

April 7, 2014



WINGTIPS

Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

A Stamp Success Story: Quivira NWR



Whooping Cranes in the Central Flyway; Photo: USFWS

Located near the geographical center of the lower 48 is Region 6's [Quivira NWR](#) in Stafford County, Kansas. The property's 22,135 acres lie about midway between Hutchinson and Great Bend. The refuge was established in 1955, as Great Salt Marsh National Wildlife Refuge, and was given its present name in 1958.

Quivira's central location is a contact zone between eastern and western species of birds, plants, and other wildlife. Both species of North American meadowlarks breed there, for instance. Located two degrees east of the 100th meridian, it's also an ecological crossroads between the wetter tallgrass prairie to the east and the drier shortgrass prairie to the west. But most unusually, due to groundwater percolating through

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Did You Know?

- 1) The highest number of stamps sold in California was in the 1952-1952 year when there were 214,456 stamps sold in the Golden State.
- 2) The highest number of stamps sold in Minnesota was in the 1971-1972 year when there were 179,624 stamps sold.
- 3) The last two times that the price of the stamp went up, 1989-1990 and 1991-1992, there actually were increases in the total numbers of stamps sold.
- 4) The first Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest open to the general public was in 1966.
- 5) For some time (e.g., the 1940s) the Law Enforcement

subsurface salt deposits, Quivira offers rare inland saltmarsh habitat, where salt-tolerant plants like Alkali Sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides*) and Seepweed (*Suaeda calceoliformis*) thrive. The uplands consist of native sand prairie, another habitat at risk of disappearing from this part of the country.

There's a prairie-dog town within the confines of the NWR. The Breeding Bird Survey for June 2013 lists [74 species](#), and migrants expand the [checklist](#) to a count of 344 species. As Laura and William Riley wrote in their *Guide to the National Wildlife Refuges*, it's estimated that half the shorebirds in North America stop at Quivira or nearby Cheyenne Bottoms on their migrations along the Central Flyway.

The refuge provides critical habitat for migrating Whooping Cranes (*Grus americana*), listed as Federally Endangered. Quivira also supports a subspecies of Snowy Plover, and the Interior subspecies of Least Tern. In streams fed by Artesian springs can be found a small fish, the Arkansas Darter (*Etheostoma cragini*), endemic to the Arkansas River watershed and a candidate for Federal listing.

Quivira is far enough west that water rights are an important factor in its success. According to the draft [Comprehensive Conservation Plan](#), water for the refuge's wetlands is taken from Rattlesnake Creek, which flows southwest to north through the property. Although the refuge holds senior rights to about 15,000 acre-feet of water per year (having filed in 1957), in general, water rights have been overappropriated within this agriculture-dominated management district. Declines in the water table, with concomitant reductions in water quality and availability, loom in the future.

Meanwhile, the prairie uplands are threatened by encroachment from native and non-native trees and shrubs. The native Sand Plum, or Chickasaw Plum (*Prunus angustifolia*), scarce elsewhere, is invasive on these grasslands, growing in thick, monotypic stands.

Quivira is fortunate to have an active [Friends organization](#). An audio tour of the Wetlands & Wildlife National Scenic Byway offers a [10-minute visit](#) to the refuge and a chat with staff. The next [Wings N Wetlands Birding Festival](#), a biennial event, will take place in April, 2015.

As of September, 2012, 99.1% of Quivira NWR's acreage was acquired with MBCF money. Here's something even more revealing: most (21,820 acres) of this land was purchased by 1969 (when the Stamp price was \$3); the total tab for all 22,135 acres has come to \$2,059,238. That works out to \$93.03 per acre, quite a bargain!

section of the USFWS handled matters related to the Duck Stamp.

6) The 1982 contest for the stamp was the first one to require an entry fee. It was \$20.

7) There were 2,099 artwork submissions for the 1982-1983 stamp. This is the highest number of entries recorded.

8) After years of controversy, the Migratory Bird Conservation Act was passed on February 18, 1929. It created the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The MBCC would have little power until 1934 when passage of the Stamp act would provide a solid funding mechanism for habitat acquisition.

9) The Stamp is usually released on or about the start of July of each year. One exception, however, was for the 1949-1950 stamp, when it was released on the first of September 1949, due to delays caused by Congress deliberating on raising the stamp price from \$1 to \$2.

10) In 1992, after realizing that some waterfowl species were frequently depicted on Duck Stamps while others simply never appeared, the Federal Duck Stamp office began a program of prescribing which species could be painted in any given year.

11) Only two women artists have won the Federal Duck Stamp Competition: Nancy Howe in 1990 (King Eider) and Sherrie Russell Meline in 2005 (Ross's Goose).

12) The official name of the stamp changed from the "Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp" to the "Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp" in 1977 to better reflect the mission of the program and to encourage non-hunters to buy the Stamp.

MBCC Secures Valuable Habitat at March Meeting



Waterfowl at Upper Ouachita NWR, by Joseph McGowan, USFWS

On March 26th, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) met in Washington, DC to consider important investments (fee-title, easements, and leases) to secure habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Here's a quick summary of those realty decisions:

1. Anahuac NWR (TX)	1,277 acres fee-title	\$1,718,200
2. San Bernard NWR (TX)	30 acres fee-title	\$ 138,500
3. Trinity River (TX)	234 acres fee-title	\$ 162,399
4. Upper Ouachita NWR (LA)	18,711 acres fee-title	\$3,830,013
5. Tulare Basin WMA (CA)	305 acres easement	\$ 782,000

Clearly they were both small (30 acres at San Bernard) and large (18,711 acres at Upper Ouachita) acquisitions. But all were directed to improve the situation for birdlife.

The first three, all along the coast of Texas and all within an hour or two of Houston, help secure a network of regional refuges specifically designed for migratory waterfowl (e.g., Mottled Duck, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, and Black-bellied Whistling-Duck) and also shorebirds, long-legged waders, as well as neotropical and grassland songbirds. The large Upper Ouachita NWR acquisition is intended to protect bottomland hardwood forest for wintering waterfowl but also other habitats such as shrub-scrub and pine, contributing to the goals of the Red-cockaded Woodpecker Recovery Plan. The Tulare Basin easement arrangement in the San Joaquin Valley of California is intended to stem the rate of wetland habitat fragmentation in the valley. The Tulare

Basin WMA is part of a creative mosaic of federal, state, and private wetland-associated properties.

The Commission also received a summary of the year's MBCF habitat investments, which included \$18.46 million for National Wildlife Refuge acquisition and \$46.35 million for WPAs, mostly grassland and wetland habitat in the northern Great Plains.

Did you buy at least one Stamp last year? Well, give yourself a pat on the back. This is where your dollars went to work!

The MBCC also approved 50 extremely valuable North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA) decisions, unrelated to Stamp investments, but crucial for wetland conservation in parts of Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. Also, 45 U.S. Small NAWCA Grants were approved.

Finally, at the end of the meeting, a "birthday cake" was shared, recognizing the 80th anniversary of the signing of the original Stamp Act in March of 1934.

National Junior Duck Stamp Contest Coming Up

The National Junior Duck Stamp Contest will take place this month. It will be conducted at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, on Friday, April 18, beginning at 10am.

Every year, the very best student artwork from individual 50 states, Washington DC and the US territories is judged in this competition to select a national winner whose pictured waterfowl be depicted on the next Junior Duck Stamp. The annual art contest is the culmination of the program providing students, educators, families, and communities the opportunity to learn about waterfowl and wetland conservation.

You can find more information on the April 18th event at NCTC [here](#).



The Current JDS, artwork by M. Grimm

The JDS program has proven to be a tremendous success since its launch in the early 1990s. It mobilizes about 30,000 students per year, connecting youngsters in a meaningful program to promote conservation through the arts.

In the best of cases, the JDS program links youth to the outdoors in a meaningful way. Moreover, the JDS's new educational curriculum (2012) is a model of "relevance," with creative projects to bring into classrooms and out to field trips across America. In many respects, the JDS is also the "farm team" for the next generation of great wildlife artists.

wildlife artists.

All these are good reasons to keep the Junior Duck Stamp program thriving. But budget decisions at the USFWS have put the entire JDS program in jeopardy. The Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp has expressed disappointment in this trend and will continue to do so until the JDS program regains the support it so richly deserves.

All Mountain Bird Festival Attendees to Receive a Duck Stamp



The very first [Mountain Bird Festival](#), to be held in southern Oregon in late May, will make sure that each of their attendees gets a Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation [Duck] Stamp. The [Klamath Bird Observatory](#), host for the festival, is making sure that each attendee will be sent a brand new Stamp as soon as it is released in late June.

The [registration form](#) for the festival includes the Stamp, a concept that is probably a first for bird festivals run across the country.

KBO organizers for the festival have spread the word, indicating that the Stamp program is "one of the most successful conservation programs ever." It is no accident that the theme for the Mountain Bird Festival is "elevating bird conservation."

About the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

Last month marked one year since our e-newsletter, *Wingtips*, began. Our first issue came out on March 13, 2013, and we have now had a total of 20 issues. We try to send out at least one issue per month, but sometimes we send out two... if circumstances demand! You can find an archive of all our *Wingtips* issues [here](#).

Our Friends Group is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to two basic goals:

1. To increase promotional and educational efforts among various target audiences concerning the stamp and the National Wildlife Refuge system.
2. To increase the regular, voluntary purchase of the stamp among hunters and non-hunters alike.

The purchase of a stamp is, perhaps, *the easiest thing you can do* to protect crucial wetland and grassland habitat in the U.S. Indeed, a 15-dollar purchase of a stamp goes a very long way!

Our "Regular Friend" fee is modest, equal to the cost of one current Stamp (\$15), but all Friends are *also* asked to pledge to buy two stamps per year, joining with other individuals and organizations across the country with that promotional effort. Our "Friend's Year" also corresponds with the "year" of a valid Stamp - from July to July.

[Become a Friend Today!](#)

