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# The Philadelphia Inquirer Jersey Life

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## Unexpected delight

A little boy's question, — "What's a bluebird, Mom?" — signalled the start of something big: The Unexpected Wildlife Refuge.

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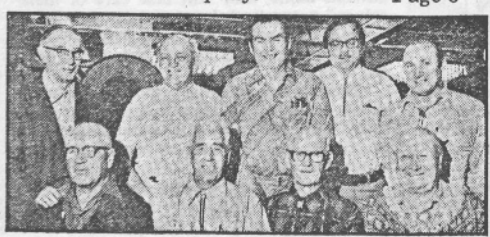
Special to The Inquirer / CRAIG TERRY

Hope and Cavit Buyukmihci own the 300-acre private refuge which has a huge pond and "every animal indigenous to South Jersey," says Cavit with pride.

## They still practice their quick-draw

Meet the fellows who belong to the 110-year-old Mount Ephraim-Haddonfield Pursuing and Detective Company.

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## Mrs. America: A Cinderella saga

Carrie Gabriel of South River had never competed in a beauty contest until she entered the Mrs. America pageant.

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Cavit Buyukmihci holds trap illegal in 11 counties; they'd like wider ban



*'What's a bluebird, Mom?'  
If children have to ask, then  
progress may have gone too far*

## Unexpected delight — saving wildlife for the young

By R. Craig Lord  
Special to The Inquirer

"What's a bluebird, Mom?"  
It is hard to believe that such an innocent question could be responsible for the existence of a 300-acre wildlife preserve, but it was.

For Hope Sawyer Buyukmihci, it was this simple question, asked by her son, Nedim, then 13, that exposed just how ignorant her children were of nature. Not at all pleased, Hope and her husband, Cavit, undertook a struggle to preserve a bit of nature so that their children and others could observe wildlife in its natural state.

The product of the Buyukmihcis' efforts is the Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, 300 isolated acres they own near Buena and which they open to visitors by appointment only.

The Unexpected Wildlife Refuge offers visitors a glimpse of the Pine Barrens in their unspoiled splendor. Those who come here can see such waterfowl as Canada geese and black ducks on a pond created from a cranberry bog by a band of beavers and their dam. The pond is also home for muskrats and otters. In the woods, wildflowers, reptiles, birds, deer and raccoon flourish. Walkways built over the low,

## Family getaway

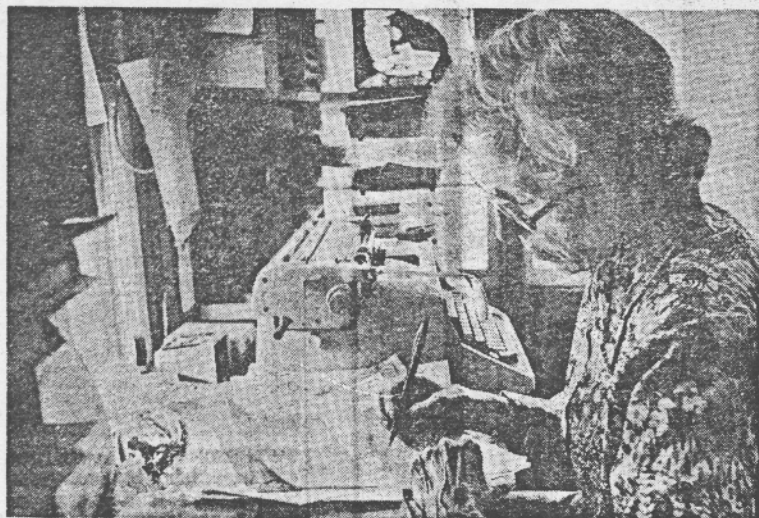
marshy sections and trails through the woods allow visitors to hike easily through the swampy land.

The Buyukmihcis constantly improve the grounds of the preserve, checking on the more than 300 bird houses, planting poplar sprouts for the beavers, tending wild rice for ducks and caring for and protecting the animals.

"We have every animal indigenous to New Jersey," Buyukmihci said with pride. He and his wife firmly believe that "if you let the animals alone, they will take care of themselves," naturally balancing their population without the hunting or trapping permitted on most government refuges to reduce the number of animals.

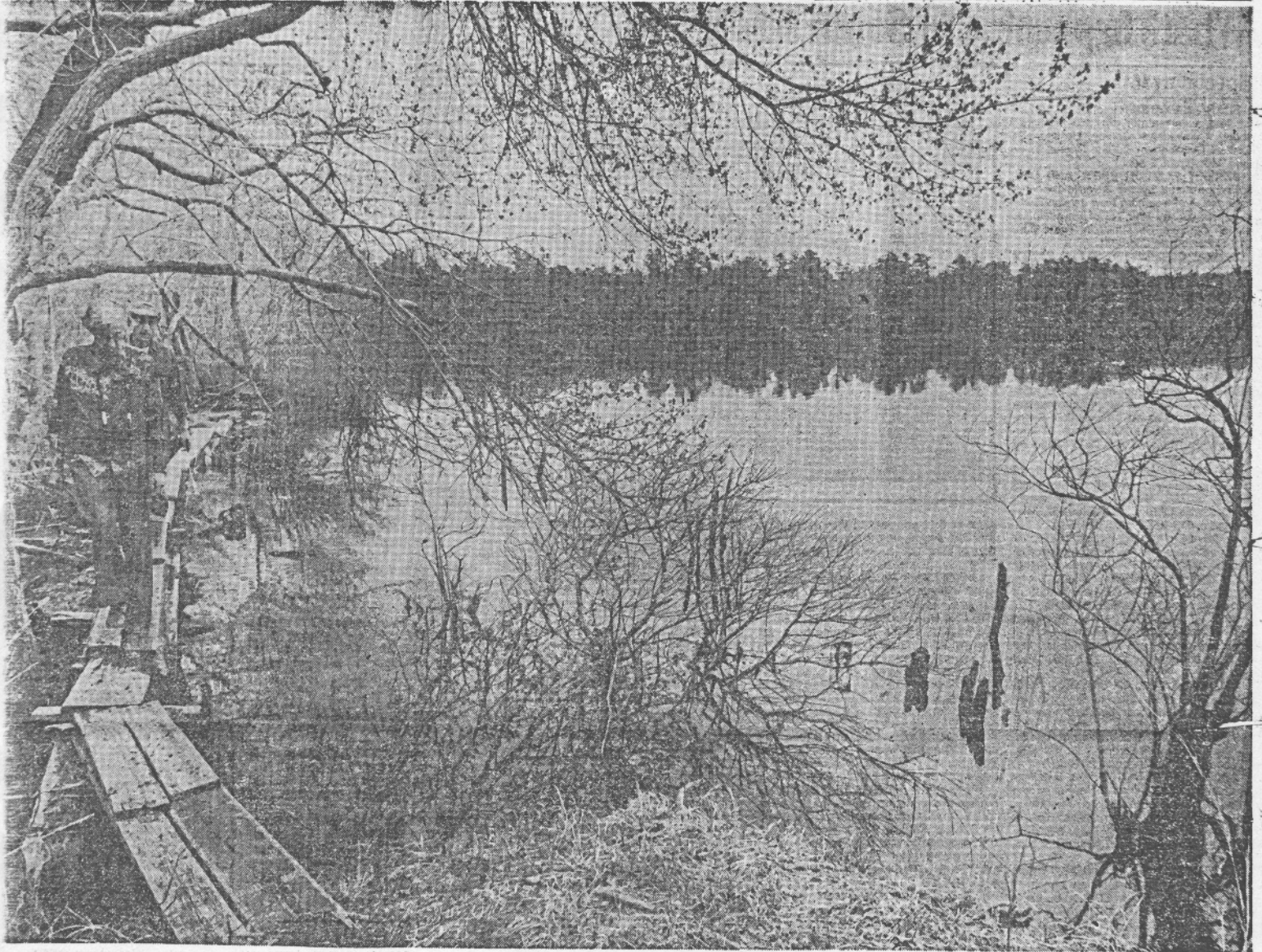
"This is a true refuge as opposed to (government) refuges that allow hunting and trapping," Buyukmihci said. Because the preserve is private, the Buyukmihcis can control who enters and when.

"If you have unregulated entrance by the public, then you might as not have a preserve," Mrs. Buyukmihci said. She has published three



Hope, a free-lance writer, at her desk, but nature is just outside the window.





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### The Unexpected Wildlife Refuge guards a bit of unspoiled Barrens and specimens of 'every animal indigenous' to the state on just 300 acres

books on her experiences at the Unexpected preserve. "Private" does not mean that the Buyukmihci do not welcome visitors. They gladly show the preserve to any visitors who make an appointment in advance.

The idea of setting up a wildlife preserve first struck the Buyukmihcis in 1961, seven years after they returned to the United States after living in Buyukmihci's native Turkey for five years. Buyukmihci, a metallurgist in Philadelphia, settled his family in a small farmhouse on three acres in the Pine Barrens.

Then came the history-making day when Nedim asked that fateful question: "What's a bluebird?" Suddenly Hope Sawyer Buyukmihci had had it. She was fed up with tolerating bulldozers clearing away beautiful woodlands and with hunters killing animals she wanted to protect. She had had it with traffic and congestion.

So in 1961 the couple purchased for \$40 an acre a tract of 85 acres between Newfield and Buena and accessible only by dirt road. They and their three children, Nedim, Linda, and Nermin, moved into a tiny one-story frame house on the property.

At first things at the Buyukmihci home were, well, rustic. There was no electricity and no telephone. They used bottled gas for light-

ing, heating and the stove.

There were animals galore near the house — foxes, rabbits, opossums, squirrels, skunks, moles, swans, and, yes, sometimes even bluebirds.

As acre after acre of nearby property was sold to developers and cleared, the Buyukmihcis remortgaged their property to purchase more land. Because most of the acreage adjoining the refuge was too marshy to be developed, they were able to buy the land cheaply, some parcels at tax sales, some by outright purchase. Then in 1965, they formed Unexpected Wildlife Refuge Inc., a nonprofit corporation controlling the lands.

Today their house has electricity, a telephone and many other amenities, including a beautiful wood-burning stove. The Buyukmihcis' children have grown up and left home. And the refuge is so large that the job of maintaining it has become almost a full-time occupation for the couple.

Many problems confront the preserve: Trespassing hunters and trappers, neighbors' poorly behaved dogs, forest fires often set by arsonists, and poachers who hunt out of season. During the five months of the year when there are hunting seasons — from goose season in October through coon and fox season in March

— Unexpected is patrolled on foot and in pick-up trucks by volunteers in contact by CB radios with the Buyukmihci house.

When not protecting their land, the Buyukmihcis protect animal rights in other ways. A coalition, started this year and chaired by Buyukmihci, the N. J. Congress for Animals, lobbies local and state governments for legislation to protect area fauna. The group is now gathering support for N. J. Assembly Bill A 1293, which would ban the use of leg-hold traps in New Jersey. Eleven Jersey counties have already outlawed the trap because they feel animals caught in such traps suffer greatly. But the trap is still legal in Atlantic and Gloucester counties, where Unexpected is located.

"The law states that traps must be checked once every 24 hours", Buyukmihci said. "While this law is rarely obeyed, the trauma, shock, and blood loss an animal could endure in (those) 24 hours is still severe. Sometimes animals will chew their own limbs off to get away."

"Trapping reminds me of the goons on Halloween that put razor blades in apples for children," Mrs. Buyukmihci said.

Mrs. Buyukmihci is also the force behind the Beaver Defenders, a group she founded in 1970. It now has 400 dues-paying members who

campaign relentlessly to protect the furry animals. The group publishes a newsletter and raises funds by selling beaver bumper stickers, coloring books and "Bravo Beavers" buttons.

So devoted are the Buyukmihcis to the cause of animals that they do not eat meat, dairy products or eggs. They avoid using any animal products, such as wool and leather, and will not use honey.

The Buyukmihcis are eager to share with visitors their knowledge of animals and their natural habitat. "There is so much to learn about nature that 10 lifetimes would only scratch the surface," Mrs. Buyukmihci said.

#### If you go ...

To make an appointment to visit the Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, call the Buyukmihcis (BOO-yook-MUTCH-cha) at 697-3541. They will give you directions, and they request that groups be limited to eight persons. One of the Buyukmihcis will show you around the refuge.

You may stay as long as you wish and even picnic if you wish. You also may want to plan to stay until after sunset to catch a glimpse of the beavers, nocturnal animals who are most active after dusk.

Remember that the refuge is home for many animals and should be treated with respect. 212 344-43