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Heroic Tales *of* Wetland Restoration

The Wetlands Conservancy

HEROIC TALES *of* WETLAND RESTORATION

Esther Lev

Produced with generous support from:

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

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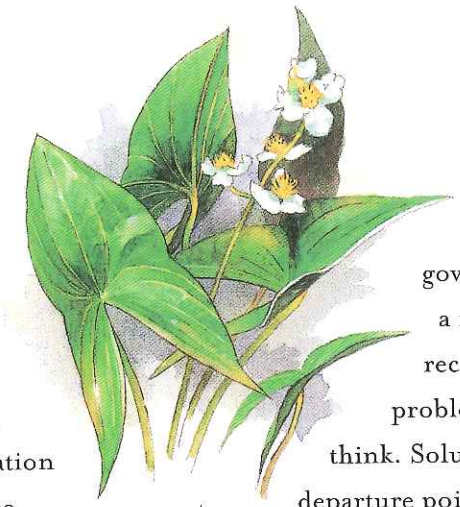

Traveling around Oregon, I learned many new things and discovered new ways of looking at familiar landscapes. My travels showed me that main taining water, topsoil and vegetation is the landowner's best insurance policy. It allows them to continue living where they are and loving what they do. I learned how land management evolves over time and responds to new understandings of the relationships between people and their natural environment.

I learned about cattle and sheep ranching, dairy farming and grass seed production. I began to see opportunities for integration between wetlands and working landscapes, people and wildlife.

I found that private landowners and government agencies follow a more parallel path in recognizing environmental problems than either might think. Solutions can become the departure point, fueled by the fear of change and the cultural differences between the bureaucracy and the ranch. Yet people in all parts of the state crossed hurdles to forge the magnificent solutions contained in the tales, photographs and paintings in this book. Each success pays tribute to the power of partnership between individuals, agencies, land, water and wildlife. Each hero can inspire us all.

First and foremost, I thank the heroes in this book for their noble work, their modern tales of change. Their warmth, honesty and

creativity inspires me. I hope other landowners find similar inspiration to restore and enhance their wetlands.

I greatly appreciate the trust of the following project donors, whose support enabled the interviews, writing, photography, art, design and publication of this book:

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

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As I searched for examples of wetland restoration around the state, many people shared their knowledge of people, projects and places. Without their help I may not have found these wonderful stories. In particular, I thank Rob Tracey, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Ann Donnelly, South Coast Land Conservancy; Faye Weekely, Curt Mollis and Jim Hainline, US Fish and Wildlife Service; Bruce Taylor and Sandra Fife, Oregon Wetlands Joint Venture, and Bianca Streif, US Fish and Wildlife Service.

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The photographs in this book make the stories come alive. I want to thank Madeleine Blake, Richard Wilhelm, Steve Roundy and Deb Stoner for these outstanding photographs. Thank you to Curt Mullis and Teresa DeLorenzo for providing photos of several of the projects. Steve Katagiri's marvelous illustrations remind us of the plants and animals that benefit from these wetland restorations. Thank you to Laurie Causgrove for bringing together all the pieces and making this beautiful book.

INTRODUCTION

Wetlands are vital to our lives. They store, clean and filter our water, prevent soil erosion, and control flooding. They provide rich habitat for thousands of species of birds, fish and mammals. And they are indescribably beautiful.

Yet for more than two centuries, we have destroyed millions of acres of wetlands for agriculture, commerce and other developments. In today's world, we hear tales of people in rural areas abusing the land. We see photos of landscapes with denuded riparian zones, deep-cut, incised channels and eroded stream banks. By the same token, rural residents tell us how government agencies take away property and bureaucrats care more for animals and plants than for people.

Heroic Tales of Wetland Restoration sheds new light on these stories. A dozen rural landowners tell about how they have changed farming methods to reclaim wetlands, streams and rivers. Some of these pioneers have bumped heads with government, but most have also forged partnerships with hard-working agency staff who have helped them maintain a rural life and breathe new life into their precious land.

The real-life heroes include both farmers and public employees. Together, they have restored natural Oregon landscapes from the Columbia River to Cape Blanco, and from Bonanza to Bear Valley. They have rejuvenated oxbows, lush with sedges and cattails. Sandhill cranes, black-necked stilts,

blue-winged teal, cutthroat trout and Nelson's checkermallows find homes in newly restored habitat. Many fish, aquatic animals, birds and plants thrive in places where they once would have withered.

The tales in this book are not fairy tales. They are true stories about passionate people who have overcome obstacles. Their hurdles include red tape, resistant neighbors and physical challenges. Jerry Hines, of Chiloquin, complains about the lack of a Prince Charming to steer projects through an unwieldy course that seems interminable. After seven years of multi-agency confusion, Doug McDaniel says he may give up on his Wallowa River project. Others, like Bonanza's Louis Randall, found the special helpers they needed.

Why did these heroes continue down the bumpy path to restoration? Edith Leslie, of Beaver Hill, wanted to transfer to her children the land that has been in her family for more than a century. Mark Tipperman and Lorna Williams fled from the rat race in Snohomish County, Washington, to create a peaceful life for themselves in the Blue Mountains. Mark Knaupp, of Rickreal, longed for ducks on his property.

In the end, each hero can feel good about creating more Oregon wetlands. "We are caretakers of this earth for such a short time," says Sharon Sinko of Myrtle Point. "We would like to give something back to land that has been good to us."

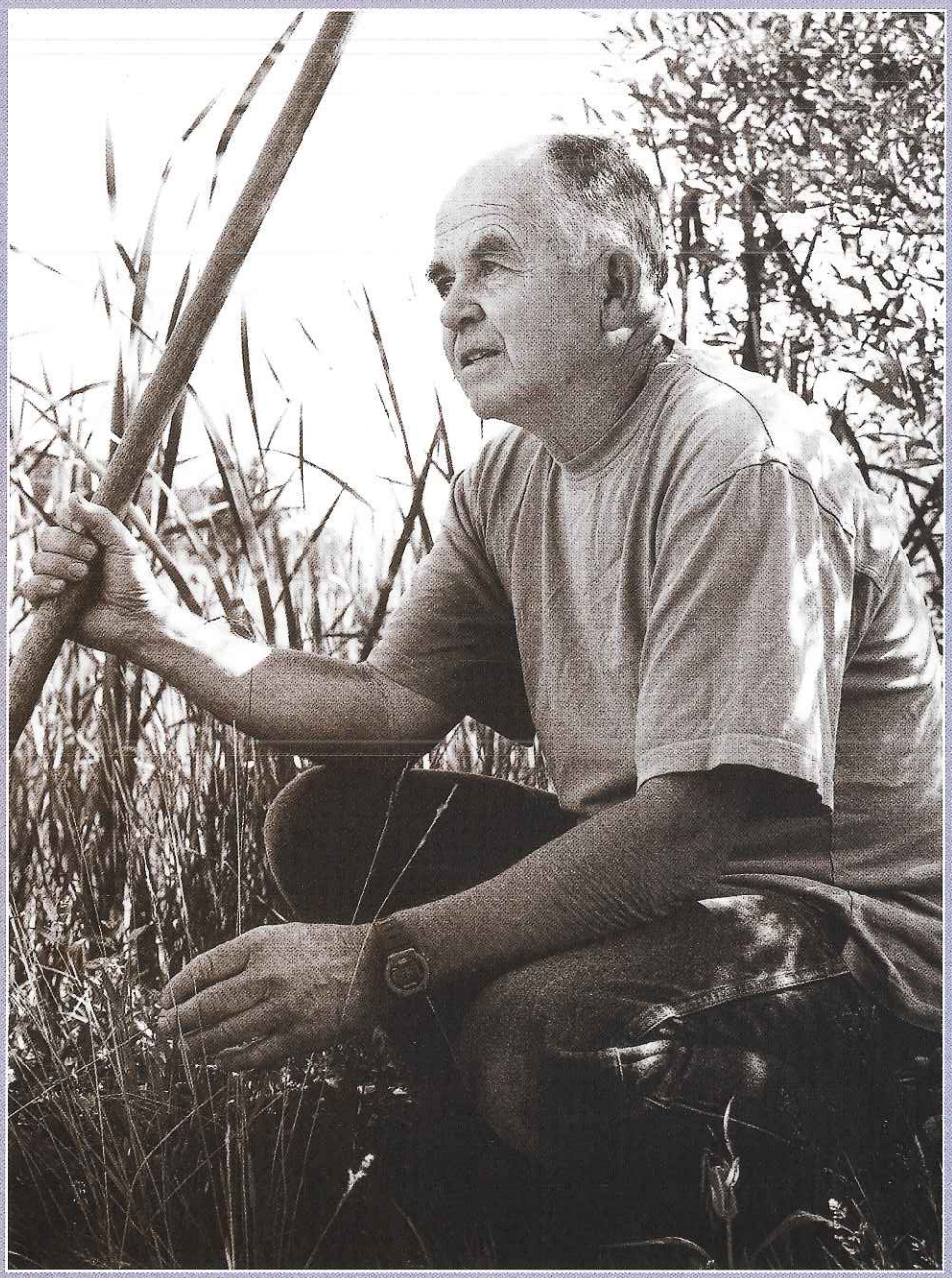
Their tales are part of a larger national story. More than 75 percent of wetlands in the lower 48 states are privately owned, making landowner stewardship a critical part of a wetland conservation strategy. In 1985, the Natural Resources Conservation Service created several landowner incentive programs. Two years later, the US Fish and Wildlife Service initiated its Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

As these programs change, so do the people whose lives they touch. Residents of Oregon's rural and urban communities are gaining a new understanding of how wetlands enrich our lives and protect our future. Landowners and members of public agencies, non-profits and citizen groups preserve and conserve quality wetlands and restore others.

In the first section of this book, readers can enjoy and learn from these tales of vision, passion, perseverance and economic survival. The second section of this book describes land conservation options and a range of state and federal technical assistance and funding programs. It also lists and explains the programs the people in this book used and some of the regulations that governed their work.

The last section in the book includes descriptions of the restoration techniques employed by the landowners, as well as recommendations for the future. It outlines difficulties experienced by landowners working with federal and state incentive programs and includes landowner recommendations for ways the programs can better accommodate their needs.

Map of Projects



TED GAHR

We need the tonic of wilderness, to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder, and more solitary fowl builds her nest and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU
1817 - 1862

Land Changes Vacationers' Lives

Ex-Californians pursue wetland education

McMinnville, Oregon

Ted and Harriet Gahr had no intention of buying a farm on their 1966 vacation to Oregon. However, the piece of land along the Yamhill River caught their eyes. In 1967, they pulled up their roots in California, bought the farm, and moved to the Willamette Valley. Back then, the young couple had never heard of red-legged frogs, Nelson's checkermallow, or Fender's blue butterfly. Now, the Gahrs share their 350-acre conservation farm and forest with these native creatures and plants.

"It was the scenery, rather than the farming potential, that sold us on the place," Ted said. "Initially, we were more than happy to accept guidance and farming tips from the seller." After farming for a number of years, they leased the land to another farmer, but he gave his lease in 1992. "Our lessee, even with the help of the subsidy, was having a hard time making a profit on our Muddy Valley soils," Ted recalls. So he began looking for alternatives for the land beside conventional farming.

"About that same time, I spotted 300 ducks in pools created by the river overflowing into the cropland. This sparked an interest in restoring the wetlands for the ducks, which led to substantial management changes which are still in progress," Ted says. "Learning over time, I developed an appreciation for many other species of native plants and wildlife that inhabit the farm."

Preserving and enhancing the natural habitat potential of the property became a priority in management decisions that followed. The farm and forest activities now focus on sustaining and improving natural habitat, operating a bed and breakfast business, and opening the property for educational workshops and retreats.

Ted learns whatever he can wherever he can. He has received advice from the Yamhill

"Mostly, I have learned by doing, experimenting with design, engineering and construction."

County Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Ducks Unlimited, and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). He reads a lot, visits farms, attends conferences and workshops. "But mostly," he says, "I have learned by doing, experimenting with design, engineering and construction."

Ted signed up with the Agricultural Conservation Program, an ODFW landowner cost-share program to create shallow water habitat for wildlife. He received funds to conduct a land survey and construct a dike and water-control structure. Ted provided the labor. The two-year, 12-acre project was the first of many restoration projects, but the last time Ted received government engineering services.

Over the next three years, Ted continued his wetland and stream enhancements with funds from the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). "That's what launched my career in water system and restoration design and engineering," he laughs.

In 1997, Rob Tracey, of NRCS, introduced the Gahrs to the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), which would pay them to stop farming and restore the wetland. In January 1999, after two applications to the program, they enrolled 119 acres.

Once the project was accepted into WRP, things moved slowly. "The process took longer than we expected, with glitches along the way," says Ted, "but it was an essential step in continuing the quest for the holistic management of the farm."

Opportunities for habitat restoration are continually unfolding. Along a channeled stream, they found vivid pink clumps of Nelson's checkermallow, a flower listed as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species Act. The sighting spurred them to create a checkermallow reserve.

Ted proudly points to the 200 checkermallows now growing along the banks of a series of small ponds he built for red-legged frog recovery. He feels commercially propagating the checkermallow through native plant nurseries would have a positive effect on recovery, but has had little encouragement from the regulatory agencies due to controversies about the propagation and sale of endangered species. "Maybe in the future," Ted muses.

Ted believes that with holistic goals an management, forests,

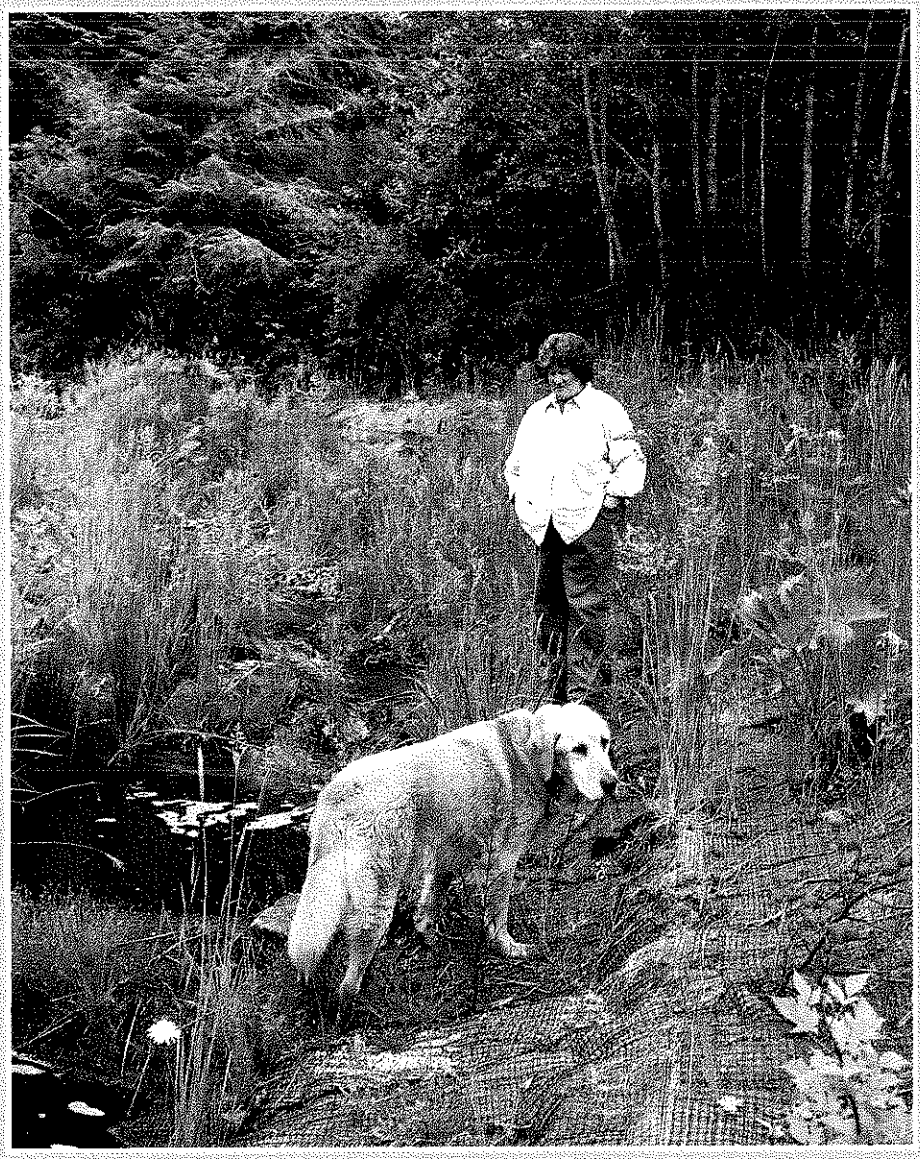
Visitors find peace beside this babbling brook.

fields and wetlands can provide large amounts of food crops for wildlife and people. He continues to experiment with cultivation of a constructed 30-acre wetland, which serves as winter habitat for dabbling ducks and produces good yields of grain without the use of chemicals or fertilizers.

Overall, he feels government programs are heading in the right direction and have a positive influence on improving the health of our watersheds. He also feels continuing refinements are necessary to make programs more effective and efficient.

"The Wetlands Reserve Program made it possible for us to continue pursuing our goals of preserving and enhancing the natural habitat values of our property," Ted says.

On summer days, red-winged blackbirds alight upon cattails.



TERESA DELORENZO

An old pond —

a frog tumbles in —

the sound of water.

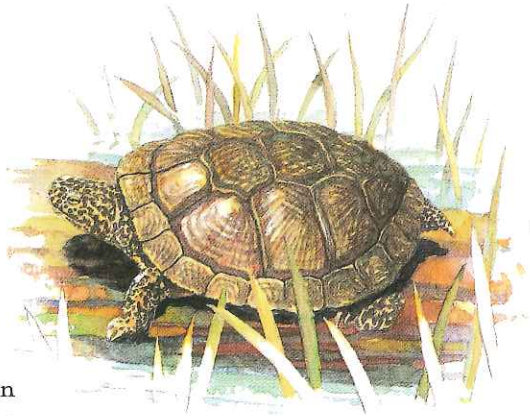
MATSUO BASHO

1644-1694

Community Embraces Slough Revival

Project lures red-legged frogs, salamanders and salmon

Knappa, Oregon



For years, Teresa DeLorenzo advised others on how to restore and manage their land. "One day," she says, "I realized it was time to purchase and manage my own property – walk my own talk." In 1998, she bought 86 acres along Warren Slough, about 15 miles from the mouth of the Columbia River. Neighbors, Teresa says, were initially skeptical of her – a wildlife consultant from Portland. Teresa quietly began restoring her property. Then the project turned into a community effort.

"The project is visible from the road," she explains, "so neighbors would constantly stop by, watch and offer advice."

The Lower Columbia River Estuary Program agreed to fund Teresa's project. After long discussions and several field visits, officials at the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Partners for Fish Wildlife Program followed suit and provided funds to help Teresa create a passage over a dike that enables fish to swim to a large pond and several streams that drain into Warren Slough.

Teresa's wildlife and advocacy background helped turn the tide in talks with USFWS. "Fish and Wildlife has an anti-impoundment stance," explains Teresa. "It was up to me to demonstrate that changing the 25-year-old system would improve habitat for fish and wildlife." Teresa was frustrated with the narrow focus on fish. Her vision was filled with birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Teresa reached out to others as she pursued the project. "I learned to ask everyone for advice, help, and ideas," she says. When she discovered she needed permits, she hired Mark

"I totally underestimated the community interest and extent to which the project would benefit from community involvement."

Barnes, a consulting planner. He prepared permits for the US Army Corps of Engineers and Oregon Division of State Lands, and negotiated design features and engineering details with the county Public Works Department and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Ducks Unlimited prepared engineering drawings required for the permit applications.

The first step was removal of a collapsing 18-inch culvert. Teresa paid for the materials. Clatsop County Public Works provided the labor. "I ended up with a three-foot culvert rather than the four-foot one I had wanted," she says, "but was charged less money." She was pleased with the county's hard work and flexibility: "It was a great partnership."

Next, she and her consultant worked with national and state fisheries specialists. NMFS helped her determine dimensions of the steps and ponds. "The local Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife fisheries biologist, Joe Sheahan," says Teresa, "was helpful in working through design details."

This restoration was not the usual Clatsop County building project. Astoria's Vinson Brothers Construction did "on-the-ground research and development," as they repaired the dike, built the fish passage, removed culverts, smoothed new stream channels, and built the water control box, Teresa says. Vinson Brothers supported the project by charging only what the grant construction budget would allow.

Next, Teresa worked with Keith Fitzgerald of Alder View Natives in Wilsonville to choose plants for the site. She bought 425 shrubs and 60 Sitka spruce trees from the company – far more than she could haul with her small pickup. "I showed up for 7 a.m. coffee at The Logger Restaurant in search of suggestions of where to find a large enough truck," she recalls. Autio Company, a local manufacturer, provided a truck and driver for two round trips from Knappa to Wilsonville – at no charge.

Volunteers from the Nicolai-Wickiup Watershed Council unloaded and planted the shrubs and provided lumber that had been donated by Willamette Industries to build the water control box in the dike.

The non-profit Northwest Ecological Research Institute managed the grant and provided technical assistance. With their help, Teresa created habitat for some of her favorite

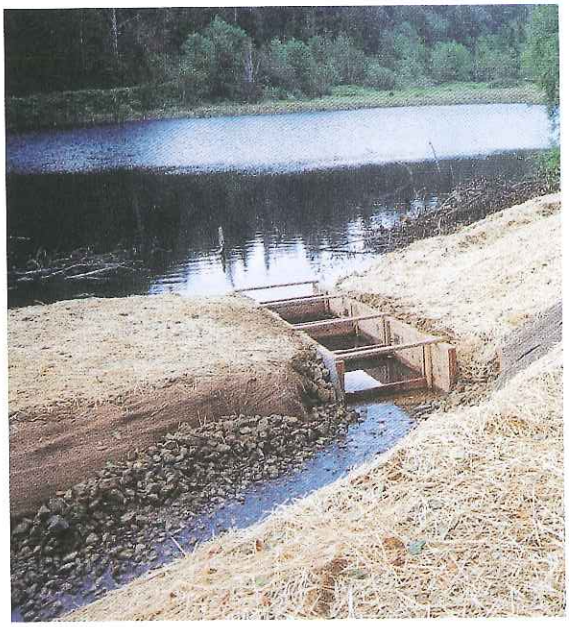
Fish will pass through this new channel to a large pond and several streams that drain into Hall Slough.

animals: red-legged frogs, salamanders, purple martins, and others. At the same time, her efforts helped four species of salmon and sea-run cutthroat trout.

Looking over the land, the wildlife consultant reflects upon partnerships that included truckers, bureaucrats, vendors, engineers, biologists, 4-H, and the local community college: "I totally underestimated the community interest and extent to which the project would benefit from community involvement."

Teresa can adjust water levels by removing a board in this water control box.

In the future, hundreds of salmon and trout will use the resting pools being created in the fish passage.



MARK KNAUPP

In the swamp in secluded recesses

a shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

WALT WHITMAN, 1820

Restoration Proves Lucrative

Farmer-biologist finds "best of both worlds"

Rickreall, Oregon

Polk County farmer Mark Knaupp watches the habitat change in the bottomlands of his expansive grass seed farm. In the past five years, Mark has restored 320 acres of wetlands and created an additional 60-acre wetland mitigation bank. "It's amazing how the vegetation comes back and how the habitat develops," says Mark. "It's happened very fast. The birds found it and moved into it very quickly."

Mark suspects that neighbors laughed when he and his wife Debbie bought the 200-acre damp fescue grass field in 1976. He was the only interested buyer. Now, 25 years later, some who may have snickered would have to view the Knaupps' purchase as a good investment. They now own 1,200 acres – 400 acres of restored wetland and the rest under cultivation.

"I enjoy waterfowl and waterfowl habitat," says Mark, an avid duck hunter with a degree in wildlife from Oregon State University. "That's what got me started on my first restoration project. Now look!" He points to phalaropes poking their long bills into the mud at the edges of the wetland.

In 1992, he embarked on his first restoration project – creation of a 20-acre shallow pond for waterfowl. In 1995, after a series of wet years and gaggles of hungry Canada geese feeding on his grass each winter, Mark's lands along Mud Slough became increasingly difficult to farm. He decided to enroll 320 acres of the bottomland into the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). He used the easement payment from the WRP to buy an adjacent 180 acres. This allowed him to acquire more productive farmland, less sensitive to the elements, and essentially trade it for prime wildlife habitat.

Mark harvested his last commercial crop of tall fescue seed from the bottoms in 1996.

The elusive Virginia rail pokes for food in the Knaupps' wetland.

The site was flat and required little excavation. To prepare the soil for native plants, he scraped it, planted it with an annual cover crop, flooded it, and sprayed Round-Up in the spring and fall. Then, without tilling, he planted meadow foxtail and the once widespread tufted hairgrass.

In five years, thousands of native plants, including some rare species, have sprung up on their own and turned the wetlands into a tapestry of color and texture. The purple and white popcorn flower and veronica, dark green tufts of sedge, bulky cattails, and delicate tufted hairgrass provide habitat for a variety of wildlife. The showy pink Nelson's checkermallow is listed as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Mark figures he and his brother spend a combined two weeks per year maintaining the wetland, primarily removing and managing reed canarygrass, purple loosestrife, blackberry, and Canada thistle. Though the process has

This former grass seed field is now home to diverse wetland plants and wildlife.

required patience, Mark has no regrets. "Buying the land, farming it and then enrolling in the WRP and restoring it to wetland was a great business decision."

Mark also enjoys the priceless beauty that comes from his decision. Every fall through spring, thousands of ducks and geese, shorebirds and swallows return to the wetlands. Mark has seen birds breeding, including black-necked stilt, Wilson's phalarope, and 11 species of waterfowl. In addition, bitterns, rails, herons and egrets feed in the marshes, while bald eagles and northern harriers work the skies overhead. Mark's list of birds includes some that are rarely seen in the Willamette Valley, including yellow-headed blackbirds and white-faced ibis. "My bird list matches, if not surpasses, the nearby Basket Slough Wildlife Refuge," Mark beams.

Mark's 23 years of farming, combined with his education and passion for waterfowl hunting, gave him the background and motivation he needed to transform a rye grass field into a wetland. He also received help and advice from the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Ducks Unlimited. Last, but not least, he had the right site. "If you want to succeed in restoring a wetland," he says, "you need to know the site's opportunities and barriers, and then design with those in mind. I have the perfect conditions: a non-draining clay soil, flat topography, a large piece of ground, and minimal invasive plant contamination."

Diligent monitoring and maintenance of the site, especially invasive plant removal, are critical elements of the project's success.

Flowers and grasses create a colorful tapestry on the Knaupp's wetland.

Mark cautions newcomers that, over time, the wetland takes on a life of its own. Mark's biggest complaint with the project has been the lack of flexibility of some of the Wetlands Reserve Program regulations. He has had some disagreements with program officials about site management and compatible uses. The murky wording of the compatible use regulations requires Mark to apply for permission to mow the native grasses even in September, in order to provide habitat for geese and promote growth of other native plant species. Twice a year, he and all the project partners walk through and evaluate the site, noting changes and needed adjustments.

On balance, he's grateful for the help from The Wetlands Reserve Program. "They allowed me to get my money out of the property and restore habitat at the same time. It's the best of both worlds for me."

"Buying the land, farming it and then enrolling in the WRP and restoring it to wetland was a great business decision."

EDITH LESLIE

Appreciation, respect and stewardship of this land,

moved from my past to my future. Who could wish for more?

EDITH LESLIE, 2001

Turning Lore to Legacy

Family launches award-winning project

Coos Bay, Oregon

Edith and Willamar Leslie left California in 1970 to build a home at Beaver Hill, outside of Coos Bay. For years, as their children were growing up, the Leslies had taken family camping trips to this Oregon property. Retiring there proved irresistible.

Once settled, the Leslies raised a few head of cattle and sheep, then set out to replant trees. This piece of land, which has been in Edith's family for more than a century, is a centerpiece in the family legacy. Years ago, a cash-starved logger gave Edith's grandfather the land in exchange for an unpaid tab at the Prosper general store, which Edith's grandfather founded about 120 years ago. At the time, says Edith, the logged-over land was ·lued at less than 50 cents an acre – a mere ction of the debt.

Edith's mother left that piece of land and the Coquille Valley when she was a young woman, but kept it alive in her memory. For years, the family heard stories of the soggy ground near Prosper. "Salmon so thick," relatives were told, "it almost seemed as if you could walk across the Coquille River on their backs."

Edith inherited the piece of squishy earth from her mother in the 1950s and continued to rent the pastures to a neighboring farmer for grazing. After her husband's death in 1992, neither Edith's two sons nor her only daughter had any interest in ranching the family parcel. For about five years they leased out the pastures for grazing. Edith loved that land, and wanted to find a way to transfer it to her children and grandchildren.

In her search for solutions, Edith met Michael Graybill, director of the South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve. He explored with Edith and her children how they

might restore the pasture to its natural state. Then, he connected the family with a cadre of scientists, engineers and ecology gurus at the South Coast Land Conservancy. They showed the Leslies how the family could create a conservation easement to keep the property.

This was no easy decision. Thirteen people representing three generations batted around the pros and cons of the easement, debating the trade-off between preserving the land and doing whatever they wished on it. Some family members balked at signing away forever the option of running livestock or harvesting hay. In 1997, they threw their hats together to establish a limited liability corporation, keeping the land in one piece they could all own.

The timing was good. In 1995, the state had new funding to restore wetlands and boost dwindling salmon populations. The South Coast Land Conservancy, in partnership with the Leslies, received a grant from the Oregon Governor's Watershed Enhancement Board to restore the hydrologic connections between the pastures and the Coquille River. The Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wetlands Reserve Program, United States Fish and Wildlife Service Partners in Wildlife Program, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Coquille Watershed Association and Ducks Unlimited also contributed to the effort.

The family received technical advice from many agencies and natural resource proponents. Some neighboring landowners, however, questioned the wisdom of converting farmlands to wetlands. One neighbor requested a dike around the project to protect his horse pasture from floods the restoration could cause. The Leslies agreed to his request, never considerir they would have to flatten one of their favorit landmarks to get dike-building materials.

Red-legged frogs now thrive where cattle once fed.

When the restoration project was completed in October 1999, the whole Leslie family celebrated with an old-fashioned barbecue for neighbors, friends, and partners in the project. They thanked everyone who had worked on the project, and gave landowners a chance to explore and ask questions about the new landscape. Around plank picnic tables, Coquille Valley landowners, biologists and engineers exchanged ideas, which have spun off into a number of new private restoration projects.

Recognition for the project extended beyond the Leslies' community. The US Fish and Wildlife Service awarded the family the National Wetlands Conservation Award for the private sector.

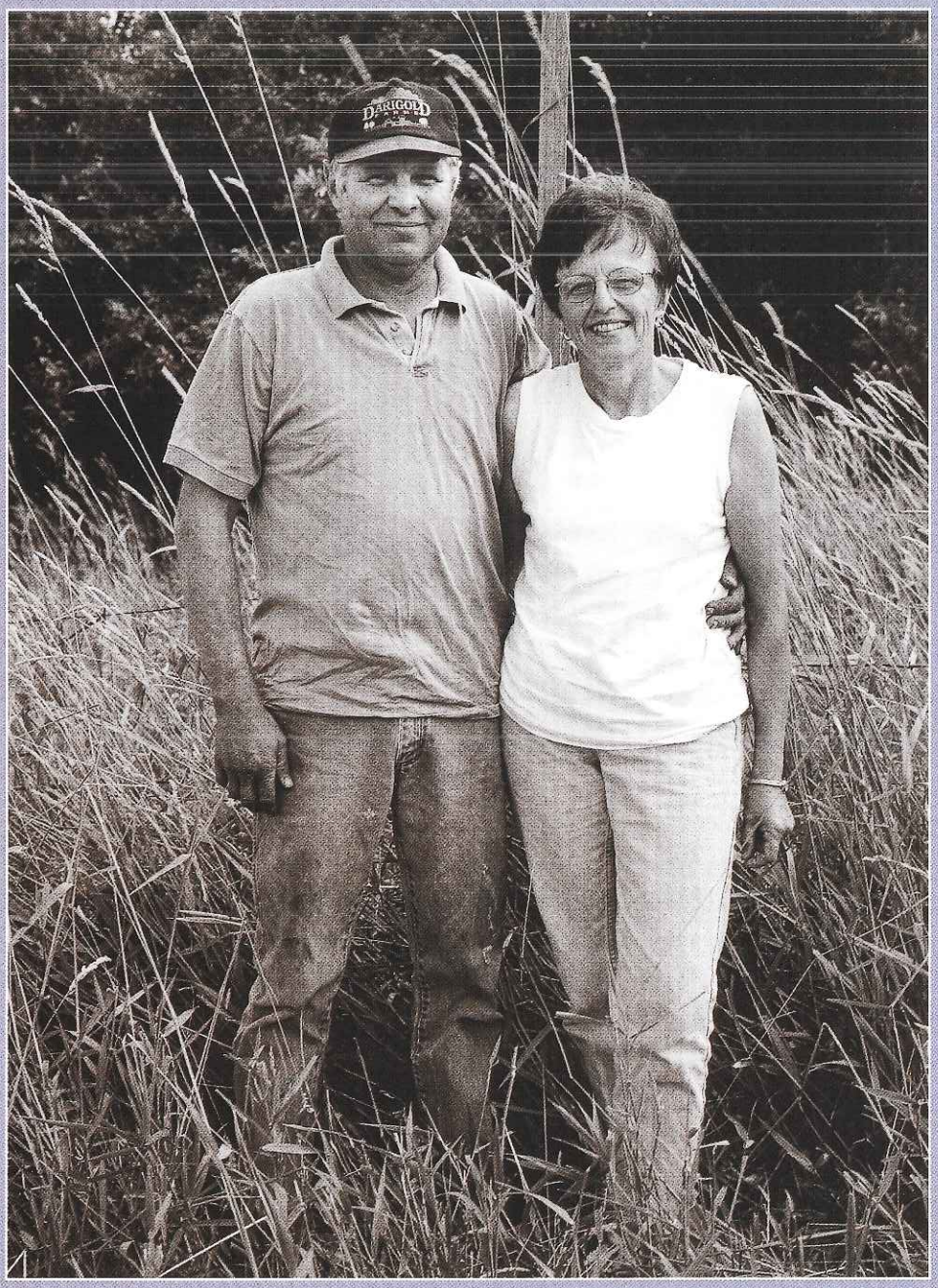
But the real rewards lie among the coho salmon smolts darting in the upland stream, the ribbeting red-legged frogs, and many varieties of birds in the restored wetland's grassy areas. "Appreciation, respect and stewardship of this land," says Edith, "moved from my past to my future. Who could wish for more?"

The Leslies worked together to restore their wetland on land that had been in the family for over 100 years.

Three Generations of the Leslie Family

Edith and Willamar Leslie

Lael Leslie-Lepowski	Lorin Leslie	Lann Leslie
Jim Lepowski	Shannon Leslie	MelodyLeslie
Tris Lepowski	Forrest Leslie	Logan Leslie
Mei Lepowski	Lorelei Leslie	Megan Leslie



DOUG AND SHARON SINKO

If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life.

RACHEL CARSON, 1992

Ex-Teacher Comes Home

Childhood memories fuel arduous effort

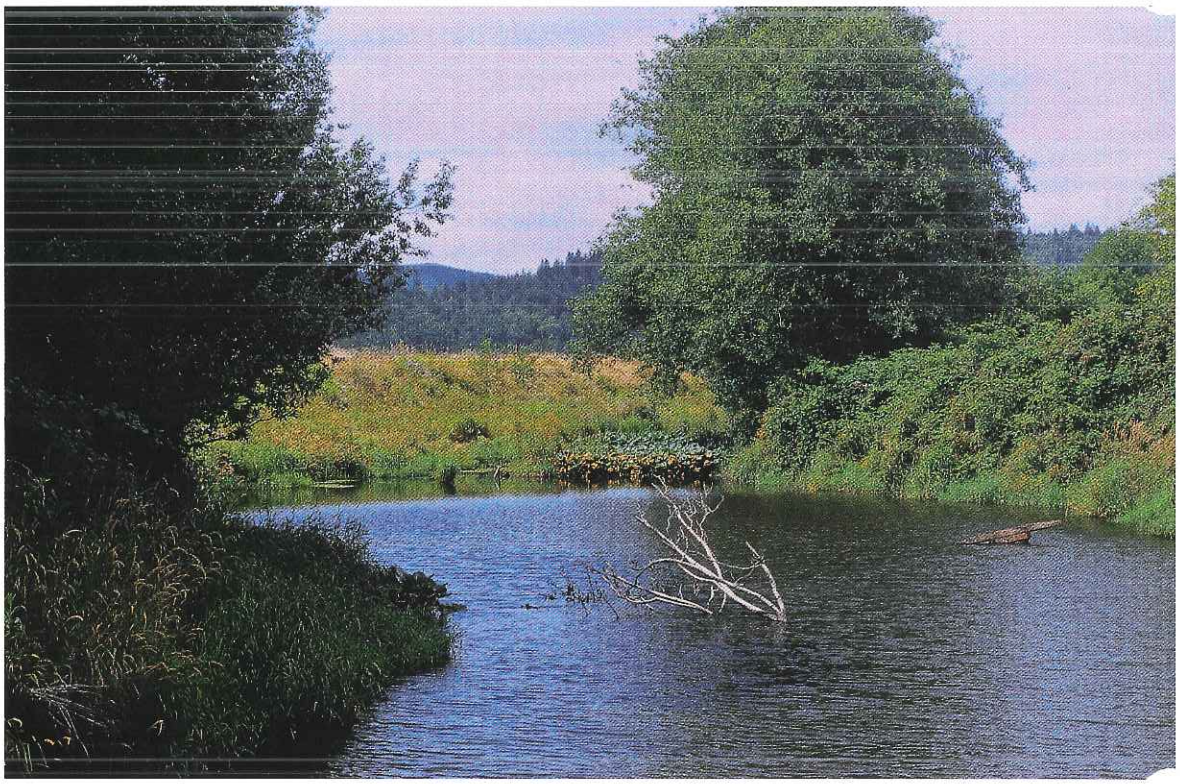
Myrtle Point, Oregon

From the age of 12, Doug Sinko was raised on a Coquille River dairy farm. He spent his teenage years exploring the wetland: catching frogs, watching birds, becoming a "naturalist." In 1972, after five years of teaching, Doug returned to his roots and bought the 120-acre piece of land from his father. In 1979, he added the adjacent 240 acres.

Fourteen years later, Doug and his wife Sharon became the first organic dairy farmers in the Northwest. Soon after they received their organic certification, they cut their herd from 300 to 150, reduced the size of their pasture and decided to change the character of the retired pastureland. "Sharon and I are very excited about restoring the wetland," ays Doug. "At times, the setbacks, delays and d tape test our commitment and patience. Finally, after 20 months, I think we have cleared all the hurdles."

Historically, Doug and Sharon's land near Myrtle Point was a willow-and-ash marsh. In the early 1900s, dairy farmers began settling along the major rivers in the Coquille Valley and changing the land. By the Depression, valley farmers had slashed and burned much of the vegetation to create pastureland.

In 1972, during the Sinkos' first year of the dairy operation, high water nearly gutted the river bank. That year, in their first restoration project, the Sinkos stabilized and reclaimed 1,000 feet of the bank. The bank had eroded roughly 40 feet each year, creating steep drop-offs in some places. With the help of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), the Sinkos secured the proper permits – 13 in all – and sloped the bank, putting a rock toe at the bottom. They seeded and irrigated the slope in an effort to sprout a grass cover before winter. Other vegetation sprung up naturally. Now, large



Winter flooding and scouring creates this backwater on the Sinkos' wetland.

willows and alders shade a narrow, deep channel. "And," Doug adds, "the fishing is good."

The Sinkos attempted a second bank stabilization in 1992 – with different results. Again, they sloped back the bank. This time, upon the advice of the funding agencies, the Sinkos did not place rock at the toe of the slope. Doug and Sharon's fears were realized when, over time, the bank reverted to the wide, shallow channel it had been before the restoration.

"We haven't been able to establish a ground cover or trees," says Doug. "Any plants that we've added have been swept away by floods and erosion, just like we predicted."

In 1998, Doug and Sharon learned about the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), a federal program that compensates landowners in agricultural production for restoring and protecting their wetlands. The WRP offered the tools and incentives they needed to maximize the natural state of their wetland and pay off part of the land. The easement, which allows the owners to maintain control, was particularly attractive to them.

"In reality, we are caretakers of this earth for such a short time. We would like to give something back to the land that has been good to us."

In 1999, after several brainstorming sessions with the South Coast Land Conservancy (SCLC) and Tom Purvis of NRCS on how to restore the wetland, Doug and Sharon applied to enroll 210 acres in the WRP. That's when the delays, frustrations and fun began. The Sinkos spent 18 months haggling with

the Farm Service Agency (FSA) over the real value of the land. The SCLC negotiated, read over legal contracts and generally helped them navigate the arduous process. The Sinkos, with help from the SCLC, altered the standard WRP easement language. They were able to maximize the value of the land by relinquishing their rights to hunt, fish, control trespassers and mine below the surface of the land.

"Imagine our dismay," Doug says, "when two appraisals and four months later the Farm Service Agency required a third appraisal." The SCLC used grants from USFWS Coastal Wetlands grant and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to compensate the Sinkos for the gap between what the WRP was willing to pay and the appraised value of the land.

Twenty months later, with all the paperwork complete and financial matters settled, Doug and Sharon look forward to working with SCLC and Ducks Unlimited to secure the necessary permits. They hope to begin construction in June 2002.

At times, they were fed-up and just wanted to walk away from the project. But then they remembered their greater purpose. "In reality," says Sharon, "we are caretakers of this earth for such a short time. We would like to give something back to land that has been good to us."

After a dry summer, the Sinkos still have water in a few spots on their Coquille Valley property.

TERRY WAHL

It may be those that do most, dream most.

STEPHEN LEACOCK

1869-1944

Sheep Farmers Shift Practices

Movable fence protects streams, fuels dreams

Langlois, Oregon

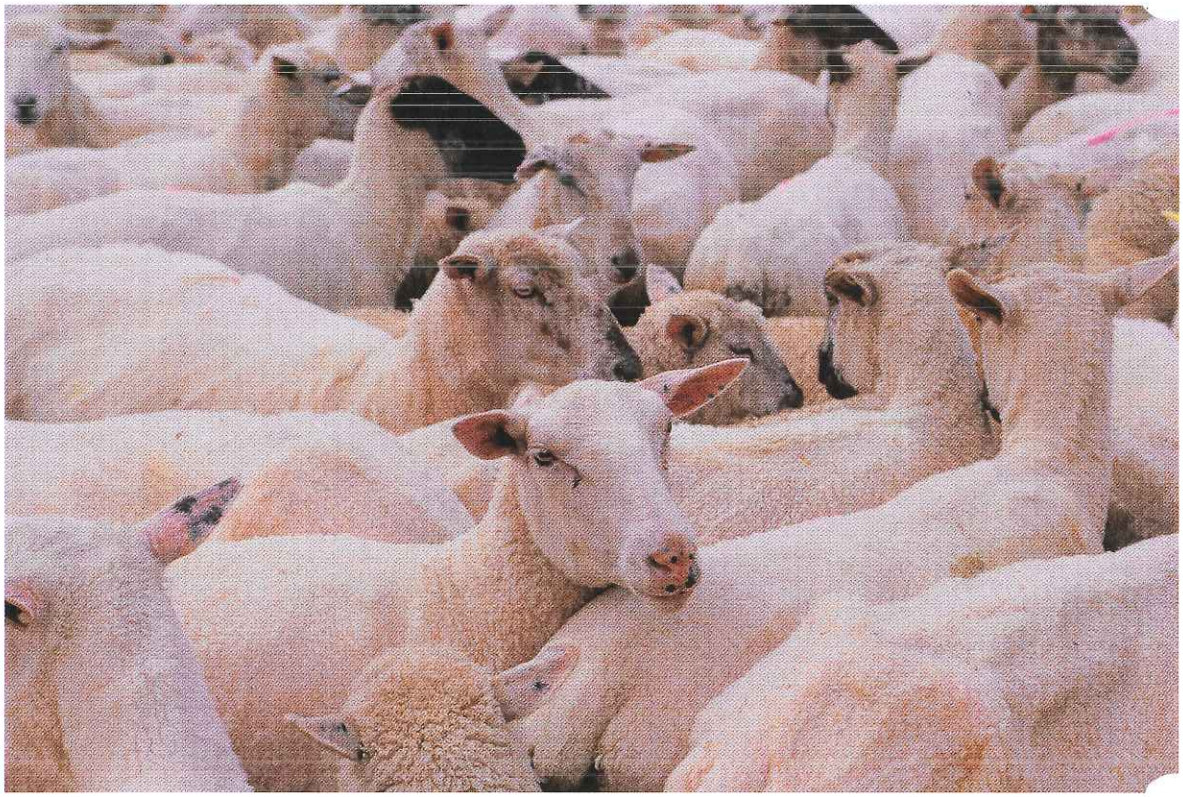
In 1874, the McKenzie family brought their Scotch sheep ranching heritage to a site south of Cape Blanco, one of the windiest places in Oregon. They homesteaded 480 acres to raise sheep along the Elk River. More than 125 years later, the ranch spans 840 acres, and is run by the Wahl family branch of the McKenzies.

Georgiana Wahl, her daughter Tooz and sons Terry, Bucky and Pete, tend to day-to-day operations on the South Coast ranch. Georgiana's other children raise sheep in various Willamette Valley locations. Family members share the management of the original ranch property, each having equal voice and power.

National trends, economic opportunities, d the conditions of the land helped shape the Wahls' ranch management techniques. In the 1960s and 70s, like many other ranchers, the Wahls removed willow, discouraged beaver, and cultivated as much land as possible. In the early 1980s, they relined the creeks with trees. "We planted trees on the land that wasn't really fit for grazing," says Terry, "and fenced to keep the livestock out of the creeks."

They also rotate the grazing areas on the ranch daily. "We practice intensive grazing – using movable electric fencing," says Terry. "We let them feed for a day and then move them to the next strip." This reduces the impact on the land and results in higher quality forage.

Since 1995, the Wahls have worked to restore streams, wetlands and fish with help from a long list of government programs. Harry Hoogesteger, coordinator of the South Coast Watershed Council, has cut some of the red tape of state and federal clean water and endangered fish recovery programs.



The Wahl family has raised sheep for over 125 years on their Cape Blanco ranch.

"Harry makes it all so easy," smiles Terry. "After a couple of years of working together, he has a good sense of our family operation and interests and has been able to match them with and help navigate us through a variety of government funding and permitting programs."

The Wahls have fenced and planted more than five miles of riparian area along the Elk River mainstem and its tributaries, to increase shade and keep livestock out of the streams. The fencing also has improved ranch management. "An example," says Terry, " is that when sheep get sick they go to wet places to die. The fencing eliminates the difficult task of hauling sick or dead sheep out of the wetlands."

In their restoration projects, the Wahls erect the fences and plant the trees, which include willow, spruce, shore pine, hemlock, cottonwood and western red cedar. The South Coast Watershed Council, Curry County Soil & Water District, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and the Environmental Protection Agency have contributed funding to the effort.

The rewards came quickly, according to Terry. Dense willow thickets and conifers sprang up along the river's edge, within the fenced-off seeps and in the wet areas around the ranch. Terry, a keen birder, notes, "It seems like the numbers and types of birds using the ranch have increased, though I haven't conducted a census to prove it."

One of the significant restoration projects took place on Cedar Creek, a tributary of the Elk River. A culvert there blocked fish passage upstream. The Wahls worked with a neighbor to replace the culvert with a rail car. This opened up a wetland and nearly a mile of salmon habitat. The South Coast Watershed Council helped coordinate the project and

raise funds from the Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, US Fish and Wildlife Service, South Coast Watershed Council and Curry County Soil & Water District.

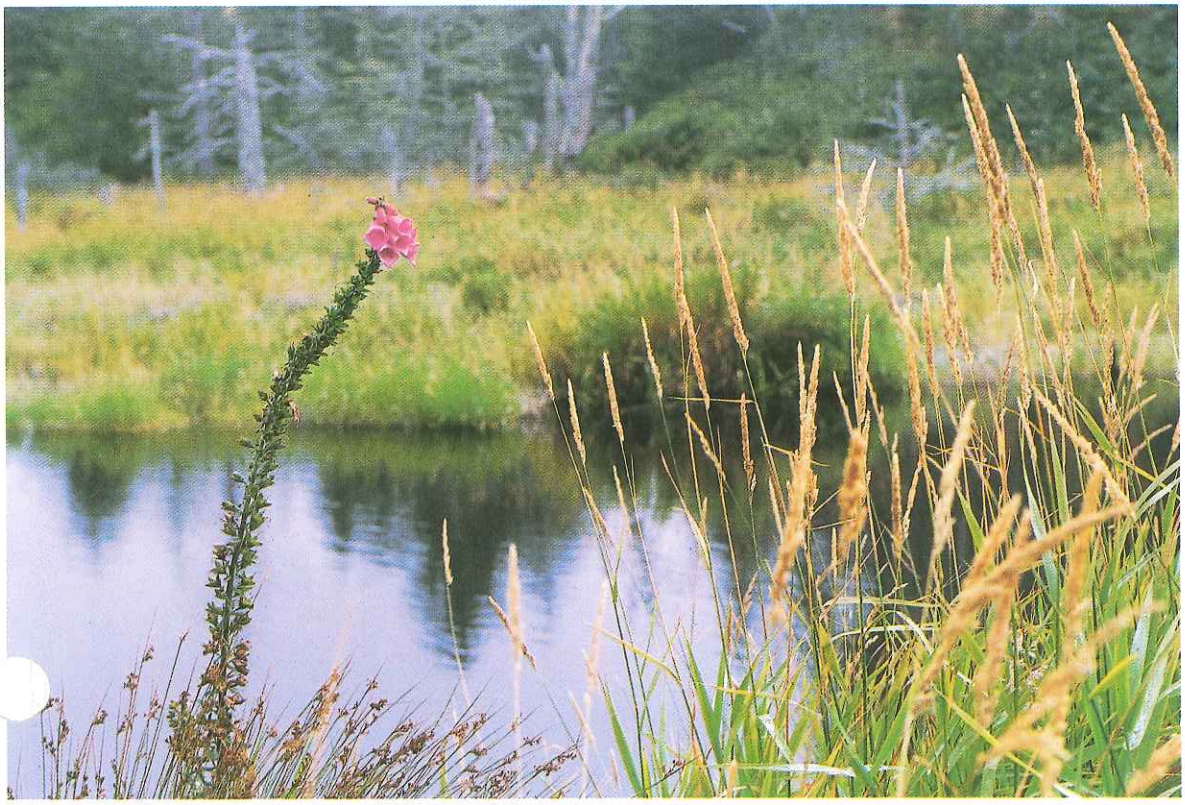
The Wahls and the South Coast Watershed Council are now eyeing a new project on Swamp Creek, which also runs through the Wahl Ranch. Two impounded reservoirs there could provide ideal rearing habitat for coho salmon. The family plans to install fishways in both of the dikes that hold back irrigation water in order to open up nearly five acres of rearing habitat. The creek historically had runs of coho and chum salmon.

Once again, the South Coast Watershed Council is helping solicit project funds and in-kind services from US Fish and Wildlife Service, the South Coast Watershed Council, Curry County Soil & Water District and the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board.

"Working with the government programs has been great for us," says Terry. "As long as they match our family management goals and strategies, we are open to new projects and partnerships."

". . . when sheep get sick they go to wet places to die. The fencing eliminates the difficult task of hauling sick or dead sheep out of the wetlands."

Sheep, fish and wildlife live side by side on the Wahls' expansive ranch.



LOUIS AND MARR RANDALL

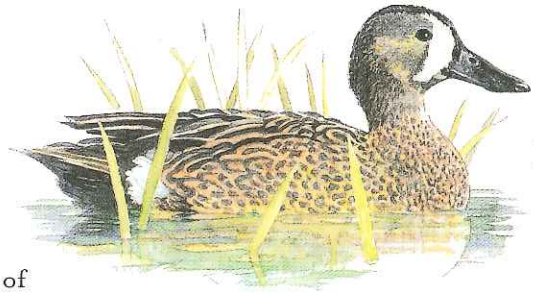
What is honored in a country will be cultivated there.

PLATO
347–427 BC

Farmer Finds New Ways on River

Duck club proves profitable

Bonanza, Oregon



At age 13, Louis Randall moved from Fort Sumner, New Mexico to the Langell Valley, outside of Bonanza, Oregon – the backdrop for Zane Grey's book *Forlorn River*. After 58 years of ranching and farming, he is busy reclaiming over 1,000 acres of wetland on his 10,000-acre Circle 5 ranch.

Changes to the land, rivers and hydrology of the valley began in 1868, when the Langell family settled along the banks of the Lost River and rechanneled it to reclaim 4,000 acres of farmland. By 1904, as more families settled in the valley, the network of canals and irrigation ditches expanded in all directions, transforming arid sagelands to bountiful fields of grain and irrigated pasture. In 1902, the creation of the Bureau of Reclamation saw the beginning of more and larger diversion and irrigation projects in the Klamath Basin and Lost River Valley. The biggest change for the Circle 5 Ranch was the 1950s Bureau of Reclamation project that rechannelized and rerouted the Lost River through the swamplands to promote irrigation. The reconstruction dewatered the valley.

"We used to cut hay on the high ground, and then in 1945 we broke up 640 of the 2,000 acres of wetlands on the land," Randall says. He spent the summer of 1945 plowing and preparing the land. The following year, he planted it in oats. "It was all wetlands before the Bureau of Reclamation started moving things around," explains Randall.

"After a couple of years of good yields, the swamp land was never very productive," continues Randall. People had always hunted ducks on the ranch. "So in 1970, in order to make up for the economic loss of farming the marginal soggy ground, I decided to restore the wetland, improve the waterfowl habitat and start a hunting club."

So began his first restoration effort. He was a true pioneer, recreating the wetlands on his own long before any of the federal wetland enhancement programs existed. Using his own machinery, Randall dug a drain ditch for two center pivots and built a dike around the drainage ditch to keep the poorest soils wet.

"It was a lot easier back then. You didn't have to get everyone's permission and all kinds of permits to change around your land," Randall recalls. "Today it's a different story." As the habitat improved, the number of ducks and geese increased. He started up the club and charged people $10 to hunt in the wetland.

In 1989, he entered his first partnership with a federal agency, US Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners in Fish and Wildlife Program. He received funds for a 400-acre wetland restoration on the property near the Lost River. In 1996, he received additional funding to fence livestock from some spring-fed ponds.

Randall saw that traditional ranching needed to move forward and that the marshlands were providing more income as a duck club than from crop production. He decided to put portions of the wetland into a permanent easement. In 1994, he enrolled 700 acres in the Wetlands Reserve Program and in 1997 added an additional 311 acres.

"Anymore, a person can't change or decide how to manage their land without asking for permission, and the permission adds up to a lot of paperwork permits and multi-agency scrutiny."

Although he was able to benefit from a variety of federal technical assistance and financial programs, the process was not without frustration. Randall is no stranger to water and natural resource management and policies. He has spent much of the past few decades sitting on the local Soil and Water Conservation District and irrigation boards. At one time, he was head of the Oregon Cattlemen's Association and a founding member of a group of ranchers interested in practicing ecologically sustainable ranching. All that experience with boards, bureaucracies and policies didn't prepare him for the exasperation of navigating federal grant and permit programs.

"Lucky for me, Jim Hainline of US Fish and Wildlife and a cast of others were there to shepherd me through the Corps of Engineers permits and archeological clearances," Randall sighs. He also had some differences of opinion with Natural Resources Conservation Service about active management activities such as mowing and burning. "Anymore, a person can't change or decide how to manage their land without asking for permission," Randall sighs, "and the permission adds up to a lot of paperwork, permits and multi-agency scrutiny."

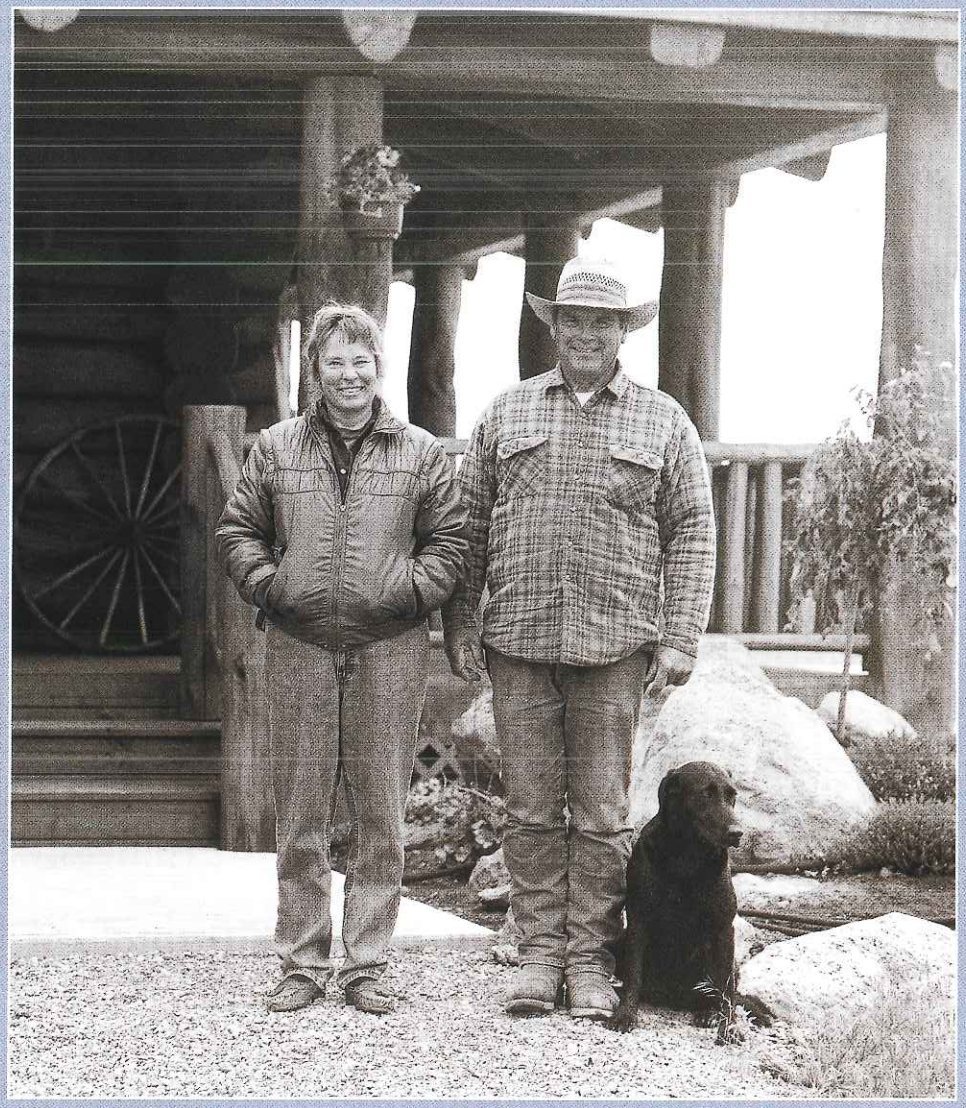
Louis Randall's pioneering efforts provide daily rewards. He began his restoration in 1970.

In February 2001, he completed restoration and enhancement of 700 acres of moist soil wetlands, and 200 acres of adjacent uplands on land previously used for hay production and livestock grazing. Much of it took place on the land he had previously enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program.

The restoration funding was provided by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited and a North American Wetland Conservation Act grant. It supported construction of levees and water control structures to restore the historic hydrology in three independent wetland areas. The water control structures have also improved the capability to manage water on the existing wetlands.

Midway through the construction process, Randall had one more setback. Until he received a pond permit from Oregon Water Resources Department, he could not direct water into the newly restored wetland. He was a bit confused about why he needed a permit. Prior to the restoration, the same land, then in farm fields, ponded water in much the same way. A year later, Randall and the wetland patiently wait for approval to let the water flow.

The Circle 5 Ranch shows how private landowners can integrate wildlife protection into agricultural operations. Thirty years of habitat restoration have attracted a variety of waterfowl, sandhill cranes, tricolored blackbirds, bald eagles and northern harriers to the wetland. "I'm proud of returning the land to how it looked when I moved here as a teen," Randall says.



JEAN AND JERRY HINES

Heroes are not grand statues framed against a red sky.

They are people who say this is my community

and it is my responsibility to make it better.

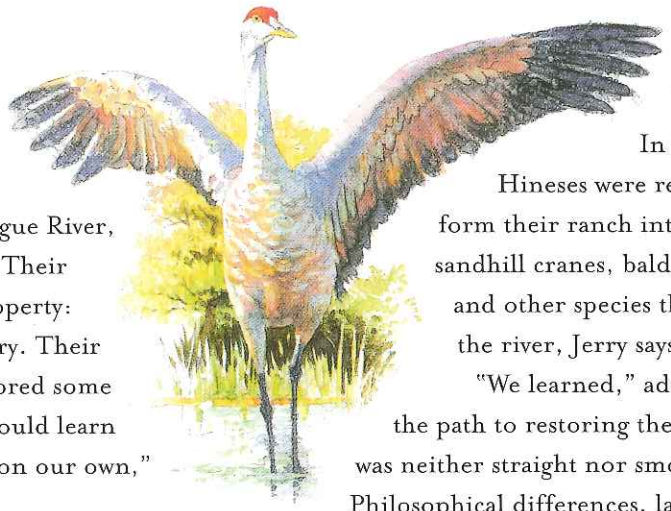
TOM MCCALL

1913–1983

Couple Learns from Neighbor's Mistake

Finds new bumps in road to restoration

Chiloquin, Oregon



Jerry and Jean Hines bought their 92 acres on the Sprague River, near Chiloquin, in 1995. Their goal for the riverfront property: creating a wildlife sanctuary. Their neighbor had already restored some wetland. "We figured we could learn from him before starting on our own," Jerry says.

The neighbor shared design and technique advice. But Jean and Jerry learned their biggest lesson from their neighbor's mistake. The Division of State Lands had stopped the project because the neighbor had not obtained the proper permits. The Hineses learned they needed state and federal permits before moving any dirt. They also learned from the neighbor about the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners in Wildlife Program and the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wetlands Reserve Program, and pursued opportunities with both.

In 1999, the Hineses were ready to transform their ranch into a refuge for sandhill cranes, bald eagles, trout and other species they saw on the river, Jerry says.

"We learned," adds Jean, "that the path to restoring the historic wetland was neither straight nor smooth."

Philosophical differences, language barriers, human error and bureaucracy added twists to their bumpy restoration project. The Hineses also discovered the importance of wetland jargon. "We quickly learned from a very helpful US Fish and Wildlife Service employee," says Jean, "this restoration culture has its own vocabulary. We had to substitute 'berms' for 'levees' and 'marshes' for 'ponds.' The project goals had to include 'improving water quality' and 'fish habitat'."

The Hineses hoped to diversify habitat on their property to attract a variety of fish and wildlife. They planned to develop nesting

A winter snow and ice-coat blankets the Sprague River.

islands in the floodplains, create different water depths by enhancing the existing swales and complete a berm around the wetland to hold water. The Hineses submitted their first Division of State Lands permit application. But the state and federal agencies involved in the permit process reached an impasse. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife Service disagreed about fish entrapment and the best way to connect and restore floodplains and oxbows. "The Division of State Lands told us the two agencies had to work it out," Jerry says.

After months of discussion, they reached consensus when the Hineses proposed adding fish escape routes to each of the four fields they were turning into wetlands. They also planned to deepen the oxbow between the outside bend and the confluences of the river so fish would not get trapped or isolated.

Finally, the Hineses learned they needed a separate permit for the oxbow work. The Division of State Lands is requiring them to apply for a general permit, rather than applying for a restoration and enhancement permit for construction of the berm connecting the islands to the rest of the ranch. Therefore, the application process will cost $225 and take longer for review. Perry Lummley, recently retired from the lands division, plans to help them through the permit process should they encounter more roadblocks.

"As a landowner, it would have been helpful if there was one point person, agreement among the agencies, and a knowledge of the true costs, restrictions and timelines."

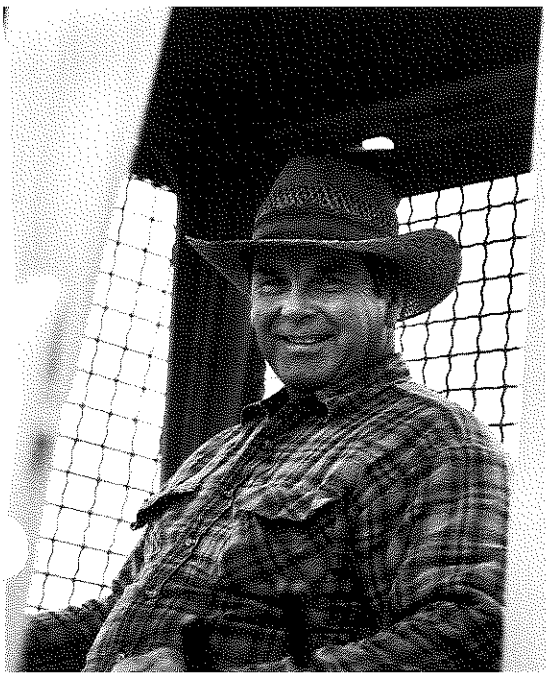
In the fall of 2000, the Hineses hit another bump. They had applied to enroll 80 acres into the Wetlands Reserve Program, but the agency neglected to file their application. The Hineses convinced agency officials to place their project on a waiting list, should funds become available. If so, the couple has a chance of being accepted in the 2002-2003 program. That is, if the program is funded.

Meanwhile, the Hineses await guideline development for the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, which offers assistance to ndowners interested in enhancing wildlife abitat.

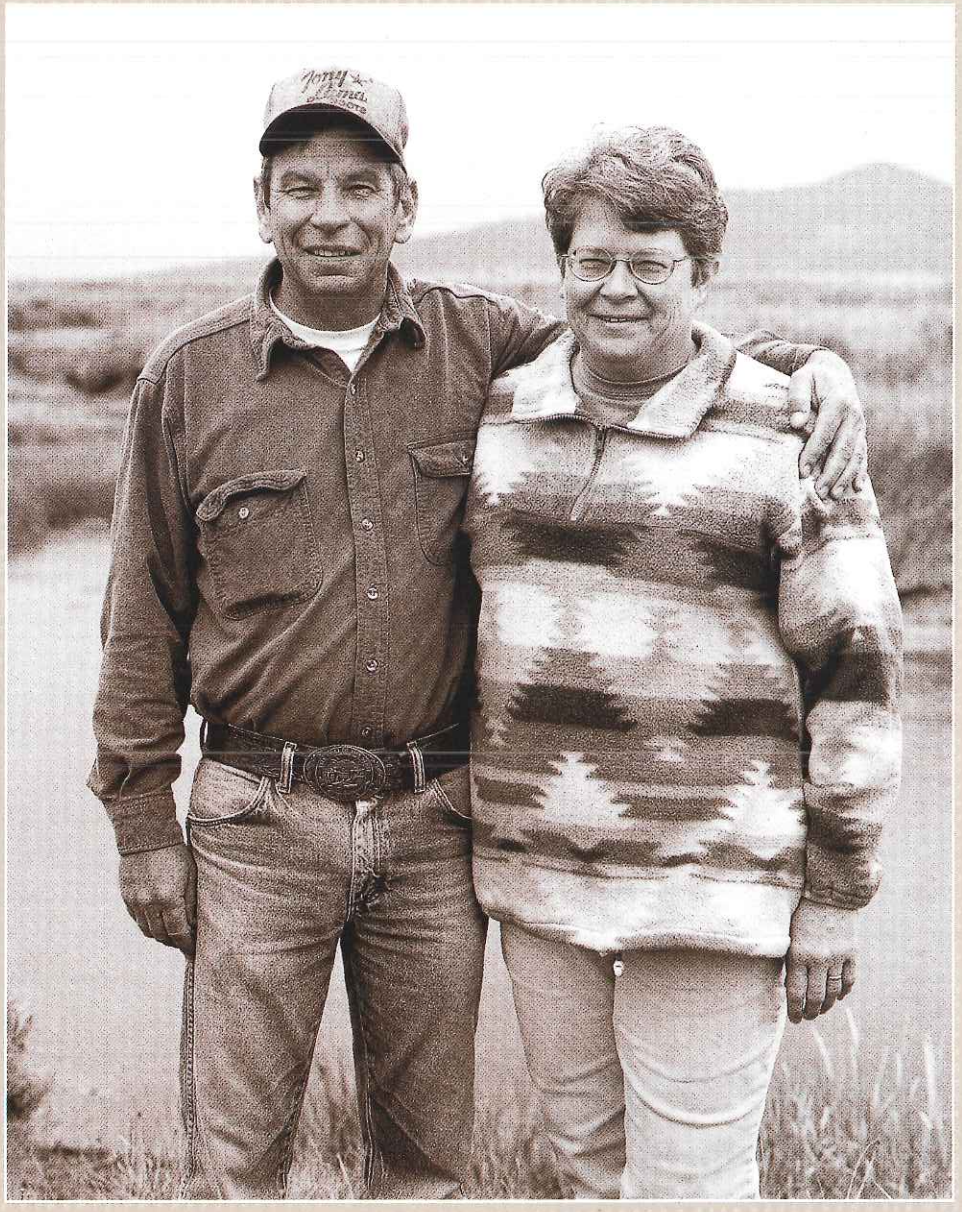
Committed to their dreams for the wetland, the Hineses search for more funding. In early 2001, they applied for and were accepted into the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners in Fish and Wildlife Program. In April, with permits in hand, Jerry began moving the earth. He created berms for the rice fields and the lower wetland restoration. He also prepared and planted the south barley field as a food plot for wild geese.

In another bump, the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) in late spring denied the Hineses' request for funding. Thus, the couple is pursuing other avenues for funding that may be more receptive to their vision. They are optimistic about the Hatfield Fund, which provides funding for projects in the Klamath Basin.

The Hineses save time and money by doing their own surveying, design, drafting, engineering and earth-moving. But leaping over government hurdles is expensive and time consuming. "As a landowner," says Jerry, "it would have been helpful if there was one point-person, agreement among the agencies, and a knowledge of the true costs, restrictions, and timelines. Hopefully," he muses, "our experience can provide help for the next person, like our neighbor did for us."



Jerry Hines, sitting in his tractor, reflects upon his labor to restore historic wetlands and improve wildlife diversity in the Sprague River.



DAN AND KATHY RIDGEWAY

We have subdued the wilderness and made it ours. We have conquered the earth and the richness thereof. We have indelibly stamped upon its face the seal of our dominating will. Now, unlike Alexander sighing for more worlds to conquer, we should address ourselves to adding beauty to that glory and grandeur.

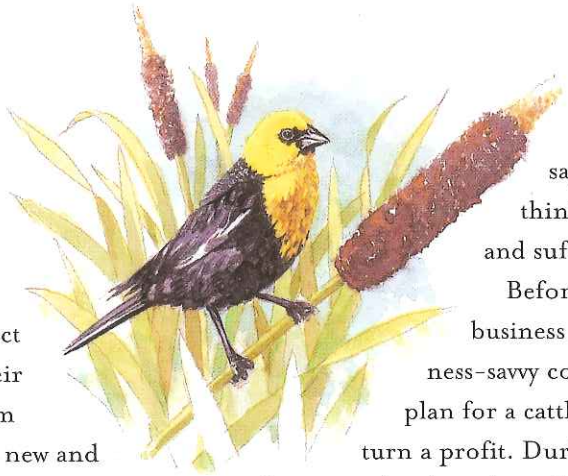
ALICE FOOTE MACDOUGALL

1867-1945

Business Realities Spur Change

Neighbors object to government partnerships

Sprague River Valley, Oregon



The spotted owl was the first animal to change Dan and Kathy Ridgeway's life. Forest conservation practices to protect the endangered bird ended their Marion County business, Salem Lift Truck, Inc. They had sold new and used forklifts, and also had a rental fleet of forklifts. It was a very successful business until the spotted owl controversy destroyed the local timber industry. In 1994, they moved to the Sprague River Valley in South Central Oregon in search of a more peaceful life.

Dan's childhood memories shaped their dreams of a new life along the Sprague River. In his youth, his family had owned and managed an Idaho farm. "We thought we could make a go of a cattle operation in the Sprague River Valley," he says. But the cattle's impact on the river, combined with economic realities and riverbank reveries, gave the Ridgeways' life a new twist. "One might hear our story," says Dan, "and think we enjoy pain and suffering."

Before starting their new business in 1994, the business-savvy couple penciled out a plan for a cattle ranch that would turn a profit. During their first year in business, they leased 100 breed cows. The following year, they switched to running their own yearlings. The third year, they ran leased yearlings. The fourth and final year, they ran 200 leased yearlings and 100 pair of their own. Based on the numbers, their business appeared to be on track.

However, the Ridgeways noticed that the livestock degraded their property. Water levels rose and they were losing land to erosion. "Watching the water and land change," says Dan, "I realized that if I did nothing, I would find myself living on the banks of Lake Sprague." Again, Dan's memories of youth spurred a change for the couple. He

remembered fishing for trout along lush streams: "I decided I wanted to do my part to restore the Sprague River."

In the final analysis, a decision to reduce the number of cattle would not make sense, so Dan and Kathy explored other ways to make money from their property. Recalling the advice of a neighbor, they applied to enroll their wetlands in the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). In 1998, the Ridgeways placed 259 of their 273 acres into the WRP. They used the money from the WRP to pay off the rest of the land. "At that point," says Dan, "I learned to walk in two very different worlds and develop both environmental and agricultural eyes."

Back at the drawing board, the Ridgeways researched ways to finance the restoration and identified potential new income sources. Instead of chasing cows, building fences and managing vegetation, Dan and Kathy filled out forms, attended meetings and spent hours on the telephone. The hardest part for the enthusiastic couple was waiting. "Once again," says Dan, "we created a business plan which has had to continuously float and change." This time, their plan for the property was a duck-hunting or fly-fishing club and an environmental destination for canoeists and birdwatchers.

Instead of chasing cows, building fences and managing vegetation, Dan and Kathy filled out forms, attended meetings and spent hours on the telephone.

"We entered the WRP with the expectation that NRCS would provide financial and technical assistance for our restoration project," says Dan. The couple, however, has not always seen eye-to-eye with the program administrators. After a year in limbo, they began looking for other potential funding sources.

Meanwhile, word of the Ridgeways' plans to restore the wetland filtered through the community. "Our neighbors began to shun us," says Dan. "One morning at the local restaurant we were seated with someone who spent the entire breakfast pounding the maple syrup pitcher on the table as he lectured us about the evils of government and taking lands out of production. We haven't returned there for breakfast."

Negativity toward the Ridgeways' new enterprise has been emotionally trying for the couple and has been a barrier to their search for funds. Many funding sources require support from the community or local watershed council. And the bureaucracies can be overwhelming.

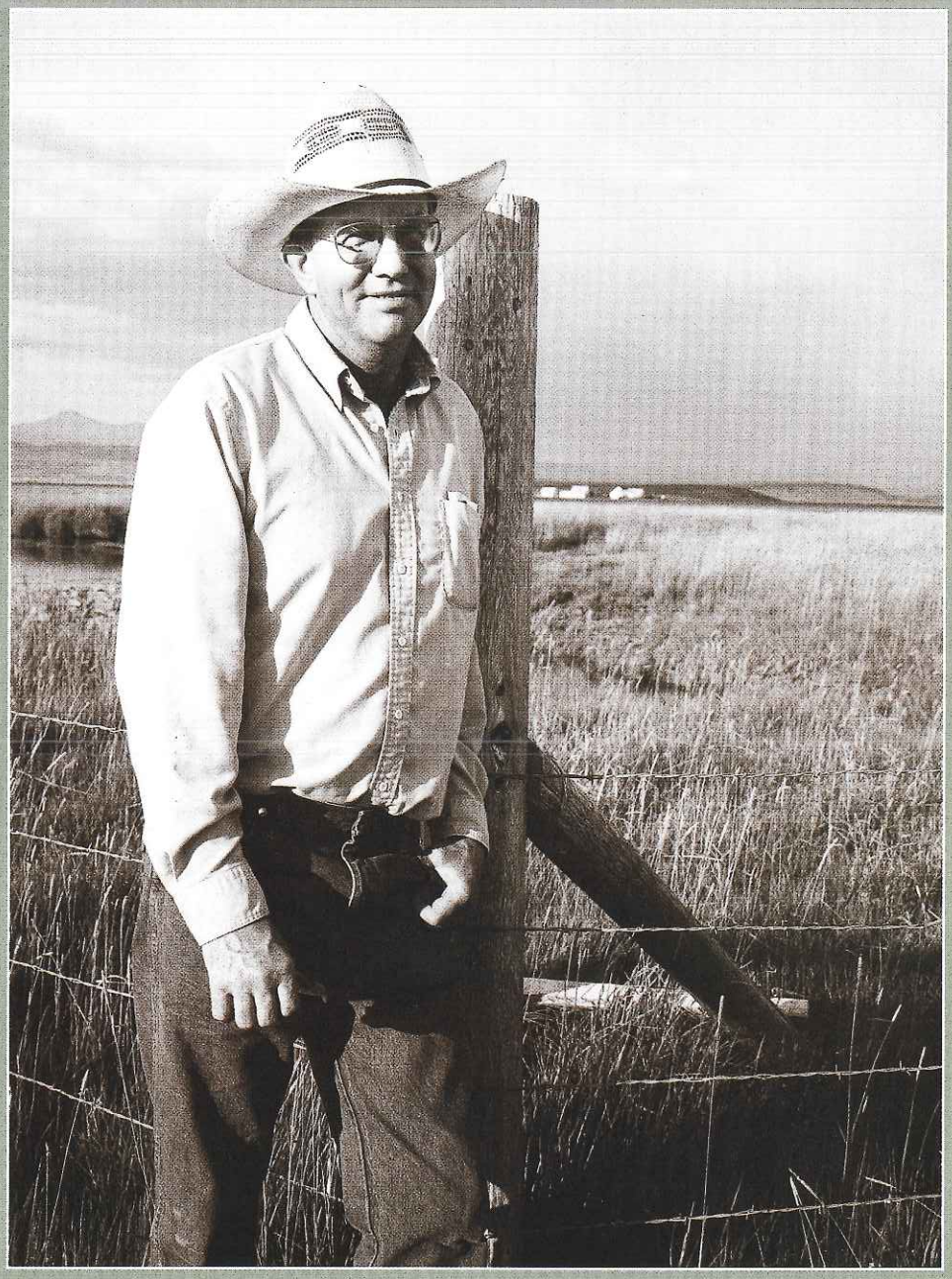
Dan Ridgeway (left) paddles the Sprague River with a friend.

Sandhill cranes are annual visitors to the Sprague River Valley.

"Throughout this process," says Dan, "we ve often felt lost, not knowing if we were at beginning, midway through, or just about done and ready to construct. There are so many agencies, regulations and criteria that need to be met. From a landowner's perspective, they often do not seem well aligned, sometimes actually at odds."

Through hard work, persistence, and a few helpful folks, Dan and Kathy have gotten help. Curt Mullis and Faye Weekly of the US Fish and Wildlife Service Ecosystem Restoration Office in Klamath Falls provided technical assistance, guidance and handholding as Dan and Kathy navigated through a maze of permit and grant applications. Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and USFWS Jobs in the Woods Program have provided some funds.

The Ridgeways are optimistic that after four years of paperwork and negotiations, this summer they can finally send out invitations to the groundbreaking. In addition to adding 257 acres of fish and wildlife habitat, the Ridgeways hope their work will help simplify the process for other landowners who choose to restore the land. "Being pioneers," says Dan, "is never the easy road."



JACK SOUTHWORTH

A man is ethical only when life, as such, is sacred to him,

that of plants and animals as well as that of his fellow man,

and when he devotes himself helpfully

to all life that is in need of help.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

1875-1965

Holistic Approach Inspires Change

Beaver abound in former pastureland

Seneca, Oregon

In 1826, Antoine Sylvaille of the Hudson Bay Company described Bear Valley as "abounding with beaver." In that spot, he saw more beaver than he had seen in any one place within the Northwest Territory. Now, 175 years later, Jack and Teresa Southworth restore the Silvies River on their Seneca ranch and learn patience from beaver, which once again are bountiful.

Jack's grandfather came to Bear Valley in 1885. He homesteaded 160 acres to raise hay for oxen to run a sawmill near Canyon City. He also set up Seneca's first sawmill, post office and general store. With profits from these enterprises, Jack's grandfather pulled together enough money to buy out some other homesteaders, expand the family holdings and start cattle ranch.

The ranch, now 12,000 acres, continues to pass from generation to generation. Like his father, Jack experiments with the banks and streamside vegetation along the Silvies River. Many years ago, the family changed the land along the river from a dense willow thicket to hay and pasture land. Now, Jack and his wife Teresa are restoring the river banks to their natural, historic condition.

During one of the drought years of the 1930s, so the story goes, a friend of Jack's grandfather asked if the Silvies River still ran. "I can't tell," Jack's grandfather said. "It just kind of trickles from one beaver dam to the next." In 1955, the Soil and Water Conservation Service presented Jack's father with a plan to straighten the Silvies River through the ranch and build channels to improve irrigation of the adjacent pasture and meadow. "At the time, my father rejected that proposal," Jack recalls. "He subscribed to the graze-every-inch-of-ground fad of the time and fastidiously worked to remove the willows along the bank."

When Jack was 12, the family bought a new tractor and Jack got to drive it to the creek and pull out the last willow. "I doubt I will ever feel so good about anything again," Jack recalls, "I'd finally made our meadows look like the fields on the cover of *Successful Farming.* Surely I was doing the right thing."

By the early 1980s the ranch had gone from debt-free to incurring nearly $1 million in debt. In 1984, Jack and Teresa attended a week-long class on Holistic Management. "I was looking for any answer to help turn things around," he says. Holistic Management is a decision-making framework that assists farmers and others in establishing a long-term goal, a detailed financial plan, a biological plan for the landscape and a monitoring program to assess progress toward the goal. He walked away from the seminar with some good information on grazing and financial management practices, but tucked away in his back pocket, the centerpiece goal-setting process. "It was as if I'd bought a new car but didn't have the key to start it," Jack says.

Three years later, Jack, Teresa, and their employee, Ed Newton, struggled through some goal-setting. They reflected on quality-of-life issues and identified what they were for the ranch. "It was a very difficult process for the three of us to describe quality of life," recalls Jack. "It was a whole lot easier to talk about calving or what fences needed fixing than to think about what you wanted out of life. In the end, we decided that we did not like to look out on a damaged creek." They felt the land needed some shrubs and a dense stand of perennial grasses. They also wanted willows along the stream banks to attract beaver and trout.

The goal-setting realigned their expectations. "Initially," says Jack, "we thought we always should try to hit a home run and make a lot of money. Once we acknowledged that we love where we live and what we do, we focused on hitting singles." They realized that financial success was only important if it brought about quality of life and environmental success as well. "The ironic thing is," Jack says, "is that we are better off financially as a result. We don't make a big profit, but we make a small one almost every year."

With their new vision, they plotted a new course for themselves. In the early 1990s, they received a grant from Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to fence the riparian portion of the ranch. The first grant covered a mile on each side of Silvies River. "It was pretty gratifying after the first-year willows and other wetland plants were visible," says Jack. In the second year, they received additional funding to construct two more miles of fencing on either side of the creek. "One thing that has made all this fencing possible is Brad Smith's ability at building fence," Jack adds. "Brad works with us here on the ranch and when Brad builds a rockjack, you know it is going to be there for a long, long time." The restoration

A willow grows from a rusty car. Nearly 50 years ago, Jack Southworth's father used th Chevy Impala to stabilize the bank.

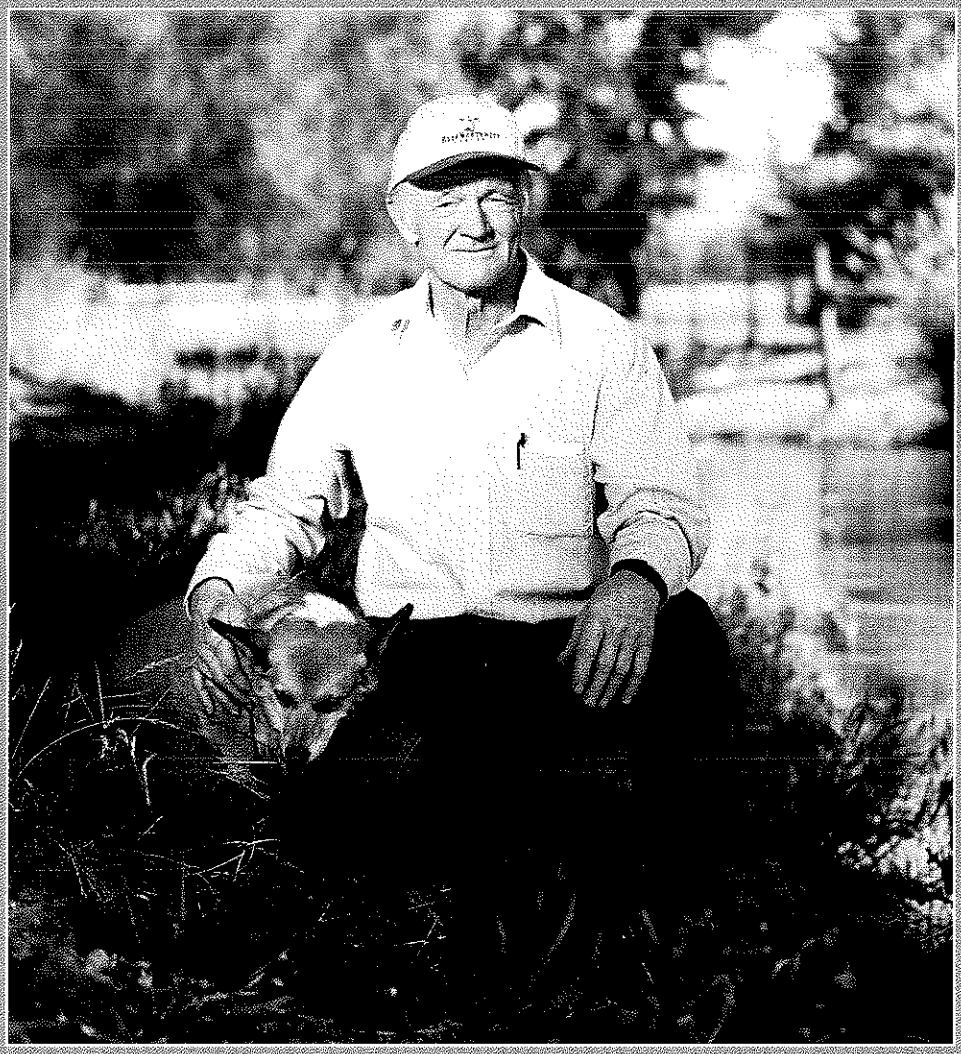
Wetland grasses and sedges take root in the once grazed floodplain of the Silvies River.

has brought neither fortune nor debt to Jack and Teresa, but they feel proud of their healthy stream.

Two sandhill cranes call as Jack points out check dams and gravels they have added to the stream. In the restoration process, the Southworths debated over the depth of the river. They rejected a shallow, more erosion-prone channel, and refocused on their goal for the river: "It validated our choice to add the gravels and check dams to promote a higher water table, better diversity, a healthier meadow and better habitat for bass, suckers, and trout," Jack smiles. New sedges and wetland plants grow in the meadow each year. Plentiful beavers chew on the new willow plantings. The riparian zone may not have the willow lining they had envisioned, but the channel is definitely healthier. "We just have to learn to wait and let nature take her time," says Jack. "Beaver and willows co-existed here for tens of thousands of years without our help."

The Southworths work with the Oregon Country Beef Program, which promotes ecological and sustainable land management practices. Their involvement brings them a higher price and more market certainty.

Teresa also raises llama and sheep. She cards, spins and felts the wool. Jack and Teresa are pleased with their decision for the family ranch. "I think it is a neat thing," says Jack, "when people can make a living off the land in an environmentally sound manner and support the community as well. That's what Teresa and I get to do."



DOUG MCDANIEL

When I am 85 years old and too old to ranch,

my dream is to be able to hobble down to the river

and catch a big trout . . . . I just hope the trout will still be around.

DOUG MCDANIEL, 2001

HURDLES FRUSTRATE RANCHER

Red tape may squelch project

Lostine, Oregon

Doug McDaniel remembers the Wallowa River of his childhood, with its many meanders, log jams and places to fish and explore. Landowners along the bank had a long history of battling this river that encroached upon and stole their land.

After World War II, with access to larger tractors, landowners took control, straightened the river and moved its water through their land as quickly as possible. Over time, the loss of soil increased, rather than decreased, and the river required more maintenance than before. Stabilizing the banks to protect the land became a way of life. No one even considered restoring the twisty, old river.

Between 1960 and 1984, Doug ventured ay from Wallowa County, started a successful gging enterprise and founded RD Mac Inc., a concrete company in La Grande.

In 1970, at the age of 35, Doug returned to Wallowa County and bought an overgrown, 600-acre ranch with a mile of Wallowa River frontage. Doug attacked the overgrown pastures to revive the farm.

"I basically had to level it to re-create a 'normal' ranch. "It didn't take me very long to realize," he muses, "that it was going to be hard to make money off the 400 acres of upland pasture and 200 acres of bottomland."

He decided to restore the river to its historic shape. His first task was fencing off the river to protect it from cattle. Willows and other trees stabilized the banks and shaded the river, but high water continued to scour and carry away soil, woody debris and other nutrients important to fish. In March 1996, Doug partnered with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to construct a fish screen on the Cross Country Ditch. He worked with them

on installation of a second fish screen. In 1999, he constructed a fish ladder up to the pond.

Aerial photographs and walks through bottomlands allowed Doug to trace the meanderings of the Wallowa River as it once was. When the former cement company operator penciled out what it would cost to extract and haul the gravel to re-create the old channel, the math looked good: "I knew the sale of the gravel would come close to paying for most of the project expenses."

Doug set up visits with resource agency staff to brainstorm ways to improve fish habitat. ODFW biologists came up with some concepts. Other agencies took an interest in the project, and began to amass funding. It seemed like a model project: a willing landowner with a large section of the river and adjacent bottomland willing to fund the restoration. Between 1992 and 1994, after countless meetings, discussions, and site visits, Doug's patience began to wither. The delays and lack of decision blocked his dream for five years.

In 1999, Doug tried again, enlisting help from Wallowa Resources to revive the project and secure the proper permits. Wallowa

Doug McDaniel created this slack water pond beside the Wallowa River – the first phase of his restoration.