



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

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1993-1994 DUCK STAMP TO FEATURE CANVASBACK DUCKS

Wildlife artist Bruce Miller of Mound, Minnesota, capped off a banner year by winning the 42nd Annual Federal Duck Stamp Contest with a design featuring a pair of canvasback ducks.

Miller's acrylic painting will be featured on the 1993-1994 Federal Duck Stamp. Money from the sale of the stamp is used to purchase and protect vital wetlands for waterfowl and numerous other wildlife species.

Held November 9 and 10 in Washington, D.C., the annual contest is sponsored by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

A professional artist and avid outdoorsman, Miller, 40, has received a number of honors this year, including being named artist of the year by the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation and artist of the year at the Wildlife and Western Art Show in Minneapolis. He also won the 1993 Minnesota Pheasant Habitat Stamp Contest.

Calling it "the biggest thing that ever happened to me," Miller said winning the Federal Duck Stamp Contest is particularly meaningful to him because he is an ardent hunter and fisherman.

"Like most sportsmen, I support all kinds of conservation activities and the Duck Stamp program has done more than any other program to promote wild ducks," Miller said. "I just hope that by winning this year, I will help put more ducks in the air in the years to come."

Miller's design was one of 629 in this year's contest. The artists who finished in second and third place are previous winners of the contest. Second place went to 1981 winner David Maass of Long Lake, Minnesota, for his design of a pair of mallards. Neal Anderson of Lincoln, Nebraska, the winner of the 1988 contest, took third place with an oil painting of canvasback ducks.

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Miller, an Eagle Scout who grew up in Minnetonka, Minnesota, and attended the University of St. Cloud, started painting wildlife in 1980 and took third place in the 1991 Federal Duck Stamp Contest. He became a full-time artist in 1985 and has published 25 limited edition prints through his company, Mixed Bag Publishing Co.

Ironically, the winning art was modeled after his design of two shoveler ducks that failed to make the finals in this year's Minnesota Duck Stamp Contest. Miller said he made some changes to provide more contrast for the ducks.

"I wanted to add more color to the design than there had been in the winners the last few years and I took a chance with the angle of the drake," he said. "But in a contest like this if you don't take a chance, you are not going to win."

Since it began in 1934, the Federal Duck Stamp Program has generated \$414 million to acquire more than 4 million wetland acres, primarily for the National Wildlife Refuge System. All waterfowl hunters 16 years of age and older are required to purchase the stamp annually. The current price is \$15 and remarkably, 98 cents out of every dollar raised through the sale of Duck Stamps goes directly to purchase vital migratory waterfowl habitat. The stamp also has become a valuable collector's item for philatelists and conservationists across the country.

The canvasback, one of North America's fastest flying ducks, is distinguished by its long reddish-chestnut neck and head, and white body with a black chest and hindquarters. Its wedge-shaped head slopes upward from the tip of its long black bill to the back of the crown.

The other eligible species for this year's contest were the Canada goose, and greater scaup, mallard, and pintail ducks. Through an annual process of elimination and alternating eligible species, all 42 species of North American waterfowl should be portrayed on a Duck Stamp by the turn of the century.

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.

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The Federal Government offers no monetary award to the winner, but a panel 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, by winning the contest, the reputations of previously unknown artists have been established overnight, and those of professionals considerably enhanced. Winning artists profit when limited edition prints of their design are marketed by commercial wildlife art dealers under private agreements. The Duck Stamp Licensing Program allows the use of Duck Stamp designs to adorn various products -- such as T-shirts, caps, and mugs -- from which the artist also profits.

Judges for this year's competition were Robert F. Dumaine, owner of Sam Houston Philatelics, Inc. and publisher of The Duck Report, a quarterly journal of Duck Stamp activity; Kit Harrison, conservation editor of Sports Afield magazine and co-author of several books on birds and bird-watching; Ginger K. Renner, recognized expert on art of the American West, particularly Charles Russell's works; Frank J. Sisser, editor/publisher of U.S. Art and a specialist in limited edition artwork; and Mona M. Willis, who runs an art studio in Wichita, Kansas, dedicated to her late husband, artist M. Wayne Willis, and a member of the Kansas Art Commission from 1987-91 and president of the commission in 1991.

The current 1992 Duck Stamp, designed by 1991 contest winner Joe Hautman, is on sale at most U.S. Post Offices and some national wildlife refuges across the country. Duck Stamps also can be used as passes for admission to National Wildlife Refuges requiring entrance fees.

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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.

