

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

For Release November 17, 1976

Levitt 202/343-5634

ACRYLIC PAINTING OF ROSS' GEESE WINS DUCK STAMP CONTEST

An acrylic painting of a pair of Ross' geese in flight by Martin R. Murk of Greendale, Wisconsin, has won the 1977-78 Duck Stamp competition on November 12 at the Interior Department.

Murk's design will be reproduced on next year's \$5 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp purchased by waterfowl hunters, philatelists, and conservationists. Revenues from the stamp are used to buy additional wetland habitat under a program administered by Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Murk, 48, has been a free lance commercial artist for the last 13 years. He had never before won a wildlife art contest and has never even seen a Ross' goose alive. He painted from pictures, drawings, and skins taken from museum collections. In his design the stark white geese are shown silhouetted against a darkened sky with their black-tipped wings contrasting with a snow bank on the horizon. The Ross' goose, a small snow goose with pink feet and bill, migrates from Alaska to Texas. Murk selected the species for his entry because he was impressed by the pattern of its coloration.

Most of the artist's paintings concentrate on livestock--horses, hogs, and cattle--but he has done many wildlife paintings as well which have been part of several one-man shows in the Milwaukee area.

His work won over those of 271 other entrants, a record number for the contest, and scored 47 out of a possible 50 points.

(more)

A panel of judges selected for the contest included Les Line, Editor, National Audubon Magazine; George Reiger, Conservation Editor, Field and Stream Magazine; Mrs. Shirley Briggs, Executive Director, Rachel Carson Trust; Warren King, International Council for Bird Preservation; and Carl Buchheister, Emeritus President, National Audubon Society.

Although there is no official prize other than a sheet of stamps autographed by the Secretary of the Interior, in recent years the winning design has gained immediate commercial value in the wildlife art and stamp collecting marketplaces. The prestige of winning the contest has enhanced the reputation of established artists and has elevated otherwise unknown artists to public acclaim.

The competition is the only art contest regularly sponsored by the Federal Government. The colorful stamps constitute the longest-running annually issued series of stamps in revenue or postage stamp history.

Since 1934 when Duck Stamps first went on sale, over \$176 million in revenue has been collected and used for the acquisition of 2 million acres of prime waterfowl habitat. By purchasing the stamps, more than 2.4 million conservationists annually provide close to \$12 million in revenue.

This year, the Interior Department is encouraging non-hunters who also enjoy the wildlife resource through photography, birdwatching, and other activities to contribute to the U.S. conservation effort by buying a stamp.

Next year's issue will go on sale at post offices on July 1, 1977.

x x x

EDITORS: Black and white glossies are available by calling 202/343-8770.

