

## **Oral History Cover Sheet**

**Name: Art Hawkins**

**Date of Interview: February 1999**

**Location of Interview: ??**

**Interviewer: Mark Madison**

**Approximate years worked for Fish & Wildlife Service: 30+**

**Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held:**

**Most Important Projects:** grouse survey in New York State; breeding surveys; Flyways

**Colleagues and Mentors:** Aldo Leopold, Emmeline Moore (NY State Conservation Department); Dr. Frison (Illinois Natural History Survey); Frank Bellrose; Al Hochbaum

**Most Important Issues:** breeding surveys; Flyways; Pilot Biologist Program

**Brief Summary of Interview:** school; going to work for Leopold; getting an interest in wildlife and wildlife management; early hunting/fishing and taxidermy; parents; job with game association; working with Frank Bellrose; Illinois Natural History Survey; Army Veterinary Service – Camp Grant, Illinois; service in Texas, stationed in Amarillo developing mild sheds throughout Texas/New Mexico/etc.; going to Canada – Big Duck Factory; working with [Gene Howe], newspaper publisher (?) in Texas on importing Hungarian Partridges, trapping ducks/banding geese.

Oral history interview, in February 1999, with Art Hawkins. Interviewed by Mark Madison, with some additional comments by Betty Hawkins.

*AH* -- [Indecipherable] Game management, there was no such thing as game management then. But there was outdoor [indecipherable – lots of background noise] was available. You had some really good teachers there -- in ichthyology, herpetology, and ornithology, and mammalogy. And probably, at that time, was probably about the best school in the country for that type of biology. And then, I worked for the state of New York on the... in the grouse survey. And they had a major grouse study that went over... lasted about 15 years or more. Ended up in a big book - about that big. At the time, that was the major grouse study. And Stoddard was the doing the same sort of thing down in Georgia on quail, at the same time. And so those were the two biggies at that time -- was the grouse and the quail. And a little bit latter, White in Michigan, started to do the same thing for pheasants; and [Perney ?] with waterfowl. And so, that was just, kind of the beginning, of all this... these early, major studies.

*MM* -- So, that would have been what time, late 20s early 30s? Or later than that?

*AH* -- Early 30s.

*MM* -- Early 30s. Okay. Okay.

*AH* -- I went to Cornell in '31. I graduated in '34. And then went back to work on my masters in fisheries. And I got one semester in on that, and then I got this offer to go to Wisconsin.

*MM* -- Go to Wisconsin. Who'd you get the offer for Wisconsin from?

*AH* -- Well, that was by far the luckiest thing I that ever happened to me. At that time, I may have heard of Leopold, but I didn't know anything about him. He didn't know anything about me, of course, but he needed somebody to work on the quail eruption, which was going on at the time. And Dr. Allen, at Cornell, was had been working with ruff grouse. And he was kind of the outstanding ornithology teacher in the country, at that time, and so Leopold wrote to him, to see if he had any students available. And well, there were two of us that were interested, and one was the [indecipherable] his PhD, and he had an offer from Audubon, to work on the ivory billed woodpecker. And so, he had his choice. He would have first choice. And he took that job.

*MM* -- Okay.

*AH* -- That left the other one open.

*MM* -- Open for you.

*AH* -- And then, at that point, we corresponded back and forth a couple of times. And so, I kind of just fell into it as the only guy available at the time. And, well, I had never had

any experience with quail of course, in New York state, but I was interested in going into some sort of wildlife management, and so I just... I took it, and it was a pretty outstanding offer at the time. The stipend was 60 dollars a month. Now, that was that sounded pretty good in those days. And plus travel. And, of course, travel at that time -- gasoline was less than 20 cents a gallon, and oil 22 bits, you know. And, so... entirely different scale of values back in those days.

*MM* – Oh, sure. Sure.

*AH* -- [indecipherable] with my 60 dollars a month I was able to put money in the bank. Started a bank account there. So, anyway that was... I remember that I kept a little notebook that first year and... the supper would be... that would be... the dinner of the day would be 50 cents, and 25 cents for lunch, and I'd be... 10 cents for breakfast, 50 cents for overnight.

*MM* – Wow!

*AH* -- There were no motels at the time. We used to stay at what they now call bed and breakfasts. And for about a buck you get... you got overnight and breakfast.

*MM* – And breakfast. Pretty good deal then.

*AH* -- Yeah. Yeah.

*MM* – Well, what really kindled your interest in wildlife management, or wildlife conservation?

*AH* -- Meaning – specific? It was not my parents. They weren't interested in... my mother was interested in birds and flowers -- particularly flowers, in general. We lived in town. But Batavia was only about 10,000 or something like that, and we lived right at the edge of town. So I was able to take off and hunt rabbits within five minutes of leaving our house. and I used to hunt rabbits. I remember the first time I hunted woodcock. The... I had a paper route, and the... one of my customers said 'there's some funny birds back of our place, with a long bill.' And... well, I knew enough about birds at that time to know that they must be woodcock. So I went out with my 30 inch, hammerless, Lefebvre and [indecipherable]

*MM* – Wow!

*AH* -- ... shot and got a mess of woodcock there, right off the bat.

*MM* – Uh huh.

*AH* -- And then, about that time, I got an opportunity to get a pointer. And so I got this pointer, and from then on, of course, he got... started to get into pheasants and things of that sort.

*MM* – Uh huh. Uh huh.

*AH* -- But, it just was a matter of... and then I ran a trap line too,

*MM* – Uh huh. Uh huh.

*AH* -- ... before school in the morning. I don't know; I just... well, I had... my grandfather was from England -- directly from England.

*MM* – Okay.

*AH* -- And he was tolerant of things like people having guns, and things of that sort. And so he kind of... whetted my interest a little bit. But mainly the... couple of my associates were the people who got me started. One was a taxidermist, and he was the president of the local Genesee County Game Protective Association. And, in very... he was awfully, awfully nice about taking me with him on fishing trips, and out over to where he did his taxidermy work. And I got interested in taxidermy. And took that Northwest School of Taxidermy...

*MM* – Oh?

*AH* -- ... I think it cost 15 bucks, or something like that. Through a whole bunch of lessons that were a little... kind of mimeographed pamphlets that you got for the lessons. And... but, it told you how to skin things, and what preservatives to put on them, and so on. And... so that... several things of that type. And then a couple of my close, close friends there were interested in the same things that I was. And so, there was about three or four of us that did a lot of hunting and fishing together.

*MM* – Okay.

*AH* -- We didn't own a... my folks never did own a car, but we had some neighbors that had cars. And one was a retired farmer -- his name was Heddon. And so, he wrote to the Heddon Bait Company, and kind of implied that maybe he was a relative. And they sent him a whole tackle box full of Heddon...

*MM* – I'll be darned!

*AH* -- ... lures. And...

*MM* – And it was probably... his last name was spelled Heddon.

*AH* -- Yeah. This thing was the Heddon Company and so but he was a not much of a fisherman really. I mean, he certainly not an expert, and he... But, I remember we used to... if we were going out fishing for northern pike, we'd go out the night before and

catch minnows. And that was more fun than catching the northern the next day. We got big creek chubs, you know.

*MM* – Big chubs. Yeah, I know.

*AH* -- And then, the next day we'd go out and along the creek there somewhere and toss out our minnows, and once in a while we'd catch a northern. But, usually it was more in the line of rock bass and bull heads...

*MM* – Sure.

*AH* -- ... that type of fish. And we did... well anyway, about the same time I got... there's a pond out there, about five miles away, that was in easy reach of a bicycle, you know. And we got to going out there. And we'd set up a tent out there, and then use it every possible time we had a chance to get out there. I had to get back in for my paper route, but, usually after running the route, particularly on weekends, we'd go out and stay in our tent. And, in those days, you could set up a tent and leave all your stuff in it.

*MM* – You didn't have to worry about it.

*AH* -- You didn't have to worry about it. In fact, I don't remember anything was ever stolen from there. We left it there all summer, you know. And it was a good bass pond, good for croppies and things like that. And so, that's where I kind of honed my fishing interest. And then, we had a quite a number of little brooks that were spring fed. And some of them had pretty decent trout in them. So, we got a fair amount of trout fishing too. And gradually got into such things as fly fishing [indecipherable – too many voices]

*MM* – Sure.

*AH* -- ... and, so, that was... it kind of just all seemed to fit together. Well, I remember another thing was... the very early stage, I had a customer on my paper route that was a typical little old lady in tennis shoes type.

*MM* – Uh hum.

*AH* -- And she got me real interested in songbirds.

*MM* – Oh!

*AH* -- And she... anyway, I don't remember whether she gave me a copy, or whether just gave me the reference and we bought it -- a Reed Birds Guide -- thing's about that wide, would fit in your back pocket. And then, my mother, for Christmas, bought me a pair of opera glasses -- about two power or something like that.

*MM* – Okay.

*AH* -- And I've still got them, except one of the lenses has fallen out.

*MM* -- Uh hum.

*AH* -- And so that got me off on the birding. And I remember one spring, I just happened to take a hike and got under a tree, and that tree was just loaded with about six or seven different kinds of warblers. And that was my first acquaintance. and I didn't realize that there... you know, you see these pretty birds in the bird book, but, turned out there was some real live birds that looked like that too, you know. And so, that was real exciting to me... to the list of half a dozen [\[indecipherable\]](#). look at a bird and then get out the bird book and identify it, and that.... So, that... the Reed Bird Guide was an important thing. Of course, that was way ahead of the Peterson's.

*MM* -- Sure.

*AH* -- And the reproductions were unusually good at that. Surprising. They had a flower guide too, a wildflower guide.

*MM* -- Wildflowers. Well, what did your dad do?

*AH* -- He was... he worked for the Massey Harris Harvester Company. He was a mechanic... or a machinist, I guess you'd call him. He helped... or he put together parts for heavy equipment -- tractors and things of that sort. And he... well, in his spare time, he was a baseball player too. He played for semi-pro baseball. He and his brother both. And... But, he was never... I can remember he went fishing two or three times, somebody would invite him to go fishing. He was very much interested in... more interested in sports.

*MM* -- Sports, baseball specifically.

*AH* -- Yeah. But, and there was a whole bunch of things like that, all kind of tied together, you know. And so, that... well then, one summer, I... this catfish pond was finally bought out by this game association and they put a trout pond there. And fed the young trout liver, you know. And one of my jobs that summer was to feed the trout, and keep control of the kingfishers and...

*MM* -- Oh.

*AH* -- ... and things of that sort. and they... and plant trees in the.... And, as a reward for my summers work... that was when times were really, really tough -- right in the mid '30s, and I got a new Ithaca .20 gage shotgun...

*MM* -- Wow!

*AH* -- ... my reward for working all summer there.

*MM* – Single shot, or double?

*AH* -- Double. Double. Nice double barrel.

*MM* – Wow! Oh, boy!

*AH* -- And then, eventually that was stolen on me... or stolen from me, when... my first job after I left Leopold and went down to the Illinois Natural History Survey with... working with Frank Bellrose, down in [Brussels\*] County, which is a.... You know anything about Illinois?

*MM* – Not a whole lot.

*AH* -- Well [Brussels] County is in-between the Illinois and the Mississippi River. And, at that time, it was about as isolated as you could get a place in Illinois.

*MM* – Heavily wooded?

*AH* -- Pardon?

*MM* – Heavily wooded?

*AH* -- It was orchard. It was orchard country then.

*MM* – Okay.

*AH* -- Used to call them ‘apple knockers’ down there.

*MM* – Okay.

*AH* -- And good quail country. And... so, Frank and I went down there to start with, and study quail, and.... But, that... anyway, we stayed in this old hotel in Brussels, and there wasn’t even a lock on the door. And somebody walked in while I was out and stole my.... I had... the only place I could put it was behind the dresser. I had...

*MM* – Sure.

*AH* -- ... had my gun hidden behind the dresser.

*MM* – Oh, boy.

*AH* -- ‘Cause all my worldly goods were down there, at that time. And, well, let’s see...

*MM* – Quick question: did your mom work or was she just a housekeeper?

*AH* -- Mostly a housekeeper. She did work around the school quite a bit.

*BH* -- She was a cook

*AH* – She... well, she became a

*MM* – Okay.

*AH* – ... cook... they had a lunch program at the school, or something like that,

*MM* – Okay. Well, let's see. Okay. I know you went with the Illinois...

*AH* – Natural History Survey.

*MM* – And how long were you with them? A couple of years?

*AH* – No, more than that.

*MM* – More than that.

*AH* – Let's see. I went to them in '37, that's when I got my degree from Leopold.

*MM* – That was your masters or doctorate?

*AH* – Masters.

*MM* – Masters, okay.

*AH* – And then... went into the military, from Illinois, in '41. How many years is that? Wasn't it '41?

*BH* -- '41 and then... then you got it from Leopold in '38, I think, Art.

*AH* – Was it '38? Not '37, huh. '38.

*MM* – Okay.

*AH* – '38. Well, that's just about... and then after the War, I went back to the Illinois Natural History Survey for about 6 months before I transferred over to the Fish and Wildlife Service.

*MM* – Did you... was there an opening with the Service then, or did somebody ask you...?

*AH* – Well, Bob Smith that got me to... you know Bob Smith?

*MM* – I know of him.



*AH* – Anyway, he was... he was flying around the Mississippi Flyway [indecipherable] Mississippi Flyway biologist ...

*MM* – Okay.

*AH* – ... I remember, and I got acquainted with him, and when I was working with them, Natural History Survey, he'd come down there... and he was just starting flying then, and one of his assignments was to drive the geese out of Alexander County, Illinois, because they were funneling down there and then stopping.

*MM* – What at... honkers? Canadas?

*AH* – Yeah. Yeah. The Canadas.

*MM* – In the Mississippi Valley?

*AH* – Yeah. And they were... the people farther south were getting more and more upset about it [indecipherable] they finally [indecipherable] goose flight up...

*MM* – Okay.

*AH* – And southern Illinois, got to be a slaughter pen.

*MM* – Down around Horseshoe Bend.

*AH* – Around Horseshoe Bend, yeah. And... the... well, it finally reached the point that the Fish and Wildlife Service closed the season after five days, I think it was. It got so bad... the slaughter was so bad. And... but, anyway, Bob's job was to see if he could move the geese at them. And... well, he'd just started to learn how to fly then, and at that time he only had about 30 hours under the belt, or something like that, which made it pretty hazardous to go chase the geese.

*MM* – Oh, yeah.

*AH* – But, I didn't know any better, so I flew with him. And I remember, we'd get a couple thousand geese up and start pushing them and... toward... try to get them over into Kentucky, you know, and they start to dwindle. They start going out around you on either end. And get down to about the Ohio River and we'd be down to about one or two geese.

*MM* – And the others would be going back up there.

*AH* – Yeah, all the rest had gone back

*MM* – Sure

*AH* – [indecipherable]. Well, that turned out that that was not a practical thing to do. And... but, that... for... where I met Bob Smith, and then when we went on a trip to... all the way down to the [Gulf?].... the River... 'cause that time we were just starting to get age ratios, in mallards particularly, and one of the best places to do it was down at the... in Arkansas, at the stockyard, where there were some big processing going on from the hunts...

*MM* – Okay. Uh huh.

*AH* – ... and you could check a lot of birds in a short time down there. And... but anyway, Bob was in and out, making inventories and... I mean, flying... and then I connected up with Bob at different places along the line, and then we got down to Louisiana, there's... Johnny Lynch was down there. And... so we flew the Louisiana marshes, and oh, quite a bit around [stockyard?] and all through there. So, he talked me into considering going up to Canada. And I was getting kind of fed up with the Illinois cornfields, anyway. They wanted me to headquarter in Urbana, and of course, most of my work I was interested in, was over in the Illinois River. And from Urbana to Illinois River, or points south -- Horseshoe Lake -- 90% of your travel time was cornfields as high as the car...

*MM* – Sure.

*AH* – ... and you'd have the road. And I just got tired of that, and thought how much nicer it'd be to go up to Canada. While I was in the Army...

*MM* – When did you get out of the Army?

*AH* – '46.

*MM* – '46. And then you...

*BH* -- Art, October '45.

*AH* – Was it '45?

*MM* – '45.

*AH* – Yeah. Okay. And then I went back to the... that's right, I joined the Service in '46.

*MM* – Okay. So, you went back with the Survey right away then?

*AH* – Yeah.

*MM* – And then you got in the Service in '46?

*AH* – Yeah, and then...

*BH* -- And your salary was doubled, from 1500 dollars to 3000 dollars.

*AH* – 3000.

*BH* -- Dr. Frison, when we came back from Amarillo, driving, Art stopped in Urbana to talk to Dr. Frison. His job was waiting for him.

*MM* – With the Survey?

*BH* -- With the Natural History Survey...

*AH* – Yeah. Uh hum.

*BH* -- ... at twice what he'd been paid before. And he was so amazed...

*MM* – Uh hum.

*BH* -- ... at that wonderful increase, you know, twice as much as he had been paid four years before.

*MM* – Wow! Wow!

*BH* -- Isn't that something?

*MM* – So what... what's your appetite for the Service? Why did... was the salary better with the Service then when...?

*AH* – There was one other factor involved and that was the... when we were in the military, Tom Main, of Ducks Unlimited, happened to be giving a speech at Amarillo. And he came out to our place. We were living off of Post in Amarillo, and he came out and offered me a job as a... Ducks Unlimited.

*MM* – Okay.

*AH* – And... up in Canada. And that sounded pretty good to me, you know, at that time. And... so, that kind of got me thinking about going to Canada, and then when the...

*BH* -- To the Big Duck Factory. they called it the BDF.

*MM* – Yeah, BDF -- Big Duck Factory. Yeah. Yeah.

*BH* -- And then up to the breeding grounds.

*MM* – Yeah

*BH* -- And that was so...

*AH* -- Of course I didn't know any...

*BH* -- [indecipherable]

*MM* -- Oh, sure, for a while [indecipherable]

*Both MM & BH* -- yeah, oh, yeah.

*AH* -- And about that time, oh, was it when the... Hochbaum was starting to get a little disillusioned with the Ducks Unlimited about that time.

*MM* -- That early he was?

*AH* -- Yeah. Well, at that time though, there wasn't any really bad reasons for not going... I mean, there wasn't any... anything attached to them that would have made me turn them down just on the basis of the reputation. But, little by little, Al was getting just a little more dis... and I had quite a bit of contact with Al, all during that time, because we were... when I in the military, I was able to... living off the Post, we set some traps near where we were -- duck traps -- near where we were staying, and we had a fellow in Amarillo, name was Gene Howe, and he was a newspaper... owner, wasn't he. He owned a paper.

*BH* -- I know he was the publisher. He might have been the owner.

*AH* -- Yeah. And he was very interested in wildlife in general. And he knew that I'd been working with the Hungarian Partridge in Wisconsin, and so he came to me and... oh, wanted me to give him some advice about introducing Hungarian Partridges to the plains... the western plains of the Texas Panhandle, you know.

*MM* -- Uh huh.

*AH* -- And... so we made arrangements up in Alberta and bought a whole bunch of partridges. and then he wanted me to kind of follow them, as best I could, and see what happened out there [indecipherable], or whatever, and... well, I have to go back one step further -- what my job was with the Army.

*MM* -- Okay.

*AH* -- I was with the... in the Veterinary Service, and the... I... in fact, I was in the last class that Camp Grant, Illinois, where they taught you how to take care of wounded horses... it was at that point they decided that they weren't going to use horses anymore in the military, and so the veterinary job then became food inspection entirely.

MM – Okay.

AH – And when we got out to Texas, Amarillo was the headquarters for servicing, I think it was four or five other military units, scattered around, you know, Texas and New Mexico and so on. And they were really short of food milk for the camps. There was no source of... nowhere near a source of milk for all those military camps. And so my main job was to help develop a milk shed. And you did that by going out on the ranches where they had a few cows but they were milking the cows in the cow lot, and then the sediment samples were terrible, you know.

MM – Oh, sure.

AH – And so, little by little, we helped train a bunch of ranchers to become milk producers. And there was a grade they called Grade C, which is the acceptable for food milk. And then the object was to try to upgrade some of the Grade C to Grade A milk. And so, anyway, that... because of that assignment, I got onto... I think one year I figured out I'd been to 800 different farms and...

MM – Wow!

AH – ... in five states.

MM – Oh, my gosh.

AH – And so, I was only... going all the time, in the back roads and everything. And so, while I was doing that I was accumulating a bird notes, and that sort of thing. In fact, I wrote a paper on the birds of the Texas Panhandle. And the... and then we... this Gene Howe said that he would furnish the materials if I'd build a couple of duck traps and trap some ducks. There was a really nice playa lake right in that... I don't know, where we lived, and I made arrangements with the rancher there to put some traps there, and I... he said to help myself... and Betty would... and I would... they raised a lot of milo there... well, just a little milo, and during the harvest a lot of it was wasted, and so you could use that for bait, you know. And this... the trap material was just a matter of a little wire. And I figure I had probably the most efficient trapping operation in the country at that time, and it was costing me about 5 cents per bird, or something like that. 'Cause the birds responded well to the traps, and milo is good bait. And we banded several hundred ducks while we were at it. And... so, anyway, we were... kind of kept us busy on weekends and different times. And we had a lot of fun along with our [trap?] operations. So, it was a very interesting [indecipherable], we enjoyed that. That's [indecipherable] country. And also, the other thing was that, when we moved to Amarillo, when we were shipped to Amarillo, we didn't know anybody there, of course. And so, I thought that maybe the best way to get to know somebody was look up the local game warden. And so we looked him up, and he invited us to stay with him...

Oh!

... 'till we got located. So we...

End of tape

\* Brussels is a town in Calhoun County, Illinois.