



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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1994-95 FEDERAL DUCK STAMP MAKES DEBUT

Marking the 60th anniversary of the Federal Duck Stamp Program, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will host special ceremonies on June 30 and July 1, 1994, to celebrate the First Day of Sale of this year's Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Duck Stamp).

One of the nation's most successful conservation efforts, the new 1994-95 Duck Stamp will go on sale nationwide for \$15 at most U.S. post offices, national wildlife refuges, and some sporting goods stores on July 1.

Purchase of a Duck Stamp is required for waterfowl hunters age 16 and older, but increasingly, people are buying Duck Stamps voluntarily as a way to contribute directly to wildlife conservation.

To date, more than \$450 million in Duck Stamp sales have been used to purchase 4.2 million acres of wetlands and associated habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. These areas are vital not only to waterfowl but a host of other wildlife, including about half the nation's endangered species.

The First Day of Sale celebration will begin in Washington, DC, at 10:00 a.m. in the Interior Department auditorium, 1849 C Street, NW., with ceremonies hosted by officials from the Department of the Interior, the Department of Treasury's Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the U.S. Postal Service, and the Smithsonian Institution's National Postal Museum.

The stamp's designer, artist Neal Anderson, will attend the Washington, DC, ceremony as well as a special honorary celebration to be held the following day in his hometown of Lincoln, Nebraska. Anderson's gouache (gum-and-honey-based tempera paint) design of red-breasted mergansers was chosen from among 435 art entries during the 1994-95 Duck Stamp Contest held last November.

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As part of celebrating the importance of wetlands conservation, each year during the First Day of Sale ceremony in Washington, the Service presents its prestigious National Wetlands Conservation Award to honor special efforts by individuals, groups, or corporations to protect, enhance, or restore the nation's wetlands.

This year's individual recipient is Hal G. McKnight of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, who has enhanced and restored 210 acres of wetlands and associated habitat on his property through the Service's Partners for Wildlife program.

On July 1, the Town of Lincoln, Nebraska, will roll out the red carpet to honor Anderson, his design, and Duck Stamps in general. During special ceremonies at the Capitol Rotunda, Nebraska Governor E. Benjamin Nelson will proclaim July 1 "Federal Duck Stamp Day" in Nebraska, and will be joined by Senators J. James Exon and Bob Kerrey and Representatives Doug Bereuter, Peter Hoagland, and Bill Barrett to commend Anderson for his contributions to the program.

Later, Anderson will be the guest of honor at a First Day of Sale banquet, exhibition, and special black-tie gala, all sponsored by local businesses.

Judges from last year's Federal Duck Stamp Contest will be on hand at the June 30 ceremony to judge Junior Duck Stamp "Best of Show" winning designs from the 25 states participating in that program this year. Three national winners are to be selected. They will win a free trip to Washington, DC, next November to be honored at the 1994 Federal Duck Stamp Contest.

The Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program is a unique conservation education curriculum which includes an art competition modeled after the Federal Duck Stamp Contest. It teaches youngsters about waterfowl and the importance of wetlands conservation.

Also during the Washington ceremony, Jeanette Rudy, owner of the first Duck Stamp ever sold and collector of many other stamps, will unveil an architectural model of an exhibit she is donating to the Smithsonian's National Postal Museum. Scheduled to open in the summer of 1996, the exhibit is to include her collection of Duck Stamps and other stamps; wetlands displays; cartoons by J.N. "Ding" Darling, the designer of the first Duck Stamp; and interactive video activities.

While it originated as a waterfowl hunting license, over the years the Duck Stamp has become a popular collector's item. Today, companies form licensing agreements with the Fish and

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Wildlife Service allowing them to feature Duck Stamp art on a variety of products, such as T-shirts, mugs, calendars, tote bags, and note cards. Royalties collected from the sale of these products go directly into a fund used to acquire migratory bird habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

At both the Washington, DC, celebration and the exhibition in Lincoln, licensed Duck Stamp products as well as special collectors items will be available for purchase. These include artist-signed prints of the 1994-95 Duck Stamp design, souvenir cards, pins, and posters. Duck Stamp phone cards will be on sale for the first time ever.

Also available for purchase will be a special 60th anniversary poster featuring all 61 winning Duck Stamp designs, donated by Nebraska Ducks Unlimited, the Larson-Juhl Company, and the University of Nebraska's Morrill Hall. A raffle to give away 25 posters will be held at the Washington, DC, ceremony.

Those interested in entering next year's Federal Duck Stamp Contest may request contest regulations by contacting the Federal Duck Stamp Office, 1849 C Street, NW., Suite 2058, Washington, DC, 20240; telephone (202) 208-4354. Entries for the 1994 contest, which will be held November 1-2, are being accepted through September 15, 1994.



FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Facts

U.S. Department of the Interior

WETLANDS ARE WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

The Federal Duck Stamp Program has come a long way in preserving wetlands since its inception 60 years ago, when a concern for ducks and wetlands was raised by conservationists, particularly J.N. "Ding" Darling, who then served as chief of the U.S. Biological Survey, the predecessor agency of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Darling and many of his contemporaries were concerned over plummeting waterfowl populations, caused primarily by an extended drought which took place during the 1920s. In 1929, Congress passed the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, thus providing the mechanism for land acquisition for the refuge system. The law did not, however, provide a continuous funding source for purchase of suitable lands. But Darling had a solution for that.

He set out to create the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp, a required purchase of all waterfowl hunters age 16 and older, to ensure a source of revenue. This idea was embodied in legislation known as the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act, passed by Congress in 1934. A well-known political cartoonist, Darling took it upon himself to design the first stamp, featuring a pair of mallards.

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Later, to acknowledge that stamp funds benefit many other species as well as waterfowl, the stamp was renamed the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, and today is considered one of the world's most successful conservation efforts. It currently costs \$15.

The Fish and Wildlife Service commissioned artists to design the Duck Stamp until 1949. That year, the Service began to hold the annual contests in which wildlife artists would compete to have their design featured on the stamp.

Today, even though the winner of the Federal Duck Stamp Contest receives no cash award from the Federal Government, winning the contest is a highly coveted honor because it can boost the reputation of even a previously unknown artist to the top of his or her profession. Winning artists stand to make millions of dollars from the sale of limited edition prints of their Duck Stamp design, as well as realize increased value in their other paintings.

The stamp is also prized by collectors. A person who purchased each stamp the year it was issued through 1992 would have paid a total of \$242, an investment now worth more than \$4,000. Stamps issued before 1941 are exceedingly rare since the law originally specified that unsold stamps were to be destroyed the following year. Duck Stamps are now sold for 3 years and excess stamps are then destroyed.

Duck Stamps can also be used as entrance passes to national wildlife refuges requiring fees, and can be purchased at most refuges, U.S. post offices, and through the Federal Duck Stamp Office, 1849 C Street, NW., Room 2058, Washington, DC, 20240.