin public, even those usually divided on issues, against an ill-conceived and poorly coordinated program.

In 1983, DNR Secretary C.D. "Buzz" Besadny disassociated his agency from the Fish and Wildlife Service's Mississippi Flyway Plan for 1979–1983, and declared the plan to be in total disarray. He stated that the failure had put Wisconsin in an untenable position.

A new Goose Management Plan for East-Central Wisconsin for 1980–1990 was created. CNRA considered this a step in the right direction, but it did not yet contain all of CNRA's recommendations, which included comprehensive research as a basis for new solutions, expansion of satellite acreage and improvement of existing satellite areas for goose use, as well as adapting hunting pressure to help the evolution of natural distribution patterns. We supported a mandatory monitoring system to control over harvesting of geese and tougher fines to curtail the high toll of illegal killing. We also supported a fair and practicable crop damage abatement program. We were opposed to any disturbance or drainage management practices destined to geographically distribute birds. Such practices have proven to be failures throughout the country for many years.

**I**n 1983, Dick Hunt, a retired DNR research biologist of national renown and a CNRA life member, presented a paper, "Crop Depredation by Canada Geese in East-Central Wisconsin" during a Wildlife Damage Control Conference at Cornell University. In this paper, he takes a different approach to the goose problem. He stresses that the Canada goose is a major wildlife asset in Wisconsin

and that resulting so-called management problems should be viewed from the positive side. We should feel fortunate that Canada geese are so adaptable and abundant, and not take them for granted. Says Dick Hunt: "Surely, no other Canada goose population has been so abused by managers, farmers and hunters." In his opinion, it defies logic that Canada geese have at all maintained their Wisconsin stopover habit. Crop damage by Canada geese is not always preventable, but it is a manageable problem with current skills in agriculture and with new techniques to be explored. He admits that he would rather have geese and some depredation than no geese.

Nor do all farmers hate geese. There are those who appreciate them for what they do best: glean fields after the harvest. Quoting Hunt: "Canada geese and field-feeding mallards make extensive use of corn stubble when chopped for chisel plowing and planting. Incentives or subsidies to encourage conservation tillage would save soil and provide much more feeding area than normal plowing." CNRA supported this approach. Farmers who were able to rent blinds also accepted the presence of geese as a welcome source of additional income.



**I**n the 25 years that have passed since Goose War II started, many goose-related memories have become a part of my life. One is of special meaning to me. It happened in the summer of 1996 when I had the opportunity to pay daily visits to a couple of giant Canadas raising six young ones on nearby ponds. After days of being scrutinized, my black shepherd and I were allowed to sit close. It was an experience that filled me with great respect for goose parenting. With good luck in timing I was able to witness the first flying lesson with take-offs from and landings on water, launched from a little island on one of the ponds where the geese had originally nested.

I will always remember the impressive teaching style of the goose parents, a mixture of patience, discipline, encouragement, and the wisdom to know just how much of each element was needed to get six young geese of very different dispositions airborne. And then to teach them how to come down on water, a very intricate exercise and fascinating for me to watch. From then on, they changed location daily, always greeting me happily once I found them. Eventually, they disappeared, leaving me behind with wonderful memories, but also with great worries

### FRED OTT — Horicon Marsh, 1977

Dear Fellow Members:

CNRA has been in active opposition to the Joint Horicon—East Central Wisconsin Goose Reduction Program sponsored by a cooperative effort of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) since 1976.

In August 1976, the CNRA sought in Federal Court a filing of an Environmental Impact Statement, and sued both the DNR and the FWS. We lost.

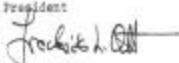
Ever since then, we have continued the fight against the dewatering of one of America's finest wetland marshes, and the accompanying hazing of geese at Horicon, as well as East-Central Wisconsin.

We have presented our case to the public, at hearings both closed and open to the public, by exposure to the press, and TV media, by personal contact to appropriate government officials, both State and Federal. Many outstanding wildlife biologists throughout the country have supported our opposing position.

We have been joined by other distinguished national and local groups in our opposition to this ill-conceived project. They are: the National Audubon Society, the Milwaukee Audubon Society, the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, the National & Wisconsin Isaak Walton Leagues, and the Horicon Farmers' Alliance, just to name a few.

We have financed this by donations and the current sale of Owen T. Gromme prints of thirteen Canada geese landing at sunset in a dried up Horicon Marsh, so aptly named "Requiem—Horicon Marsh 1916, 1976." The low price of this quality print is only \$30 plus \$1.20 state tax.

Our two stalwart members whose untiring energies and dedicated motives brought the truth of the total program to the public were Kurt Remus of Milwaukee and Mrs. Leonie Vrtilek of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. We owe them our lasting gratitude.

Your President  
  
Frederick L. Ott

about their uncertain future. Not one of the geese returned.

The involvement in Horicon Marsh and Canada goose management caused CNRA to support a mandatory monitoring system for goose hunting and the use of steel shot for waterfowl hunting on a statewide basis.

In 1980, at the time a new and improved Wisconsin Goose Management Plan was considered, CNRA financially contributed to telemetry equipment and neck collar research on the Wisconsin cohort of MVP geese and also purchased two scanners for this research. It has always been CNRA's contention that any new management plan for Canada geese be based on research to avoid past mistakes leading to detrimental results.

CNRA has had input on Master Plans for Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area and Pine Island. CNRA encouraged and financially supported Marsh Haven Nature Center since its planning stage in 1986 and helped develop a CNRA Wetland Exhibit at the Center, with a special contribution of extensive volunteer work by CNRA member Steve Maassen. CNRA, under the leadership of Jan Scalpone, was instrumental in establishing the Horicon Marsh Area Coalition, with the purpose of bringing together people, groups and agencies concerned with the protection and future of Horicon Marsh and the surrounding area. Furthermore, CNRA is represented at the Marsh Management Committee for the restoration of the Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area.

Wallace Grange remarks in his extensive and pertinent report of January 21, 1954, on Goose Management: "Corrections of state wildlife conservation policy can be made, but only as the CNRA, and many other groups and individuals, demand that they be made."

I think this statement defines CNRA's mission as validly today as it did in 1954.

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Leonie Vrtilek, well-known in the Fond du Lac area as the "Goose Lady", has served on the CNRA Council since the mid 1970s and regularly presents a report on Horicon Marsh and other environmental issues at quarterly Council meetings.

## REFLECTIONS — Lynn E. Hanson

**I**N FALL 1946, WHEN THE FEDERAL portion of Horicon Marsh was relatively new, a peak number of 250 Canada geese used the area. By 1949, the peak number had risen to 12,000 geese, plus thousands of ducks and coots. By 1953, geese numbered 30,000. That year the Wisconsin Conservation Department (WCD) initiated a managed hunt program. Distribution of the goose harvest was the objective.

At first it was recommended that land be acquired outside the Federal Refuge. Cost estimates were made to purchase land and presented to J.R. Smith in Game Management and to Lester Voight, then director of the Conservation Department. Costs were high, so the Department looked for other alternatives. The Federal Refuge had been purchased by duck stamp funds, which required that 25 percent of such Refuge lands be open to hunting. WCD negotiated with "the Feds" to create a quarter-mile zone inside the Refuge boundaries to create a managed hunt.

This caused considerable concern to conservationists statewide. Wallace Grange, CNRA's first president, filed suit against the Fish & Wildlife Service for opening the refuge to hunting. CNRA supported this suit with \$100 and a special publication. In 1954 CNRA reproduced a painting of Owen Gromme's on stamps opposing hunting in the Federal Refuge. The stamps were titled "Wisconsin Wildlife Refuge Stamps" and were distributed to promote public awareness of the rapid encroachment on wildlife refuges.

CNRA was again involved in Horicon Marsh in 1976, the first fall of active goose dispersal efforts, and in the following draw downs, hazing and "Goose Wars" where the WCD, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, farmers, hunters, goose watchers and others stepped into the social arena to settle their differences. The views of citizens were often ignored by agencies. So advocacy, petition drives, letter writing, issue organizing, litigation, appearances at hearings, and information gathering and sharing were carried out with great skill, dedication and persistence by CNRA members. CNRA provided a unified voice to many people across Wisconsin. The active citizens of CNRA accomplished what individuals working alone could not.

## Wisconsin Wildlife Refuge Stamps

Issued by the Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin, Inc.

Secretary: E. M. DAHLBERG, Ladysmith, Wis.

A non-profit organization.

### CNRA OBJECTIVES

To preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of Wisconsin in relation to natural resources; to help establish esthetic values and ethical concepts for natural resources; to prevent waste and unnecessary destruction; to work militantly in any legal manner to further conservation principles; to provide education, information analyses, and evaluation of natural resource issues.

### PURPOSE OF STAMPS

SINCE CONSERVATION is concerned with the basic relationship of man to all of his natural resources, rather than to any single resource or use of a resource; and

INASMUCH AS our wildlife *refuges* were established for the purpose of creating a reservoir of wild life of which the increment would provide for all varieties of nature recreation; these stamps are issued

FOR THE PURPOSE of promoting public awareness of the rapid encroachment on wildlife *refuges* which now threatens our state, as exemplified by the ill-advised opening of the Horicon Marsh Wildlife Refuge to public hunting. If you endorse this purpose, attach these stamps to your letters. *Let the public know!*



These Wisconsin Wildlife Refuge Stamps were created by Owen Gromme and issued by CNRA in 1954 to promote public awareness of the rapid encroachment on wildlife refuges like Horicon. People were asked to put these stamps on their letters to help spread the word about Horicon Marsh and other special places.

## *Horicon Marsh Area Coalition: How it Worked*

**by Lynn E. Hanson**

**H**ARRIVED AT HORICON IN 1989, more than a decade after the “Goose Wars.” I was to be a private land wildlife biologist working with landowners around the Horicon Marsh to restore wetlands, grasslands and other wildlife habitat. One of my first assignments was to visit five people in each of five counties plus meet people from the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge, Marsh Haven Nature Center, and community leaders. I met with the UW-Extension agents, the County Conservationists, NRCS and FSA staff at USDA offices, and county planning and development directors.

I discovered that everyone had a mission of conservation, protection of the environment, education, planning and resource management. I also discovered that there was little coordination of agency programs and efforts and that on some days there could have been a great collision of agency trucks on one country road intersection with all of them rushing around to do their own thing.

During my first years at Horicon, Leonie Vrtilek was regularly visiting our office, or calling for information for her CNRA goose report. Dick Hunt, retired DNR waterfowl biologist, would visit as well and encourage us to do something or other to make sure that the resources of Horicon Marsh were managed and available for future users.

In 1992, Leonie invited Dick Hunt to a CNRA meeting to air some of his concerns. Dick brought

along Bill Volkert, a naturalist at Horicon Marsh. They identified impending threats to the marsh: urban and rural runoff bringing large amounts of sediment, nutrients and pesticides into the marsh; uncontrolled residential, industrial and commercial development on the periphery; decline of endangered species; and issues regarding public access. Most concerns related to issues occurring on private lands surrounding Horicon Marsh rather than those related to management strategies of state and federal agencies.

**C**NRA had neither the financial resources nor sufficient local membership to solve these problems on its own. Members formed a small committee to look at alternative ways to address these issues. After the committee met a few times, Dick Hunt invited me to meet with several CNRA members. I was interested. Bill Volkert, my office mate, had kept me informed about what CNRA was doing. Their goals were similar to mine. I could see CNRA serving as a catalyst to bring together the many diverse stakeholder interests to deal with the complex issues of the marsh.

I met with individual CNRA members several times, then attended a CNRA Council meeting where we developed a strategy to move forward. In 1993 CNRA approached local groups to establish a cooperative dialog over the future of the marsh and the surrounding area. At the first meeting the group decided to plan a public forum on Horicon Marsh issues. CNRA would provide the funding from its Horicon Defense Fund, derived from print sales of

"Requiem—Horicon Marsh 1916, 1976" by Owen Gromme. The planning committee consisted of Jan Scalpone, Katherine Rill, and Leonie Vrtilek from CNRA; Dick Hunt, retired DNR biologist; David Neuendorf and Jim Fanta from Dodge County UW Extension; Patti Meyers and Diane Kitchen from the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge; and Bill Ehlenbeck from Dodge County Planning and Development. I represented the DNR.

The planning committee met nine times from February to September to work out the details for the forum, which was held on September 11, 1993. About 150 people were invited; 70 attended. Its purpose was to seek the common ground among multiple marsh interests. Through a participatory process, the group identified eight major issues and generated 35 action plans. Thirty-six participants indicated a willingness to continue the dialogue, including eight who agreed to serve on an expanded planning committee to keep the process going.

The discussion initiated at the Forum laid the groundwork for goal setting and future strategies. The planning committee was charged with developing an organization to continue the dialog. By 1994 the planning committee had become the Steering Committee for the Horicon Marsh Area Coalition (HMAC). HMAC's purpose was to facilitate communication, cooperation and coordination among individuals, groups and agencies concerned with Horicon Marsh and the surrounding area. Its parameters were defined as the watershed feeding into Horicon Marsh and the headwaters of the Upper Rock River.

Jan Scalpone of CNRA continued to chair the Steering committee during this development period. It became apparent that HMAC would function best as an informal coalition, using collaborative methods. The nature of a collaborative approach enables participants to look for comprehensive solutions and deal with a wide range of issues and interests. Most decisions are made by consensus of the group rather than by one individual, with shared leadership and responsibilities.

Once HMAC was established, it became an official part of my workload for DNR. The DNR at that time was implementing "integrated resource management" at a watershed level. That program looked to bring together all concerned individuals, groups, and governmental units to address watershed issues. Teamwork, public involvement, scientific data and continuous learning are key components of an integrated approach. The approach also emphasized coordination, cooperation and sharing of resources and responsibility. HMAC's structure and operating method offered one outlet to operate in this manner.

I could also see personal benefits from participation. Resource managers tend to spend most of their time in their own specific areas of expertise or discipline. They don't have the opportunity to learn the skills needed to get people

### ***Priority Needs of the Horicon Marsh Area***

**As identified at a public forum sponsored by CNRA and six other agencies on September 11, 1993:**

- *Comprehensive planning for the marsh and surrounding area*
- *Management of urban/rural runoff for improved water quality*
- *Development controls for land adjacent to the marsh*
- *Farmland preservation*
- *Improved wildlife habitat on and around the marsh*
- *Improved nature and marsh education for schools and the general public*
- *Year-round recreational access*
- *Coordination among all interest groups*

working together to solve problems in a collaborative fashion. HMAC offered that opportunity. We found out quickly, however, that the open-ended approach of collaboration is not easy. Still, by creating a neutral place for discussion, coalition members tended to discover ways to resolve issues constructively. Each of us found our perspectives were not as different as we thought, and although individual participants recognized they could not agree on every issue, we became an increasingly cohesive group.

**F**rom early on, HMAC served as a model of an organization with a collaborative approach. David Neuendorf, Dick Hunt, Patti Meyers, Jan Scalpone, and I described this approach in a paper entitled "Finding the Common Ground in the Horicon Marsh Ecosystem," which I presented at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resource Conference in March 1995. In 1996 DNR's Integrated Ecosystem Management Team used HMAC as a case study during DNR's reorganization efforts. The UW-Extension also promoted collaborative resource management based on the HMAC model.

HMAC set up work groups to accomplish specific projects. At various times there were work groups in water quality, recreational access, GIS, land use and farming. These groups established their own meeting schedules.

The HMAC Steering Committee met monthly, usually at the headquarters of the federal refuge, sometimes at the Leroy Town Hall and sometimes at the DNR headquarters in Horicon. The core group consisted of representatives from CNRA, DNR, USFWS, UW-Extension, Dodge County Tourism Council, Wildlife Damage Control, the Farm Bureau, the Dodge County Board, the Town of Leroy and the Town of Williamstown. Others came and went. The chair and secretary served on a rotational basis. The Dodge County UW-Extension office sent out the agenda. Agendas always included informational updates and sharing, often the bulk of the meeting.

Work group and committee reports followed, then discussion of particular topics. Frequently an agency or an outside individual was invited to give presentations on relevant issues. CNRA provided administrative funds.

Between 1994 and 2000, HMAC's Steering Committee and work groups addressed numerous issues and coordinated several major projects. Among its many accomplishments were:

- Organizing a public forum to identify issues relating to the proposed expansion of the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge, resulting in a smaller expansion plan and a year's moratorium on land purchase;
- Helping get priority watershed designation for the Upper Rock River and East Branch;
- Initiating a cooperative geographic information system (GIS) among agencies and programs in the Rock River watershed;
- Arranging a public dialogue with George Meyer, former DNR Secretary, to allow discussion of land use, water quality and DNR reorganization issues;
- Working with the USFWS to obtain a North American Conservation Act grant of nearly \$500,000 for wetland restoration, land acquisition and water quality studies;
- Conducting a land use planning workshop for local officials;
- Coordinating support with local governments and the Lake Sinnissippi Association and assisting in obtaining planning grants to set up a three-year monitoring effort to determine amounts of pollutants entering and exiting the marsh;
- Carrying out various studies of sub-watersheds;
- Coordinating a one-day cleanup of parts of the Upper Rock River;
- Developing spring and fall tours of local towns,

public facilities and sites on the marsh for information sharing with representatives from local chambers of commerce and area businesses aimed at tourism development;

- Coordinating agreements with local clubs to set up and maintain cross-country ski trails on the lower third of the marsh and working with the John Deere Company for fabrication and donation of a trail groomer;
- Sending representatives to the Dodge County Comprehensive Planning Committee and the state's Horicon Marsh Management Committee.

In September 1998 HMAC was recognized at the Governor's Rural Summit in Wausau as one of Wisconsin's top ten rural development initiatives for its success in demonstrating a spirit of partnership and collaboration in creating positive community impacts.

HMAC's successes resulted primarily from its function as a coordinating body for agencies. To broaden its scope, in the summer of 2000, participants in HMAC began to transform HMAC into a formal organization that could provide financial and operation support to carry out its mission. The new organization, called Rock River Headwaters, Inc. (RRHI), is a traditional not-for-profit organization.

The purpose of Rock River Headwaters is to promote cooperation between citizens, organizations and governments in the Upper Rock River Basin; and to protect, restore and sustain the ecological, economic, cultural and recreational resources through a watershed-based approach. To that end, RRHI

successfully sought a grant and hired an outreach coordinator. It also agreed to collaborate with the DNR to develop a "Focus Watershed" report that will help define environmental conditions, standards and goals for the Upper Rock River Watershed. The group has sought cooperation from area municipalities and to date has successfully held two community suppers on pertinent water quality topics.

***In September 1998  
HMAC was recognized  
at the Governor's Rural  
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development initiatives.***

DNR and other agencies in addressing concerns on the periphery. RRHI has broadened this further, centering on issues in area communities and collaboration with local officials and citizens. RRHI anticipates still broader influence as it moves to address interests of people in the entire watershed.

We continue to build on the tradition started by CNRA at Horicon Marsh. We have seen the benefits of CNRA's ongoing encouragement, leadership, support and tenacity. The example of citizens working together through an organization such as CNRA will always inspire new citizens to take up the banner and make a difference in building a positive community and sustaining a healthy environment in this special place we call Wisconsin.

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*Lynn E. Hanson is a Private Lands Biologist, Wildlife Management, in the Horicon DNR office. He has been a CNRA member since 1997.*

## *CNRA and HMAC*

*by Jan Scalpone*

**W**ALTER SCOTT WAS ONE OF the reasons CNRA was so effective in the early days. He was Assistant to the Secretary of the Department of Conservation. As a charter and active CNRA member, he drafted the pledge and the constitution. Later, he helped CNRA anticipate and understand the major conservation issues. He also shared critical information about when and who to contact to influence legislative and administrative decisions, often behind the scenes.

Today it is highly unlikely that someone in his position would be an active member of a citizens environmental group. Environmental agency people who are now activists generally are field staff, not administrators. They are usually biologists, wildlife managers, education specialists or community liaisons. They play a role similar to Walter Scott's, but without his clout. Often they become members of a citizens group out of frustration with policies that prevent them from effectively doing their jobs. But just as often they have the blessing of their higher ups, who recognize that citizen confirmation of government policy is one of the ways to achieve an agency's goals.

This was the operative mode in establishing and maintaining the Horicon Marsh Area Coalition (HMAC). Although I was awarded a Silver Acorn partially because of my work as CNRA president

during the time HMAC was established, much of the credit for HMAC belongs to a small group of agency staff who played key roles in the process.

Dick Hunt and Bill Volkert began the process in January 1992 when they came to a CNRA Council meeting and outlined some of the threats to Horicon Marsh. Dick, a retired DNR Wildlife Researcher from the Horicon area, was a longtime CNRA member. In the mid-80s CNRA had given him several grants, including one for \$2600 to purchase telemetry equipment for goose research. Bill, an education specialist in the Horicon DNR office, was known to several of us as a former president of the Fond du Lac Audubon Society.

Their list of concerns was long, but chief among these were increased development and agricultural runoff on the marsh's periphery. Both men felt the DNR and USFWS had the ability to address issues inside the marsh. The question was, how to address issues outside their jurisdictions? My response, as a professional planner, was to suggest initiating a comprehensive planning process for the area surrounding the marsh. The Council's response was: "Good idea, but who would do it and how?"

The Council appointed a small committee to pursue the issue. We met at Leonie Vrtilek's house a month later. In addition to several Council members, Dick Hunt and Patti Meyers were there. Patti was the new manager of the federal refuge

portion of the marsh. USFWS was in the process of preparing an expansion plan and Patti was looking to form a citizens support group. She expressed concerns similar to those of Dick Hunt and Bill Volkert.

The committee defined as its main goal the protection of the periphery of the marsh. We had a model we thought would work: the recent effort by the DNR to plan for and protect the Lower Wisconsin River Valley. With the committee's help, I drafted a letter to DNR Secretary C.D. Besadny, outlining CNRA's longtime interest in Horicon Marsh, detailing our current concerns, and suggesting that the DNR initiate a planning effort similar to the one for the Lower Wisconsin River Valley.

Besadny's response was thoughtful and provocative, and showed how naïve we were to compare protection of Horicon Marsh to the Lower Wisconsin River Valley. Briefly, Besadny said the multi-jurisdictional nature of the Lower Wisconsin River Valley, with no single jurisdiction able to plan for the entire riverway, made DNR the preferred choice for leading this planning effort. Public opinion confirmed DNR's lead role. In contrast, he pointed out that Horicon Marsh was primarily in one county, which has its own planning capabilities, and two-thirds of the marsh is owned by USFWS, which also has an interest in the periphery. He said, too, that the DNR has limited resources to undertake such a program. He encouraged a strong local role in any planning effort. He also suggested a meeting with one of his staff to explore the subject further.

Our response to Besadny's letter was to reverse our original approach. Instead of looking for ways to develop a comprehensive plan,

we began looking at what could be done with individual programs. Leonie contacted Maureen Rowe, wildlife manager for Dodge County, who suggested ways CNRA might encourage landowners to put their land in grasses. She talked again to Patti Meyers about their land acquisition program and how CNRA could help. I talked to the county planner who suggested we try to get the Dodge County Board to fund an update of its comprehensive plan from the 1950s. I also spoke to the clerk of the Town of Williamstown to determine if the conservancy plan it was undertaking would be suitable to promote in other towns bordering the marsh.

Katherine Rill and I also met with Dick Hunt and Lynn Hanson. Lynn, a Private Lands Specialist, Wildlife Management, in the Horicon DNR office, was Bill Volkert's officemate, and knew the background of CNRA's involvement. Additionally, he was the staff person delegated to meet with us as indicated in Besadny's letter.

Lynn turned out to be the Walter Scott of the nineties. He had a handle on every important county and state program currently underway—



HMAC steering committee members Jan Scalpone, CNRA and Lynn Hanson, WDNR. Lynn was CNRA's modern-day Walter Scott, providing valuable insights of the many local factors involved in the Horicon Marsh issue.

those with which we had already made contact, and numerous others. His manner was to listen intently to a person's comments, then rephrase these comments in a far more intelligent, coherent way. Then, smiling, he'd say he agreed completely, what a good idea. With his help, I drafted a memo to the Council that included eight specific actions that could be taken to protect the marsh. These included such activities as encouraging USFWS to establish a local review committee for comments on early drafts of the Environmental Assessment for its land acquisition program; recruiting local residents to encourage Dodge County to seek designation of the Upper Rock River Watershed as a priority watershed; and publishing a booklet or video to develop public support for protecting the uplands surrounding the marsh.

The specific activity directed toward CNRA, however, was for CNRA to serve as an outside host to establish a forum of local interests from which a Horicon Marsh planning committee might emerge. The main purpose of the committee would be to identify issues and develop a comprehensive plan. It would also pursue other activities for marsh protection.

**T**hus began a series of meetings with key federal, state and local agency people to plan the Horicon Marsh Forum. Several members of other environmental groups also attended the meetings, which we held in Fond du Lac. I was chairperson; Leonie and Dick Hunt represented CNRA's interest in the marsh; and Lynn made sure the meetings moved in the right direction. CNRA picked up the tab for committee lunches, for the Forum itself and later for HMAC's administrative expenses when it was established. Funding came from CNRA's Horicon Defense Fund.

Elsewhere, Lynn tells the story of the Forum, how the HMAC Steering Committee was formed, how HMAC operated and some of its

### FRED OTT — HMAC

*HMAC's the best thing we've done for Horicon since the "Goose Wars." When we thought about getting those people together for a forum to discuss their problems (many had never talked to each other before), it was a brilliant idea. It turned into a win-win situation. But I'll never forget our little group sitting there and waiting to see who might come to such a get-together—and nobody, but nobody, came. We thought we had laid a bomb until we found out we were a half hour ahead of what we told everyone else. Finally, after agonizing moments, they came—and came—and kept coming. What a lovely day that turned out to be.*

accomplishments. Once HMAC was established, Lynn, who had by this time joined CNRA, continued to provide direction, now with the blessing of his boss. Dodge County UWEX Community Resource Agent, Dave Neuendorf, was equally instrumental in providing direction and support. USFWS offered its meeting room and other support.

**L**eonie and I attended monthly HMAC Steering Committee meetings, happy to have a reason to drive along the marsh and spend time looking out across the wide expanse. I served as the first chairperson. We met country board members, town officials, and other agency members. Usually about a dozen or more people attended meetings. Often there were planned presentations. Frequently extended arguments ensued. Several subcommittees were formed and reported their accomplishments. HMAC held another forum. We published a newsletter intermittently. And eventually Dodge County

developed a comprehensive plan that included a buffer zone around the marsh.

After each meeting, on the trip home, or during lunch at an unusual, small German restaurant in Waupun, Leonie and I first would exchange pictures of grandchildren, then spend the rest of the time congratulating ourselves on the continued interaction among the group. Information sharing became a large part of the agenda. It was apparent as time went by that people in agencies who had rarely previously communicated but were working on similar projects, were getting to know each other well enough to seek out joint projects. We could see trust growing among people with divergently different views. After almost six years of attending meetings, we could also see that discussions were becoming increasingly technical, that we were contributing little to the discussion, and that HMAC was moving in a direction where it needed to reorganize to raise funds and hire a paid director.

***This time we were not taking an agency to court. . . We were promoting coordination among agencies.***

We were satisfied, however, that CNRA had accomplished what it set out to do: use the Horicon Defense Fund to protect the marsh from impending threats. This time we were not taking an agency to court, we were, in fact, doing the direct opposite. We were promoting coordination among agencies. We were funding specific activities of governmental agencies, including monitoring water quality and sponsoring land use forums. More importantly, we were doing this in cooperation with and under the guidance of agency people with as strong a commitment to protecting Wisconsin's natural resources as the most "militant" among us.

I believe Owen Gromme would have agreed that this was a good use of Horicon Defense funds. Certainly Walter Scott would have wholeheartedly approved. 

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*Jan Scalpone was one of the founders of HMAC and, as CNRA president, served on HMAC's Steering Committee.*

## *How the Horicon Marsh Defense Fund Became CNRA's Major Grant Program*

**W**HEN CNRA IS NOT USING all of its funds to fight legal battles, produce special publications or support its ongoing programs, it shares its money with other conservation-minded organizations or individuals. This is in keeping with one of the first tenets of CNRA: the ability to respond spontaneously to situations of member interest.

In the early days it was not unusual for the Council to approve enclosures of \$25 with resolutions of support sent to ad-hoc committees seeking public land purchases or promoting specific pieces of legislation. One of the first \$100 was given to help Wallace Grange fund a lawsuit against opening the Horicon Marsh Refuge to hunting. Later, as the treasury grew, larger donations were given. In 1979, for example, \$2,500 was given toward support of a Wetland Coordinator, whose main job was to lobby for proposed new state wetland legislation; in 1987 \$500 was donated to the Peregrine Falcon Recovery Program. More recently, multiple grants have been awarded over a number of years to ongoing projects; for example, CNRA donated over \$8,000 to Marsh Haven Nature Center to help develop its buildings and programs.

For the first decade or so of CNRA activity, all funds were held in a general account containing membership dues and donations. Later, special

funds were set up to allow people to donate to specific projects, such as the Rachel Carson Fund for the DDT hearings in the late 1960s, the Water Pollution Fund in the early 1970s and the Horicon Defense Fund in 1977. Generally, money in the special funds was spent specifically for the purpose for which it was raised; if not, at some point the fund was merged into CNRA's general account.

The Horicon Defense Fund, however, differed from other special funds. This fund was established in 1977 specifically to pay legal and other bills CNRA incurred during Goose War II. The fund received the bulk of its money from the sale of Owen Gromme's painting, "Requiem—Horicon Marsh 1916, 1976" and limited edition full-color prints of that painting. An agreement between Owen and CNRA specified that these funds could be spent only "for the preservation, promotion and maintenance of the Horicon Marsh and any present or future satellite refuges in Wisconsin for migratory waterfowl and cranes located therein."

**B**y 1979 most of the Horicon bills had been paid, but the Horicon Defense Fund still contained more than \$15,000. CNRA continued to sell prints, with more than 1300 remaining to be sold. The contract with Owen stated CNRA needed his signature to disburse money from the Fund for any reason other than the original intent. In 1979 Owen gave permission to donate \$2600 to the DNR toward purchase of telemetry equipment to conduct research on migratory patterns of geese.

Again, in 1982, Owen allowed \$700 to be taken from the Fund as a portion of a \$1400 grant CNRA awarded to a student of Jim Zimmerman's to research control of purple loosestrife in Horicon Marsh. Soon after, Owen said he wanted no other funds diverted for that purpose.

The Horicon Defense Fund continued to grow throughout the 1980s. The prints sold steadily, and with the high interest rates at the time, the Fund exceeded \$40,000 by 1988. With no projects on the horizon that fit the limited instructions for use of the money, CNRA was coming dangerously close to losing its non-profit status by falling below the required IRS ratio of membership dues to other income. A new agreement with Owen that year allowed CNRA to spend the interest accumulated in the Horicon Defense Fund in any way it wished for 1988 and future years. It also allowed CNRA to use the entire Fund in this manner upon Owen's death.

With that agreement in place, the Council established some informal rules for expenditures. The Membership Fund—CNRA's general account—would be used for internal expenses and dues and donations to affiliates; the Horicon Defense Fund would support requests for small grants for various conservation projects related to CNRA's traditional interests. Within the Council there was an understanding that grants would be awarded to projects we thought Owen would have liked.

The grant program proved to be popular, and within a year guidelines were set to allow more

time for deliberation. Only individual grants up to \$300 could be given at the meeting in which they were presented; larger grants had to wait until the next meeting before a decision could be made. When Owen died in 1991, because both the interest and the principal could now be used, the Council set up a formal grant program. Grant requests up to \$2,000 could be submitted until April 30 of each year. These would then be reviewed competitively, with awards determined at the July quarterly Council meeting.

This set-up worked for less than a year. By having a formal program and a cap on grants, the Council felt it no longer had the ability to respond spontaneously to member interests and small environmental crises that had long been a tradition in CNRA. Today, grant requests of any size are considered at each Council meeting.

**T**he Horicon Defense Fund has remained at about \$30,000 for the past few years. The Fund is no longer growing as quickly as in the early nineties. Interest rates are low; we sell only a few Gromme prints annually. But CNRA continues to find good projects that need start up or supplemental funds. Between 1988, when the Council was first able to use the interest from the Horicon Defense Fund, and 2001, CNRA awarded more than \$44,000 in grants (see table on page 63). These grants have provided for a variety of educational, research and preservation projects and, at various times, brought new members and interesting programs to CNRA meetings.

## *Sharing our Resources: CNRA's Conservation Grants*

*by Katherine D. Rill*

**O**NE REASON I WAS ATTRACTED to CNRA was its willingness to work with other groups having similar objectives. CNRA's founders specifically stated they expected to cooperate with other conservation organizations. They also wanted their members to belong to other groups. They saw the benefits of CNRA making its weight felt through multiple organizations, expanding CNRA's ability to influence the conservation movement.

To a large extent, I view CNRA's grant program in a similar manner—a way to cooperate with other conservationists and broaden CNRA's influence on environmental issues. Since joining CNRA in the mid 1960s, I've often brought requests from other groups or individuals for funds to support particular activities or issues. I especially like the idea of funding research and educational projects, because from the time I was CNRA president in the early 1980s, I've had a strong interest in improving environmental education.

When CNRA had an opportunity in 1991 to participate in the Lois Almon Fund with the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, The Nature Conservancy and the Wisconsin

Department of Natural Resources, I volunteered to represent CNRA on the grants committee. The Lois Almon Fund offers small biological research grants annually, usually to graduate students. I liked the cooperative nature of the program. Because of my background—a master's degree in biology, a former employee of the DNR, and a member of both The Nature Conservancy and the Wisconsin Academy—I felt I could contribute to the effort.

Participating in the Lois Almon Fund allows CNRA to stretch its grant money to projects it would not have an opportunity to fund on its own. CNRA's annual share originally was \$500, increasing recently to \$800. Contributions to the Lois Almon Fund account for \$5,800 of the total grant money awarded by CNRA from the Horicon Defense Fund since 1988 (see table). This is by far the largest category of research grants awarded since the Horicon Defense Fund was first opened to CNRA for general use.

In addition to grants awarded through the Lois Almon Fund, from 1988 to the present CNRA supported 26 other projects, generally classified into three categories: education, research and preservation. A brief review of grants listed in the accompanying table offers insight into the broad range of interests CNRA members reflect.

## EDUCATION GRANTS

Between 1988 and 2001, grants awarded from the Horicon Defense Fund for educational projects totaled \$17,165. CNRA always has had a strong commitment to education, believing that people need reliable information in order to make sound environmental choices.

Almost half of all education funds were given to Marsh Haven Nature Center in small grants on an annual basis. Marsh Haven began its major development phase about the same time interest from the Horicon Defense Fund was converted for general use by CNRA. A nature center bordering Horicon Marsh fits well with CNRA's long history of environmental education goals and marsh

protection. CNRA member Leonie Vrtilek shared her interest in Marsh Haven from early on, encouraging this partnership. Leonie also encouraged a \$300 grant to Barbara Harvey who provides educational programs with live raptors at Marsh Haven and area schools.

An additional third of the educational money went to prairie restorations in elementary school yards. These projects forward CNRA's goal of educating young people to be good environmental citizens now and in the future. Prairie restorations also complement CNRA's longtime support for natural roadsides, where native vegetation is promoted to preserve ecological communities. Students' hands-on experience with creating and tending prairie gardens on their school grounds

## CONSERVATION GRANTS AWARDED BY CNRA FROM THE HORIZON DEFENSE FUND: 1988-2001

EDUCATION		RESEARCH		PRESERVATION	
Barbara Harvey Raptor Rehabilitation	300	Andy Williams Insect Inventory	2,000	Baraboo Range Preservation	1,000
Carl Traeger Elem. School – Oshkosh	1,000	Brad Guhr Gratiot Savanna Study	625	Chiwaukeee Prairie	4,000
Fox Valley Wild Ones Seminar & Video	1,100	Fully Integrated Land Use Publication	250	Citizens for Clean Water Around	700
Gerald Scott Biology Scholarship	150	Gene Drecklrah Lakerfly Study	1,000	Horicon Marsh Area Coalition	3,000
Indian Hills School – Brown Deer	3,400	Horicon Marsh Water Monitoring: UWSP	1,000	Mining Impact Coalition	500
Kids for Clean Water – Wolf River	750	Horicon Marsh Wild Rice Project	210	Nashville Legal Defense Fund	600
Lorrie Otto Education Fund – Wild Ones	1,000	Int'l Crane Foundation: Crane Count*	2,500		\$9,890
Marsh Haven Nature Center—Waupun	8,265	Lake Superior Raptor Survey	1,000		
Sheldon Nature Area – Oshkosh	300	Lois Almon Fund	5,800		
Trees for Tomorrow*	200	Mississippi River Mollusk Population Study	933	*1976-1987 grants from Membership Fund:	
Winnebago Audubon Bluebird Houses	500	Paul West Prairie Burn Study	1,000	Trees for Tomorrow: \$1,400	
IWI Citizens Concerned for Cranes & Doves	100	WI Breeding Bird Atlas	500	ICF Crane Count: \$2,400	
	\$17,165	WI Herpetological Atlas Project	780		
			\$17,098		
<b>TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED: \$44,063</b>					

\*1976-1987 grants from Membership Fund:  
Trees for Tomorrow: \$1,400  
ICF Crane Count: \$2,400

keeps them in touch with the natural world and helps build intimate relationships with living things.

Over a period of three years, \$3,500 was given to Indian Hills School in Bayside to develop a 12-acre prairie and wetland in cooperation with the DNR. Lorrie Otto piloted the project; CNRA provided funds for a portion of the seeds, plants and later maintenance. Similar projects were funded at the Sheldon Nature Area adjacent to Oakwood School and at Carl Traeger Elementary School, both in Oshkosh. CNRA members Steve and Zaiga Maassen and Lisa Zeman spearheaded these projects, which served as models for other outdoor nature projects throughout the Oshkosh area.

To inspire other school districts in Wisconsin and throughout the nation, Steve Maassen and others from the Fox Valley Wild Ones produced a video promoting the development of school nature areas. CNRA contributed \$1,000 toward making the video, which features Lorrie Otto and targets teachers, parents neighbors and community groups. CNRA also contributed \$1,000 to the Lorrie Otto Education Fund, established by the Wild Ones to honor Lorrie's pioneering efforts in the natural landscaping movement. This fund offers small grants for projects promoting native vegetation.

Other educational grants were given to Kids for Clean Water, a weekend event to promote multicultural environmental awareness among

### REFLECTIONS — Steve Maassen

#### School Natural Areas

**I**N A SPEECH TO EUROPEAN settlers, Chief Seattle was quoted as urging them to: "Teach your children what we have taught our children ... that the Earth is our mother. The Earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. All things are connected, like the blood which unites one family ... Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself."

This advice is especially relevant to our generation as we begin to take notice of the real potential for ecological collapse created by global warming, ozone depletion, overpopulation, and the loss of biodiversity.

For this reason, CNRA has supported several school natural area projects: a prairie and wetland restoration around Indian Hills School in Brown Deer and prairie restorations in the Sheldon Nature Area adjacent to Oakwood Elementary School and at Traeger Elementary School in Oshkosh. Support was also given to the Wild Ones "A Tapestry of Learning" project which produced a video encouraging the creation of school natural areas. This video was awarded the prestigious Aegis award, taking

first place in the category of education/training non-commercial videos.



School natural areas provide the setting for our children to learn about the natural world directly. Applied learning in school nature areas often teaches many subjects simultaneously. Science, math, art, history, environmental education, can all be woven into the experience. Learning while doing out in the fresh air makes lessons more enjoyable and knowledge more lasting. In addition, natural areas provide a beautiful lower maintenance alternative for the unused areas of a school's property that is usually covered by expanses of lawn. They serve as an example of environmental responsibility for the children and the community. Location on the school grounds increases the student's accessibility. If future generations, aided by school natural areas, learn that they are a part rather than apart from nature, then perhaps they can live sustainably on this planet.

*Steve Maassen, an MD from Oshkosh, is the School Coordinator for the Wild Ones and has been a CNRA member since 1995.*

young people held on the Menominee Indian Reservation and related to protecting the Wolf River from the negative impacts of the proposed Crandon Mine; and for high school seminars conducted by Frank Zuern of the Winnebago Audubon Society in which 22 specially designed bluebird nesting boxes were built and information presented on bluebird preservation. CNRA also supported the Wisconsin Citizens Concerned for Cranes and Doves, an organization protesting a hunting season on mourning doves.

Donations were also made to honor two longtime CNRA members, Al Berkman and Gerald Scott. Al Berkman from Wausau was CNRA president in the early 1970s. He encouraged CNRA to fund scholarships for teachers to attend summer workshops on forestry and wetland topics conducted at Trees for Tomorrow in Eagle River. For ten years, CNRA contributed \$80 to \$150 annually to send a teacher to these workshops.

After Al's death, a donation of \$200 to Trees for Tomorrow was given in his name. Since then, CNRA has maintained a membership in Trees for Tomorrow.

Gerald Scott and his wife Gladys were active CNRA members until his death in 1991. They hosted numerous CNRA meetings at their home in Baraboo, where the principles of Aldo Leopold, John Muir and Henry David Thoreau were shared with CNRA members, fellow County Board Supervisors, other friends and numerous students from Gerald's 35 years of teaching biology. Gerald served as a vice-president of CNRA, led many field trips and arranged several annual meetings. CNRA contributed to the Gerald Scott Biology Scholarship Fund established as a memorial for him in 1991.

### **RESEARCH GRANTS**

Research grants amounted to \$17,098 during this time period. These grants generally were awarded for projects related to particular interests of CNRA or of specific CNRA members.

In addition to the annual contribution to the Lois Almon Fund, every year CNRA also contributes \$300 to the International Crane Foundation (ICF) for the sandhill crane count. This contribution first began as \$150 in 1976 when Ron Sauvey, co-founder of the ICF and soon-to-be CNRA president, asked CNRA for a small contribution to begin a statewide count of sandhill cranes. At that time sandhill cranes were almost extirpated in the state; since then the numbers have increased dramatically, so much so that the DNR is considering a Wisconsin crane hunt.

**S**everal grants relate to CNRA's interest in native vegetation: to Paul West to test the results of summertime prairie burns; to Brad Guhr to study savannas, to Andy Williams to research



Gerald and Gladys Scott. In recognition of Gerald's dedication to conservation issues, CNRA contributed to the memorial Gerald Scott Biology Scholarship Fund after his death in 1991.

the interaction of insects and spiders in prairie ecosystems, and to the state Horicon Marsh Management Committee to reestablish wild rice in demonstration areas on the Marsh. Member interest in raptors resulted in a \$500 donation to the Breeding Bird Atlas, a massive effort to document all birds that nest in the state. CNRA's donation sponsored the osprey. Another \$1,000 grant was awarded over a two-year period to conduct educational programs and spring raptor migration counts at the Great Lakes Visitor Center near Ashland on the south shore of Lake Superior. Ryan Brady, a student at Northland College,

published results of this survey in the *Passenger Pigeon*. Additional grants went to Dr. Gene Drechtrah, a UW-Oshkosh biology professor, for a lake fly study on Lake Winnebago and to Marion Havlik for a study of mollusk populations in the Mississippi River, seeking information on the endangered Higgins-eye clam.

Research grants related to specific CNRA activities were given to help publish a booklet on Fully Integrated Land Use, and to a UW-Stevens Point biology professor whose students monitored water entering and leaving Horicon Marsh under the auspices of USFWS and HMAC. Finally, in

### REFLECTIONS — Louise Coumbe

#### *Participating in ICF's Crane Count*

C NRA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE International Crane Foundation (ICF) goes back a long way. Ron Sauye was president of CNRA in the 1970s when he and George Archibald were in the beginning stages of developing the ICF—an organization to save cranes throughout the world. CNRA was among the first groups Ron asked to contribute to an annual sandhill crane count statewide. Ever since then, CNRA has supported the crane count with a yearly donation.

But I can't say I'm thinking about CNRA or ICF when I get up at 4 a.m. on a sometimes very cold April morning to participate in the annual event with Katherine Rill. It's dark when we leave Oshkosh. We travel about 12 miles to a marsh near Winneconne in Winnebago County. We get there in time to see the sun rise and hear the first sounds of cranes calling. If we're lucky, we see or hear 70 or 80 cranes; if not, even a dozen cranes in the early morning light makes the trip worthwhile. Each year, however, it seems we see an increasing

number of cranes as they return from their wintering grounds further south.

The count was begun by ICF more than 20 years ago because the number of sandhill cranes had dwindled to a precipitously few in the state. Now the cranes have increased by such numbers that the DNR is considering a crane hunt. Thoughts of a possible crane hunt make us want the count to stay low when we combine our numbers with those of other local crane counters at breakfast later in the morning. These numbers are added to other counts throughout the state. The total count is often presented at ICF's annual meeting, sometimes also the site of CNRA's annual meeting. Each time the statewide count is presented, I worry about a possible crane hunt. I love to see the cranes fly into the marsh in the spring. They are so beautiful I would hate to see them hunted.

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*Louise Coumbe, a retired teacher from Oshkosh, is CNRA's current Membership Chair.*

keeping with CNRA's long relationship with the Milwaukee Public Museum, CNRA helped fund publication of Gary Casper's *Wisconsin Herpetology Atlas*.

## PRESERVATION GRANTS

Preservation of Wisconsin's natural resources is written into CNRA's creed. So it is not unusual that several of the largest individual grants were given for preservation projects. That all of these grants were given in areas in which individual CNRA members have had a close relationship is also not surprising. All are excellent projects, in keeping with CNRA's traditions.

**F**red Ott, Lorrie Otto and Richard Barloga are strong supporters of Chiwaukee Prairie, a large natural prairie bordering Lake Michigan near the Illinois border. Once platted into lots and the site of a proposed marina, the land was rescued from these uses by a downturn in the economy and the tightening of rules for wetland protection. Because of the high quality of this prairie—it contains a wide variety of native plants, many rare and endangered—The Nature Conservancy, the DNR and a group of local friends have undertaken an effort to purchase lots as they become available. Much of the prairie is now protected. CNRA has donated a total of \$4,000 over the years, contributing \$1,000 whenever finances allow.

**C**arla and Harold Kruse were awarded Silver Acorns in part because they were the moving force behind Honey Creek and Baraboo Hills Natural Area projects. When Harold wrote a book on the history of the Baraboo Hills, CNRA had good reason to contribute \$1000 toward its

publication. Proceeds from the book go to the Baraboo Range Preservation Society.

CNRA's longstanding relationship with the Horicon Marsh was the underlying reason CNRA helped initiate and fund administrative expenses of the Horicon Marsh Area Coalition (HMAC). One of HMAC's major goals is addressing land use issues in surrounding areas to preserve the marsh's integrity. Over a six-year period, CNRA contributed \$3,500.

**G**rants totaling \$1,850 have gone to protect the Wolf River in northern Wisconsin by supporting the Mining Impact Coalition of Wisconsin, its youth-focused Kids for Clean Water, and the Town of Nashville Legal Defense Fund, all opposing the proposed Crandon Mine in the headwaters of the Wolf River. In support of this concern of current CNRA president Kira Henschel, CNRA is helping to educate the public about the potential environmental damage from mining, particularly the use of cyanide, to Wisconsin's land and water, an important preservation issue.

Kira is also a proponent of the Citizens for Clean Water Around Badger, which was awarded \$700 for educational materials to generate interest in preserving portions of land near Baraboo, used by Badger Ordinance during WW II and abandoned by the US government. More than 20 years ago CNRA first expressed concern about cleaning up that area. 

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*Katherine Rill was CNRA president from 1981 to 1984 and currently represents CNRA on the grants committee of the Lois Almon Fund*

## *CNRA and Marsh Haven*

*by Lawrence Vine*

**M**Y FIRST INTRODUCTION TO CNRA was through a chance meeting of one of its longtime members. My wife, Sandy, and I had been given permission to set up a small table one weekend in the Fond du Lac Mall, just one of many organizations doing their best to meet the general public and further their own individual causes. I remember it was Easter weekend, 1985. We woke up early to load our organization's meager supply of brochures, maps, newsletters and building plans into our station wagon, then drove the 45 miles from our home in Juneau to Fond du Lac. We welcomed the chance to tell folks more about our plans to build a modern nature center at the world-famous Horicon Marsh.

We soon discovered most shoppers were busy looking for bargains rather than opportunities to support worthwhile causes. But we did pass out quite a bit of literature and answered many questions that Sunday. With only about an hour to go on that afternoon, a friendly-looking, gray-haired woman approached our table. She spoke with an attractive European accent that I later learned was Swiss, and asked gently probing questions. She seemed intrigued by our involved, bold plans and I could tell she

whole-heartedly supported our efforts. Instead of poking holes in our dreams and pointing out the massive organizational and financial challenges that lay ahead, she seemed to admire our enthusiasm and ambition. From the very first, I felt she wanted us to overcome all odds and succeed. I knew we had met a kindred spirit in Leonie Vrtilek of Fond du Lac.

Little did I know then just how important Leonie would be to Marsh Haven's future. She had taken samples of our proposed building plans, newsletters, and membership brochures. Later that year she personally offered her financial support that continues to this day. Through our newsletters, she kept well informed of our steady progress.

After we purchased a 47-acre tract of land along Highway 49 in 1987, Leonie asked me to share our plans with CNRA. I had joined CNRA the previous year, so was pleased to receive an invitation to give a slide presentation at Lorrie Otto's. It was at this meeting I first met and spoke with many influential members of CNRA, including Lorrie Otto, Owen Gromme, and Leonie's husband, Mojmir. My slide presentation went well, and I felt strong general support for my plans to build a nature center at Horicon Marsh. Shortly after this meeting, other CNRA members became annual financial contributors to Marsh Haven.

Throughout the early years when we were developing trails, building a 30-foot-tall observation tower, digging a new waterfowl pond, and conducting nature education programs, Leonie kept CNRA members well informed on our progress. She always included a paragraph about Marsh Haven in the Horicon Marsh report she presented quarterly to the CNRA Council.

In the spring of 1990, I called Leonie to ask whether I should apply to CNRA for a building grant for Marsh Haven's bunkhouse called Dommissé Lodge. She thought CNRA would be interested in supporting our work, and she was right. We needed building materials, and CNRA offered a generous grant to get us started. Because various talented and dedicated volunteers donated their time and skills to construct the building, we were able to stretch that grant money, and make significant progress,

completing the first bunkhouse on Horicon Marsh.

The next spring, we undertook a massive building project—the construction of Marsh Haven's Main Building. When we started construction of our 8,064 square foot facility, we needed funding for so many small and large projects that I again wrote to CNRA outlining our needs. CNRA gave us an unrestricted grant, meaning we could use the funds where they were most needed. In the following years, CNRA gave us many small grants that helped purchase essential, but unglamorous items—bathroom toilets, sinks, stall dividers, shower stalls, exterior and interior doors, door knobs, and a host of smaller items. (Try asking a Foundation to fund the construction of toilet facilities!) Once again, talented volunteers completed large and small tasks on our Main Building and we stretched our funds as far as possible.



The Wetlands Exhibit at Marsh Haven. Thanks to the talents of CNRA members, Marsh Haven volunteers and the computer wizardry of CNRA member Steve Maassen, visitors simply point binoculars at any of the shore and water birds in the exhibit to hear the sounds of the marsh.

As major sections of the building were completed, we began designing and developing large exhibits and displays. One of the displays we wanted to develop was a Wetland Exhibit that depicted plant and animal life in Horicon Marsh and the importance of wetland habitats. Leonie again asked CNRA for funds to help build this exhibit, and CNRA generously responded. CNRA took a keen interest in developing this display and contributed to its design and construction. After so many years of support and encouragement for all of our endeavors, it was clear to me that CNRA fully deserved to be listed as sponsor of this important exhibit.

I'm pleased to report we constructed a colorful and informative exhibit with help from a team of CNRA members and other Marsh Haven volunteers: Jack and Holly Bartholmai of Beaver Dam, Louise Coumbe of Oshkosh, Clarence, Judy, Paul and Lori Gorter of Waupun, Don Heaster of Green Bay, Katherine and Russell Rill of Oshkosh, Jan Scalpone of Oshkosh, Jan Schultz of Watertown, Andy Stoffel of Campbellsport, Dr. Mojmir and Leonie Vrtilek of Fond du Lac, Tom and Shirley Walters of

Markesan, Janet Wissink of Pickett, and Dr. Steve and Zaiga Maassen of Oshkosh.

Throughout the years of Marsh Haven's development, we have been fortunate that so many individuals and organizations have provided funds to help us achieve our goals. CNRA was among our first donors, and over the years its support was unwavering. Its regular contributions, totaling \$8,265, were essential to help us develop trails, buildings, displays and exhibits. Its generosity has made a lasting legacy at Horicon Marsh. Tens of thousands of visitors from all 50 states and 85 foreign countries, and thousands of school kids

have enjoyed exploring Marsh Haven and learning more about history, management and wildlife of Horicon Marsh.

To me the acronym CNRA will always stand for CARING Natural Resource ACTIVISTS! 

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*Larry Vine, Founder and Director of Marsh Haven Nature Center, Inc., is a research technician in the Horicon DNR office and has been a CNRA member since 1986.*