



NEWS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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1998-99 FEDERAL DUCK STAMP DEBUTS AT JULY 1 CEREMONY

The Smithsonian Institution's National Postal Museum in Washington, DC, will once again serve as a backdrop when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service unveils the 1998-99 Federal Duck Stamp, including a new self-adhesive version, on July 1.

Duck Stamps will be sold before and after the July 1 ceremony, which begins at 10 a.m. on the lower level of the Postal Museum at 2 Massachusetts Avenue, NE. San Francisco wildlife artist Robert Steiner, whose painting of a male Barrow's goldeneye graces the new Duck Stamp, will be on hand to autograph stamps and Duck Stamp merchandise. A special postal cancellation for the new Duck Stamp will be available at this event only. It will read "Duck Stamp Station, Washington, DC."

This year's ceremony marks the debut of the self-adhesive single issue Duck Stamp, which will be available, along with the traditional gummed stamp, for a 3-year trial period. The self-adhesive stamp, which is the same size as the traditional stamp, is mounted on a dollar-bill-sized carrier sheet packed with information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its programs. The new format will be available from post office vending machines and other 24-hour access sites, and may eventually be dispensed from automatic teller machines.

Steiner's design was chosen over 379 other entries last November to become this year's Duck Stamp. He will be honored at an artist's hometown ceremony July 18 at the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge in San Francisco.

The Washington event will serve as an opportunity for the public to view the newest exhibit in the Jeanette Cantrell Rudy Federal Duck Stamp Gallery at the Postal Museum. Highlights of the new exhibit will include several rare examples of imperfections in Duck Stamps, three early Duck Stamp issues signed by the artists, and the earliest Duck Stamp First Day Cover on a postcard postmarked July 1, 1936. The 800-square-foot gallery, depicting a wetlands scene, includes displays of Duck Stamps and other philatelic artifacts highlighting the Federal Duck Stamp's role in conserving wetlands and waterfowl. The gallery was made possible by a gift from Jeanette Cantrell Rudy, an avid waterfowl hunter and one of the world's most renowned collectors of Federal Duck Stamps.

One of the Nation's most successful conservation efforts, the new Federal Duck Stamp will be available for \$15 at most U.S. post

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offices, national wildlife refuges, Wal-Mart and K-Mart stores, and some sporting goods stores. It is also available from the Federal Duck Stamp Office by calling toll-free 1-888-534-0400.

Formally known as Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, Duck Stamps must be purchased annually by waterfowl hunters age 16 and older. However, a growing number of stamp collectors and other conservationists also purchase them as a way to contribute to wildlife and habitat conservation.

Money from the sale of Duck Stamps is used to acquire wetlands for the National Wildlife Refuge System, one of the world's most diverse collections of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife. To date, more than half a billion dollars in Duck Stamp sales has been used to purchase more than 5 million acres of habitat for the 514-unit refuge system.

The 1998 Federal Duck Stamp Design Contest will be held November 3, 4, and 5 at the Department of the Interior in Washington, DC. Eligible species in this year's contest are the American green-winged teal, black duck, greater scaup, northern pintail, and ruddy duck. The Duck Stamp Office will begin accepting entries July 1; all entries must be received by midnight September 15.

Contest rules and regulations are available from the Federal Duck Stamp Office, 1849 C Street, NW., Room 2058, Washington, DC 20240, or by calling 1-888-534-0400, toll free. Contest rules are also available on the Federal Duck Stamp Office's Internet homepage at <http://www.fws.gov/r9dso>. Artists may download the entry form and submit a printed copy along with their art.

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's nearly 93 million acres include 514 national wildlife refuges, 78 ecological services field stations, 66 national fish hatcheries, 50 wildlife coordination areas, and 38 wetland management districts with waterfowl production areas.

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 distributes 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.