

## **A Look Back ... John Gottschalk**

John Gottschalk began fishing as a boy in Indiana, rowing the boat while his grandfather trawled for pike. He never thought of fishing as a career. But by the time he was 25, he was superintendent of fisheries in Indiana. He began working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1945 in Montana, coming to Washington a few years later to lead the program that returned the excise tax on sport fishing tackle as matching grants to the states. In 1957, Gottschalk became the first chief of the Division of Sport Fisheries.

Gottschalk, who died in 1999, used to tell the story of becoming director of the Service in 1964, revealing the simplicity of federal hiring then. Interior Secretary Stewart Udall asked former director Ira Gabrielson and the head of the Sport Fishing Institute whom they would recommend for the job. Both said Gottschalk. He was hired and served as director until 1970.

There was a constant battle for funds for conservation during the Vietnam War years. Gottschalk recalled being told two years in a row to close 10 hatcheries and 10 refuges – but “Congress would not let us close any of these facilities ... they just didn’t give us any money.”

Gottschalk is credited with initiating the first formal endangered species program, several innovative waterfowl management concepts and the search for a lead shot substitute. He played an important role in establishing Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey, one of the country’s first urban refuges. The Refuge System added more than 500,000 acres of habitat during his tenure.

Gottschalk received multiple awards, including the Distinguished Service Award from the Department of the Interior, and was a life member of the American Fisheries Society, The Wildlife Society, the Whooping Crane Conservation Association and the Izaak Walton League.

Gottschalk took greatest pride, however, in his contribution to pesticide research and the resulting ban on DDT in 1972. “The only thing I want my grandchildren to remember about me is that I was the director when the work was done at Patuxent [Wildlife Research Center]. I was the guy that fought in the Congress ... led the charge to get the money for this work.”

### **CAPTION:**

John Gottschalk (1912-1999) had a lifelong love of fishing. He was U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service director from 1964-70. (Courtesy of Gottschalk family)