



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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1991-92 DUCK STAMP TO FEATURE KING EIDERS;
FORTIETH FEDERAL DUCK STAMP CONTEST HAS A FIRST--
FEMALE ARTIST TAKES TOP HONORS

The 1990 Federal Duck Stamp Contest marked its 40th anniversary with an historic first as artist Nancy Howe of East Dorset, Vermont, became the first woman to win top honors. Howe painted a pair of king eiders set against a backdrop of subarctic tundra that will be featured on the 1991-92 Federal Duck Stamp. Held November 6 and 7 in Washington, DC, the annual contest is sponsored by the Interior Department's U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Interior Secretary Manuel Lujan called Howe from Washington, DC, to give her the news and invite her to Washington to meet President Bush the following afternoon. He asked her how she felt, and a packed auditorium heard Howe exclaim, "Oh my goodness, that's incredible! I've entered the contest for a number of years and I've been wondering when a woman would win."

Howe's acrylic design, one of 626 entered in this year's contest, won after an exciting three-way tie was broken. She says she has lost count of exactly how many times she has entered the contest, but thinks this was the 10th or 12th time. Second place went to Wilhelm Goebel, a New Jersey artist, for his rendition of black scoters; and Cynthia Fisher of Washington State placed third with her spectacled eiders.

Fish and Wildlife Service Director John Turner congratulated Howe on her win and told her she should get ready for a busy year of Duck Stamp events. "Your design will serve as an excellent reminder to waterfowl hunters, stamp collectors, and many others of the need to protect and preserve this country's vital wetlands," he said.

Howe, who will soon celebrate her 40th birthday, has an A.B. in art from Vermont's Middlebury College and has been painting since childhood. Married with two young sons, she says, "I want to be a full-time artist, but anyone who is a mother understands you can't be a full-time anything when you have children."

An active member of Ducks Unlimited, Howe has exhibited her work with that organization as well as in numerous other art shows. This past spring, she participated in a show at the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau, Wisconsin, and currently has a painting included in an "Arts for the Parks" tour sponsored by the National Park Academy of the Arts headquartered in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Howe says living in the country has given her a deep appreciation for the out-of-doors. She accompanies her husband waterfowl hunting, and has helped him train a retriever. "I love slogging through swamps," Howe explains, "and as winner of the Duck Stamp Contest, I am looking forward to speaking on behalf of wetlands. My heart is in the swamps," she said.

Howe chose the king eider for her design because a local museum had it in its collection of birds and, according to Howe, it was the only specimen of an eligible species that was, ". . . good enough for me to get the needed detail. I decided this year to do something that looked like a small, fine painting; something that would capture a mood and that my heart was in," she said.

Since it began in 1934, the Federal Duck Stamp Program has generated over \$350 million and nearly 4 million wetland acres have been acquired through these revenues. All hunters 16 years of age and older are required to purchase the Federal Duck Stamp in order to hunt waterfowl. In addition, it becomes a valuable collector's item and is bought by philatelists and conservationists across the country. The Duck Stamp Program is remarkable because 98 cents of each dollar raised through the sale of Duck Stamps goes directly to purchase migratory waterfowl habitat.

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At home in Arctic coastal waters, king eiders range from Siberia and northwestern Alaska to Labrador and Greenland. They winter along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts as far south as New Jersey and California, and sometimes on the Great Lakes.

The male king eider is one of the largest, most colorful ducks in North America. Its head is characterized by a short orange or violet-red bill, a yellow or orange frontal shield outlined in black, and a pale blue crest. The side of the head is pale green. The body is predominantly black, with a white front. A large black "V" outlines the throat. The female king eider is tawny brown with dusky brown crescent-shaped bars.

The judges for this year's contest were Susan Bournique, photo editor for The Nature Conservancy's magazine; James Gordon Jude, internationally known wildlife conservationist and stamp dealer from Sydney, Australia; Robert J. Koenke, publisher and editor of "Wildlife Art News," the world's most popular wildlife art magazine; Dolores "Sissy" George LaVigne, wildlife art collector and avid hunter; and Romi Myers Perkins, outdoorswoman, conservationist, and wildlife art collector. The alternate judge this year was Jack Elrod, award-winning artist and writer/illustrator of the "Mark Trail" comic strip.

The Duck Stamp has been issued annually by the Federal Government since 1934 when Jay N. "Ding" Darling's drawing entitled "Mallards Dropping In" became the first design for the stamp. Subsequent artwork was commissioned until the contest began in 1949.

During this year's contest, the Interior Department honored Bob Hines, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service illustrator who initiated the idea of having a contest to select the design for the Duck Stamp. A special collection of Hines' artwork, spanning over 40 years, is currently on display in the Department's museum. In addition, he was presented with a certificate of appreciation by Interior Secretary Lujan. Hines, who began his prestigious career with the Service in 1948, was commissioned as the artist for the 1946-47 Duck Stamp.

The Federal Government offers no monetary award to the winner. A pane of stamps bearing the artist's design and autographed by the Secretary of the Interior is presented to the artist during the next year's competition. However, commercial wildlife art dealers market limited edition prints of the winning design under private agreements with the artist. Through this contest, the reputations of previously unknown artists have been established overnight, and those of professionals considerably enhanced.

The five species eligible for this year's contest were selected from a list of seven that have never before appeared on a Federal Duck Stamp. Next year, the king eider will be dropped and the surf scoter will be added to the list of five eligible species. Through an annual process of elimination, all 42 species of North American waterfowl will be portrayed on a Duck Stamp by 1997.

The current 1990 Duck Stamp, designed by 1989 contest winner Jim Hautman, is on sale at most U.S. Post Offices and some national wildlife refuges across the country for \$12.50. The 1991 Duck Stamp will sell for \$15.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Black-and-white glossy prints and color transparencies of the winning design are available on a loan basis from the Fish and Wildlife Service's Audio-Visual office, 202-208-5611.

