

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)

Creator: Popowski, Bert John, 1904-1982

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 writer, photographer, and expert hunter known for his contributions to outdoor literature and wildlife conservation. A graduate of South Dakota State College, he authored over 2,300 articles and several books, including *Hunting Pronghorn Antelope*. He contributed to major publications like *The American Rifleman* and *The Outdoorsman* and gained national recognition as a hunter, innovator, and award-winning photographer. In 1979, he donated his works to South Dakota State University, where he was honored as the "Dean of South Dakota Outdoor Writers."

The collection, spanning 1935–1978, includes manuscripts, published articles, research materials, correspondence, and visual content. Highlights include writings on big game

hunting, conservation, and outdoor techniques; award-winning photographs; illustrations for *Crow Shooting*; and a phonograph record, *Crow Calling*, reflecting his expertise in crow hunting. This collection offers valuable insight into mid-20th-century hunting culture, wildlife management, and outdoor journalism.

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, Bert lived in various parts of the United States and held a range of jobs, including high school principal and associate editor for *Look* magazine. From 1951 until his passing in 1982, he worked as a freelance writer, author, and contributing editor for numerous publications. Over the course of a prolific career spanning half a century, he authored more than 2,300 articles. His first feature story appeared in *Outdoor Life* in 1931. He served as a contributing editor for *The American Rifleman*, writing the "Dope Bag" column, and contributed columns such as "Hunting" for *The Outdoorsman*, "Guns and Ammunition" for *Hunting & Fishing*, and "The Shot Tower" for *Guns and Hunting*. He gained national recognition for his classic book *Hunting Pronghorn Antelope* and authored several other major works, some of which were translated into Spanish and Japanese. An award-winning photographer, Bert often illustrated his articles and books with his own images.

In his early years, Bert became known as an expert varmint hunter, and his books helped popularize this type 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 focused on his writing. In 1949, he won the National Crow Shooting Championship, using crow calls of his own design to best 51 other contestants. Beyond hunting, Bert was deeply interested in natural history and wildlife management.

In 1979, Bert donated a collection of his books, original manuscripts, and photographs to his alma mater, South Dakota State University. He was honored at the Outdoor Writers Association of America convention in Rapid City when the State of South Dakota presented him with a special award as the "Dean of South Dakota Outdoor Writers." In the 1980s, Bert battled cancer and suffered a stroke that led to his hospitalization. He passed away on

February 14, 1982, leaving behind a lasting legacy as a 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 and hunter, 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 Popowski's article "Off-Season Duck Hunting."

The collection includes a wide range of manuscripts accompanied by correspondence with publishers and records of submissions, publication status, and payments received. Manuscripts cover diverse subjects such as hunting techniques, wildlife, firearms, and conservation. Also included are materials related to Popowski's books, such as 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.

The general materials include correspondence from 1942–1956, 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 further illustrates Popowski's expertise and contributions to hunting practices.

The collection provides a comprehensive look at Popowski's career, offering insight into mid-20th-century hunting culture, techniques, and the conservation movement through his writings, photographs, and artistic collaborations.

Access Points

Subjects

- Big game hunting
- Firearms
- Fishing
- Hunting
- Nature photography
- Outdoor life
- Outdoor writers
- Varmint hunting
- Wildlife conservation

Names

- Popowski, Bert John, 1904-1982

Genre

- Photographs
 - Sound recordings
-

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open to all researchers, with materials accessible on-site only and not available for circulation.

For extensive research, scheduling an appointment in advance via phone or email is encouraged, including details about the research topic and intended use.

To access materials, researchers must complete and sign the Registration Form and provide proof of identity (e.g., University ID or driver's license). By signing, researchers agree to adhere to the Reading Room Rules. The registration document also includes guidelines on making copies of materials, correct referencing, and copyright obligations.

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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

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
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: Cookery	1973-1978
3	4	Manuscripts: Dogs	1974-1975
3	5	Manuscripts: Firearms	1955-1978
3	6	Manuscripts: Fishing	1947-1957
3	7	Manuscripts: Game Birds	1953, 1966-1975
3	8	Manuscripts: Game Birds: Grouse	1958, 1974-1975
3	9	Manuscripts: Game Birds: Pheasant	1964-1974
3	10	Manuscripts: Game Birds: Prairie Chicken	1965-1968
3	11	Manuscripts: Game Birds: Quail	undated
3	12	Manuscripts: Game Preparation	1964-1970
3	13	Manuscripts: Hunters	1973-1975
3	14	Manuscripts: Hunting	undated
3	15	Manuscripts: Hunting and Game Laws	1968-1973
3	16	Manuscripts: Hunting Gear	1964-1970
1	1	Manuscripts: Hunting Techniques	1956-1975
1	2	Manuscripts: Miscellaneous	1966, 1972-1973
1	3	Manuscripts: Safety	1973-1976
1	4	Manuscripts: Small Game	1975-1978
1	5	Manuscripts: Small Game: Crow	1952-1977
1	6	Manuscripts: Small Game: Dove	1973-1974
1	7	Manuscripts: Small Game: Bobcat	1955-1957
1	8	Manuscripts: Small Game: Coyote	1946-1970
1	9	Manuscripts: Small Game: Fox	undated
1	10	Manuscripts: Small Game: Magpie	1952
1	11	Manuscripts: Small Game: Mink	1956
1	12	Manuscripts: Small Game: Porcupine	undated
1	13	Manuscripts: Small Game: Prairie Dog	1958
1	14	Manuscripts: Small Game: Rabbit	1956-1973
1	15	Manuscripts: Small Game: Rat	1952

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
1	16	Manuscripts: Small Game: Squirrel	1967-1975
1	17	Manuscripts: Small Game: Woodchuck	1977
1	18	Manuscripts: Waterfowl: Duck	1947-1973
5	1	Manuscripts: Waterfowl: Goose	1955-1957
5	2	Manuscripts: Weather	1970
5	3	Manuscripts: Wildlife	1954-1973
9	1	Manuscripts: South Dakota Brags	1953
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
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

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
6	12	Published Articles: Small Game: Magpie	1961
6	13	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
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

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
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	Photographs: 81-145	undated
10	1	Photographs: Award-winning photographs	1939