

December 2, 2015



WINGTIPS

Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

Stamp Success Story: Merced NWR



Ross's and Snow Geese at Merced NWR
Photo: USFWS/Richard Albers

We complete another circuit of the country's refuges that have benefited from MBCF/Stamp funds with a visit to Region 8 (California and Nevada) and a look at the [Merced National Wildlife Refuge](#) in the Central Valley of California. At first glance, Merced would seem to be one of our more conventional refuges, composed largely of wetlands, upland grasslands, and riparian woods and supporting migrant and wintering waterfowl. But it holds some surprises as well.

The first surprise is that when the refuge was established in 1951, it was created under the Lea Act. That is, its objective was not the protection of wildlife and habitat but rather a way to move winter waterfowl out of adjacent farmland, where the birds were damaging crops. Fortunately, agricultural and management practices have changed since then, reducing the conflict between crops and birds. Some 3,800 acres were purchased with MBCF/Duck Stamp funds. Today, the refuge

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Did You Know?

1) The 1950-1951 stamp (showing Trumpeter Swans by Walter Weber) was the first one to be chosen by an open art competition.

2) In the late 1940s, the Izaak Walton League passed a resolution asking the Department of the Interior to place Ding Darling's portrait on the 1950-1951 Stamp. Darling quickly sent a letter to the Secretary of the Interior, asking him to reject the suggestion. "I want to be the first to protest against it," he wrote.

includes the Merced unit (which includes an auto-tour route and walking trails accessed from the colorfully-named Sandy Mush Road) as well as the Lonetree, Arena Plains, and Snowbird units. Merced NWR is managed under the San Luis National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which includes another 15,000 acres acquired via MBCF/Stamp funds.

The property hosts the greatest population of wintering Lesser Sandhill Cranes in the Pacific Flyway, with as many as 20,000 birds paying a visit each year. Ross's, Greater White-fronted, and Snow Geese also spend the cold months here. So perhaps it's not surprising that the best time of the year to visit is winter-unless your main interest is in the breeding Swainson's Hawks and [Tri-colored Blackbirds](#).

A specialized habitat found in the Arena Plains unit is a region of vernal pools. As [Joseph G. Silveira explains](#), in an extensive analysis of the geology, plant communities, and endemics supported by this special place, a surprising management technique is the grazing by cattle. In this ecological setting, grazing controls the build-up of non-native vegetation like Yellow Star-thistle and Prickly Lettuce. Silveira notes that the action of cattle maintains open sand habitats that benefit flora and fauna alike.

One more surprise: researchers are using the wetlands to study growth rates-of fish! A team recently released [2,500 young Chinook Salmon](#) into Cinnamon Slough, a seasonal wetland. Depending on the results of this and subsequent studies, Merced wetlands may contribute to the restoration of free-swimming salmon to the waters of the San Joaquin River.

In what John Muir called the "extravagantly flowery" Great Central Plain of California, Merced NWR hosts a [Crane Day](#) each November. A favorite subject of videographers is the bumper-to-bumper flights of geese at sunrise and sundown, as a quick [YouTube search](#) will attest.

3) The 1959-1960 stamp, with artwork by Maynard Reese, depicted a Mallard, but it really showed a Labrador retriever, King Buck. The required theme for the 1959-60 stamp was "Retrievers save game," and there were 110 entries by 64 artists in the open competition.

4) Our three species of scoters - black sea-ducks - have appeared on stamps , but only one time each: 1969-1970 (White-winged Scoter by Maynard Reese), 1996-1997 (Surf Scoter by Wilhelm Goebel), and 2002-2003 (Black Scoter by Joseph Hautman). In the last case, all the artists in the 2001 contest were instructed to illustrate Black Scoter. There were no other options.

5) The first year for the self-adhesive - as well as the gummed - stamp was for the 1998-1999 stamp (Barrow's Goldeneye, by Robert Steiner). That self-adhesive format dominates the sales and distribution.

6) The first Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest open to the general public was in 1966. The winning image that year was of a trio of flying Canvasbacks, a black-and-white wash drawing by Ron Jenkins.

7) The highest number of stamps sold in one year was for the 1971-1972 stamp. There were 2,445,977 stamps sold.

T-shirt with Classic Stamp Image Available from the Friends

The Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp has created a new stamp-support t-shirt. It features the classic first stamp, with the wonderful artwork by Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling. The message on the shirt is simple - "Securing Wildlife Habitat Since 1934."



The price (\$11.20 plus shipping and handling) is being kept as low as possible, to get the t-shirt in the hands - and on the backs - of bird advocates and conservationists across the country.

Through the t-shirt, we wish to spread the word about the unique role that the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation [Duck] Stamp provides.

Also, by using the original 1934-1935 stamp image on this t-shirt, our Friends acts as a Nonexclusive Licensee of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, with the Stamp design the property of the

United States Government. Also, as part of our use of the stamp image, five percent (5%) of the price of this t-shirt is deposited into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, the fund where Duck Stamp dollars are sent for acquisition of wetland, bottomland, and grassland habitats in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Yes, by buying a t-shirt you will also help secure actual refuge habitat!

Our t-shirts come in traditional men's style only. (Sorry, we are in an experimental phase.) They are available in just four sizes: M, L, XL, and 2XL.

The t-shirt may be just what you are looking for in the way of the perfect gift this holiday season!

You can find t-shirt images and more details [here](#).

While shopping this holiday season, you can help the Jr. Duck Stamp Program

"AmazonSmile" is a simple concept that works like this: When you shop through the Amazon website, the folks at Amazon will donate to your favorite designated tax-exempt organization or charity.



The Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp is now a registered charitable organization with AmazonSmile. You can designate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to be donated to the Friends, at no cost to you. In turn, these funds will be re-donated by the Friends to sustain the creative activities of the the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program. You can find a lot more details [here](#).

Please consider sharing this information to supporters of the Jr. Duck Stamp Program, whether they are environmental educators, art teachers, hunters, bird watchers, or Refuge Friends.

About the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

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.



Our "Regular Friend" fee is kept modest, only \$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. [Join our Friends group!](#)

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