



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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David Klinger 202/343-5634

Pair Of Pintails Scores Big For Minnesota Artist Phil Scholer In 1983-84 "Duck Stamp" Contest

Phil V. Scholer, a professional wildlife artist from Kasson, Minnesota, won the 1983-84 Federal "Duck Stamp" competition in Washington, D.C., on November 4 with his acrylic painting of a pair of pintail ducks on water.

Scholer had entered the Federal competition on four previous occasions, placing high in the national judging but never winning the prestigious honor. His persistence paid off this year, however, as his entry topped 1,563 other paintings during two days of judging at the Department of the Interior.

His design will be reproduced on next year's Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, which must be purchased by all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age and older in the United States. The design for each year's stamp is selected through an annual contest--the Federal Government's only regularly sponsored art competition. Revenue from the sale of the "Duck Stamp" is used to buy wetlands and other types of waterfowl habitat under a program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Scholer, 31, set another record by being present in Washington, D.C., to witness the judging and selection of his entry--the first time that a winner has emerged from the Interior Department audience to instant national acclaim.

A native of southeastern Minnesota's prime duck country, Scholer turned to wildlife art barely 7 years ago while he was employed as an outdoor sign painter and designer in Rochester, Minnesota. He has since become a full-time professional waterfowl artist, but credits his experience as a designer for much of his success in the "Duck Stamp" competition. Scholer's only formal art training was at Mankato State University, where he graduated with a degree in fine arts.

His design, an acrylic painting on hardboard, depicts a pair of pintails in front of reeds at twilight. One of its most distinctive features is the late afternoon subdued glow in which the birds are bathed.

The pintail is a species common to all four major North American flyways, but most plentiful in the West. They are extremely graceful birds and fast fliers, typically measuring over two feet in length and weighing nearly two pounds.

"I chose pintails because I like them and thought they'd be competitive," Scholer said. "And my aim was to produce a real-looking painting." He hunts his birds with a camera along stretches of the Mississippi River, northern Minnesota, and South Dakota, where waterfowl are common. Game farms, Scholer says, also offer him an opportunity to study the anatomy and posture of these birds up close, which is crucial in the selection of any winning "Duck Stamp" design.

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Last year, Scholer's depiction of a pair of redhead ducks placed third in the Federal competition. That same design went on to win the 1982 Minnesota State "Duck Stamp" contest. In 1981, Scholer won his first major contest with a pair of whistling swans in the Nevada State "Duck Stamp" judging.

Nolan Haan, of Bethesda, Maryland, took second place in this year's Federal judging with his oil painting of a king eider duck, and John P. Baumlin of Owego, New York, placed third with his watercolor of a pair of redheads.

Judges for this year's contest were Col. Tom Bass, board member of The Wildlife Legislative Fund of America, Inc., of Washington, D.C.; Peter Henry, a waterfowl hunting guide from Queenstown, Maryland; Mary Gresham, art instructor and hunter, of Natchitoches, Louisiana; Dan C. Howley, art collector, of Vermilion, Ohio; and William E. Ready, president of the California Waterfowling Association, of San Francisco.

Before 1949, wildlife artists were commissioned to produce a design for the annual stamp. Since then, the design has been chosen through a contest open to all artists who are residents or citizens of the United States. Contestants are limited to one entry apiece each year and the competition is intense because of the growing popularity of the contest.

This year's total of 1,564 entries represents a drop from last year's record of 2,099 designs. This year, however, is the first time that the Fish and Wildlife Service has imposed a \$20 entry fee in an effort to defray the administrative costs of running the popular contest.

Judges place importance on anatomical accuracy of the birds and suitability of the design for reproduction as a stamp, and consider visual impact, composition and design, style, lasting first impression, and distinctiveness in their selection. In addition, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing advises judges on the technical requirements for good reproduction as stamp designs.

The Federal Government offers no prize or award to the winner other than a sheet of the following year's "Duck Stamps" autographed by the Secretary of the Interior. Commercial wildlife art dealers in the past, however, have been eager to market limited edition reprints of the winning design under private agreements with the finalist. Through this contest, the reputations of previously unknown wildlife artists have been established, and those of professionals have been enhanced.

These colorful stamps are the largest running, annually issued series in U.S. revenue stamp history. Since 1934, when "Duck Stamps" first went on sale, over 3.5 million acres of prime waterfowl territory have been acquired as National Refuge System lands or waterfowl production areas with more than \$400 million in revenue (\$256 million from "Duck Stamp" receipts and \$144 million from accelerated wetlands acquisition loan funds). By buying the stamps, nearly two million conservationists, most of them hunters and other sportsmen, provide about \$15 million in support for this program each year.

Non-hunters and a growing number of stamp collectors are also discovering the "Duck Stamp." The Interior Department encourages outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy wildlife through photography, birdwatching, and other activities to join hunters in supporting the Nation's conservation effort by buying an annual "Duck Stamp." Post offices sell "Duck Stamps," as well as an increasing number of National Wildlife Refuges across the country. This year's \$7.50 issue is currently on sale and next year's issue will go on sale July 1, 1983.

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Editors: Single black-and-white glossies of this year's winning design are available from 202/343-8770

