



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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BUY DUCK STAMPS FOR CHRISTMAS GIFTS THAT KEEP ON GIVING

Need a unique gift for that special someone on your Christmas list? If he or she happens to be an artist, wildlife watcher, stamp collector, or conservationist, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may just have the answer.

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, commonly called Duck Stamps, depict a variety of North American waterfowl and make a great gift. And with each \$15 Duck Stamp purchase, \$14.70 goes directly into a fund used to acquire wetlands habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife.

For other gift ideas, the Federal Duck Stamp Office offers an extensive line of products featuring various Duck Stamp designs. These include Christmas ornaments, cotton throws, tile boxes, computer mouse pads and screen savers, prepaid phone cards, ice bucket-and-glass sets, tankards, tote bags, sweatshirts, camp shirts, posters, caps, coffee mugs, and beautiful neckties. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of licensed products also is used for acquiring wetlands habitat. Through the Duck Stamp Licensing Program, private companies form agreements with the Federal Duck Stamp Program allowing them to feature Duck Stamp art on their products.

The Duck Stamp was created to raise money for acquiring wetlands during the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s when waterfowl populations were plummeting. It is a required annual purchase of all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age and older, but today it is also a popular purchase as a collectible and as a way to directly contribute to wildlife and habitat conservation.

Each year, wildlife artists from across the country enter Duck Stamp designs in the Service-sponsored Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest, where the next year's design is chosen by a panel of judges. Through an annual process of elimination and alternating eligible species, all 42 species of North American waterfowl should be portrayed on a Federal Duck Stamp by the year 2003.

Buying Duck Stamps is an easy and relatively inexpensive way to invest in this Nation's wildlife heritage. Wetland habitat purchased with Duck Stamp dollars becomes a part of the National

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Wildlife Refuge System. In fact, more than \$450 million raised from Duck Stamp sales has purchased 4.2 million acres of wetlands.

Wetlands are vital habitat areas for waterfowl and numerous other plants and wildlife, including nearly half the Nation's endangered species, yet more than 50 percent of the Nation's wetland areas have been lost since Colonial times and about 290,000 acres of wetlands continue to be lost each year. The Federal Duck Stamp Program is considered one of the Service's most successful efforts to preserve remaining wetlands areas and the species dependent upon them for future generations.

As an added bonus, a current Duck Stamp can be used as a pass to visit national wildlife refuges requiring entrance fees. To protect your Duck Stamp for this purpose, a credit card-sized "Duck Stamp Entrance Pass For National Wildlife Refuges" with a protective sleeve for your stamp is also available.

The Service currently manages more than 500 national wildlife refuges nationwide, ranging in size from less than an acre to 20 million acres. The refuge system not only protects habitat for a diversity of wildlife but also provides the public with unique opportunities for outdoor recreation and interpretation. These activities vary from refuge to refuge. As a possible stocking stuffer, information on these activities is provided in the brochure "National Wildlife Refuges, A Visitor's Guide," available for \$1 from the Consumer Information Center-3D, R. Woods, P.O. Box 100, Pueblo, Colorado, 81002.

Duck Stamps are very popular among philatelists, not only because they are beautiful and unique works of art, but also because their value as a collectible increases over the years. A person who bought each Duck Stamp the year it was issued through 1992 would have paid a total of \$242, an investment now worth more than \$4,000. Duck Stamps are sold for 3 years and excess stamps are then destroyed, ensuring their value as a collectible.

The 1994-95 stamp featuring Neal Anderson's gouache design of a pair of red-breasted mergansers looks great mounted and framed. It is available for \$15 from most U.S. Post Offices, national wildlife refuges, some sporting goods stores, and the Federal Duck Stamp Office.

Also available are the 1993-94 Duck Stamp by Bruce Miller, who used a rare combination of orange and lavender tones to portray a pair of canvasback ducks, and the 1992-93 Duck Stamp, designed by Joe Hautman, featuring a spectacled eider in flight over an arctic seascape.

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To order any of the above items, contact the Federal Duck Stamp Office, 1849 C Street NW., Washington, DC 20240; telephone: 202-208-4354.

The newest winning Duck Stamp design by Jim Hautman, selected during the 1994 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest on November 2, portrays a pair of mallards in flight and will be featured on the 1995-96 Duck Stamp. This stamp goes on sale nationwide July 1, 1995.

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