

September 25, 2017



WINGTIPS

Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

ANOTHER HAUTMAN BROTHER WINS



In This Newsletter Issue

ANOTHER HAUTMAN BROTHER DOES IT!

PPR CONSERVATION

NEED A STAMP?

Quick Links

[Our Website](#)

[Join Friends of the Stamp](#)

[Resources](#)

[Connect via Facebook](#)

[Tweaking Future Art Rules](#)

[THREATS TO SANTA ANA NWR](#)



DUCK STAMP ART CONTEST PRODUCES FINE RESULTS

The Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest was held a little more than a week ago (September 15-16) at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point at the Noel Fine Arts Center. There, before a packed audience, a panel of five judges went through 215 submissions, all [still viewable in an online gallery](#), in this year's exciting competition. Eligible species for this year's contest were:

- Mallard,
- Gadwall,
- Cinnamon Teal,
- Blue-winged Teal, and
- Harlequin Duck.

Out of the 215 entries, there were 12 that made it to the final round of judging on that Saturday.

Although the stamp, today called the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, has been in existence since 1934, the first art contest started in 1949. It was open to any U.S. artist who wished to enter, with 65 artists submitting 88 design entries that first year. To this day, the contest remains open to any artist 18 or older who is a U.S. citizen. (A number of artists submitted pieces for the first time this year. The uptick in art submissions was attributed by some to the increase in the program's visibility after the release of the movie, *Million Dollar Duck*.)

Bob Hautman, an accomplished artist from Delano, Minnesota, won the contest. His image of a pair of Mallards flying over a cattail marsh - with other Mallards in the background - will be made into the 2018-2019 stamp. It will go on sale in late June 2018. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service produces the stamp, which sells for \$25 each and raises nearly \$40 million each year to provide easement and fee-title wetland and grassland habitats for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

This is Bob Hautman's third Federal Duck Stamp Contest win. His art previously appeared on the 1997-1998 (Canada Goose) and 2001-2002 (Northern Pintail) stamps. Bob's brothers, Jim and Joe, are also multiple Duck Stamp artists, having each won the contest five times. Curiously, Bob's win this year follows the two wins in the previous two years by his brothers, Joe in 2015 (Trumpeter Swan) and Jim in 2016 (Canada Goose). And perhaps as curious, in 2015, the trio took all three top spots when Joe took first prize, Bob was second, and Jim was third.



Greg Alexander's Cinnamon Teal

Greg Alexander of Ashland, Wisconsin, placed second this year with his acrylic painting of a Cinnamon Teal. Christine Clayton of Sidney, Ohio, took third place with her oil painting of a Blue-winged

Teal. In 2012, Clayton won the National Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest with her painting of a Northern Pintail. She was 17 at the time.

The five judges for this year's Federal Duck Stamp Contest were highly qualified: Dr. Jacob Straub, a waterfowl biologist and the Wetlands and Waterfowl Conservation Chair in UW-Stevens Point's College of Natural Resources; Jane Kim, an artist and science illustrator; Robert Spoerl, a lifelong hunter and conservationist with a passion for waterfowl; Tim Pearson, an artist - and flyfishing guide - who paints mostly in watercolor; and Richard Prager, an avid collector of Federal and Junior Duck Stamps, Duck Stamp remarks, and original artwork.



Christine Clayton's Blue-winged Teal



Judges giving Bob Hautman's work a very rare perfect score of "25" in the final round of judging. Photo: UW-Stevens Point.

SERIOUS CONSERVATION IN THE PRAIRIE POTHOLE REGION

In *Wingtips*, we have often written about Duck Stamp-acquired wildlife refuges that are large in scale and dramatic in aspect, be they [Hart Mountain National Antelope Refuge](#) or [Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge](#). But there is a landscape that is critical to the breeding success of North American waterfowl that some might consider humdrum in appearance, and whose public lands are managed as a mosaic of tiny units. Savvy readers know it as the northern Great Plains' Prairie Pothole Region (PPR).



USFWS Photo

lesser extent, groundwater flows).

The PPR consists of 276,000 square miles, stretching from central Alberta southeastward into northern Iowa; parts of five U.S. states lie in the PPR. While "prairie" can refer to any of various ecosystems of moderate rainfall and temperate climate where the dominant vegetation is grasses, herbs, and shrubs (as opposed to trees), what sets the PPR apart is the abundance of wetlands formed during the Wisconsin glaciation, which ended about 10,000 years ago. The glaciers left shallow depressions known as potholes or kettle lakes. These pothole wetlands are not connected by surface streams; rather, they are fed by spring snowmelt (and to a

This patchwork of temporary and semi-permanent **wetlands** is the continental nursery for many North American *Anatidae* species, our waterfowl. Prairie potholes are exceptionally productive because their shallow waters warm up quickly in spring; their dynamic nature facilitates nutrient cycling and the regrowth of vegetation and macroinvertebrates. The wetlands have been under threat for a century and half, largely due to drainage for agriculture; the adverse effect on

breeding birds was decied as early as 1927 by Iowan W. J. Berry. Nevertheless, by one estimate, the PPR still produces 50% of the North American breeding waterfowl population. Recent [open access research by Neal D. Niemuth, Kathleen K. Fleming, and Ronald E. Reynolds](#) assesses 40 years of population data; the authors suggest that continued draining and intensified land use remain the most significant threats to PPR birds, rather than other factors, such as climate change.

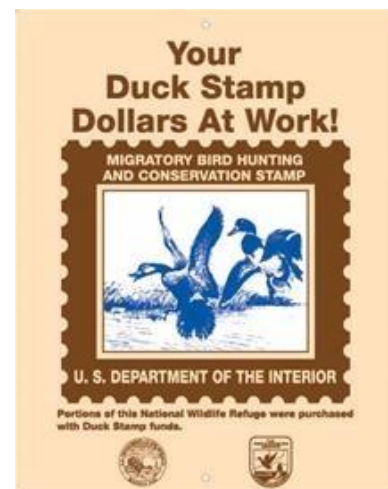
The **grasslands** in the region, going back to swaths that emerged from the ice sheet millennia ago and that have never been impacted by a shovel, constitute a precious native habitat that begs for conservation. Globally, grasslands are the most human-altered biome with the highest risk of biome extinction. Only about 18% of the grassland in the U.S. Prairie Pothole Region is protected, which equates to just 5% of historic grass area. In comparison, about a third of the wetlands, which are sprinkled throughout these grasslands, are protected. Moreover, these important grasslands buffer and protect the individual wetlands, provide cover for young waterfowl, and are crucial for numerous at-risk grassland songbirds - from longspurs, to pipits, to sparrows.

Like the mosaic of wetlands, **public land management** in the PPR is similarly broken into small pieces, [characterized](#) as having "a complex and sometimes confusing legislative history [with] funding from multiple sources...." Unlike the situation farther west, less than 10% of the landscape is under private, state, or federal protection programs (1992 data). The Department of Agriculture (USDA), through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, offers incentives to farmers to forego conversion of wetlands to croplands; it has enrolled more than 430,000 acres in wetland easements. USDA's [Conservation Reserve Program](#) (CRP) has nationwide scope, but it has been quite strong in the PPR. The [Prairie Pothole Joint Venture](#), one of the original six partnerships among federal agencies, state offices, and NGOs established under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, has been conserving habitat since 1987. This joint venture, through its web of partnerships, protects, restores, and enhances high priority wetland and grassland habitats to help sustain populations of waterfowl, shorebirds, waterbirds, and prairie landbirds on the U.S. portion of the PPR.

Perhaps most important to *Wingtips* readers would be the USFWS's Small Wetlands Program, which has used funds from the Duck Stamp program to protect nearly 3 million acres of habitat, most of it in the PPR. The program was created in 1958 by an amendment to 1934's Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act and was strengthened by the Wetland Loan Act of 1961. Rather than acquiring large tracts of land, the Small Wetlands Program uses fee-title and easements to secure small patches called [Waterfowl Production Areas](#) (WPAs). Some of these units are tiny, the smallest being Ward County WPA in North Dakota, spanning only 0.1 acre (only as much land as your correspondent's townhouse sits on), but there are *a lot of them*. All told, 36,000 WPAs comprise 18% of Refuge System lands in the lower 48. Small, numerous, and hugely important -- WPAs are wetland conservation's ["long tail."](#)

Administratively, WPAs are organized into Wetland Management Districts (WMDs), which are coterminous with counties in which any land is managed as a WPA. In the Prairie Pothole Region states, there are 32 WMDs.

[Spellman Lake WPA](#), 393 acres in Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota, and [Big Slough WPA](#), comprising 800 acres of Murray County in the same state, have been featured by USFWS. A



project by [Darrel Drake, Brenda Tozer, and Geoffrey Stillwell](#) does a good job of pulling together maps of the geology, hydrology, and meteorology of the PPR. [Ducks Unlimited produced a 6-minute video](#) in 2010 from the PPR with some lovely clips of ducks afloat and on the wing.

WPAs in the U.S. Prairie Pothole Region, acquired by fee-title and easement, are one more set of valuable investments in America's conservation portfolio. They're made possible when you purchase your Duck Stamp.

Still missing your 2017-2018 Stamp?

The easiest way to buy a stamp is probably to get yours at your local post office. Also, we at the Friends Group currently have a supply of 2017-2018 stamps on hand. Just send us a \$25 check (made out to "Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp") along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, and we'll send you your stamp. Please include a note with your e-mail address if there is any problem where we have to get back to you:

Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

P.O. Box 2143

Columbia, MD 21045

Support the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

The Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to two fundamental 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.



Our membership is annual, corresponding to the year of validity for the Federal Duck Stamp, namely from the beginning of July to the end of the following June. Our "Regular Friend" fee is modest, only \$15, but all Friends are also asked to *pledge to buy TWO stamps per year*, joining with other organizations across the country in that effort.

You can access a secure online form to join the Friends - or to make a contribution - [via Razoo](#). Or you can access our simple mail-in [membership form](#).

We encourage you to commit yourself to the promotion of the Stamp program, the Friends, and smart conservation through the sales and promotion of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation [Duck] Stamp.

And don't forget support for the Jr. Duck Stamp Program which reaches tens of thousands of youngsters. One way to help is described here, on the right, through AmazonSmile.

Shop at AmazonSmile
and Amazon will make
a donation to:

The Junior Duck Stamp Program
through our Friends

Get started

amazonsmile

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