



NEWS RELEASE

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SURF SCOTERS, HISTORIC LIGHTHOUSE TO BE FEATURED ON 1996-97 FEDERAL DUCK STAMP

Perseverance and an eye for the historic paid off in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 46th Federal Duck Stamp Contest as Wilhelm J. Goebel of Somerset, New Jersey, took top honors after nearly two decades of entering the annual contest.

Goebel's oil painting of a pair of surf scoters in flight over New Jersey's southern shoreline features the historic Barnegat lighthouse in the background.

"I noticed the color of the lighthouse echoes the color on the scoter drake's bill, which gives the painting a nice effect," Goebel said. "Plus, being a native of New Jersey, I liked the idea of putting one of the state's landmarks in my painting."

Goebel began entering the Federal Duck Stamp Contest in 1978 when he was a biology major at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York. He has come close to winning many times, including a second-place finish in 1990 when he painted black scoters.

"After that contest, I took a hard look at that painting and decided it needed zap in it," he said. "So when I painted surf scoters this year, I put more dramatic lighting in the piece."

Goebel, 35, is a nationally known wildlife artist. He designed the 1994 New Jersey Duck Stamp and fishing stamps for New Jersey, Delaware, and Illinois.

An avid birdwatcher, he has made a lifetime study of bird anatomy. "Birds are my specialty," he said. "Over the years, I've gotten to the point where I can draw almost any kind of bird from any angle simply from all the hours I've spent studying them."

Second place in this year's contest went to Daniel Smith of Bozeman, Montana, for his acrylic painting of two Barrow's goldeneye drakes on water. Smith is a two-time winner of the Duck Stamp Contest. Third place went to Robert Steiner of San Francisco, California, for an acrylic painting of a Barrow's goldeneye.

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The Federal Duck Stamp (formally known as the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp) is a required annual purchase of waterfowl hunters over 16 years of age. Duck Stamps currently cost \$15 and are available at most U.S. Post Offices, national wildlife refuges, and some sporting goods stores.

Ninety-eight cents of every Duck Stamp dollar is used for acquiring wetlands habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. To date, nearly half-a-billion dollars raised from Duck Stamp sales have been used to acquire more than 4.2 million acres of wetlands for the refuge system.

"It's a happy coincidence that Duck Stamp sales and duck populations are both at their highest levels in several years," said Service Director Mollie Beattie. "To me, this underscores not only the American public's commitment to waterfowl conservation but also the success of the Federal Duck Stamp itself. It remains one of the easiest, most effective ways for people to contribute to wildlife conservation."

Duck Stamps are also popular among stamp collectors, wildlife artists, and conservationists, more and more of whom are buying Duck Stamps as a way to contribute to wildlife and habitat protection. In fact, Duck Stamp purchases by non-hunters have risen from 3 to 10 percent of all Duck Stamp sales in the last few years.

The Federal Duck Stamp has been issued annually since 1934 when J.N. "Ding" Darling, chief of the Service's predecessor agency, the U.S. Biological Survey, designed the first stamp. Artwork for Duck Stamps was commissioned until 1949 when the Service began sponsoring annual contests to select the design.

The male surf scoter is black with large white patches on the forehead and at the nape of the neck. Its most distinctive feature is the bill, which has a black patch on each side margined behind by red, above by orange, and in front and below by a patch of white. The female is dark gray with a gray bill.

Other species eligible for portrayal this year were the Barrow's goldeneye, black scoter, and mottled duck. Contest guidelines issued each year designate species of North American waterfowl eligible for portrayal so that all of them will eventually appear on a Duck Stamp.

The 1996-97 Federal Duck Stamp will go on sale nationwide July 1, 1996.

-FWS-

Note: Black-and-white glossy photographs are available on loan to editors from the Fish and Wildlife Service 202-208-5634.