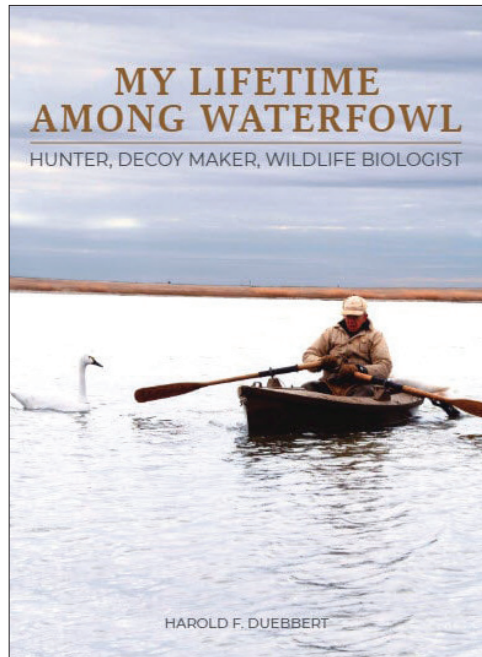


**My Lifetime Among Waterfowl: Hunter, Decoy Maker, Wildlife Biologist**, by Harold F. Duebbert. 2022. Windfeather Press, Bismarck, North Dakota. 228 pages. \$49.50 (hardbound). ISBN: 978-0-9620122-6-6.

Harold Duebbert (1929–2022) was a hunter, decoy maker, wildlife biologist, husband, father, and friend. His passion for wildlife and work in the Great Plains helped to preserve and foster the regrowth of populations of *Aythya valisineria* A. Wilson (Canvasback) and other waterfowl species. *My Lifetime Among Waterfowl: Hunter, Decoy Maker, Wildlife Biologist* is a collection of memoirs he wrote with the plan of becoming a book, but sadly it was never finished in his lifetime. After Harold passed in January 2022, a few of his friends and colleagues came together to finalize the formatting of the memoirs and to fulfill Harold's wish. This book encapsulates one man's life among waterfowl.



Harold was a family friend of ours, and at least once a year, we would stop during our travels to visit him in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, where he retired after a long career in wildlife research. He would regale us with stories of hunting and show us the latest waterfowl decoys that he was working on; Harold once spent an entire afternoon showing us the entire process of creating a decoy from start to finish in his workshop. It is our great honor to be asked to read and review this collection of stories that we listened to for many years.

The book is written in the form of daily entries that the reader must piece together to extrapolate the whole of Harold's life. It is the story of a person immersed into the hunting world from a young age and his evolution into practical research to help better understand how to keep waterfowl around for future generations. For the reader, each very detail-oriented entry felt as though you were experiencing the story alongside him.

Harold's dad wasn't into hunting, so Harold spent time with rivermen, asking them questions, listening to their tales, and it was these guys who took him under their wings and gave Harold his start in waterfowling. Through his experiences with them, Harold learned about the habits of the waterfowl, which grew into the thirst for the scientific reasonings behind those habits. In his book, one can see that he was invested in his passion for waterfowl, but he shows it to the reader through different lenses: the scientific reasonings but also through his outdoor experiences. As hunters ourselves, it was interesting to also understand how the landscape and hunting have changed over time thanks to Harold's documentation of these changes during his lifetime.

We drew many parallels in the writing style of Harold's memoir and the *Report on a Game Survey of the North Central States* by Aldo Leopold (1931). One of the notions of Leopold's *Game Survey* is that scientists are not out in the field as much as the farmers, hunters, and boaters. Harold wrote in a similar writing style as Leopold, more of a personal-

ized scientific approach and less of a narrative; however, Harold also held the perspective of both a scientist and a hunter, which gives this memoir a uniqueness in style.

Another important aspect of this book is Harold's decoy-carving journey. It was a key piece of what he called the "traditional hunter" and was another task that the rivermen and hunters taught him from a young age. To receive one of Duebbert's waterfowl decoys was an honor, as Harold made a point that his decoys were not made to sit on a shelf and were meant to be hunted over, and therefore, he did not make as many decoys as decoy carvers who were in it for a profit. Harold made his decoys for his friends and family, to commemorate memories, and as donations for wildlife charities and organizations.

Marty appreciated reading a lot of Harold's stories that he had heard in person and being able to reread those stories in detail. He also enjoyed learning new things about Harold's life, specifically about his time working in Oregon in the 1960s. Bill connected with Harold's Aldo Leopold-esque, life-long journey and a career in wildlife research as it is like his own career working at Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center in Jamestown, North Dakota. It was a proud moment for Bill to tell Harold, someone whom he looked up to, that he began working at the same research center that Harold did in the mid-1960s through the late 1980s. Harold often spoke about our family carrying on the traditional hunter's legacy through utilizing double-barrel shotguns, carving and rigging wooden waterfowl decoys, and operating old-school duck skiffs, which reminded Harold of his early days with the rivermen.

Overall, *My Lifetime Among Waterfowl* entails the life of a conservationist hunter, a hunter who devoted his life in multiple aspects to waterfowl protection and enhancement ensuring that they would be a renewable resource. This all-embracing dedication is something that modern hunters have slowly drifted away from as new generations have not been afforded the same perspective and therefore have not prioritized the multi-faceted aspects of hunting. As an avid reader of historical books on hunting, Harold wholly believed these experiences should be written down, as others had done before, to preserve the knowledge that he had and pass it down to the next generation.

**Book Reviewers:** Bill Sands (Millerton, North Dakota, USA), Marty Sands (Elkhorn, Wisconsin, USA), and Alyssa Sands (Madison, Wisconsin, USA), Decoy Carving and Collecting. [koshkonong.decoys@gmail.com](mailto:koshkonong.decoys@gmail.com).

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