Bert Popowski Papers

Collection Summary

Identifier: **MA 5**

Title: Bert Popowski Papers

Dates: 1935-1978

Extent: 6.53 linear feet (8 document cases, 2 oversize boxes), photographs, audio-visual materials

Creator: Popowski, Bert

Language: English

Repository: South Dakota State University Archives & Special Collections, University Station, Box 2115, 1300 North Campus Drive, Brookings, South Dakota, 57007

Access Note: Open. Materials must be used in-house and do not circulate.

Preferred Citation: Title or description of item, date, MA 5, box number, folder number, Bert Popowski Papers, South Dakota State University Archives and Special Collections, Brookings, South Dakota.

Abstract

Bert John Popowski (1904–1982) was a nationally recognized outdoor writer, photographer, and authority on hunting and wildlife whose career spanned more than fifty years. A graduate of South Dakota State College, he authored over 2,300 articles and numerous books that influenced mid-twentieth-century hunting practices, firearms knowledge, and conservation awareness. His writings appeared widely in leading American sporting publications and were also translated for international audiences. This collection reflects Popowski's sustained impact on outdoor literature and hunting culture, documenting his role in popularizing varmint hunting, advancing hunting techniques and safety, and contributing to broader discussions of wildlife management and conservation during the twentieth century.

Biography

Bert John Popowski was born on February 15, 1904, in Grafton, North Dakota, where he spent his childhood and completed his elementary and high school education. He attended South Dakota State College in Brookings, graduating in 1926 with a Bachelor of Science degree in printing. In 1930, he married Harriet Seymour of Aberdeen, South Dakota, and they had two sons, John Seymour and Jerome Bert.

Throughout his life, Popowski lived in various parts of the United States and held a range of positions, including high school principal and associate editor for Look magazine. From 1951 until his death in 1982, he worked as a freelance writer, author, and contributing editor for numerous outdoor and sporting publications. Over a prolific career spanning fifty years, he authored more than 2,300 articles. His first feature story appeared in Outdoor Life in 1931. He later served as a contributing editor for The American Rifleman, where he wrote the “Dope Bag” column, and contributed regular columns to other magazines, including “Hunting” for The Outdoorsman, “Guns and Ammunition” for Hunting & Fishing, and “The Shot Tower” for Guns and Hunting.

Popowski gained national recognition for his book Hunting Pronghorn Antelope, along with several other major works, some of which were translated into Spanish and Japanese. An accomplished photographer, he often illustrated his own articles and books. In his early years, he became known as an expert varmint hunter, and his writings helped popularize this form of hunting. In 1932, he built a log cabin near the Narrows on French Creek in Custer State Park, where he weathered the Great Depression and devoted himself to writing. In 1949, he won the National Crow Shooting Championship, using crow calls of his own design to defeat 51 competitors. His lifelong interests extended beyond hunting to natural history and wildlife management.

In 1979, Popowski donated his books, manuscripts, and photographs to South Dakota State University. He was honored the same year at the Outdoor Writers Association of America convention in Rapid City, where the State of South Dakota recognized him as the “Dean of South Dakota Outdoor Writers.” In his later years, he faced health challenges, including cancer and a stroke, and passed away on February 14, 1982. His legacy endures as a prolific writer, photographer, and advocate for wildlife and outdoor pursuits.

Scope and Content

This collection documents the career and work of Bert Popowski as an author, hunter, and photographer, highlighting his contributions to the fields of hunting, wildlife, and conservation. The materials span from 1935 to 1978, with a significant portion consisting of articles authored by Popowski on topics ranging from big game and varmint hunting to conservation and safety. The research material series is the largest, containing published articles in various hunting and wildlife publications, including an autographed copy of The Outdoorsman (June 1947) featuring his article “Off-Season Duck Hunting.”

The collection includes a wide range of manuscripts accompanied by correspondence with publishers, records of submissions, publication status, and payments received. Manuscripts cover diverse subjects such as hunting techniques, firearms, wildlife, and conservation. Materials also relate to Popowski’s books, including illustrations by Gordon Elliott for Crow Shooting (29 ink drawings) and photograph proofs for Hunting Pronghorn Antelope (37 pages). Additional artwork features a mat board drawing of a fireplace, believed to depict Popowski’s cabin, created by C. Greenidge.

General materials include correspondence from 1942 to 1956, as well as photographs, illustrations, and a phonograph record titled Crow Calling, which features Popowski demonstrating crow calls. The photographs include black-and-white images of wildlife and hunting, negatives, and a set of 22 matted and signed photographs that won first prize at the Iowa State Fair.

Another unique feature of the collection is Popowski’s contributions to the Japanese magazine Modern Hunting (1968–1970), which includes translated articles and writings on hunting techniques. The phonograph record and international publications further illustrate Popowski’s expertise and contributions to hunting practices.

The collection provides a comprehensive record of Popowski’s career, offering insight into mid-twentieth-century hunting culture, techniques, and the conservation movement through his writings, photographs, illustrations, and artistic collaborations.

Access Points

Subjects

- Big game hunting
- Crow hunting

- Firearms
- Fishing
- Game and game birds
- Hunting
- Hunting--Equipment and supplies
- Hunting—Safety measures
- Nature photography
- Outdoor llfe
- Outdoor writers
- Photography of animals
- Varmint hunting
- Wildlife conservation
- Wildlife management

Names

- Popowski, Bert

Genre

- Phonograph record
- Photographs

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research, but please note that the materials in the Archives do not circulate and can only be used In the SDSU Archives and Special Collections Reading Room.

Please contact us in advance so we can prepare for your visit.

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Container List

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
1	1	Correspondence	1942-1951
1	2	Correspondence	1952
1	3	Correspondence	1953-1956
1	4	Miscellaneous	undated
1	5	Research material: Magazine Articles	1946-1973
1	6	Research material: Magazines	1949-1971
1	7	Research material: Newspaper clippings	1952-1957
1	8	Research material: Statistics	1938-1958
2	1	Manuscripts: Alaska	1967, 1973-1974
2	2	Manuscripts: Big Game	1957-1970
2	3	Manuscripts: Big Game: Antelope	1957-1975
2	4	Manuscripts: Big Game: Bear	1955-1957
2	5	Manuscripts: Big Game: Bison	1957-1958, 1969
2	6	Manuscripts: Big Game: Deer	1955-1976
2	7	Manuscripts: Big Game : Elk	undated
2	8	Manuscripts: Big Game: Moose	undated
2	9	Manuscripts: Big Game: Sheep	1975-1976
2	10	Manuscripts: Big Game: Turkey	1958-1977
2	11	Manuscripts: Binoculars and Scopes	1973, undated
2	12	Manuscripts: Calling All Crows	undated
2	13	Manuscripts: Call of the Wild	undated
2	14	Manuscripts: Hunting Pronghorn Antelope	1959
3	1	Manuscripts: Camping	1959, undated
3	2	Manuscripts: Conservation	1960-1976
3	3	Manuscripts: Miscellaneous	1966, 1972-1973
3	4	Manuscripts: Cookery	1973-1978
3	5	Manuscripts: Safety	1973-1976
3	6	Manuscripts: Dogs	1974-1975
3	7	Manuscripts: Firearms	1955-1978
3	8	Manuscripts: Fishing	1947-1957
3	9	Manuscripts: Game Birds	1953, 1966-1975
3	10	Manuscripts: Game Birds: Grouse	1958, 1974-1975
3	11	Manuscripts: Game Birds: Pheasant	1964-1974
3	12	Manuscripts: Game Birds: Prairie Chicken	1965-1968

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
3	13	Manuscripts: Game Birds: Quail	undated
3	14	Manuscripts: Game Preparation	1964-1970
3	15	Manuscripts: Hunters	1973-1975
3	16	Manuscripts: Hunting	undated
3	17	Manuscripts: Hunting and Game Laws	1968-1973
3	18	Manuscripts: Hunting Gear	1964-1970
4	1	Manuscripts: Hunting Techniques	1956-1975
4	2	Manuscripts: Miscellaneous	1966, 1972-1973
4	3	Manuscripts: Safety	1973-1976
4	4	Manuscripts: Small Game	1975-1978
4	5	Manuscripts: Small Game: Crow	1952-1977
4	6	Manuscripts: Small Game: Dove	1973-1974
4	7	Manuscripts: Small Game: Bobcat	1955-1957
4	8	Manuscripts: Small Game: Coyote	1946-1970
4	9	Manuscripts: Small Game: Fox	undated
4	10	Manuscripts: Small Game: Magpie	1952
4	11	Manuscripts: Small Game: Mink	1956
4	12	Manuscripts: Small Game: Porcupine	undated
4	13	Manuscripts: Small Game: Prairie Dog	1958
4	14	Manuscripts: Small Game: Rabbit	1956-1973
4	15	Manuscripts: Small Game: Rat	1952
4	16	Manuscripts: Small Game: Squirrel	1967-1975
4	17	Manuscripts: Small Game: Woodchuck	1977
4	18	Manuscripts: Waterfowl: Duck	1947-1973
5	1	Manuscripts: Waterfowl: Goose	1955-1957
5	2	Manuscripts: Weather	1970
5	3	Manuscripts: Wildlife	1954-1973
5	4	Published Articles: Ammunition	1938-1964
5	5	Published Articles: Big Game	1948-1962
5	6	Published Articles: Big Game: Antelope	1948-1962
5	7	Published Articles: Big Game: Bear	1951-1962
5	8	Published Articles: Big Game: Bison	1959
5	9	Published Articles: Big Game: Deer	1941-1963
5	10	Published Articles: Big Game: Elk	1952-1962
5	11	Published Articles: Big Game: Moose	1962
5	12	Published Articles: Big Game: Mountain Goat	1950
5	13	Published Articles: Big Game: Mountain Lion	1958
5	14	Published Articles: Big Game: Turkey	1960
5	15	Published Articles: Cabins	1935-1941
5	16	Published Articles: Conservation	1948

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
5	17	Published Articles: Cookery	undated
5	18	Published Articles: Dogs	1952-1959
5	19	Published Articles: Firearms	1939-1963
5	20	Published Articles: Fishing	1938-1962
5	21	Published Articles: Game Birds	1939
5	22	Published Articles: Game Birds: Grouse	1958-1961
5	23	Published Articles: Game Birds: partridge	1960
5	24	Published Articles: Game Birds: Pheasant	1937-1963
5	25	Published Articles: Game Preparation	1960
5	26	Published Articles: Hunters	1945-1958
6	1	Published Articles: Hunting	1947-1962
6	2	Published Articles: Hunting Gear	1951
6	3	Published Articles: Hunting Guides	1950-1963
6	4	Published Articles: Hunting Techniques	1942-1962
6	5	Published Articles: Miscellaneous	1935-1938
6	6	Published Articles: Photography	1945
6	7	Published Articles: Small Game	1942-1962
6	8	Published Articles: Small Game: Bobcat	1952-1961
6	9	Published Articles: Small Game: Coyote	1953-1959
6	10	Published Articles: Small Game: Crow	1938-1963
6	11	Published Articles: Small Game: Fox	1941-1943
6	12	Published Articles: Small Game: Magpie	1961
6	13	Published Articles: Small Game: Owl	1948, 1959-1960
6	14	Published Articles: Small Game: Prairie Dog	1941-1962
6	15	Published Articles: Small Game: Rabbit	1942-1959
6	16	Published Articles: Small Game: Raccoon	1960
6	17	Published Articles: Small Game: Snake	1943
6	18	Published Articles: Small Game: Squirrel	1940-1943
6	19	Published Articles: Small Game: Woodchuck	1939-1961
6	20	Published Articles: Waterfowl: Duck	1940-1962
6	21	Published Articles: Waterfowl: Goose	1942-1963
6	22	Published Articles: Weather	1944
6	23	Published Articles: Wildlife	1945
7	1	Japanese Magazine: Modern Hunting: Translation of article titles	1968-1970
7	2	Japanese Magazine: Modern Hunting: [No Articles Found]	1968
7	3	Japanese Magazine: Modern Hunting: Crow Shooting; p. 30-38	1969

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
7	4	Japanese Magazine: Modern Hunting: Crow Shooting (Last - Decoy); p. 56-64	1969
7	5	Japanese Magazine: Modern Hunting: Decoying Ducks; p. 54-61	1969
7	6	Japanese Magazine: Modern Hunting: Detail Survey of Deer Hunting By Calling (Part 1); p. 30-35 and Calling for Ducks; p. 98-101	1969
7	7	Japanese Magazine: Modern Hunting: Detail Survey of Deer Hunting By Calling (Part 2); p. 30-37	1969
7	8	Japanese Magazine: Modern Hunting: Aim of Elk Hunting; p. 38-43	1970
7	9	Japanese Magazine: Modern Hunting: Decoying The Divers; p. 17-24	1970
7	10	Photographs: Hunting and fishing	undated
7	11	Photographs: Hunting techniques	undated
7	12	Photographs: Miscellaneous	1937-1938, undated
7	13	Photographs: Portraits	1949, undated
7	14	Photographs: Proofs-Hunting Pronghorn Antelope: Final set	undated
7	15	Photographs: Proofs-Hunting Pronghorn Antelope: Rough draft	undated
7	16	Photographs: Tomahawks	undated
7	17	Photographs: Wildlife	undated
8	1-29	Illustrations: 29 ink drawings	undated
8	30	Illustrations: 1 matted drawing of a fireplace drawn by C. Greenidge	undated
8	31	Illustrations: Crow shooting illustrations (33 p.)	undated
8	32	Phonograph record titled Crow Calling (78 rpm)	undated
9	1	Manuscripts: South Dakota Brags	1953
9	2	Manuscripts: South Dakota Brags	1953
9	3	Photographs: 81-145	undated
9	4	Photographs: Award-winning photographs	1939