



NEWS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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STEINER TAKES TOP HONORS AT 1997 FEDERAL DUCK STAMP ART COMPETITION

On November 6, Robert Steiner's acrylic portrait of a male Barrow's goldeneye was chosen over 379 other entries to become the design for the 1998-99 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, better known as the Duck Stamp.

All waterfowl hunters age 16 and older are required to purchase and carry Duck Stamps when hunting. The stamps have also become increasingly popular among stamp collectors and non-hunting wildlife enthusiasts, who see the purchase as an effective way to contribute to wildlife habitat conservation. Ninety-eight percent of the \$15 purchase price is used to acquire wetlands for ducks and other species.

This was the 17th time Steiner has entered the Federal Duck Stamp Contest. He submitted a version of this painting 2 years ago and it placed third. When contacted at his studio in San Francisco, California, Steiner said, "I did have a good feeling about this piece. I just put the earlier version up in front of me and asked myself, 'How can I improve on that?' I was actually a little surprised at how much improving I was able to do."

Steiner is a professional artist who owns his own print publishing company. He paints primarily waterfowl and retrievers, although he sometimes paints other subjects. He has won 41 state duck stamp competitions, a record in wildlife art, as well as the 1995 California upland game bird stamp contest.

Second place went to Dan Smith of Bozeman, Montana, for his acrylic rendering of a pair of Barrow's goldeneyes. Smith won the 1987 contest with his painting of a snow goose. Harold Roe of Sylvania, Ohio, took third place with his acrylic painting of a mottled duck.

Barrow's goldeneyes are found chiefly in Alaska and western Canada. Breeding areas also include the Cascade Mountains of Oregon, Washington, and California and the Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming Rockies. In the West, they winter along the Pacific Coast from the Aleutians to San Francisco and in the East, along the coasts of southwestern Greenland, Newfoundland, and New England. There are also concentrated wintering populations in Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. Barrow's goldeneyes are year-round residents of Iceland.

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The male Barrow's golden-eye is a striking black-and-white bird with dark purple head. There is an irregular white patch between the eye and bill, which is gray. The female has a brownish head, white neck and belly, mottled gray back and wings, and yellow bill. As the name suggests, the eyes of both male and female are yellow-gold. Barrow's goldeneyes usually nest in tree cavities, sometimes as high as 50 feet above the ground, and feed primarily on aquatic insects, mollusks, and crustaceans.

This is the first time the Barrow's goldeneye has been featured on a Duck Stamp. This year, artists were limited to depicting black scoters, Barrow's goldeneyes, or mottled ducks. Species eligible for next year's contest are the ruddy duck, northern pintail, greater scaup, black duck, and green-winged teal. Artists are limited to particular species so that, by the year 2002, all North American waterfowl species will have appeared on a Duck Stamp at least once.

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service sponsors the annual Duck Stamp Art Competition to choose the design for the following year's stamp. Although no cash prize is given at this, the only Federally sponsored art contest, winning artists stand to gain hundreds of thousands of dollars through the sale of limited edition prints and licensed products bearing the image of their designs. They also receive a pane of stamps bearing their design.

In an entertaining twist to this year's contest, the opening ceremonies included an appearance by a quartet of trained mallard ducks from the Peabody Orlando Hotel. The three hens and one drake marched around the Interior Department auditorium, to the delight of audience and officials alike. Both Peabody hotels feature a duck-themed decor and, through a partnership with the Fish and Wildlife Service, now are an official outlet for the sale of Duck Stamps.

The Duck Stamp Program was initiated in 1934 when Jay N. "Ding" Darling designed the first Duck Stamp following "user pay" legislation supported by waterfowl hunters and conservationists, who were alarmed by waterfowl declines during the Dust Bowl Era. For the next 14 years, Duck Stamp designs came from artwork commissioned by the Fish and Wildlife Service. The first Duck Stamp contest was held in 1949 with eight entries.

The top 20 paintings from this year's contest will be displayed at the Easton Waterfowl Festival in Easton, Maryland, November 14-16.

Duck Stamps bearing this year's winning design will go on sale at Post Offices, national wildlife refuges, the Peabody hotels in Memphis and Orlando, national retail chain stores, and various

sporting-goods stores nationwide July 1, 1998. The Fish and Wildlife Service is working with the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to develop a self-adhesive version of the Duck Stamp, which is expected to be available for the first day of sale.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages 511 national wildlife refuges covering 92 million acres, as well as 67 national fish hatcheries.

The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that funnels Federal excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies. This program is a cornerstone of the Nation's wildlife management efforts, funding fish and wildlife restoration, boating access, hunter education, shooting ranges, and related projects across America.

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Editors Note: Black-and-white glossy prints and color slides are available on loan from the Fish and Wildlife Service's Duck Stamp Program Office, 202-208-4354.

