

Chicago Academy of Sciences / Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum
ARCHIVES – FINDING AID

Collection Title: Ralph M. Eiseman Papers

Creator: Eiseman, Ralph M.

Dates: 1948-2009

Language: English

Extent: 6 Linear Feet

Level of Description: Folder Level

Repository: Museum Collections and Archives, Chicago Academy of Sciences /Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Chicago, Illinois.

Access Conditions: Open for research.

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Citation: Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [item], [folder], [box], Ralph M. Eiseman Papers, Chicago Academy of Sciences / Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum.

Provenance: Accession 2015.2. Bequeathed by the estate of Ralph M. Eiseman, January 2015.

Processor and Date: Jessica Weller, Jan. 2016 – Aug. 2017; updated by Dawn Roberts, Nov. 2017

Processing Note: The materials were taken from various locations from Eiseman's house after his death, so the original order was not always maintained.

Guidebooks and other published material found in the collection were removed during processing; some of these references were incorporated into the Chicago Academy of Sciences' institutional library.

- "Guide Book to Carlsbad Caverns National Park." Edited by Paul F. Spangle. The National Speleological Society, Washington, DC. (1960).

- Hines, Bob. "Ducks at a Distance." Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Southwest Natural and Cultural Heritage Association, Drawer E, Albuquerque, NM. (no date).
- "Horicon Marshland: Guide and Business Directory." Horicon Chamber of Commerce and Your Marshland Advertisers. (no date).
- Petersen, Peter C. "A Field List of Birds of the Quad City Region." Quad City Audubon Society, Chapter of the National Audubon Society. (Revised 1996).
- Schauer, John J. "The American Revolution in Northeastern Illinois, 1778-1781: An Historical Monograph." [typewritten manuscript]. (November 1975).
- *The Chicago Wilderness Calling Frog Survey: Frogs and Toads of the Chicago Region* (CD-ROM)
- *UrbanWatch Tutorial: A Project of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Field Museum* (CD-ROM)

The notebooks in Box 10, Series 7 were frozen and cleaned for traces of dirt and mold. They are housed in this separate box in order for their condition to be monitored. Other documents with traces of mold were copied onto archival paper and then disposed of.

The Chicago Academy of Sciences does not currently have the equipment to view the bird slides on the Sony Mavipak MP-50 still video floppy disks in Box 5, Series 3.

The checklists in Series 4 are not all housed together. Some of the checklists from c. 1952 through c. 1961 were found separated and as they were already organized, it was decided to keep them together rather than incorporate them with the checklists in archival folders.

Eiseman's field notebooks in Series 7 are organized by the earliest date in the notebook, but the dates on the binding of the books do not always match the span of dates actually recorded in the notebook. Some notebooks contain notes that are not in chronological order (e.g. years or months are skipped and recorded in a different notebook).

Biographical Sketch: Ralph M. Eiseman (April 4, 1935 – November 8, 2014) was an avid bird watcher throughout his entire life. He earned his high school diploma from Hyde Park High School in January 1953; his B.S. from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in May 1957; and his M.S. from the same university in May 1959. He started teaching biology at Highland Park High School (Township High School District #113) in September 1959. He also taught adjunct summer courses through Northeastern Illinois University and the National College of Education. In addition to teaching, he also coached tennis and sponsored the Rifle Club and Ecology Club.

He developed ecology coursework and outdoor programs for his school district, which he later developed into a college course. His nickname was "Mr. Ecology" and he loved teaching because he had the opportunity to "create new learning situations and enjoy watching students benefit from them." Outside of teaching, he volunteered at the Field Museum and the Chicago Academy of Sciences as a "professional biologist."

According to his National College of Education application, his "interest in natural history started with a high school interest in bird watching" and widened to include "Chicago area plants, amphibians, reptiles, geology, ecological relationships, and photography." He was an avid traveler—by the early 1980s, he had visited 47 of the 48 continental United States (he had not yet been to North Dakota).

In addition to documenting bird sightings and communicating the information to various conservation organizations—mostly regarding tagged Canadian geese—Eiseman raised money for peregrine falcon conservation efforts and planted seedlings at the Lake County Forest Preservation District. As a Field Notes contributor for the Illinois Department of Conservation, he corresponded at length with Vernon Kleen, the Nongame and Endangered Species Section Manager; recorded information about nests; verified reports of bird sightings; and extraordinary sight records. He also served on the board of the Lake-Cook Chapter of the Illinois State Audubon Society.

He was married to Bobbie (Weitzman) Eiseman and had two daughters, Beth (Jordan) Grey and Lisa (Len) Servedio. Beth was an attorney and Lisa was a certified public accountant (CPA). He also had four grandchildren: Yoni, Tamar, and Benny Grey and Becca Servedio. He is buried at Oakridge Jewish Cemetery (4301 West Roosevelt Road) in the Chewra Kadischa Earas Nidorhim Section. Memorials for his funeral were donated to the National Parkinson Foundation.

Scope and Content: The majority of the materials in this collection relate to Eiseman’s bird watching activities. There are personal notes included within documentation of bird sightings. Eiseman also observed other elements of nature, such as plants, reptiles, amphibians, etc., but never as extensively as birds and their environment.

SERIES DESCRIPTION

Series 1: Personal (1950s-2000s; undated)

This series contains materials related to Eiseman’s personal life and education. It contains reports, notes, and study guides from his education; lesson plans, worksheets, extracurricular activity paperwork, and field trip plans from his teaching career; and recognition of his teaching and volunteer achievements. There are also selections of his writings and publications, including two main pieces about “Birds of Chicago’s Navy Pier” and “Trumpeter Swan in Illinois.” The series is divided into four subseries: School Assignments; Writings and Publications; Teaching and Course Materials; and Volunteering.

Series 2: Bird Watching Activities and Organizations (1954-2005; undated)

This series contains materials related to Eiseman’s involvement in bird watching organizations, both formal and amateur. It contains information about Eiseman’s conservation efforts, mainly about Canadian geese and with the Illinois Department of Conservation. The documentation of the Lake-Cook Chapter of the Illinois State Audubon Society focuses on the activities of the executive board and fundraising for the organization. The rest of the materials in this series document Eiseman’s involvement in local bird watching communities. The paperwork consists of printed emails from other members of the bird watching community, sharing their sightings and planning future trips. Some correspondence list sent to/from a listserv entitled “Illinois Birders Exchanging Thoughts” (IBET). The bird watching tips that Eiseman collected are both serious and humorous. The series is divided into four sub-series: Conservation Efforts, Illinois Department of Conservation, Lake-Cook Chapter of the Illinois State Audubon Society, and Miscellaneous.

Series 3: Photographs (1948-2005; undated)

This series contains Sony Mavipak MP-50 still video floppy disks and color photographs found throughout Eiseman's paperwork. The folder containing photos of "Fred Wilkin's finches" also includes a letter.

Series 4: Checklists (1950s-2009; undated)

This series contains formal printed checklists (as opposed to notebooks containing handwritten field notes). The series is divided into two sections: checklists with information recorded and blank checklists that Eiseman collected or used to make copies for himself. The blank checklists are separated geographically while the others are divided up by year. The checklists were found throughout the collection (some were tucked between pages of field notebooks) and consolidated into this series.

Series 5: Flora and Fauna (2003-2006; undated)

This series contains information about Eiseman's non-bird watching activities. Only the herptofauna and frog monitoring contain documentation of Eiseman's observations; the rest of the information—about ticks, local plants, and bats—are mostly pamphlets and fact sheets. The documentation in this series is nowhere near as comprehensive as the rest of the collection (only a few pages per each folder). Most all of the documents relate to flora and fauna in the Midwest; the notable exception is a document by Frederick R. Gehlbach entitled *Amphibians and Reptiles of Carlsbad Caverns National Park, New Mexico, and Adjacent Guadalupe Mountains* (1964).

Series 6: Loose Pages and Miscellaneous Notes (1952-2000s)

This series contains loose pages that were found in folders and journals, resource manuals, newspaper clippings, and maps. Some of the loose pages were removed from their "original" location because they were tucked in between journal pages and did not necessarily relate; others were removed so they would not be misplaced. In the case of the latter documents, the loose pages are sorted by date and marked by which field notebook the pages were taken from. The resource manuals are a combination of checklists and birding guides that Eiseman has recorded some of his own notes (it is unclear if Eiseman contributed to the data collected from Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee by Ross and E. L. Bell). There are several maps that Eiseman has collected and made notes on; additional maps can be found in Box 11.

Series 7: Field Notebooks (1950-2008; undated)

This series contains small notebooks and ringed binders containing Eiseman's field notes throughout his life. Some of the notebooks contain life lists (comprehensive documentation of all birds seen by one person in their lifetime) and birds seen in specific locations (such as Navy Pier or on certain vacations); others are dedicated to vacation planning and descriptions of home-videos and photographs taken. Personal notes are included within notes of bird sightings and other nature observations.

Series 8: Oversize (1953-1960; undated)

This series is an assortment of oversize documents, such as Midwestern maps and bird records on large sheets of graph paper.

CONTAINER LIST

Box 1		
Series 1: Personal (1950s-2000s; undated)		
<i>Subseries 1: School Assignments</i>		
1	Zoology/ecology coursework	c. 1950s
2	Animal ecology review	1955
3	Final report	May 1959
4	Protozoology notecards – sarcodina, mastigophora	September 1957 to October 1957
5	Protozoology notecards – ciliophora	November 1957 to December 1957
6	Protozoology notecards – sporozoa	December 1957 to January 1958
<i>Subseries 2: Writings and Publications</i>		
7	“Birds of Chicago’s Navy Pier” and associated materials	1962 to 1984
8	“Trumpeter Swan in Illinois” drafts	1986-1992
9	“Trumpeter Swan in Illinois” correspondence	1986-1992
10	“Trumpeter Swan in Illinois” research	1986-1992
Box 2		
Series 1: Personal, continued (1950s-2000s; undated)		
<i>Subseries 3: Teaching and Course Materials</i>		
11	Miscellaneous publications and related correspondence	1950s to 2000s
12	High school ecology lesson plans	1962 to 1989
13	“A High School Course in Field Ecology” first revision	1969
14	“A High School Course in Field Ecology” second revision	1970

15	"How Many People Can Fit Onto Spaceship Earth"	August 6, 1973
16	National College of Education applications	c. 1971 to 1983
17	National College of Education course materials	1977 to 1986
18	Highland Park High School policies	1971 to 1988
19	Student worksheets	Undated
<i>Subseries 4: Extracurricular Activities</i>		
20	Rifle Club materials	Undated
21	Rifle Club financial notebook	c. 1962 to 1971
22	Field trip paperwork	1984 to 1988
<i>Subseries 5: Recognition</i>		
23	Certificates, pamphlets, etc.	1958 to 2008
Box 3		
Series 2: Bird Watching Activities and Organizations (1954-2005; undated)		
<i>Subseries 1: Conservation</i>		
1	Forest prairie edge microenvironmental data	c. 1958
2	Tagged bird correspondence	1970s
3	Tagged bird correspondence	1980s
4	Tagged bird correspondence	1990s – 2000s
5	Canadian geese	April 14, 1978 to July 31, 2002
<i>Subseries 2: Illinois Department of Conservation</i>		
6	Nest record card program	September 23, 1974 to February 22, 1978
7	Seasonal report drafts	February 20, 1980 to December 6, 1991

8	Illinois bird observation report forms	January 2, 1981 to December 2, 1996
9	Verifying extraordinary sight records	January 21, 1975 to October 12, 1997
10	Correspondence with Vernon Kleen	July 7, 1975 to January 9, 1990
<i>Subseries 3: Lake-Cook Chapter of the Illinois State Audubon Society</i>		
11	Correspondence	February 2, 2000 to March 21, 2004
12	Meeting minutes	July 2000 to October 25, 2003
13	Embroidered patch	August 22, 2000 to November 20, 2001
14	Publications and brochures	November 1984 to 2003
Box 4		
Series 2: Bird Watching Activities and Organizations, continued (1954-2005; undated)		
15	American Ornithologist's Union	1954
16	Correspondence about bird sightings	1950s, 1970s, 1980s
17	Correspondence about bird sightings	1990s
18	Correspondence about bird sightings	2000s
19	Chicago Ornithological Society	1992; 2003 to 2004; undated
20	Tuesday bird watching trip planning and checklists	2003
21	Tuesday bird watching trip planning and checklists	2004
22	Tuesday bird watching trip planning and checklists	2005
23	Bird watching tips	Undated
Series 3: Photographs (1948-2005; undated)		
<i>Subseries 1: Physical photographs</i>		
1	COS Field Trips	1948 to 1981

2	Indiana State Parks	1952 to 1956
3	Howard K. Gloyd	1955
4	Polar view of metaphase	1962
5	Miscellaneous field trip photos	1968 to 1972
6	McGraw Wildlife Foundation	1972
7	Strip mine area and ENRT	1974
8	Horicon National Wildlife Refuge	1975
9	Lincoln Park Zoo and Chicago Academy of Sciences	1979 to 1980
10	Land use	1979 to 1981
11	Miscellaneous photos	1979 to 1981
12	Bird watching in Lincoln Park	1980
13	Bird banding demonstration	1980
14	Metro Chicago trip	1980 to 1981
15	IBSP Zion nuke	1980 to 1981
16	Post/pre-glacial	1980 to 1981
17	Strip mine area and ENRT	1981
18	Shedd Aquarium	1981 to 1983
19	Zamia cone devil	1983
20	Yellow crowned night heron	c. 1983
21	Fred Wilkin's finches (with letter)	1986
22	Wright Woods	1987
23	Chicago area parks and microscope images	1988

24	Squirrel	1993
25	North Point Marina	2005
26	Miscellaneous photos	Undated
<i>Subseries 2: Sony Mavipak MP-50 still video floppy disks</i>		
27	Birds – Master loon – Bufflehead Master bird 2 – com. mer – yel-b. sap [yellow bellied sapsucker?] Master bird 3 – downy wd – wood thrush Master bird 4 – veery – song sparrow Master bird 5 – field sparrow – house finch (no case)	Undated
Box 5		
Series 4: Checklists (1950-2009; undated)		
<i>Subseries 2: Completed</i>		
8	Birds	1950
9	Birds	1952
10	Birds	1953
11	Birds	1954
12	Birds	1955
13	Birds	1953 to 1960
14	Birds	1966
15	Birds	1967
16	Birds	1969
17	Birds	1970
18	Birds	1974
19	Birds	1975

20	Birds	1976
21	Birds	1977
22	Birds	1978
23	Birds	1979
24	Birds	1980
25	Birds	1981
26	Birds	1982
27	Birds	1983
28	Birds	1984
29	Birds	1985
30	Birds	1986
31	Birds	1987
32	Birds	1988
33	Birds	1989
34	Birds	1990
35	Birds	1991
36	Birds	1992
37	Birds	1993
38	Birds	1994
39	Birds	1995
40	Birds	2000
41	Birds	2001

42	Birds	2002
43	Birds	2003
44	Birds	2004
45	Birds	2005
46	Birds	2006
47	Birds	2007
48	Birds	2008
49	Birds	2009
50	Birds	Undated
51	Checklists – Illinois – blank	Undated
Box 6		
Series 5: Flora and Fauna (1964-2006; undated)		
1	Herpetofauna (reptiles and fauna of a particular region)	1964 to August 16, 2006
2	Frog monitoring	2003 to 2006
Series 6: Miscellaneous Notes (1952-2000s)		
<i>Subseries 1: Loose journal pages</i>		
1	Loose journal pages	c. 1953
2	Loose journal pages	c. 1950s to c. 1960s
3	Loose journal pages	c. 1970s to c. 1980s
4	Loose journal pages	c. 1990s to c. 2000s
<i>Subseries 2: Loose field notes</i>		
5	Species notes	1952 to 1955

6	Yearly field notes (#1 through #360)	1984 to c. 1993
7	Yearly field notes (#361 through #870)	1984 to c. 1993
<i>Subseries 3: Resource manuals</i>		
8	Data collected at Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee	c. 1949
9	<i>Combination List and Checklist for Birds of North America</i>	1950s, 1960s, 1970s
10	<i>Top Birding Spots Near Chicago: Detailed Maps and Information</i>	1969
11	<i>Distributional Checklist of the Birds of Illinois</i>	c. 1973
<i>Subseries 4: Maps</i>		
12	Maps	Undated
Box 7		
Series 7: Field Notebooks (1950-2008; undated)		
1	Bird Calendar of Ralph Eiseman	January 1, 1950 to May 8, 1952
2	List of Dates of First Bird Records	January 1, 1950 to November 23, 1952
3	Life List	January 1, 1950 to September 13, 1953
4	Journal Book 1	August 1950 to August 10, 1951
5	Journal Book 2	August 12, 1951 to December 23, 1952
6	Species Records of Birds Seen on Field Trips	March 31, 1952 to September 4, 1952
7	Daily Bird Records	April 3, 1952 to August 11, 1952
8	[Untitled Notebook]	August 3, 1952 to February 28, 1954
9	Navy Pier Birds	January 31, 1953 to October 3, 1964
10	[Untitled Notebook]	March 1, 1954 to November 25, 1955
11	Herpetological Catalog of Ralph M. Eiseman	June 12, 1954 to June 15, 1957

12	[Untitled Notebook]	February 5, 1956 to November 17, 1960
13	Field Book – Over	Miscellaneous 1950s (1 of 2)
14	[Untitled Notebook]	Miscellaneous 1950s (2 of 2)
15	[Untitled Notebook]	February 10, 1961 to October 10, 1964
16	[Untitled Notebook]	March 29, 1965 to April 18, 1967
17	[Untitled Notebook]	August 20, 1967 to April 3, 1969
Box 8		
Series 7: Field Notebooks, continued (1950-2008; undated)		
18	Independent Study Log	September 19, 1968 to August 25, 1971
19	Cincinnati	June 29, 1973 to August 27, 1973
20	[Untitled Notebook]	August 2, 1975 to August 24, 1975; undated
21	[Untitled Notebook]	Miscellaneous 1970s; undated
22	[Untitled Notebook]	August 17, 1981 to April 15, 1990
23	[Untitled Notebook]	July 28, 1990 to October 12, 1992
24	[Untitled Notebook]	December 3, 1992 to August 28, 1994
25	[Untitled Notebook]	October 16, 1994 to March 16, 1996
26	Trips	December 30, 1994 to August 25, 1996
27	[Untitled Notebook]	March 17, 1996 to March 24, 1998
28	[Untitled Notebook]	August 5, 1996 to July 2, 1999
29	Note Bk. Sp.	Miscellaneous Late 1980s & Mid 1990s
30	[Untitled Notebook]	March 27, 1998 to February 23, 1999
31	[Untitled Notebook]	February 25, 1999 to September 10, 1999

	32	[Untitled Notebook]	September 18, 1999 to January 30, 2001
	33	[Untitled Notebook]	January 3, 2001 to September 29, 2003
	34	[Untitled Notebook]	December 25, 2001 to May 27, 2006
	35	[Untitled Notebook]	October 1, 2003 to May 24, 2005
	36	[Untitled Notebook]	December 7, 2006 to September 12, 2008
	37	Digital Notebook	Undated
	38	[Untitled Notebook]	Undated
Box 9			
Series 7: Field Notebooks, continued (1950-2008; undated)			
	39	Field Book 1, Exposure Notes and Identification	July 13, 1958 to April 15, 1961
	40	Field Book 2, Exposure Notes and Identification	April 15, 1961 to April 20, 1965
	41	Field Book 3, Exposure Notes and Identification	April 20, 1965 to August 10, 1968
	42	Field Book 4, Exposure Notes and Identification	August 10, 1968 to May 16, 1971
	43	Home Movies	August 18, 1963 to July 28, [196?]
	44	Vegetation of North America by students of Botany 488	1957 to 1958
	45	Vascular Plant Catalog	July 1953 to June 1960
Box 10			
Series 8: Oversize (1953-1960; undated)			
<i>Subseries 1: Documents (undated)</i>			
	1	Maps from the Midwest	Undated
	2	SCK's Dec. – Jan. release Woods Bird Records	1941 to 1958