

## **Dr. Frank C. Bellrose**

Dr. Frank C. Bellrose passed away on February 19, 2005. He was 88 years old. Frank had a productive and full life and a remarkable professional career that began in 1938. Frank leaves behind his wife Esther, their two sons, Ron (Sandy) and Frank Jr. (Becky), and four grandchildren. The following is a brief biography on Dr. Bellrose.

Frank C. Bellrose was born in 1916 in Ottawa, Illinois, on the Illinois River where he developed his lifelong interest in waterfowl and wetlands. He received his B.S. degree in zoology from the University of Illinois and began working for the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) in 1938. His extensive research studies conducted from the INHS field station located on Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge near Havana, Illinois, included the migration and orientation of waterfowl; dynamics of waterfowl populations; life history, ecology, and management of the wood duck; ecology of aquatic and marsh plants; and the ecology of the Illinois River.

Bellrose began a study of wood duck nesting in the late 1930s. Eventually, he would develop predator-proof nest boxes. Indeed, the wood duck breeding biology, population dynamics, and evaluations of various types of nesting houses became a career-long project for Bellrose. He began a study of the ecology of aquatic, marsh, and moist-soil plants in the bottomland lakes of the Illinois River valley in the summer of 1938 and continued it periodically for more than 40 years. Through this long-term study, the detrimental effects of sedimentation upon the lakes of the Illinois Valley became apparent.

Bellrose initiated waterfowl surveys in the Illinois River valley from the ground in 1938. He began using a light aircraft in 1946, and the time required for a comprehensive inventory was greatly reduced, while the area covered was noticeably expanded. Waterfowl data, derived from these ground and aerial estimates, were incorporated into numerous studies. The aerial inventory of waterfowl continues to be an important part of the INHS waterfowl research program.

Pioneering work on lead poisoning as a mortality factor among waterfowl was one of Bellrose's most important contributions. His research was a major factor in the gradual replacement of lead with nontoxic shot for waterfowl hunting in the United States and other countries as well.

Bellrose's world-renowned book, *Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America*, was published in 1976 and has sold more than 350,000 copies. His latest book, co-authored with Daniel Holm, *Ecology and Management of Wood Duck*, was published in 1994. Both of these classic compendiums received The Wildlife Society's Book Publication of the Year Award. Bellrose has published more than 110 scientific and popular articles. His name is virtually synonymous with "ducks" throughout the world.

In recognition of his long and productive career, Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois, awarded Bellrose an honorary Doctor of Science degree in 1974, and McMurray College, Jacksonville, Illinois, recognized him with a similar degree in 1995. In 1979, he received the Professional Award of Merit from the Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society; and in 1985, the Aldo Leopold Award, the most prestigious professional award of The Wildlife Society. February 1, 1988 was declared "Frank Bellrose Day" in Illinois by Governor James Thompson. In 1992, the Illinois Department of Conservation dedicated its Cache River Wetlands Project, which included the Frank Bellrose Waterfowl Reserve. He retired from the INHS in 1982 but retained an Emeritus status.

The Waterfowl Research Laboratory of the Illinois Natural History Survey's Forbes Biological Station near Havana, Illinois, was officially named the Frank C. Bellrose Waterfowl Research Center in 1997. The naming of the Waterfowl Research Laboratory in his honor recognized the important contribution of Bellrose's work to waterfowl ecology and management throughout the world and the Illinois River where he spent his entire life and professional career.

In 2001, Bellrose was selected as a charter inductee into the newly established Illinois Outdoor Hall of Fame, a program of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Illinois Conservation Foundation, in recognition of his lifelong commitment to natural resource protection and outdoor recreation in Illinois.

Bellrose's lifelong dedication to waterfowl research was a shining example to peers throughout the profession. His commitment to furthering our understanding of the waterfowl resource continues in the present with his recent revision of the classic *Ducks, Geese and Swans of North America*.

Frank and his wife of many years, Esther, traveled extensively throughout North America. They were blessed with two sons, Ron (Sandy) and Frank Jr. (Becky), and four grandchildren.

In 2002, in keeping with Frank's life-long commitment to habitat and wildlife, the Bellrose family protected a segment of their farm along Sugar Creek in Logan County by dedicating it in perpetuity as the Sandra Miller Bellrose Nature Preserve.

The family requests memorials be made in Frank Bellrose's honor to: The University of Illinois — Bellrose Waterfowl Research Center, and sent to: Illinois Natural History Survey, Frank C. Bellrose Waterfowl Research Center, P.O. Box 590, Havana, Illinois 62644.