

By Karen R. Hollingsworth

The Art of Conservation®

*Young Artists of Wildlife Forever's
State-Fish Art Contest™*



Largemouth bass by Seth Thomas Spradlin won both the 2008 national Best of Show and The Art of Conservation Stamp Awards.

“After weeks and weeks of research, the young ‘Professor of Study’ would enter his bedroom studio, close the door and begin to paint. Always a

perfectionist, his goal was for the viewer to feel they were actually right there—in the nature he loved.” These words are from the parents of

Indiana State-Fish Art winner Seth Thomas Spradlin whose art graces the cover of this issue of *Eddies*. In 2008, Seth won both the national Best



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of Show and The Art of Conservation Stamp Award with his remarkable largemouth bass.

Late this past August, during his second summer earning funds for college as a seasonal employee for the National Park Service in Alaska, Seth, 20, and his brother Neal, 28, lost their lives in a bush plane accident in remote Katmai National Park and Preserve. Wildlife Forever is renaming their top award as the Seth Thomas Spradlin Best of Show Award in honor of his talent and conservation ethic.

“Seth’s artwork inspired us all. I remember feeling a sense of wetness from the splash in his painting. That element of engagement and his untimely loss challenges us to remember and recognize his talent,” states Doug Grann, President and CEO of Wildlife Forever. “I am pleased to rename our top award after him to inspire future young conservationists to excel and achieve in the outdoor world.”

It all began in 1998, as a child’s homework assignment and has become one of America’s most effective conservation education programs. Launched in 1999, Wildlife Forever’s State-Fish Art Program continues to teach and inspire thousands of kids across America with the school curriculum *Fish On!* Using art as a tool to teach youth about fish, fishing, and aquatic resource conservation, students create an original illustration of a state-fish and write an essay about their chosen fish’s habitat, life cycle, and conservation.

The program culminates in the nationwide State-Fish Art Contest. On Earth Day a panel of judges, composed of wildlife artists, outdoor writers,



Nathaniel Grann

Seth Spradlin (r) with Douglas Grann, President/CEO Wildlife Forever unveiling 2008 ART OF CONSERVATION Stamp.



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Joshua Joint, 10-12, Pennsylvania - brook trout - 2004 Best of Show.

fisheries specialists, and national celebrities, have the difficult, but rewarding, task of selecting a winner for each of the three grade categories from each state. This year, they also judged international entries stemming from a new partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. They will then choose the top three winners for each grade level. The creativity and hard work of all the young winners is recognized at the State-Fish Art EXPO later in the summer.

Joseph Hautman, wildlife artist and three-time Federal Duck Stamp winner sums up this unique opportunity for budding artists and conservationists, "Several big success stories involve the arts with

conservation. As a past judge of the State-Fish Art Contest, the students learn about fish and fishing and the best part is the art is amazing."

In 2006, Troy Truesdell, a Minnesota 12th grader, was taken aback when he received the first ever State-Fish Art "hat trick" winning the top three awards—with just his third



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Walleye by Troy Truesdell.



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Brie Jenkins' "King Salmon" named 2009 Best of Show, the The Art of Conservation Stamp and People's Choice.

oil painting ever. Departing from his preferred medium of pencil, he painted his favorite fish. "As an avid fisherman, I even incorporated one of my favorite Rapala lures that had



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Tiara Jenkins 10-12 Missouri - channel catfish. 2005 The Art Of Conservation Stamp.

actually caught a walleye!" exclaimed Truesdell.

Four young artists in the Jenkins family made an indelible mark on State-Fish Art, winning 22 Missouri first-place honors since 2000. The tradition began with Tiara winning first place in the state's grade 4-6 category, followed by her younger sister Brie in 2002.

Maturing as artists year by year, their art is recognized with top national awards including Tiara's catfish in 2005, and Brie's king salmon in 2009, as The Art of Conservation Stamps.

Today Tiara helps fund her pursuit of a B.A in Studio Art with merit

art scholarships, aspiring to teach art at the collegiate level. Brie continues to challenge herself artistically through commissions for her work. In the family tradition,



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Brie Jenkins' "Channel Catfish" took 1st Place in her home state of Missouri in 2002.



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Tony Lee, 7-9, Oregon - Chinook salmon.

they mentor their younger siblings, Teal and Brock, with critique and encouragement as their young talent blossoms. As Brock says, "If I get their approval, I know I am doing 'okay.'"

These top winning artists, the students participating every year, and the youngest just starting their journey to learn about, study and create with their skills and imagination, a state-fish have all joined the ranks of one of America's greatest movements. Their eyes, minds and hearts have been opened to conservation and becoming

a steward of our fish, lakes and streams.

Seth Spradlin stayed up all night to finish a painting—a painting he had been working on for months. It seemed like forever to his family. "From time to time he would let us see it, as layer by incredible layer he laid in the background with painstaking attention to detail, right down to individual needles on trees," his father recalled. "Seth was leaving the next morning for his summer job in Alaska. That evening he says 'I'm finishing this painting before I go.' I told him he surely didn't have enough time and better to get a good night's

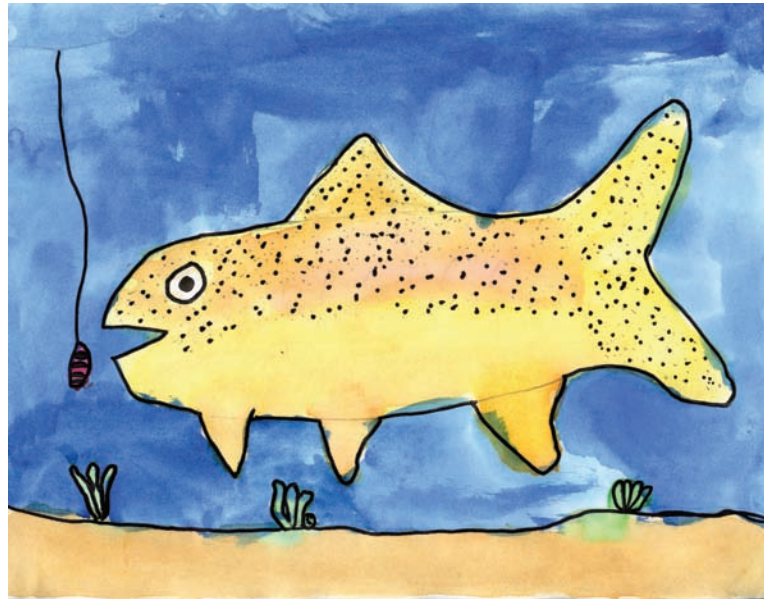


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Carson Collinsworth, 4-6, Montana - cutthroat trout.

sleep. When we left for the airport the painting was still wet, completed overnight with an absolutely magnificent herd of elk. What an amazing gift for our family, Seth's undying love of nature shared in his art, and we absolutely treasure it."

Karen Hollingsworth manages the State-Fish Art Program. She's an award-winning wildlife photographer, and is featured in numerous publications including the *Smithsonian Book of National Wildlife Refuges*.



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Emma Gardner, 4-6, Utah - Bonneville cutthroat trout.



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Makena Peet, 10-12, South Dakota - bluegill.