



# Orleans County Historical Association

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1918-



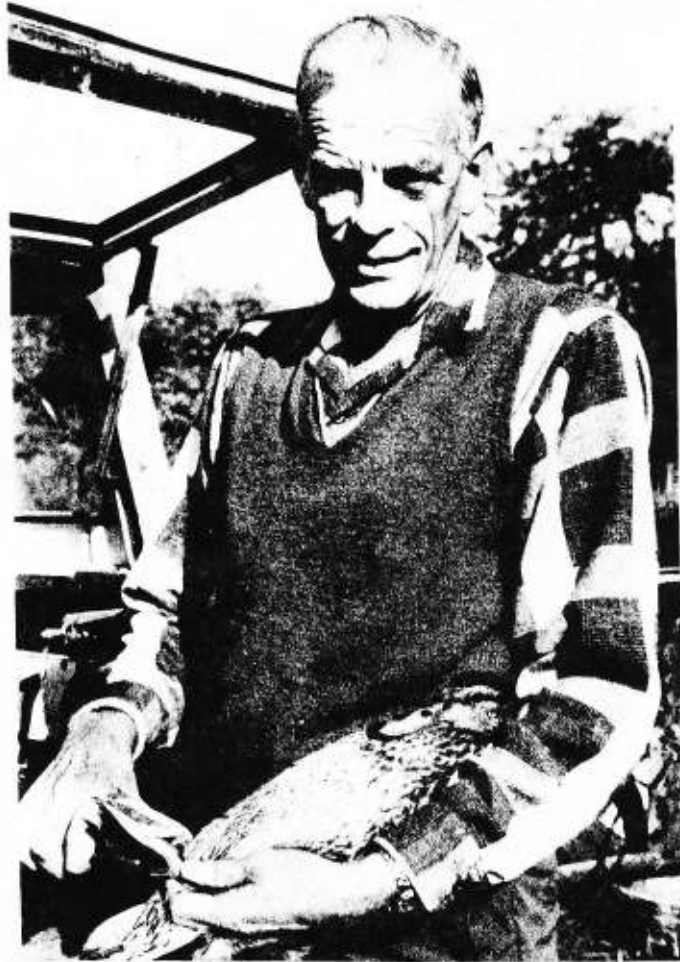
# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT INTERVIEW

Mr. Oliver Meddaugh  
11424 Harrison Road  
Medina, New York

Oliver Meddaugh was born December 13, 1918.

This interview was conducted by Don Cook of Medina, N.Y.  
All news clips and photos are courtesy of Don Cook.



Oliver D. Meddaugh



# Orleans County Historical Association

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to collect information about the historical development of Orleans County by means of tape-recorded conversations with people whose experiences reflect the county's growth.

These tapes and transcriptions will be preserved as educational resources and possible publication (all or in part).

I hereby release this tape and transcription to the Orleans County Historical Association.

Oliver D. McLaugh

Signed

April 29, 1981

Date

Understood and agreed to:

Don Cook

INTERVIEWER

April 29, 1981

Date

For the Orleans County Historical Association, April 29, 1981, Don Cook of Medina, New York is interviewing Mr. Oliver Meddaugh of 11424 Harrison Road, Medina, N.Y.

C Where and when were you born, Ollie?

M I was born in Candor, New York on December 13, 1918.

C What county is that?

M Tioga.

C In your early years is there anything that stands out in your mind, Ollie? Were you raised on a farm?

M Yes. My father died when I was two years old and he had been a farmer. Then my mother remarried and my step-father was not a farmer but we lived in the country and I worked at a neighboring farm.

C I thought so because you were always kind of interested in the horses there and hitching up the team! You probably did that when you were younger?

M All my early work was on a farm.

C With a team?

M More with the teams than with a tractor.

C Where did you go to school, Ollie?

M I went to school in Newark Valley; that's a few miles from Candor.

C Did they have school buses back then?

M I walked to school the first year .. it was a country school. All eight grades were in the same one room. That District was one of the earliest to centralize, and I went to town to school in the second year. That would have been in the mid-twenties.

C After you got out of school did you still work at the farm for awhile?

M Yes. Of course I worked summertime while I was going to school. Then I worked on farms when I got out of school.

C Were you working with the Depratment when you got married?  
( Department of Environmental Conservation = DEC).

- M No.
- C You were still farmin' it?
- M Right!
- C Your family .. you've got three children. Would you tell me about them?
- M A daughter, Donna Struble in Albion; a son, Dan. He is in Phoenix, Arizona.
- C Donna lives in Barre?
- M Right! Then there is Sally Pask (Gailey Pask III, or "Skip") and she lives right next door.
- C What is your wife's maiden name?
- M That was Smith, Celia Smith.
- C Celia has worked for Doctor Clayton Thomas of Medina for quite a few years. Do you know how many years, Ollie?
- M Twenty years.
- C You have six grandchildren?
- M Right! Each has a boy and a girl. ....
- C Were you always interested in the out-doors, Ollie?
- M Oh yes.
- C Let's lead into your career. You started your career with the D.E.C. (Department of Environmental Conservation) as a trapper. Obviously you picked this up on your own.
- M I was always interested in the out-of-doors, and I had done some trapping. They needed trappers for the rabies program.
- C Did they advertise for this? How did you happen to get involved?
- M A fellow who knew me, knew I had trapped. I left the farm because of a health problem: I had asthma. I went to Colorado for awhile but it didn't make any difference. I came home on vacation and this fellow came to see me and to see if I was interested in trapping again.
- C Was this fellow from the department?
- M Yes. Warren McKeon.
- C Would he have been from the Southern Tier Region somewhere?
- M At that time he headed up the Rabies Control Program for the entire state. He later became Regional Supervisor down along the Hudson.

C When would this have been? Do you remember about when you started?

M April 1952.

C When did you first start trapping?

M The Rabies Program moved around to wherever there was a rabies outbreak. The theory was that you could thin the fox population to prevent the spread of rabies, and to control it better. They tried to establish lines of fox scarcity, thinking that maybe this would keep the rabies from crossing .. but it didn't. I worked at that for a little over a year.

C Would this be down near your home, or would this be all over?

M All over the Southern Tier. You never knew just where you were going to be. Warren McKeon came to work in Rochester. He used to be Wildlife Research Investigator, and Bob Perry was the Manager. They had a vacancy for a Nuisance Control Trapper, and Warren suggested that they could get me to fill it in. There isn't much more interesting work than rabies trapping, so I accepted and came to work in this part of the country.

C Was that when you came to Oak Orchard?

M I spent quite a lot of time at Oak Orchard (Wildlife Management Area).

C You weren't specifically stationed at that place then?

M No, I serviced damage complaints throughout the region, but whenever I had any free time I spent it at Oak Orchard to do whatever had to be done. ... Francis King was there. Jerry Cummings came ... let's see; I come there in '53 and Jerry Cummings come shortly after I did. He was freshly out of school, out of California.

C Did King retire? Is that why Cummings come in?

M No, he went up in the north-eastern part of the state; up to Chazy, near Lake Champlain.

C When did you come into the Oak Orchard Area completely? Would this be right about within a year or so?

M When Jerry Cummings took over the Caretaker's job, after Francis King left -- well, Jerry was a biologist -- he passed the biologist's exam and became a biologist while I was there. Well, Jerry went into the Fish and Wildlife Service at Monte-



zuma. He had the Assistant Manager's job at Montezuma and he left; then I took over his duties at Oak Orchard.

C Would Bob Perry have been the Supervisor of Region One at that time? Was he your boss? Was he the General Supervisor?

M Yes, he was when I came and he was for several years after.

C Basically, when did you take over Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area?

M About 1959 or '60.

C But you had been here since '53, did you say?

M Yes, in the region. We phased out more of the Nuisance work, as much as we could. Then we had another fellow that worked the eastern part of the region, so that gave me more time to work with the enforcement.

C Almost full time then?

M Just about. I still serviced damage complaints.

C This was while you were still in Region One, right? The Lake Plains counties: Niagara County to Monroe?

M 'Till Wayne County, it used to be.

C Then, of course, in 1970 they changed it over to Region Eight and instead of along the lakeshore, it went from Pennsylvania close to the Lake Ontario shoreline. Right?

M Niagara and Erie County to Wyoming County was Region Nine.

C Right! So you don't have those counties anymore.

You worked with a lot of guys there. Can you come up with some of the highlights of all this? ... What did Bob Perry say? They started buying this right about 1940 or '41, and then the war came along and held them up? So you must have been in this whole ball of wax with this wildlife area.

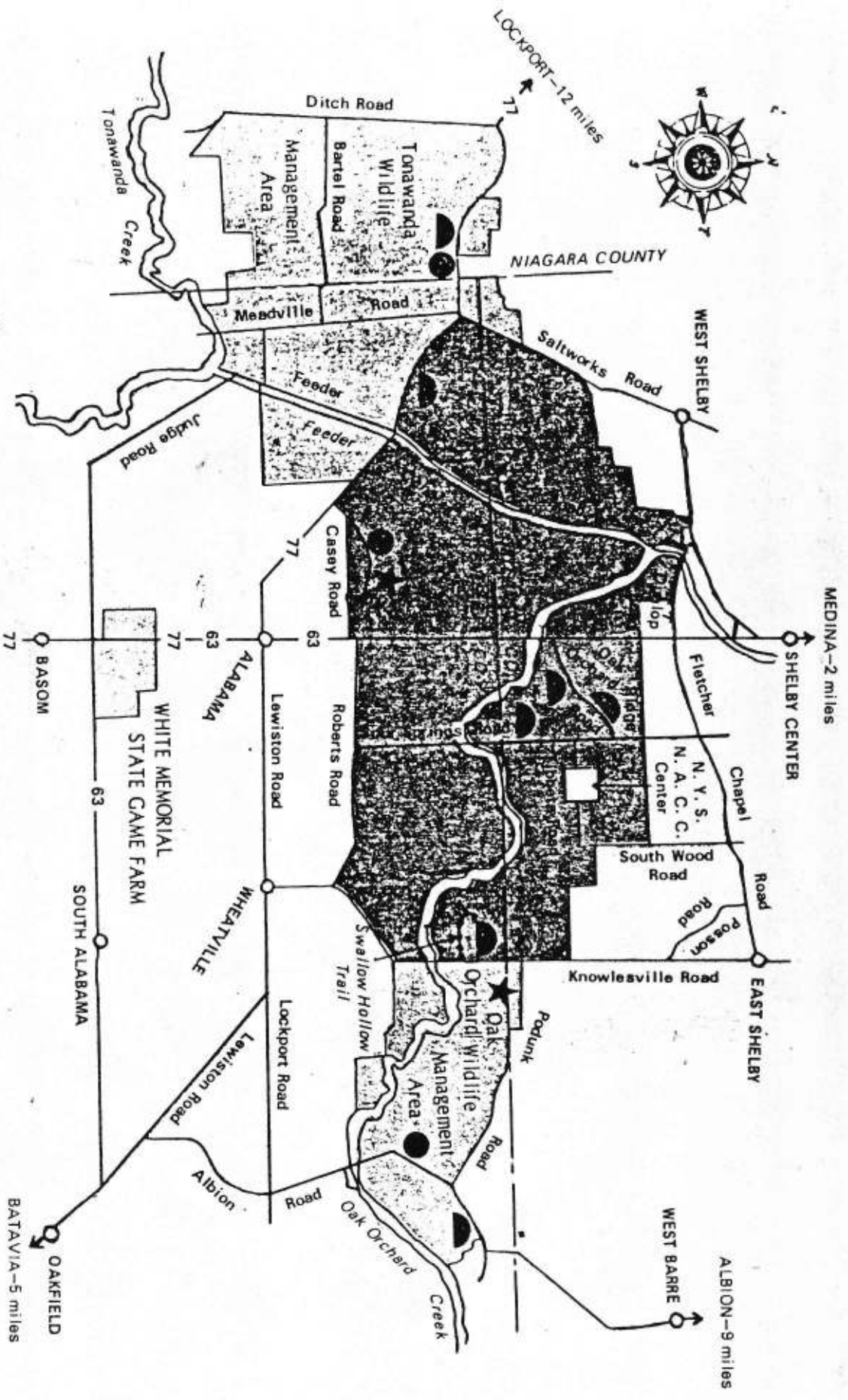
M The acquisition was nearly completed when I came.. the Oak Orchard Area. The major part was completed.

C Then in 1958 the Fish and Wildlife bought Iroquois' Refuge. Do you remember when they got Tonawanda (Wildlife Management Area).






- M They started acquisitioning the Tonawanda area and the Iroquois at about the same time. In fact three or four of them was bought at about the same time. About in '57 the state got the south side .. there south of route #77 and the Iroquois .. they called it Oak Orchard National Wildlife Reguge then.
- C Until 1964.
- M There was some confusion with the name of state areas, and the name was changed to Iroquois.
- C Now you have got about 20,000 acres right from one end to the other, or pretty close?
- M Close to it. There's about 2,500 acres on the Oak Orchard area and about 6,700, I believe, on the Tonawanda area now.
- C And of course the Iroquois Refuge is 10,800 acres or maybe a little more. That's not just water-fowl, that's upland habitat too. You can grow some corn for your pheasants and your deer and leave it out in the fields. Buckwheat and millet for your waterfowls.
- M It's basically a waterfowl area but of course it's upland and we can take advantage of the upland to produce upland grains if we can.
- C You've worked with a lot of men here, Ollie. I've written down a few of them because I can't remember from one minute to the next .. but anybody special here that you'd like to mention?
- M Oh, probably Bob Perry had more influence on establishment and development of these wetland areas than anybody that's been connected with it.
- C You have worked with Elmer Wagner and Fred Slater and Larry Myers and Danny Carroll, and of course you have had some good guys like Bill Rebovich. Do you ever hear from him anymore? Bill pulled stakes and went to Colorado, didn't he?
- M He's in the southwestern corner of Colorado.
- C I know how you enjoyed working with Bill and Dan when you were doing .. you did a lot of major or impoundment work, and all that, in about 1975, was it, over in Tonawanda?
- M Yes, there was a lot of construction and Bill and Dan were a



# Wetlands for Wildlife



## LEGEND

-  Parking
-  Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge
-  N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation
-  Offices
-  Hunt Permit Station



great team to work with.

C Great guys, right! I remember when you were doing it. I couldn't believe how much you fellows accomplished there in such a short time. I'm sure that the people that are interested in wildlife are going to be, you know, impressed.

M They are a couple of dedicated, hardworking individuals.

C Right! They've done a lot of work there.

M Worked hard and a lot of long hours.

C It's paying off because you've got some real prime waterfowl habitat over there.

Here's another thing I want to ask you now, Ollie. What's the big change you've seen in waterfowl? You've been here since 1953; that's almost 30 years. Now you must have seen a little difference in your migration?

M One of the biggest changes in waterfowl has been the establishment of local nesting of Canada Geese.

C In other words, you used to only have a few and now you have a lot?

M Well, there weren't any until the late 1950s or 1960. I understand that before that some Canada Geese nested along Lake Ontario in some of those marshes. But there hasn't been any in a good many years. ... A good water spot is supposed to build the population. I remember as a kid, Woodduck were real scarce and Mallards were scarce. Now Mallards are our most common nester. The Woodduck have made a big comeback.

C Of course a lot of our Woodduck is due to you and the biologists when they set up the nesting boxes to help encourage and protect them when they are on the nest.

M It seemed to be one of the factors to provide the Woodduck with safe nesting sites.

C I can remember as a kid .. it was 1941 before they would even let you shoot a "Woodie". You could shoot one. Now I guess they've got it up to two. So you figure they're coming back and I think it's good sound wildlife management that's brought them back.

M Before, they were rare.

# Wetlands for Wildlife

## *Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area*

The "Oak Orchard Swamp" is an historic wetland area northwest of Batavia, New York. Spring flooding by the Oak Orchard Creek provided temporary water areas used by migratory ducks and geese long before the white man settled the area. Concerned government agencies began acquiring the area in the mid-1940's in order to prevent exploitation and the ultimate loss of its value to wildlife.

Development of the areas has been aimed toward improving the habitat to benefit breeding and migrating waterfowl. Flood waters that formerly receded are now held in large shallow impoundments by low dikes. Small impoundments and numerous potholes have also been created throughout the entire area. Certain "paddies" are drained annually, tilled and planted to buckwheat or millet. After the grain ripens, the area is reflooded to provide fine dining for the waterfowl. Many upland areas are maintained as grassland or cropland to provide nesting cover and food. Shrub and tree plantings in large open areas help create interspersed habitat and provide additional food and cover for upland wildlife. Particularly on the state-owned areas, a large part of the development and operational cost has been met by money from sportsmen through such programs as the Pittman-Robertson Act (an 11% tax on sporting arms and ammunition).

Tens of thousands of waterfowl brought north each year by lengthening days and mild spring weather stop at the area before continuing their migration. Numerous parking areas and overlooks are provided where the birds can be viewed resting and feeding. Canada geese, mallards, black ducks, pintails, widgeon, blue and green-winged teal, wood ducks, shovelers, gadwalls, ring-necked ducks and whistling swans are among the many species of waterfowl commonly seen. Some of these birds, including Canada geese, mallards, blacks, blue-winged teal and woodies remain on the area to nest and produce their young.

Such birds as thrushes, warblers, shore birds and marsh waders are also abundant. Great-blue herons, green herons and American bitterns are common along the marsh edges. Birds of prey such as the red-tailed hawk and the kestrel are often seen soaring overhead, watching for rodents. Marsh hawks, ospreys and bald eagles are occasionally observed. Ring-necked pheasants, ruffed grouse and woodcock can be seen in the upland areas. Common mammals of the area include muskrats, beaver, mink, raccoons, white-tailed deer, opossums, red and gray foxes, squirrels, rabbits and woodchucks.

The abundant wildlife resources on the area are here for everyone. Whether you fish, hunt, trap, bird watch, hike or take photographs, come and share in the enjoyment.

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New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
P. O. Box 57  
Avon, New York 14414

Bureau of Sport Fisheries & Wildlife  
RFD 1  
Basom, New York 14013

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- C Now, about the numbers of geese: were there big flocks when you first came here? Was there the big migration, or would you say that's built up over the years?
- M Well, it was big but it's continued to grow. ... The biologists claim that there are more Canada Geese in the flyway right now than there has ever been.
- C ... What about the swans and other species .. Whistling Swans .. ? You had a fabulous show of Whistling Swans this spring in your area.
- M We counted 524 at one time, on one pond!
- C That's something you've never seen in the past!
- M I haven't seen it. What it was in the older days, I have no idea. Of course they don't nest here.
- C Well no, but they stop off here and you hold them for a couple of weeks while they're waiting for the weather to break, up north. It's still nice for the people in the area to drive out and see. Now Ollie, anything else? Ducks?
- M The Black Duck has decreased, the Woodduck has increased.
- C Do you have any idea why?
- M Personally I don't know. There are several theories: pesticides were blamed for awhile. Probably the competition from your mallards, crossing with the mallards, is some of it. They're very similar. The Black Duck seems to be more wary. It doesn't adjust to civilization as well as the mallard.
- C I can remember when Heinz was here (food processing plant); every year they would have carrots.. Oh you know, they made up the vegetables for baby food .. and a lot of the carrot .. I suppose when they scraped the outer edge of the carrot, it would get into Oak Orchard Creek and float down (stream). And I can remember hunting Black Ducks on Oak Orchard Creek when they would get out and just black the sky. This was right after the second world war, and into the '50s. Now you go down there during the season and you're lucky if you see a flock of ten or twenty! You know, the Black Ducks are just not here. I don't know if they are somewhere else or not.





**CHECKIN' HONKERS**--Some of the 107 Canada geese biologists rounded up on Oak Orchard are shown here. Lower left photo

shows Oliver Meddaugh banding, and Thomas "Dan" Carroll, right, displaying a band. Both of these are goslings.-(J-R Photos)

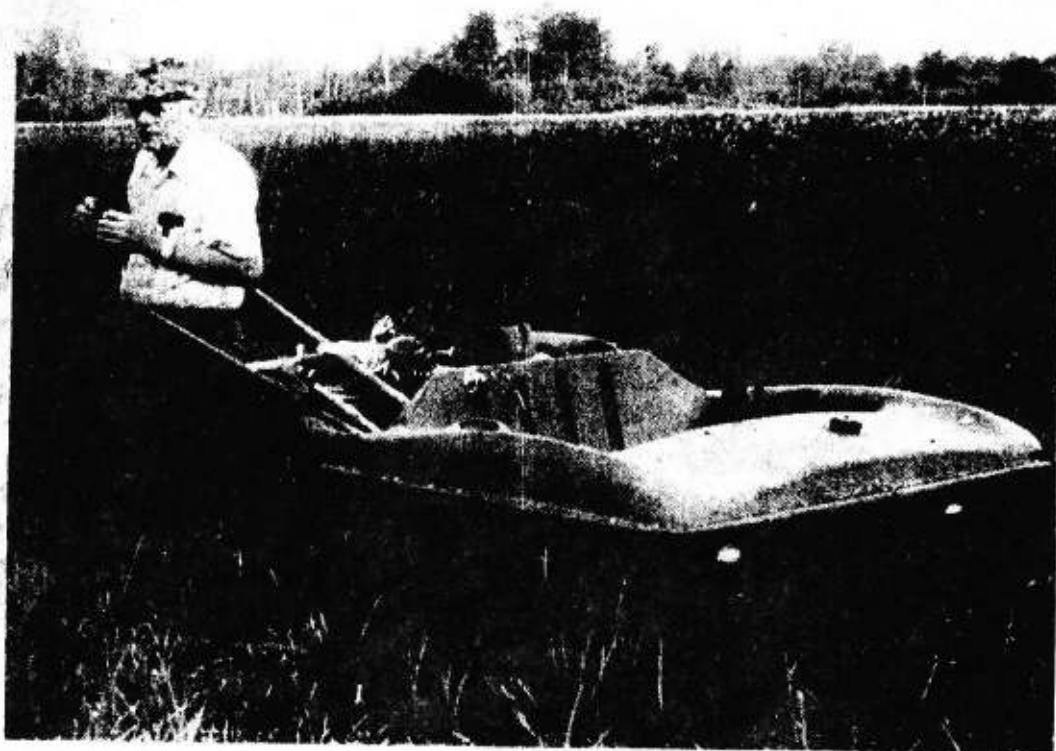




- M I guess they've had serious problems wherever they nest.
- C Am I right in saying this .. now like with a Canada Goose can nest almost in your backyard, where something like a Black Duck or a Canvas<sup>^</sup>Back, they've got to be way off and away because they are awful touchy and spooky!
- M I'm not familiar with a Canvas<sup>^</sup>Back, they nest up north. But a Black Duck is like that. They are much more scarey than the Mallards. It doesn't adapt as well.
- C I read somewhere that this is one of the problems: they're figuring on the Canvas<sup>^</sup>Backs and the Blacks because of man's encroachment. They just can't be near people, they've got to be away.

Anything else on the waterfowl here, Ollie? You have done a lot of duck banding. I know we've gone through some this in the past where you've got birds that were banded here one day, and shot zillions of miles away a couple of weeks later. Anything special that you can recall or you want to speak about on that?

- M Well, the Blue-wing Teal go farther south than any of our other waterfowl. We get quite a few that go to Cuba and to South and Central America. Some of the Mallards tend to go west and north-west after they are banded. ... Some of the Teal go north of here to Ontario after we've banded here.
- C ... It's tough to figure out why, isn't it.
- M Before the general migration, it seems some of the birds get uneasy and they take and go in various directions before they end up in the south. Of course, some going south will nest in other areas too, but the majority come back to the same area. ... They tend to return to the area where they hatched. Especially the females. The males are apt to wander. The males from other areas will come back to the females.
- C Did you say that after three years, geese mate for life?
- M Well, generally. They switch mates sometimes and if something happens to one, they remate quite readily.
- C Ducks will usually remate each year, won't they? Where geese will more or less mate for life?
- M Yes. Once the female has started to incubate, the male ducks generally join other males and molt as a group. But the geese stay together throughout the year. The male stands watch all



## Botulism Affects Birds

By DON COOK

The watchword is out to all local waterfowl biologists.

Of all the diseases afflicting waterfowl, none has caused more massive or visible losses than botulism. This past week several ducks, a few Canada geese and four shore birds were found suffering from this disease in the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area near here.

Oliver Meddaugh of the New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, and the person with primary responsibility of the State's pair of wildlife management areas, Oak Orchard and Tonawanda, first noticed a problem late last Tuesday afternoon while making a routine check of his balliwick. He spotted a strange acting mallard duck.



TARGET AREA -- Oliver Meddaugh of the Department of Environmental Conservation

acting mallard ducks.

Returning to the exact site the following morning (Windmill Marsh sector of Oak Orchard) he found, as he worded it, what he was "afraid of."

Dead ducks!!!

In searching the area with fellow workers Dan Carroll and Bill Rebovich, the trio totaled 21 dead mallard ducks, a Canada goose and four shorebirds. They were a least sandpiper; lesser yellow legs; pectoral sandpiper and a killdeer. Three live Canadas were picked up, with two surviving.

The birds were immediately transferred to the department's lab in Delmar. They were flown out of the Rochester airport that very evening.

The following day (Thursday) Meddaugh and his co-workers again searched the same region and found seven more dead mallards along with two geese still alive that they transferred to another area.

To keep waterfowl from the area, and more of them from being contaminated, a "Zon gun" was placed nearby. This weapon fires every few minutes to scare the fowl away much as orchard farmers use to keep birds from feeding on their crops. Also reflectors and fluttering flags were placed in the same vicinity.

No more fowl were found Friday, and Saturday the workers came across a woodduck that they felt they might have missed earlier in the week.

The results were phoned to Meddaugh from Ward Stone, a pathologist in charge of the Delmar lab, and suspicions were confirmed. The birds were suffering from botulism.

Reflooding of a gently sloping, moist shoreline exposed by receding water levels is commonly followed by botulism losses. A possible explanation for this apparent cause-and-effect relationship is that the moist mud between water's edge and dry soil (the fringe area) serves as an incubator. Here, free of the diluting and heat-insulating effects of the water, *Clostridium botulinum* can grow and produce toxin in the entrapped organic materials. When subsequent reflooding covers such a fringe area with water and makes it attractive to waterfowl, toxin-containing materials are consumed when they feed.

Appreciable numbers of waterfowl ill from the botulism can recover if given an opportunity. They need to be

Department of Environmental Conservation  
glasses the Windmill Marsh area of Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area for diseased ducks. He uses an all-terrain vehicle to check the vicinity for waterfowl. Lower photo is the Zon-gun used to scare waterfowl from the trouble spot. Originally carbide, it has been converted to natural gas.

(J-R Photos)

8 1/2

picked up and placed in pens that shield them from the sun, wind and predators and provide them with fresh water. Treatment depends upon the stage of the disease. Biologist John Morse of the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge said today there were apparently no sectors on the federal sanctuary with this problem. The Iroquois Refuge is adjacent to the Oak Orchard area.

In an interesting note, Dr. Stone discovered lead poisoning in four of the mallards. Meddaugh pointed out there has

been no hunting for three decades in the Windmill Marsh sector. The birds could have digested the pellets from other areas, however, and flown into Windmill Marsh, he said.

Region 8 Supervisor Edward Holmes of the Avon office, complimented Meddaugh on his quick action and said this kept the loss of waterfowl at a minimum.

"We're checking the marsh daily," Meddaugh emphasized. "Hopefully the disease has run its course but we're making sure."

during the incubation period and stays with the families through the year. In fact, family groups stay together right up until next nesting season.

- C In other words, a lot of these geese you will see out here in the summertime are what you'd call immature geese. Right? They look like adults but they are not because they are just kind of building all summer long.
- M Right! The local geese that you see now out in the field and around, are yearlings and two year olds that have not yet mated or nested. The mated pairs will be right close to the nest site.
- C It's kind of early yet (April 29th) but you said you saw a hatch today over in Oak Orchard; a brood hatched out of geese?
- M Yes, I saw a brood on Windmill Marsh today. I checked the nest site Monday morning that had hatched but I didn't see the goslings. They'd already left the area. That was on a small pot-hole. They'd apparently moved to the marsh already.
- C That would be April 27th, and that's gotta be sitting on some cold days!!
- M Well, those birds started to incubate the last few days of March.
- C What is the incubation period?
- M Twenty-eight to thirty days, depending on the weather.
- C So here they are. They're hatched out and some of the migrants still haven't left yet!
- M Right! By the 10th of May they will be gone. We'll still have quite a few the 1st of May, and then by the 10th they are gone.
- C Do you think we've had more geese this year than any other year, or is that kind of hard to say?
- M Oh that's hard to say. ... I saw as many on Goose Pond yesterday morning as I've seen any time this year, which surprised me. But that was quite early in the morning. Apparently they spend a lot of time out in the fields. They stay out in the fields throughout the day, and the marshes don't have near the geese on that ... they're in the area and in the daytime .. it's misleading. There are a lot more geese here than we see by checking the marshes in the middle of the day. They just come in for the night and stay out in the fields through the day a lot.
- C A lot are sort of hanging along the lakeshore too?
- M Yes.



C Got a lot of them down there too.

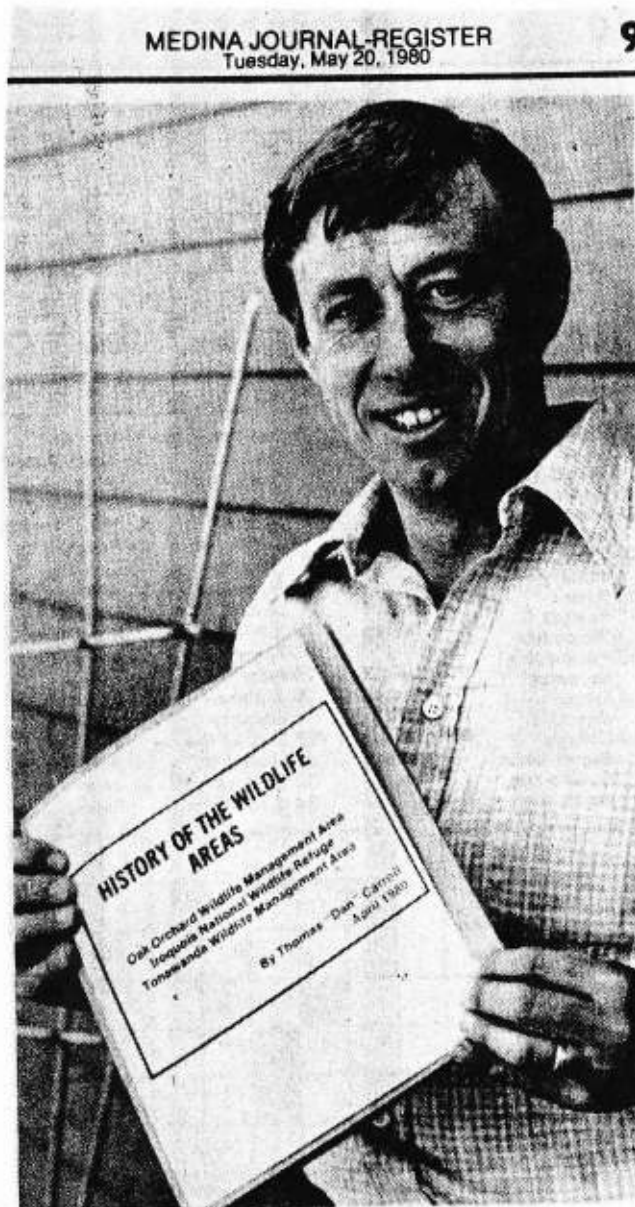
M I haven't been down that way this year, but I know that earlier they had a lot of geese down along the lake.

C When you were working at Braddock's Bay (north of Rochester) last year on assignment, didn't you say you came back and you saw geese almost in every field and in some fields that you never expected to see?

M All along the Parkway, those barrow pits; they're quite attractive and those big open fields along the Parkway had a lot of geese.

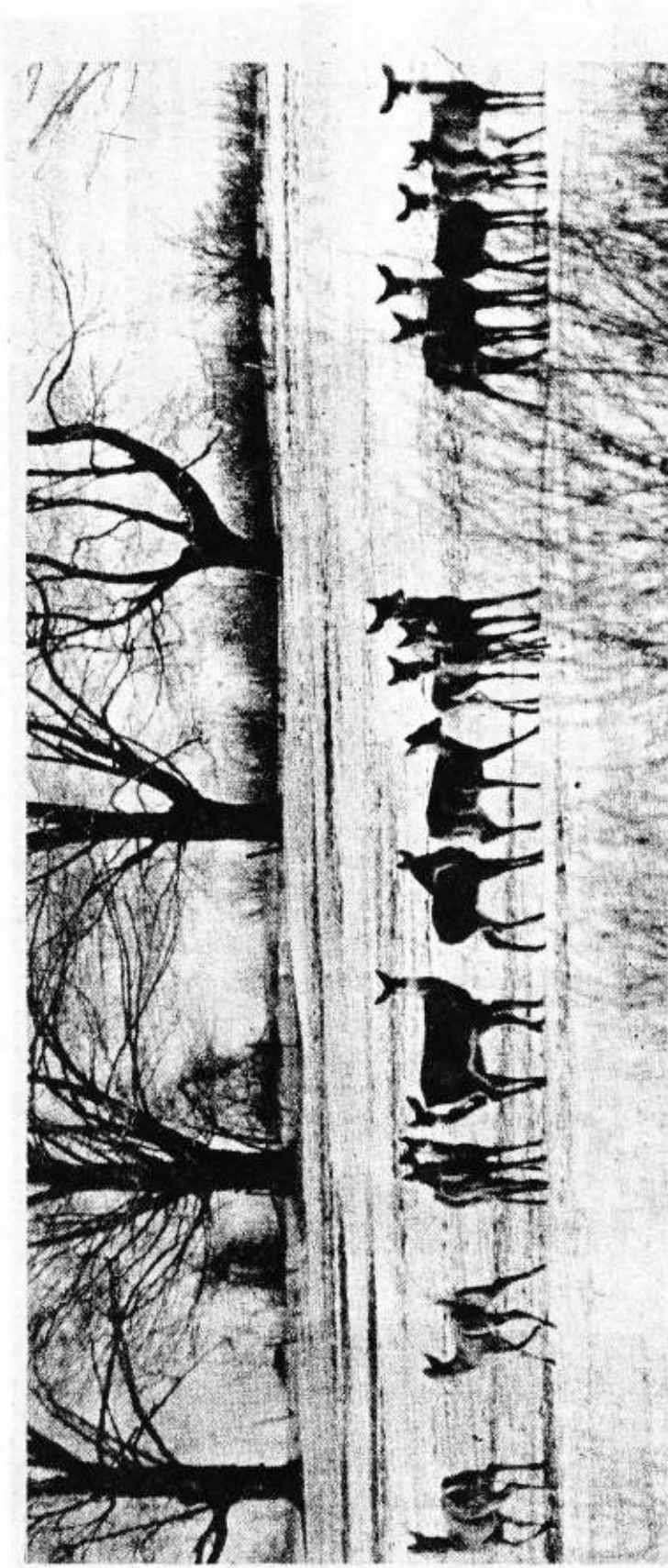
C That's great! ... Thomas "Dan" Carroll did quite a history on the development of all this wildlife area for anybody that wants to follow up on this. (See photo from J-R newspaper, this page).

(end of side one of taped interview)



**FUTURE REFERENCE--**Thomas "Dan" Carroll, biologist with the Region 8 Dept. of Environmental Conservation, has just completed a written history of the three wildlife areas south of Medina. A copy has been placed in Lee-Whedon Library in Medina and Swan Library in Albion. Eventually the historic pamphlet will be placed in all libraries in Orleans County. **-(J-R Photo)**





THE WHITETAILS--Biologists with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation are most concerned with the growing deer problem in this area. As prolific breeding animals in the wild, and basically only hunters to keep their numbers in check, the whitetails have multiplied where they are wintering over in areas that they

have never been before. DEC officials are receiving a significant increase of crop damage complaints. The above herd shown here is part of the large group currently staying in the sector of Gillette Road and Eagle Harbor-Oakfield Road in the Town of Barre.

-(J-R Photo)

MARCH 2, 1982

(Don Cook)

- C People come by in the spring of the year and they see a lot of geese, but they also see a lot of deer. Now we can remember when there was no deer and I'm sure that back in your youth, Ollie, you didn't see any deer either.
- M No, there were no deer when I first can remember. I can very plainly remember the first deer that I ever saw about in 1930.
- C We started in seeing them around here in the mid-thirties. Now you've got a lot of deer in the spring of the year when it is in the late February, when you were having your thaw breakup over in Oak Orchard.
- M There has been, traditionally, historically, a dense cedar swamp on the south side of the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area. This has been a deer yard since probably before the deer disappeared. In the pioneer days it was a wintering area, and then when the deer became re-established they started to use the area again. That was because of winter cover: protection and food. That's White Cedar and one of their favorite winter foods. In this part of the state they really don't need to yard because of severe weather or for food. It is an inherited trait that they seem to follow. They come from around the countryside.
- C Mother Nature's instinct?
- M Apparently. It does offer the most protection from the weather of any cover in the surrounding countryside.
- C You had a project over there .. I think they started before you came .. the Snowshoe Rabbit.
- M There were some Snowshoes trapped from the Adirondacks and released in the Cedar Swamp in 1949. I'm not sure of the number. They did quite well. By 1960, they were well established. The population for that area was about as high as you'd expect in a good Cedar Swamp in the Adirondacks. But that big deer herd that wintered in the area tended to destroy the winter cover. They ate all the Cedar that the deer could reach. I think that probably that was the main reason that the Snowshoe Rabbits disappeared: competition for food cover. There isn't much of the surrounding country that's good hare habitat and with the disappearance of the White Cedar, the Snowshoes apparently



All 21 of the immature Bald Eagles raised this summer at the New York State Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area have been released and a few of the birds are still hanging out in the vicinity enjoying a free meal.

A pair of the young eagles have met with disaster, however. One eagle was electrocuted near the Town of Greece, Monroe County, when he became tangled with high power lines. The other bird was shot and killed by an irate farmer in Ontario, Canada. (Birds of prey are not protected in Canada).

With all the interest of the Bald Eagles in this sector, friend Craig Ross of North Gravel Road, Medina, brought in a book that deals with the eagle here in an earlier time.

For those who may not know, Ross had dealt in antiques and autographed books in the area for many years. Some time ago he purchased

the contents in the barn of Mrs. Virginia Lattin Morrison, formerly of the Gaines-Basin Road, and now residing in Florida.

Among the findings was a book written, it is believed, by Dr. Frank H. Lattin.

The book deals with birds of Western New York and was written in longhand by Dr. Lattin. The handwriting is excellent and can be read with ease. A 20-page booklet on birds of Western New York was written by Ernest H. Short and published by Dr. Lattin in the 1890s with a second edition published in 1896. The book we speak of above was possibly written shortly after the turn of the century.

In writing of the Bald Eagle, we quote:

"Rare resident, individuals being occasionally taken along the lake. Formerly it was more plentiful and bred within the county at secluded points along the lake shore.

Back in the early 60s (1860s) there was a nest at a point very close to the Orleans-Niagara County line, in a tree near the shore. This nest was 'as large as a bushel basket' and so prominent that the Canadian smuggling-boats which made a practice of landing at some two or three different points in that vicinity used the nest as a mark by which to steer their crafts to a landing-place.

"This interesting bit of information I gain through Mr. H. P. Hood of County Line, N.Y., now deceased, who, in those days held a position as customs officer, it being his duty to patrol the shore each night for a distance of three or four miles near that point to guard against these Canadian smugglers.

"Evidence at hand would indicate also that a pair of eagles continued to nest in that vicinity (or in the neighborhood of the Thirty Mile Point lighthouse) in Niagara County, a mile or two west of the line, up until as recently as about 1890.

"Also along in the 80s there was reported to be a nest in a certain piece of woods located on the lake shore between the mouths of the Oak Orchard and Johnson's Creeks in the town of Carlton, the birds being seen frequently in that locality.

"Today the Bald Eagle is more seldom seen, the encroachments of man having driven it from these immediate parts; but that it does still breed in some isolated spot somewhere not far removed, is evidenced by the fact that young eagles are ever now and then being taken. As mature birds are never observed, the matter seems explainable, and their nesting-place is certainly a mystery. Perhaps it may be in the deep wilderness of the Tonawanda Swamp.

"White-headed Eagle is another and more strictly correct appellation for the bird.

"Fish forms the principle article of diet of the Bald Eagle, and particularly so in this section where the large lake area affects an abundance of this kind of food."

Other writings in this book are too numerous to write about here but we would like to touch on a couple of them.

Hunters and nature buffs should know the Ringneck Pheasant is an introduced species from China.

In this book it is written the first of these birds introduced in Orleans County were liberated in April 1899 by the Mitchell Preserve Association. Twenty-nine birds were given their liberty on the grounds of the preserve, south of Holley.

It goes on to state individual birds had been observed in the county at different times. Some pheasants were liberated at Rochester in the summer of 1896, and it was felt some of these birds wandered into Orleans County.

The pheasant was protected at this time and a penalty of \$25 was charged if anyone was found with one of these birds.

The other has to deal with the Canada goose which has been a migrant, probably before man arrived here.

The book states that very rarely does the goose breed here but in May 1900 a nest was found by Frank Thurston of Medina in the Tonawanda Swamp.

Apparently the Canada goose migrated through here in good numbers but nothing like the hundred thousands that peak here today in the spring.

Craig Ross said the book would be given to the Swan Library, Albion.

J-R 10-9-181



THE "EARLY" BIRDS--Craig Ross, right, leafs through a hand-written book on the birds of Western New York with J-R outdoor writer Don Cook. The book, believed to have been written by Dr. Frank H. Lattin in the early 1900s, was purchased from Dr. Lattin's niece. Story below. -(J-R Photo)



followed. By 1965, they were just about gone. That's when I saw the last one. Took a picture of it, right?!

You have spent some time fox hunting, cat hunting, and coon hunting. That's a prime hobby of yours, I know.

M Most anything that you can hunt with the hounds.

C Yes, you love your hounds.. that's good. You have owned quite a few dogs, Ollie.

M Some pretty good ones, and a few duds!

C I guess any honest dog owner would say the same. What did you say.. "Don't brag about your dog until after he's been dead for ten years!"

M 'Till he is safely dead!

C You have spent some time cat hunting in the Adirondacks?

M Yes, in the '50s and early '60s I tried to spend as much time as I could in the Adirondacks.

C Was this for Bob-cats?

M Bob-cats. This was before the snow-mobile, and before the high fur prices. We had a big blow-down in November of '49 that blew down acres and acres of soft woods, mostly in the Adirondacks. This is a wind that came out of the north-east. That blow-down and the change in the cover, and the new growth came up through the old blow-downs and created a lot of rabbit and other small wildlife habitat that didn't exist in the solid stand of mature trees. As a result of the small wildlife increase, the bob-cat increased as well. Fur price was very low so there was no incentive for trappers to trap bob-cat and they increased quite steadily through the '50s. After deer season and before beaver season .. at that time the beaver season was just a spring season .. we had the whole Adirondack Mountains pretty much to ourselves. There were no cross-country skiers, and no snow-mobiles. But the ridiculously high fur prices and the snow-mobile spoiled that pretty much.

C Pretty well put the cat out of business, do you think?

M Yes, the cat hunting.

C Well, you did it more or less for the enjoyment with the hounds, didn't you?

M Oh yes!

- C The same with the fox and the coon .. you did more of that just to work with the dogs more than anything didn't you?
- M I hunted fox just as much and enjoyed it just as much. Maybe more, when there was no market for the fox hides.
- C Right, just to go out and hear the dogs.
- M I think we had some better runs when the fox weren't persecuted as much as they are now. They were bolder and you get the best runs when you run the same fox time and time again.
- C You shoot at him, sometimes once, and if you miss him he's gone .. he's taking the next train to California!
- M Right!
- The beaver is another animal that disappeared shortly after the area was settled; probably before the deer even.
- C In western New York, do you think?
- M I think so.
- C The whole New York State, yeah.
- M I think the beaver trappers came through even before the earliest settlers, or right at the same time. Of course, they took them anyway they could. They tore out the dams and shot the beaver. There just weren't any (beaver) anyplace. There are very few any place; but they were re-established.
- C Do you remember seeing your first beaver, Ollie?
- M I can remember my first one; that was about in 1927 in Tompkins County near Ithaca. How it got there and where it came from, I don't know.
- C Was it a live one?
- M Yes. It had a dam. But it was several years before I saw another one. By 1950 they were throughout most of the state. In the late '50s and early '60s, a lot of our nuisance wildlife damage complaints were from beaver.
- C You don't get much muskrat complaint, do you?
- M Not much.
- C They are practical on your refuge anyway; they keep the cat-tails down to some extent?
- M Yes. Flooding is a problem you have with beaver. You get some complaints from cutting, but most of the material they cut is



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# YOUR J-R SPORTSMAN'S COLUMN

By Don Cook



**Oliver Meddaugh**

Ever since the outset of this column it has been stressed that your scribe is far from an expert in general outdoor reporting. The attempt here is to report with both feet on the ground, but as so often happens in any endeavor, he occasionally end up with a foot in our mouth.

So where do we come up with the final "right" answer? Well, like our good

waterfowl and wetland habitat.

Even though not a college graduate, Meddaugh has attained a pinnacle of success in his career that is rarely attained by the college educated man. He in my estimation is one of a vanishing breed!

This statement is not intended as a criticism of college education, but merely

the fall," Meddaugh pointed out. "This way we know they are locally raised birds and not the flight ducks that pass through our vicinity."

To me this is one of the more interesting phases of my friend's outdoor activities. Trapping stations are set up, baited, and visited twice a day. Each fowl taken by this method is logged for species, sex and whether mature or immature birds. They are tagged with a numbered aluminum leg band and released uninjured. Records of all birds are then sent to the federal bird banding laboratory in Laurel, Md.

Some of the records Ollie showed us were most interesting.

In 1954 he and his co-workers banded an all-time high of 3,200 ducks. And that same year a mallard drake was trapped 28 times. Apparently he enjoyed a free hand out.

A mallard drake banded Nov. 13, 1954 was shot by a hunter 11 years later on Dec. 21, 1965 near Brooksville, Fla.

A pair of male blue-wing teals were both banded Sept. 28, 1965 and just eight days later they were both bagged at Nigg, British Guiana, on Oct. 6, 1965.

And a black duck drake banded at Oak Orchard on Nov. 7, 1954 was dropped 13 years later (Dec. 17, 1967) near Lyndonville.

When Oliver Meddaugh took over the reins of Oak Orchard, the state was just in the process of acquiring the Tonawanda Area as a companion sanctuary. Russ Cheney was the biologist who laid out the management plan along with Meddaugh.

Construction work on the 6,300 acre Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area was accomplished by bits and pieces until this past summer. In 1972 the Bond Issue provided a substantial sum of money for wetlands restoration that was finally authorized. Six pieces of heavy equipment were brought in and needless to say, an enormous amount of work was performed toward making the Tonawanda Area an ideal habitat for many species of wildlife, both hunted and non hunted.

friend Oliver Meddaugh we spend more long green than we care to admit buying books on the great outdoors, ecology, etc, to come up with the answer.

More often though we just ask Ollie!

In case you're wondering, he is the New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation principal fish and wildlife technician who has primary responsibility for the state's two wildlife management areas, Oak Orchard and Tonawanda, situated between the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. The total complex covers about 20,000 acres of prime

to establish my admiration for Meddaugh.

Born and raised in Candor, New York, Meddaugh accepted a job in April 1952 as a professional trapper.

In July 1953 the N.Y. Conservation Dept. brought Ollie into this sector as a nuisance trapper. His primary work schedule was to handle wildlife damage complaints. The beaver he trapped and transferred to more logical locations, the fox he trapped and removed from the area, and the deer were scared off the complaining farmers' crops.

A couple of years later the trapping duties were turned over to Al Reigle and Meddaugh became associated with the Oak Orchard Area.

During Meddaugh's early years in this vicinity, Francis King was caretaker of the 2,500 acre Oak Orchard Game Management Area. When King was transferred by the Department in 1955, Gerald Cummings took over the reins until 1959, when he in turn left to accept a position with the U.S. Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife at the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge in central New York State.

It was at this point Meddaugh was elevated to the position that he enjoys today.

His day to day work schedule in those days included keeping records and data such as the amount of waterfowl taken each season and furbearers trapped on the area; construction of dikes, pot holes, paddie fields; building the permit station, the field house and the tool shed, and other maintenance work.

In reminiscing, Meddaugh chuckled as he told of a cannon net that he built along with Cummings, to live-trap Canada geese on Oak Orchard to band. Today, with a local flock of the big honkers nesting and raising their broods in this sector, it is much simpler to achieve these results.

"We fence off an area and drive the geese across the water into this enclosure," he explained. "This is usually around the first of July. The adult geese are molting and without their flight feathers, and their young haven't grown theirs as yet."

Another time consuming chore is banding of ducks.

"We try to band them late in the summer and real early in

Other activities in managing the two areas includes raising crops that are never harvested, but left standing for wildlife to feed on. This helps cut down complaints of crop damage from farmers bordering the area. Meddaugh explains:

From June through September sanctioned retriever field trials are held week ends on the Oak Orchard Area, and require his presence.

Woodduck nesting boxes are built and placed strategically throughout the two areas. Each winter these are checked to learn what boxes were utilized; if the hatch was successful or not; and cleaned out for the following spring use.

There are many other duties he performs that he hedges to mention. A prime example is during the whitetail deer season he spends much time examining deer at one of the many deer check stations his department operates over south each fall. Biologically this is important for department personnel to keep abreast of the deer situation in Western New York.

Quiet, mild-mannered and congenial, Oliver Meddaugh is the type of outdoorsman who enjoys a "postman's holiday". Probably he could be best classified as a hound man, a fellow who appreciates a good, hard working dog. Though he takes delight in all aspects of outdoor activities, he really "digs" the hounds, whether they are freeing a raccoon, running the fox, or chasing a cat (and by cat we don't mean the common house variety).

An avid and enthusiastic photographer, our friend has accumulated a wealth of outstanding and exceptional colored slides. Something that is enjoyed by me immensely while we chat with him next to his fireplace in his home.

He lives one country block from me, just off Rt. 63, on the Harrison Road, with his wife Celia. Their son Dan resides in Arizona. One daughter, Mrs. Leslie (Donna) Struble lives in Barre and their other daughter, Mrs. Gailey (Sally) Pask III lives just down the road from them. The Meddaughs have three grandchildren.

In concluding this article on my good friend, words of admiration are searched for, but maybe it's best to just close by saying he is one "helluva guy!!!!"

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waste material .. willow and stuff like that. You have some damage to dikes from muskrat; they burrow.

C Now you are talking about your water control. You like to keep water control, right, for your area?

M Yes.

C Do you allow any beaver trapping over in your area?

M Yes. We don't have any special regulations. We go along with the state regulations.

C But they don't trap them all, so you still have a few beaver.

M They never get all of them.

C Good, so we have a few to look at!

M And a few to migrate up in the muckland ..where they get into trouble.

C That's where they live on onions, and the muck farmers there seem to be really upset when the water starts backing up.

M That land is so flat that it doesn't take much of a beaver dam to flood quite a lot of area.

C What do you do? Do you just go in and trap the beaver and move him out?

M If it is someplace we can't tolerate the beaver dam until trapping season, we will live-trap it and move it. But we try to stall it until the season and have it trapped by private trappers through the regular open season.

C Now the muskrats .. anything on them outstanding there?...

That's something I wanted to ask you!! Apparently somebody said that Martin Schmitt brought in some Black Muskrats. Did you ever see any traits of that in your area? Do you think that trait wore itself back into the natural breeding?

M Apparently. ... He went to New Jersey and got those 'rats, and it might be a result of the environment as much as the strain of 'rats. They are from the salt marshes.

C That would darken their pigments?

M It seems that they have that dark strain; it tends to be down in that area. Those Black 'rats disappeared, either from crossing with the local 'rats or as a result of the environment. I'm not sure. There was an introduction in New Jersey of those Black 'rats, but it was not very successful.

C Were they all gone by the time you got here, or did you see

some of them?

- M I never saw one. They were supposed to have been a bigger and darker 'rat. The local 'rats are some of the best in the fur trade. In this general area, in the Montezuma area in Wayne County, and up around the eastern end of Lake Ontario .. furnish the best muskrats in the entire nation.
- C And the price is ridiculous!!
- M It is now. Eight dollars and fifty cents, or better.
- C Back when you were a kid, what would you get for a 'rat? A quarter ?
- M I can remember getting fifty or sixty cents. Skunks, at that time, were worth three and four dollars for a good skunk. Now it is just about reversed. There is not much demand for skunk, but the muskrats are high.
- C Not much for beaver, is there?
- M No,
- C Fox and 'coon are quite high?
- M The highest they have ever been in the last three or four years..
- C There's not a big demand for mink either, is there?
- M No.
- C I can remember my Dad saying that when he was a kid you used to get twenty dollars for a mink! Well, twenty dollars back in 1910 was about two weeks wages, or more.
- M Several times of what you'd get for a muskrat. Now a good muskrat will bring as much as you can get for a small female mink.
- C There is something else that you and I were in on, Ollie, and I think this is great: the wild turkeys. Do you want to give us a little run-down on wild turkeys?
- M The state started a game farm program with turkeys. They raised turkeys on the game farm to release them into the wild. I am not sure of the years, but I think that was in the '50s that they started that.
- C When I was talking to Ray Krouse at the pheasant farm, he said that it was in the mid fifties; and wasn't it down near Sherburne?
- M They had a pheasant farm at Sherburne... I think that's the



oldest game farm in the state. One of the older ones anyway. I don't have any idea how many birds they raised, or anything. I know that they released these game farm turkeys in several locations throughout the state: the Southern Tier and the Catskill area, with no success. They disappeared in every area that they were released. Then they started to live-trap and transfer wild turkeys that had migrated in from Pennsylvania .. there along the New York - Pennsylvania line. That was an immediate success! By three years ago, most of the area that we had considered prime turkey habitat had a turkey population established. Then we started to release in some of the secondary areas, and the Oak Orchard Swamp was one of those. So we brought, I believe, a total of 21 turkeys to the area from Steuben County, and the results have been quite satisfying.

C This was Auguts 1977, wasn't it, the first release .. the initial release with three or four birds?

M Right.

C I got a picture of you and Bill Rebovich, and Danny Carroll and was it Dana Robinson releasing them in Oak Orchard.

M Then that was followed up through the fall and winter. Last year we had reports of about thirty broods. That includes the release of over north of (route) #104 in another part of the county.

C The first release was in January 1980 in the Town of Gaines. Do you know how many turkeys you released in the Town of Gaines - in that big stretch of woods right along (route) #104? Was it about sixteen, or something like that?

M I think it was sixteen.

C Now those birds are part of these that you are speaking of; thirty broods?

M It includes about four broods from over north.

C And 26, you feel, from this area here?

M Well, all the way from the Town of Royalton in Niagara County to east of Barre.

C That's great! When you stop and figure back in 1935 you would come through here and you didn't have any of this, now you've got deer and fox and turkey. I think that the D.E.C. has to be complimented on what you people have done for, not just the





**HISTORIC MOMENT**--Wild turkeys were released this noon on the state's Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area, first such a release in this county. Shown holding the wary gobblers are Dept. of Environmental Conservation personnel William Rebovich, Dana Robinson and Oliver Meddaugh, left to right. Biologist Dan Carrol, also of the DEC,

banded the birds with a wing tag. Assisting was biologist John Morse of the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. More birds, trapped and transferred from Southern Tier Counties will be released in the sanctuary area that straddles Orleans and Genesee Counties.

-(J-R Photo)



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**ANOTHER FIRST--**Yesterday wild turkeys were released in the Town of Gaines by New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation personnel and Orleans County sports-

men. From left to right; Frank Shawver, John Strickland, Oliver Meddaugh and T. Dan Carroll.

(J-R Photo)

# This is Gobbler Country

By DON COOK

One of the most fascinating creatures to sportsmen of New York State is the wild turkey.

The big birds disappeared from New York State somewhere in the middle 1800s. When early homesteaders cleared the land in the Southern Tier counties of Western New York, they found it just about impossible to farm. The result was much of this land was abandoned around the turn of the century, and up to the late 1920's and 30's.

Naturally it revered back to the wilderness it once was.

Wild turkeys, as well as the whitetail deer and fox, spread from the neighboring state of Pennsylvania where much land has always been wild. They moved back into this Southern Tier sector.

Biologists from the New York State (then the Conservation Dept.) Dept. of Environmental Conservation at first attempted to raise and stock turkeys as they do the Chinese Ringneck Pheasant. They had little

success.

When the biologists decided on the trapping of wild birds and transferring them to different areas, they found the key to a most successful method of spreading the wary gobblers throughout much of New York State.

Yesterday at noon the latest trap and transfer of the wild turkey took place here in Orleans County.

Thomas "Dan" Carroll and Oliver Meddaugh of the DEC, along with John Strickland, Frank Shawver and Roger Rush, all member of the Black North Rod and Gun Club, released six hen turkeys and one tom (male). Also assisting was CO Richard Tuohey.

The birds were released in the long wooded sector that runs parallel to the Ridge Road, on the north side, in the Town of Gaines. Both Carroll and Meddaugh stated there would be more turkeys liberated in this vicinity.

"This is another historic moment for sportsmen of Orleans County," Strickland

noted.

Although this is a "first," this is not the first stocking of the bronze gobblers in Orleans County both Meddaugh and Carroll emphasized.

The original trap and transfer of wild turkeys here was on Aug. 25, 1977 on the state owned Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area, when a pair of toms and a hen was released.

Later releases at Oak Orchard was three hens on Sept. 16; a pair of adult hens and four juvenile hens, an adult tom and three young toms on Oct. 20; a pair of adult hens, two juvenile hens and a juvenile tom on Jan. 15, 1978.

Wild turkeys have been reported sighted in several parts of the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management area since, as have birds on the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge and the Tonawanda Wildlife Area.

The birds released yesterday are all identified with an orange florescent tag on the wing. They were trapped in Steuben County.

hunters, but for the general public. There are a lot of people that go out there .. bird watchers. ... Does William Rockefeller still come down here?

M No, he's deceased. Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller used to come out each spring and spend quite some time in the area.

C Harold Mitchell is 91 years old and he's still going. He was out here, I saw by the paper, not too long ago, birdwatching.

The Retriever Trials; do you want to say anything about these, Ollie? You spent enough time and effort working with those and a guy that likes dogs; why, you must have seen some good Labs.

M The Western New York Retriever Club started trials on the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area. These are A.K.C. (American Kennel Club) Licensed Trials, and I believe the first was in 1954. They have had one each September since then. They have A.K.C. Sanctioned Trials the 2nd Sunday of each month through the summer. In 1960 we had the National Golden Retriever Trials, and we also had the National Amateur Retriever Trials in, I believe, it was the same year.

C Now you are kind of in the twilight of your career, so to speak. Maybe I shouldn't put it that way. I know that you are kind of excited about the latest program you have got going. Do you want to say anything at all about that?

M The Eagle Program?

C Yes. I think this is just great!

M We expect to get 21 eagles. These are Bald Eagles that will be taken from nests in Alaska and hacked on the Oak Orchard Area. We have poles set for the hacking tower over south of the over-look that over-looks Goose Pond. It will be on the high ground between Goose Pond and Oxbow Marsh. We expect to get these young eagles about the last of July.

C About how old; about two weeks old?

M I'm not sure.

C I know that someone is going to ask what does "hacking" mean?

## 1982—THE YEAR OF THE EAGLE

On June 20, 1782, the Continental Congress adopted the American bald eagle as our nation's symbol. Over the past two hundred years, the spirit of the bald eagle has infused itself into the American way of life. The bald eagle has come to symbolize strength, courage, determination, and beauty, and it is precisely these qualities that have come to characterize the greatness of our nation.

### AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

During the first century as our nation's symbol the eagle fared well. However, during the late 1800's, as our nation expanded westward, the clearing of the land drastically reduced the nesting and roosting habitat of the eagle. Other activities also contributed to the eagle's decline. By 1973, the number of American bald eagles was precariously low, and our nation's symbol was placed on the endangered species list.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of federal and state agencies, conservation organizations, and private industries, the American bald eagle is beginning to repopulate our skies. Over 1,000 nesting pairs can be found in the lower 48 states. In New York, the Department of Environmental Conservation recently completed the first of two five-year bald eagle management programs. The sec-

ond plan, already in progress, calls for the release of 129 bald eagles through the end of 1985.

### YEAR OF THE EAGLE RESOLUTION

In recognition of these efforts, and in anticipation of the work that still lies ahead, I introduced in Congress the American Bald Eagle Resolution, designating 1982 as the "Year of the American Bald Eagle," and calling on federal and state agencies, conservation organizations, and private industry to work together to focus attention on the plight of the eagle and the variety of management programs that are in place to aid our nation's living symbol.

The resolution passed the Congress and was signed into law by President Reagan on December 29, 1981. The Presidential Proclamation aptly noted that "on June 20, 1782, the bald eagle became our Nation's symbol and national bird. As we approach the bicentennial anniversary of that event, we have an excellent opportunity to pause and reflect upon the importance of the bald eagle . . . On this occasion, let us renew our commitment and dedication to the conservation of our natural heritage as symbolized by the bald eagle."



To commemorate Congressional passage of Congressman LaFalce's resolution designating 1982 as the "Year of the American Bald Eagle", officials of the National Wildlife Federation recently brought a bald eagle to Capitol Hill.



- M These will be hand raised birds. They will be taken out of the nests where there are two or three young birds in the nest. Quite often there is competition between the birds, especially if there are three. Usually not more than two survive and sometimes only one. Eagles, like several of the hawks and owls, start to incubate as soon as they lay an egg, and that one egg hatches before the other two. So the bird that hatches first has the advantage. If the food supply is limited, he gets what is available and sometimes he even eats the others'. So taking these birds is not going to have much effect on the Alaskan population because they have a good population anyway.
- C So the term "hacking" is more or less what you refer to as hand raised?
- M They'll be hand fed.
- C You'll get the fish and feed them?
- M They will depend on Carp primarily from the Oak Orchard Creek and marshes. We have, I'm sure, an adequate supply of those. Somebody will be in attendance 24 hours a day to observe and care for those young eagles.
- C In the evening will you have a t.v. camera or something like that there?
- M They will have a t.v. monitor in what we call the Field House, the area we use as a headquarters for field trials and some other gatherings. There will also be a monitor at the overlook so the public can get a close-up view of the proceedings over there at the hacking tower. I don't know how much of the time that will be available to the public, but there are plans to have t.v. at the parking area.
- C That's good! We have already got some eagles in here thanks to the program that they have had at Springwater and at Montezuma.
- M ... That old female bird at Hemlock Lake site mated with one of the young birds that were hacked at Montezuma, and then two of those birds hacked at Montezuma nested last year at Perch River Wildlife Management Area, north of Watertown. And they are back there incubating again this year. That Hemlock nest was the only known Bald Eagle nest in the state until birds started nesting in Watertown last year. So three of the



**CONSERVATIONIST HONORED**--Oliver Meddaugh, principal fish and wildlife technician at the Oak Orchard and Tonawanda Wildlife Managements areas, third from left, displays the plaque that was presented to him for a quarter century work in conservation. Taking part in the presentation

are, from left, Charles Owen, Medina Conservation Club president, Joe Prescott, Orleans County Federation of Sportsman's Clubs president and chairman of the Medina Conservation Club's annual banquet, Meddaugh, and Don Cook, J-R outdoor writer.

-(J-R Photos)

# Medina Conservation Club Honors Area Outdoorsmen

By DON GOODWIN

Members and friends of the Medina Conservation Club gathered at the Bates Road clubhouse Saturday for an annual banquet and to honor individuals who have devoted much of their lives to the field of conservation.

Oliver Meddaugh, principal fish and wildlife technician who has primary responsibilities at the Oak Orchard and Tonawanda Wildlife Management area, was presented a plaque for his work in conservation over the past 25 years.

Don Cook, Journal-Register outdoor writer, noted in presenting the award to Meddaugh, "He is a dedicated professional who for many years has worked in the field for our

benefit. While most of us are up to our knees in conservation, our recipient is head over heels in conservation."

The veteran wildlife officer was deeply moved by the honor and accepted the engraved plaque with humility. The award is inscribed: "...Oliver Meddaugh, the Sportsman's Friend, who for the past quarter century has devoted an outstanding career to wildlife conservation in this area, a token of appreciation from the Medina Conservation Club." A quiet man, Meddaugh has performed his duties with little fanfare.

Honored with a Club Life Membership was Stephen Champlin Sr., who, as Club President Charles Owen noted, "has devoted a great deal of time and effort to making the Medina Conservation Club and its allied activities a success."

Leon Furling, chairman of the club's archery division, presented the "Big Buck Trophy" to archer Dave Bentley who bagged an eight-point buck during the past bow season.

The evening was spiced with fellowship, good food and some enlightening words from the two guest speakers who addressed the 100 or so in attendance.

Rick Sojda, a field representative with the N.Y. State Sea Grant Advisory Service, explained his organization's primary functions and offered some encouraging words on salmon fishing in Lake Ontario.

Sojda noted that Sea Grant deals solely with the Ontario shoreline in Orleans County and he at present is gathering information and material to present to the Department of Environmental Conservation relative to what can be done to preserve and improve the Ontario coastal zone. He said that when his study is complete it will indicate just how much impact the salmon fishing will have on the area and what should be done to promote the sport in regard to boating and

fishing facilities.

The controversial deer hunt at the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey that took place last fall was recounted by a man who was there, Berlin Heck, Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge assistant manager.

Heck told of the vast exposure the hunt received from the national media and of the opposition presented by various organizations. He also noted that the hunt was the most practical method to thin the deer herd which, in the eyes of wildlife officials, had outgrown its habitat.

Program chairman for the annual banquet was Joe Prescott who was assisted by Don Cook.

Following dinner and the presentations, the "New Country Sounds" took the stage and an evening of dancing was enjoyed.

four birds that are nesting now are as a result of the "hacking program" in the Montezuma. We have high hopes for these that will be hacked here in the Oak Orchard Area.

C And basically they will come back and raise their families pretty much in the area, the general area?

M Somewhere in the general area, we expect.

C Good! Hopefully we can, in a couple or three years, maybe see quite a few eagles flying around.

M We have had reports of two or three this spring and that's normal to see an eagle or two through the summer, but not at all common.

C You worked at a deer check-station every fall on the first two Saturdays of deer season and Thanksgiving. Is there anything you have ever seen there that is kind of outstanding.. outside of seeing a lot of big, beautiful bucks come through that I wished I could have shot? You never hunted deer did you?

M No.

C You are a hound man.

M I'm not a deer hunter.

C But you must have seen some nice bucks come through?

M We've seen some nice deer.

C The deer here in New York is in good shape.

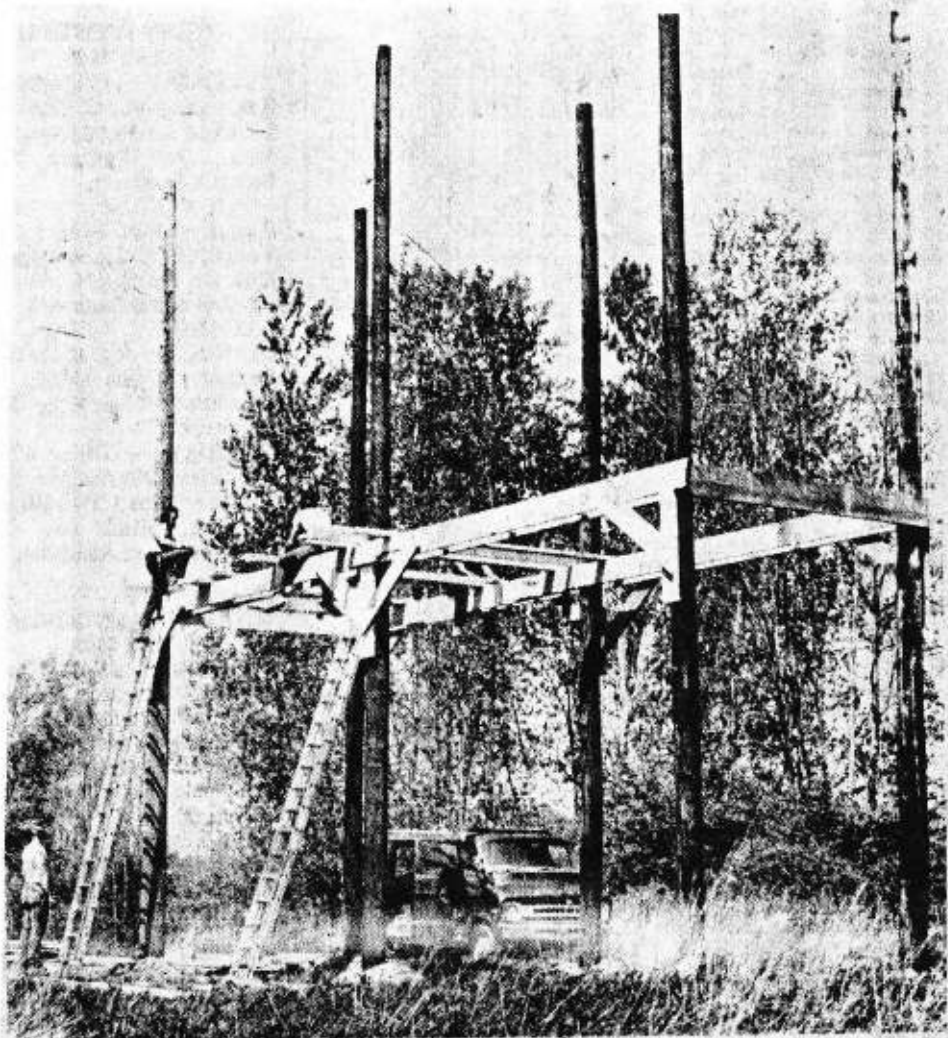
M Deer are in excellent condition and I think one of the best managed programs in the state probably have been the management of deer herd. It took quite awhile to get adjusted and to have something to solve management problems and satisfy most of the people in the state. But the program they have now works quite well.

C That's good. You have to have your deer either sex-ratioed, or what do they call them? Doe-days, in the olden times, to kind of keep the herd under control. Farmers who are loosing crops are all upset if they get too thick.

M Yes, deer are very prolific. They don't have many natural enemies. They don't seem to have much of a disease or parasite problem, especially when they are kept under control and kept in good condition. So they reproduce quite rapidly. It is necessary to take does quite regularly to keep the population under control.



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**A DIFFERENT HIGH RISE--**Members of the Dept. of Environmental Conservation Endangered Species Unit are busy constructing a two-tier structure to raise Bald Eagles on the State's Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area. Mike Allen is on the ground, left, and on the platform, Chuck Hackford, Peter Nye and Allen Peterson, left to right. Lower photo shows, left to right, Mike Allen and Peter Nye of the Unit, and Oliver Meddaugh of the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area. -(J-R Photos)



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## **J-R Sportsman's Column** by DON COOK

For the past three days members of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation have been busy constructing the platform for hacking Bald Eagles on the Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area.

Peter Nye and Mike Allen of the Endangered Species Unit are currently being assisted by Chuck Hackford and Allen Peterson, as well as Oliver Meddaugh, of the Oak Orchard staff.

Hacking is the picking up of immature eagles from nests where biologists feel all the young might not survive, and bringing a few of them to another site.

On the Oak Orchard Area the DEC plans call for 21 eagles to be raised and released this year.

Based upon the dramatic success achieved during the first five years of the hacking program, a second five-year program is currently under way.

"The young eagles will be brought into this area about the first week in July," pointed out Mike Allen of the DEC Endangered Unit.

Project leader Peter Nye emphasized the Oak Orchard sector was chosen as a hacking site because of the abundance of fish, the preferred prey of eagles, and the "cleanliness" of them.

Fish caught earlier this spring from the Oak Orchard area were tested and after examination, were found to be clean of pesticides.

Both Nye and Allen explained the structure they are building is patterned after the successful prototype used since 1976 at the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge.

The structure will be a two-tier series of four platform cages, for a total of eight release compartments.

The eagles will be picked up and transported from Alaska, where they are in abundance and not an endangered species as they are in the "lower 48" states.

One of the major reasons for selecting the Oak Orchard site is its juxtaposition with the other large wildlife areas here. The Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge and DEC's Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area together comprise 20,000 acres of prime habitat. This is over double the area that is available at Montezuma Refuge.

Both Nye and Allen are very optimistic the program will succeed here, as it did at Montezuma, and the five-year plan calls for a hacking of 129 birds.

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Setting up a cannon that will hurl a huge net to trap wild geese on the ground for banding. Gerald Cummings, left, and Oliver Meddaugh.



Net, launched by a homemade cannon, descends on wild geese at Oak Orchard to hold the birds for banding. It does not injure them. New York State Conservation Department photos by David G. Allen.

Oliver Meddaugh of Medina, N.Y. was interviewed by  
Don Cook of Medina.

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All newspaper clippings and photos are courtesy of  
Don Cook.