



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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1993 FEDERAL DUCK STAMP CONTEST TAKES OFF NOVEMBER 7

As "Radar O'Reilly" in the hit television series M*A*S*H, Gary Burghoff served as part of a remote medivac unit in the battlegrounds of Korea. Today Burghoff has joined another tough battle -- this one to combat the loss and degradation of this Nation's wetlands. Burghoff will serve as an official judge for the annual Federal Duck Stamp Contest hosted by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service November 7 through 10, 1993, in Washington, DC.

The importance of wetlands will be the theme of this year's contest to choose the design for the 1994-95 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp. Free and open to the public, this is the only federally sponsored art competition. It will be held in the Interior Department auditorium, where 435 art entries will be on display for viewing and judging.

"Buying a Duck Stamp is one of the best and easiest ways for people to contribute directly to wildlife conservation," said Service Director Mollie Beattie. "About 98 cents of every Duck Stamp dollar go directly toward acquiring and protecting wetlands and surrounding habitats used by hundreds of wildlife species."

To date, \$450 million in funding generated from Duck Stamp sales has purchased or otherwise acquired more than 4.1 million acres of wetlands and associated habitat for inclusion in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Fish and Wildlife Service manages these vital areas of habitat and the diversity of wildlife species dependent upon them.

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The Duck Stamp Program's success is especially significant because more than half of the wetland areas in the conterminous United States have been lost since colonial times.

"Losing wetlands means losing many species of plants and animals living there, as well as a number of important benefits to people," added Director Beattie.

About one-third of the Nation's endangered and threatened species live in wetlands, and about 400 species of federally protected migratory birds depend on or frequent these areas. Wetlands benefit both wildlife and people by recharging ground water reservoirs, improving water quality through filtering, controlling erosion, and acting as a natural form of flood control.

Five people from the wildlife art and/or conservation community are chosen each year to serve as judges for the Duck Stamp Contest. In addition to Burghoff, who is also a wildlife artist and lifelong collector of Duck Stamps, contest judges include James Baker Hale, a master welder and metal sculptor of wildlife; Harry D. Knight, a former Director of Parks for the City of Newport News, Virginia, and former Chairman of the Board of Ducks Unlimited, Inc.; Kenneth Carroll Parkes, senior curator of birds for the Carnegie Museum of Natural History; and Donald J. Vlcek, Jr., a successful business executive for Domino's Pizza, Inc., an avid collector of Duck Stamps and wildlife art, and an advocate of wildlife art programs.

Minnesota is the state with the largest number of entrants (31). California and Pennsylvania tie with the second largest number (27), and New York is third (25).

Each year, contest guidelines designate five species of North American waterfowl as eligible for portrayal so that all of them will eventually appear on the stamp. This year's designs depict the Barrow's goldeneye, red-breasted merganser, black scoter, mottled duck, and surf scoter. They will be exhibited at the Interior Department auditorium, 1849 C Street, NW., Washington, DC, 20240, at the following times:

Sunday, November 7:	1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Viewing
Monday, November 8:	10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Viewing
Tuesday, November 9:	10:15 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Judging/Viewing
Wednesday, November 10:	8:45 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.	Judging/Viewing

The winner of the Duck Stamp contest will be announced at approximately 12:30 p.m. on November 10. It remains to be seen whether "Radar" will be able to anticipate the winner, as he did arrival of the medivac helicopters.



FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Facts

U.S. Department of the Interior

WETLANDS ARE WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT

The Federal Duck Stamp Program has come a long way in preserving wetlands since its inception nearly 60 years ago, when conservationists raised concerns over this Nation's waterfowl and wetlands. A chief proponent was J.N. "Ding" Darling, who then served as chief of the U.S. Biological Survey, the predecessor agency of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Darling and many of his contemporaries were witnessing plummeting waterfowl populations, caused primarily by an extended drought which took place during the 1920s. Their concern led to passage of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act by Congress in 1929. The new law provided the mechanism for land acquisition for the fledgling National Wildlife Refuge System. It did not, however, provide a continuous funding source for purchase of suitable lands. But Darling had a solution for that.

He set out to create the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp, a required purchase of all waterfowl hunters age 16 and older to ensure a source of revenue. This idea was embodied in legislation known as the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act, passed by Congress in 1934. A well-known political cartoonist, Darling took it upon himself to design the first stamp, featuring a pair of mallards.

Later, to acknowledge that stamp funds benefit many other species as well as waterfowl, the stamp was renamed the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, and today is considered one of the world's most successful conservation efforts. It currently costs \$15.

The Fish and Wildlife Service commissioned artists to design the Duck Stamp until 1949. That year, the Service began to hold the annual contests in which wildlife artists would compete to have their design featured on the stamp.

Today, even though the winner of the Federal Duck Stamp Contest receives no cash award from the Federal Government, winning the contest is a highly coveted honor because it can boost the reputation of even an unknown artist to the top of his or her profession. The winning artist stands to make millions of dollars from the sale of limited edition prints of his or her Duck Stamp design, as well as realize a sizably increased value in their other paintings.

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The stamp is also prized by collectors. A person who bought each stamp the year it was issued through 1992 would have paid a total of \$242, an investment now worth more than \$4,000. Stamps issued before 1941 are exceedingly rare since the law originally specified that unsold stamps were to be destroyed the following year. Duck Stamps are now sold for 3 years and excess stamps are then destroyed.

Duck Stamps can also be used as entrance passes to national wildlife refuges requiring fees, and can be purchased at most refuges, U.S. post offices, and through the Federal Duck Stamp Office, 1849 C Street, NW., Room 2058, Washington, DC, 20240.

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