



Photo Courtesy of US Fish and Wildlife Service

The First Female Field Biologist

Elizabeth “Betty” Losey

Seney National Wildlife Refuge, Schoolcraft County- Michigan Many people have not heard of Elizabeth B. Losey, “Betty” to her friends, but she played an important role in the history of conservation in the United States. When Mrs. Losey graduated from the University of Michigan with a master of science degree in wildlife management and conservation in 1947, it was deemed unsuitable for women to work and stay overnight in the field. She changed that when the US Fish and Wildlife Service hired her as a waterfowl research biologist at Seney National Wildlife Refuge outside Seney, MI. Although she only worked at Seney for three years, Mrs. Losey became the first female research biologist in the country.

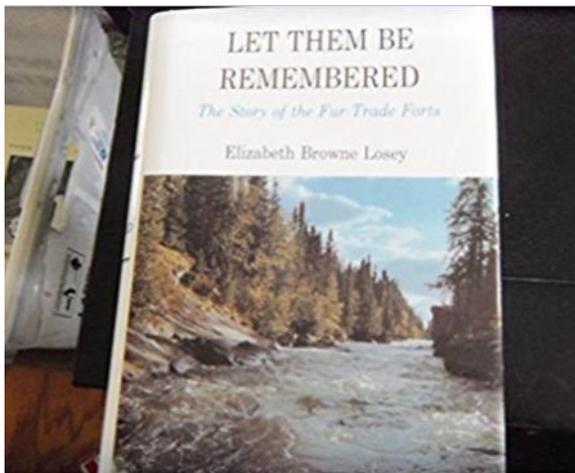
Seney Refuge applied scientist Greg Corace recalls her “willingness to think on her own. When she was working here, she would go to the field with men to do surveys and she was ridiculed. Her passion for what she did drove her to overcome social norms. Betty was a leader in the way she thought and acted and held herself.”

Born in East Orange, New Jersey in 1912, Mrs. Losey graduated high school in Lynn, Massachusetts before earning her bachelor's degree in 1934 and her master's degree in 1946 from the University of Michigan. From there, she started her job at Seney studying duck brood behavior, living in a sparsely furnished cabin on the refuge. She also worked as a part-time research assistant for the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources from 1946 to 1952.

“My favorite workplace was right in the middle of a marsh, listening to the birds and finding waterfowl nests and ducklings.”

- Elizabeth B. Losey

Mrs. Losey became an accomplished writer in her lifetime and wrote two books. The first, *Let Them Be Remembered: The Story of the Fur Trade Forts*, published in 1999, tells the story of the Hudson Bay Company and the fur trade in Canada in the late 1600s. The second, *Seney National Wildlife Refuge: its story*, published in 2003, recounts the history of the Seney National Wildlife Refuge. Over her lifetime, she wrote several technical reports and miscellaneous publications relating to birds and mammals indigenous to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, including "The Importance of Beaver in Waterfowl Management at the Seney National



Let Them Be Remembered: The Story of the Fur Trade Forts, first book written by Elizabeth Losey

Wildlife Refuge" in 1953 and "Duck Brood Behavior at the Seney National Wildlife Refuge" in 1964. At the age of 92, she wrote her final peer-reviewed paper on the history of sharp-tailed grouse at the Seney National Wildlife Refuge, published posthumously in 2007 in the journal *The Passenger Pigeon*. Before her death, Mrs. Losey compiled many of her works and personal papers and donated them to the Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University Archives in Marquette, MI.

Although she only worked at the Seney National Wildlife Refuge from 1947 to 1950, Mrs. Losey continued to live in the area at least part-time until her death in 2005 at the age of 93. When her husband, Everett, died in 1996, Mrs. Losey returned to the Seney National Wildlife Refuge as a volunteer, calling herself a biological historian. In 2003 the National Wildlife Refuge Association named her Volunteer of the Year.

About the Seney National Wildlife Refuge

Established in 1935 by Executive Order under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, Seney National Wildlife Refuge consists of over 95,000 acres of breeding grounds for migratory birds and habitat for other wildlife, including beavers, moose and black bears. After forests in the area were heavily logged in the late 19th century, developers burned, ditched, drained and cultivated the wetlands in an attempt to convert them to farmland. Despite repeated attempts, the soils and harsh conditions of this country would not provide a hospitable environment for sustained settlement and agriculture. Much of the property was then abandoned and reverted to government ownership for unpaid property taxes. Today, almost two-thirds of the refuge is classified as wetland: marshes, swamps and bogs, while the remaining lands are grasslands and forests. The refuge contains the Seney Wilderness Area and the Strangmoor Bog National Natural Landmark, a patterned bog.

More Information

https://www.fws.gov/refuges/about/conservationheroes/ElizabethBettyLosey_07202012.html

<https://www.fws.gov/news/blog/index.cfm/2016/3/4/Womens-History-Month-Wild-and-Inspiring-Females>

<http://www.nmu.edu/sites/DrupalArchives/files/UserFiles//MSS-004.html>