U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Junior Duck Stamp Artists

Celebrating 15 Years of Conservation Education

A Brief History

Introduced by Dr. Joan Allemand, the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program teaches wetland and waterfowl conservation to students in kindergarten through high school. Through research and observations, students express their understanding of waterfowl conservation by creating art entries in the medium of their choice. This non-traditional pairing of subjects brings new interest in both the arts and sciences. Crossing cultural, ethnic, social, and geographic boundaries, the Junior Duck Stamp Program helps teachers nurture a greater awareness in their students of our nation's natural resources.

The Junior Duck Stamp contest begins each spring when students submit artwork to their state contests. The artwork is judged, and one Best of Show entry from each state is sent to compete in the national contest. The winning entry at the national level becomes the next Federal Junior Duck Stamp.

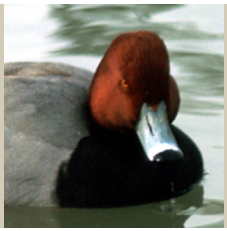
Junior Duck Stamps are sold by the U.S. Postal Service and Amplex Corporation consignees for $5 per stamp. Proceeds from the sale of Junior Duck Stamps support conservation education and provide awards and scholarships for the students, teachers, and schools participating in the program.

To commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program, this book features all of the contest winners, beginning with the first, Jason Parsons of Canton, Illinois, and his design depicting a Redhead duck

Jason Parsons

Canton, Illinois

Redhead Duck



In 1993, Jason Parsons became the first Junior Duck Stamp Artist with his painting of a Redhead. He remember, "The interesting thing for me was seeing the different ducks and becoming more aware of where you find them. You start to look for certain ducks in certain places. I do a lot of photography now and this knowledge has helped me with that."

As well as being an outdoorsman, Parsons is a conservationist. "My family taught me to be that way. We hunt and fish, and we are as much conservationists as hunters."

Currently, Parsons teaches in Illinois. "I've been an art teacher for 8 years and my kids enter the Junior Duck Contest," he reports. "My passion now is 'passing it on' basically. This contest is for education. We're trying to get a message out there about conservation. The kids end up learning a lot."

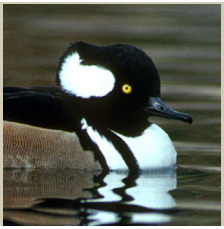
Parsons enjoys lending a hand outside the art room as well.

"I use my artistic talent to help people. I donate art and lots of other things to support conservation and health organizations. I've donated prints, as well as original paintings and sketches. If we don't step forward and give, our environment will be in bad shape."

Clark Weaver

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Hooded Mergansers



At 17 years old, Clark Weaver from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, won the 1994 Junior Duck Stamp Contest with a pair of Hooded Mergansers. As his design shows, male Hooded Mergansers have bold black and white coloring, while females are more camouflaged. Both have retractable, fan-like head crests and thin sawbills.

Weaver illustrates a wooded, swampy environment suitable for the small ducks by painting in reeds and cattails. Mergansers find their diet of insects, crustaceans and fish in this habitat. The smallest mergansers nest in tree cavities and winter in small flocks in small, often wooded ponds.

Jie Huang

Hamilton, Montana

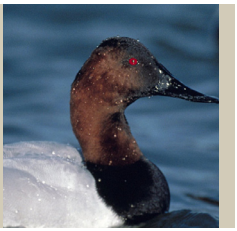
Northern Pintail

In 1995, Jie Huang of Hamilton, Montana, was the first female to win the Junior Duck Stamp Contest. At the time of her win, Jie was 16 years old and a junior at Hamilton High School. Guided by her art teacher, James Roth, Jie visited places such as Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge in Stevensville, Montana, taking hundreds of photographs to create a reference file of various species. Jie's winning design entitled "Pintail Duck in a Pond" was created from one of the photographs she gathered during her research.

Clark Weaver

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Canvasbacks



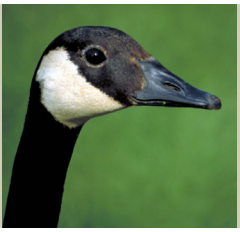
In 1996, Clark Weaver from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, won the Junior Duck Stamp Contest for a second time, winning as a senior at Central Dauphin High School. Weaver was encouraged by his art teacher, Peggy Grim.

He once again used cattails to display an accurate habitat for his ducks. Canvasbacks build their nests from surrounding vegetation, and have been known to lay their eggs in other Canvasback nests. They mainly feed on plants, insects and fish. Entitled "Can-Cans," the then 19-year-old Weaver's painting was done in acrylic.

Scott Russell

Mount Shasta, California

Canada Geese



When Scott Russell won the Junior Duck Stamp Contest in 1997 with his Canada Geese, he was thrilled. “I got close in previous years,” he says, ”and it was something I really wanted. My mom’s influence as a professional waterfowl artist inspired me to enter the contest. I grew up around ducks and painting, and I love the outdoors.”

Since his win, Russell has combined art with a career. “Winning a competition like this is a great thing to have on my resume. It established me as an artist. Today, I design video games, on all my demo reels I use my duck stamp experience to my advantage. So it’s been a major contributor to my career. This competition is so much more than just an art competition. It’s really an overall great experience. It’s worth doing, even if you don’t think your art is up to par. Art is lots of fun.”

Erik Peterson

Red Ford, Michigan

American Black Ducks

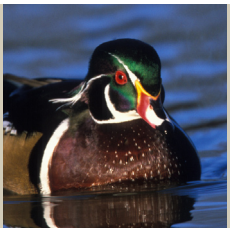
The 1998 Junior Duck Stamp features a pair of American Black Ducks painted by Erik Peterson. Peterson, 18 at the time of his win, is a native of Red Ford, Michigan. In his painting, he was careful to create accurate plumage color on these birds, as they are often confused with Mallards. Black Ducks have a distinguishing purple wing patch, orange feet and and a yellow bill.

Peterson's painting is done in acrylic with an airbrushed background. A student at Detroit Catholic Central High School, Erik was taught by his art teacher, Harlan Minor.

Ryan Kirby

Hamilton, Illinois

Wood Ducks



Sixteen-year-old Ryan Kirby of Hamilton, Illinois, won first prize in the 1999 Junior Duck Stamp Contest with his rendition of a pair of Wood Ducks.

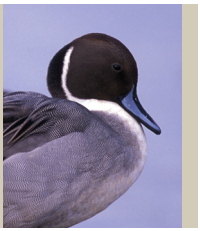
Kirby, taught by Steve Mullins, was a student at Hamilton High School and an outdoor enthusiast. Having entered the contest several years prior to his win, Kirby proved that persistance pays off. For three years he repeatedly placed Best of Show in Illinois. In 1998, Kirby's entry came in 4th at the National level.

In 1999, his painting earned a perfect score of 25 points, and was chosen to be the next Junior Duck Stamp.

Bonnie Latham

Hastings, Minnesota

Northern Pintails



Bonnie Latham of Hastings, Minnesota, won the Junior Duck Stamp Contest in 2000 and couldn't believe it. "I mean, you enter a contest and hope to do well," she says, "but it's always a long shot. My family was just as excited as I was."

Introduced to the outdoors at an early age, Bonnie was home-schooled by her mother, also an artist.

When asked about the contest, Bonnie says, "What makes the Junior Duck Stamp so important is what it does. So many kids can learn about wildlife. Teachers take their kids out on field trips to learn about different kinds of waterfowl, and it helps them get in touch with nature, which is something I enjoy. I love the personality of the ducks. Each species has its own."

When Bonnie isn't in her studio, she is outdoors doing photography, something she loves. "I've traveled all around the U.S. showing my artwork and taking pictures.

Someday I want to go to Africa."

Aremy McCann

St. Joseph, Minnesota

Trumpeter Swan

Eighteen-year-old Aremy McCann of St. Joseph, Minnesota, was judged the top artist in the 2001 Junior Duck Stamp Contest and her painting became the next Junior Duck Stamp. Although Trumpeter Swans aren't ducks, they are migrating waterfowl, and therefore, eligible for the contest.

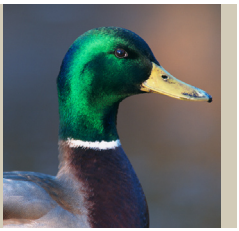
Aremy's home state of Minnesota is home to many Trumpeter Swans, as they breed in central and northwest North America.

Home-schooled by her mother, Tammy McCann, Aremy used an acrylic medium for her painting.

Nathan Closson

Whitefish, Montana

Mallard Ducks



In 2002, Nathan Closson of Whitefish, Montana, was chosen as the next Junior Duck Stamp Artist. "The Junior Duck Stamp is important to me because it promotes conservation and art," he says. "Lots of kids have no clue about where money comes from to support the environment around them. This contest teaches them."

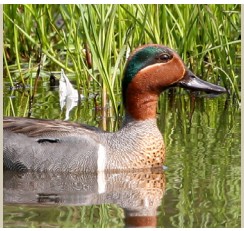
For Closson, winning the contest was a boost for his future. "Winning the Junior Duck Stamp Contest was very encouraging in my decision to be an artist. I'm currently studying art at the University of Montana. This contest raises awareness in a generation that hasn't been exposed to nature. It exposes kids to wildlife and the importance of conservation."

Closson entered the Federal Duck Stamp Contest two years after his Junior win and plans to enter again someday.

Nathan Bauman

Jonestown, Pennsylvania

Green-winged Teal



Nathan Bauman of Jonestown, Pennsylvania, won the 2003 Junior Duck Stamp with a design that had started as a graded art project.

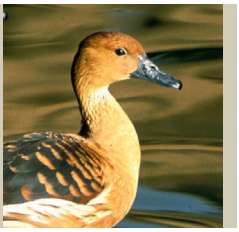
Everyone in his class had created an art piece and sent it in "Just to see how good we could do as a class." Nathan admits, "I guess I knew I had some kind of artistic talent around the age of 4. I was constantly drawing." At age five, Bauman was given art lessons working with chalk, paint and pencil. In high school, he took art classes, winning the Junior Duck Stamp Contest in his senior year.

When asked why the Junior Duck Stamp Contest is important for kids, he replies; "It educates them about conservation and broadens their perspective. They can start to notice that art expresses many important things."

Adam Nisbett

St. James, Missouri

Fulvous Whistling Ducks



Adam Nisbett from St. James, Missouri, won the Junior Duck Stamp Contest in 2004 after many tries. "The first time I entered," he says, "I wasn't expecting to win. Once I started, I just got hooked on it and kept entering. This was the seventh and last year I could enter, so I was hopeful to do better than I had in years past."

After winning, Adam taught an art class to local home-schoolers. "The kids all did paintings and submitted them. I think they really learned a lot."

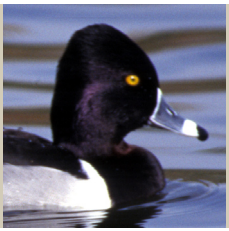
"For me," Nisbett says, "entering the Junior Duck Stamp Contest was good practice. But also, the money raised really goes to good use, the federal stamp being put toward conserving wetlands."

Today, Adam is studying mechanical engineering and plans on a career in teaching. "So really my art is just a serious hobby." Adam's advice to anyone interested in the contest is, "Just get out and look at ducks. Art takes work, but it's something that anyone can improve at. If you're interested, it takes time. Just get involved and have fun with it."

Kerissa Nelson

Grantsburg, Wisconsin

Ring-necked Ducks



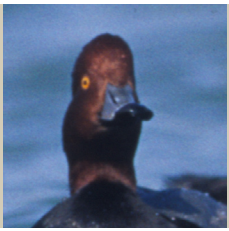
In 2005, Kerissa Nelson of Grantsburg, Wisconsin, won the Junior Duck Stamp Contest. “I always knew I had artistic talent,” she says; “I wouldn’t say I was crazy about art, but I enjoyed my art classes at school and always tried my best. When I got into high school, my art teacher, Bruce Teigan, pushed me more than any other teacher had, and introduced me to the Junior Duck Stamp Contest.”

Nelson encourages all kinds of kids to enter. “I don’t think you have to be an art fanatic to be interested in this contest. The neat part is, it covers so much ground. You can be an art lover, a nature lover, a conservationist, a duck hunter, or just someone looking to learn a thing or two. In the end, the result is the same. You learn a lot, and the perk is, you might win. But more than that, there’s so much to gain in learning about waterfowl. It’s important to understand the world around you and this contest is a great learning tool.”

Rebekah Nastav

Amoret, Missouri

Redhead Duck



Rebekah Nastav of Amoret, Missouri, entered the Junior Duck Stamp Contest three years in a row, winning on her third attempt at age 15.

Having been home-schooled her entire life, and having a passion for art, Rebekah took direction from a family friend, Susan Hearting, who quickly became her art teacher and told her about the Junior Duck Stamp Contest.

Artistic ability runs in Nastav's family. Her grandmother painted and her mother used to take art classes and draw.

Nastav believes there is a lot to be learned through this contest. "The purpose of the Junior Duck Stamp Contest is to teach about wildlife and conservation, which it does very well. I learned a lot about these things. To paint the ducks I had to learn about waterfowl– their feathering, habitat, everything. I also learned how the money from federal stamps goes back into the wetlands.

Basically, the Duck Stamp is so important because of everything there is to learn."

Paul Willey

Conway, Arkansas

American Widgeon

Paul Willey, winner of the 15th annual Junior Duck Stamp Contest, is no stranger to the program.

"I've been competing in the Junior Duck Stamp Contest since I was in the 6th grade." He says, "I like painting ducks. It gets me in touch with conservation and with natural beauty. I have been studying art with my art teacher since I was in middle school, and plan to use art in my career."

After entering so many years and finally winning, Willey explains the importance of this

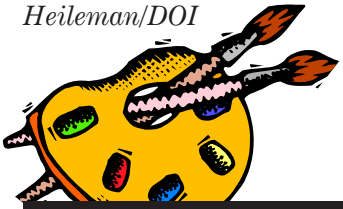
contest to him personally. "Through this program I became very aware and started to pay attention to conservation efforts. I am glad to know that my stamp will help with conservation."

Paul mixed and matched media on his winning design. After experimenting, he found that it worked best for him to use colored pencils on the ducks and an acrylic airbrush in the background. Willey plans to attend the University of Central Arkansas and then attend an art institute.

Place Junior Duck Stamps over the images below.

Collect them all:

Students enjoy the art at the Junior Duck Stamp Contest held at the National Zoo, Washington DC. - Photo: Tami Heileman/DOI



Fifth and sixth students research waterfowl and habitat while they work on their art entries for the 2008 contest. Las Vegas Day School, Las Vegas, Nevada - Teachers: Holly Fawcett and Becky Crowe

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service appreciates everyone's involvement and support. Whether you're an artist, conservationist or just eager to get involved, contact us. And remember, the next Junior Duck Stamp may feature your design!

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