

## Francis Morey Uhler

Francis Morey (Fran) Uhler was born on January 26, 1902, on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota, where his father was a science professor. He developed an early interest in wildlife while exploring the natural areas around his campus home and often went hunting or trapping before attending high school classes.



Francis Uhler

Fran began his professional career on July 1, 1924, as a wildlife research biologist with the Bureau of Biological Survey. He came armed with a degree in biology from Gustavus Adolphus College and a tremendous willingness to learn more about wildlife and their habitats. Shortly after reporting to Washington, D.C., he was called upon to become a member of a select team of three biologists who were responsible for identifying areas suitable for federal acquisition as waterfowl refuges. This mission proved invaluable in the development of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

During the fall of 1933, Fran conducted a very important investigation in the Illinois River area involving the shooting of ducks over live decoys and bait. He found that there was a surprisingly large amount of field-pen shooting with live decoys and bait. As a direct result of his report, live decoys and baiting were prohibited after 1934.

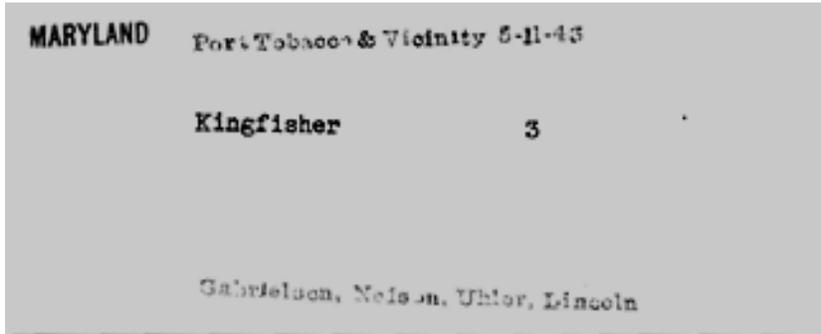
Fran was an internationally-known expert on the foods and feeding habits of wildlife. He conducted intensive studies of fish-eating birds and determined that they were having no detrimental effect on game fish populations. With his coworker, Dr. A. C. Martin, he wrote a significant report on the Food of Game Ducks in the United States and Canada. During the 1970s and 1980s he was involved with an intensive study of Chesapeake Bay and documented the dramatic decline of submerged aquatic vegetation as a food for waterfowl wintering in the Bay. Fran is credited with analyzing more wildlife food samples than any other person in the United States and possibly the world.

Fran worked and lived at Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel, Maryland, from 1940 to 1985. All the major impoundments at Patuxent were constructed under Fran's supervision. He experimented with numerous designs of nesting structures for ducks and developed two designs that were successfully used by ducks, but would deter the use by starlings. The wetlands of Patuxent are still productive wildlife areas, and a continuing testimony to his expertise in wetland management. Two Patuxent impoundments (Uhler 1 and 2) were renamed for as a tribute to him at Patuxent's fiftieth anniversary in 1989.

In recognition of his achievements in the field of wildlife research, with particular reference to studies of food habits of North American wildlife, he was the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award of the Department of the Interior in 1958. An honorary Doctor of Science degree was awarded to Fran at Patuxent in 1987 by Gustavus Adolphus College. His motto was "With a little curiosity, there's never a dull moment."

Fran was a member of the AOU from 1924, and was elected to the Washington Biologists' Field Club in 1929, and served as president of the Club from 1940 to 1942. He was awarded honorary member status in 1972. Fran loved the outings at the Island and is most remembered for his enthusiastic attention to cooking shad and oysters over the grill. Fran died in his home on September 30, 1990, after spending part of the day watching birds at his bird feeder. He was a Washington Biologists' Field Club member for 61 years. Before his death in 1990, Uhler donated much of his life's savings to purchase open space along the rapidly developing Patuxent River corridor in Maryland and

permanently save it for posterity and nature. That area is now the Fran Uhler Natural Area, operated by the Maryland - National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The Nature Conservancy has also named a natural area in his honor.



Francis Uhler BPP Migration Card