

National Elk Refuge News – June 18, 2013

Refuge Activities Accompany Duck Stamp Exhibits



A participant in the migration obstacle course navigates under a simulated power line during her timed trip between two points.

Two traveling Duck Stamp exhibits made a brief stopover at the National Elk Refuge last week, letting visitors enjoy beautiful artwork while learning about U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service conservation programs. Both Federal Duck Stamp and Junior Duck Stamp art work were on display at the Jackson Hole & Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center from June 11 through June 15.

While the exhibits were at the Visitor Center, refuge volunteers staffed the display area and explained to visitors the significance of the two programs. The first, the Federal Duck Stamp program, is the only art competition of its kind sponsored by the U.S. Government. Duck Stamps are a vital tool for wetland

conservation since ninety-eight cents out of every dollar generated by the sale of the stamps goes directly to purchase or lease wetland and associated upland habitats for inclusion in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System. The second program, the Junior Duck Stamp curriculum, is a dynamic arts program that teaches wetlands and waterfowl conservation to students from kindergarten through high school.

In addition to staffing the exhibits, refuge volunteers rounded out the learning experience by organizing a "Duck Day" on June 14, inviting the public to participate in a variety of activities that focused on waterfowl. A total of 44 participants navigated through a bird migration obstacle course,

avoiding mock predators, windows, buildings, and other obstacles while dealing with fragmented open spaces and invasive species.



Another "bird" blinded by blinking lights from antennas, radio towers, and wind generators skillfully dodges obstacles with his eyes closed on his travels through the migration obstacle course.



Participants of all ages enjoyed a station where they could try on props representing duck characteristics. Left: a senior talks with refuge volunteer Patsy Dicken while wearing two air sacs and a cardboard tube representing hollow bones. Right: a youngster enjoys helping her older sibling put on a bill to accompany her feathers and safety glasses representing nictitating membranes. A total of 67 “ducks” were dressed that day.

Two other active learning stations allowed guests to challenge themselves to pick up various sources of food with an assortment of tools to learn about different shapes and sizes of bills and beaks, or to try on props to learn about duck characteristics and adaptations. Nearby, another volunteer staffed a small table with magnifying glasses and water to demonstrate how a duck’s contour feathers serve as a protective outer shell against wind and moisture.

Earlier in the week, a group of preschoolers from the Children’s Learning Center stopped by for a reading of the 1941 children’s classic, “Make Way for Ducklings,” a picture book written and illustrated by Robert McCloskey. The book won the Caldecott Medal for McCloskey’s illustrations, a prestigious award that recognizes the year’s most distinguished American picture book for children. After the preschoolers listened to the story, they discussed the needs of the mallards in the story and their

search for a safe location to raise their young.

Later this summer, more art work will be on display at the Visitor Center when the Wyoming winners of the Junior Duck Stamp contest will be on display.

Students in all 50 states have the opportunity to participate in the Junior Duck Stamp curriculum and enter the contest. The Wyoming winners from four age categories are scheduled to be on display at the visitor center from July 26 – August 26.



The same two siblings use a more appropriate tool than the clear plastic tongs they tried first to pick up “bugs.” The activity focused on beaks and bills.