

Wingtips

Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp



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This year's Junior Duck Stamp

2025 Contest

"Ding's Darling"

Nurturing Young Artists

Fellows Retires

Support the Stamp

Quick takes

2025 Federal Duck Stamp Contest

By Tim Eisele, Friends of the Duck Stamp

It's time for artists to turn their attention to finishing work on their entry into the Federal Duck Stamp Contest.

The deadline to enter the 2025 Federal Duck Stamp contest is scheduled to be August 15, and entries can be submitted starting June 1.

Each year five different species of waterfowl are eligible to be submitted in the contest. This year they are Wood Duck, Gadwall, Cinnamon Teal, Bufflehead, and Ruddy Duck.

Anyone who is at least 18 years of age by June 1 can submit an entry, which needs to be 7-inches by 10-inches in size and matted with bright white matting.

Each entry needs to be accompanied by a Reproduction Rights Agreement and a certified check, cashier's check, or money order for \$125.

The entire package is mailed to the Duck Stamp office in Falls Church, Virginia.

The Federal Duck Stamp Program has been one of the most successful federal conservation programs in the country. Each year it raises almost \$40 million to help preserve wetland and upland nesting habitat at National Wildlife Refuges and Waterfowl

Production Areas.

These areas provide important hunting opportunities for the nation's hunters, as well as for birding, hiking and other recreational activities, besides their primary importance as nesting and sanctuaries for waterfowl, shorebirds, and many species of wildlife.

The Duck Stamp has a long, distinguished history. It started in 1934 under the guidance of Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling, an editorial cartoonist in Des Moines, Iowa who served as chief of the U.S. Bureau of Biological Survey from 1934 to 1935. It has raised more than \$1.1 billion to help purchase more than six million acres of wildlife habitat.

These lands also provide places to hunt and recreate for people who don't own land, and have helped to bring waterfowl populations back from extremely low levels to abundant populations.

The contest is mandated by law, and carried out by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For artists it serves as an important opportunity to show their work and prestige that can help launch their careers.

Guidelines for artists to consider are that the entry should feature the species of waterfowl as the dominant feature of the artwork.

The Federal Duck Stamp Contest is a win-win event for the federal government and for wildlife.

This year's contest will be held September 18 and 19; a location has not yet been announced.

[Read the complete official rules of the contest.](#)

"Ding's Darling"

If you are a fan of the Federal Duck Stamp you are a fan of the late "Ding" Darling. Darling is known as the Father of the Duck Stamp and he was an important voice for conservation during the early 1900s. He was an editorial cartoonist at *The Des Moines Register* newspaper, and for almost two years served as chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, the forerunner of today's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. While there, Darling drew the very first Federal Duck Stamp and was responsible for putting the service on a solid footing to benefit waterfowl and wildlife populations.

Many people today have not heard of Darling and many do not realize how he helped to bring people and ideas together to promote the Federal Duck Stamp, as well as to found organizations such as the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit Program and the National Wildlife Federation. Tim Eisele, a freelance outdoor writer/photographer in Madison, Wisconsin, served as a judge in the 1994 Federal Duck Stamp contest and gives a presentation called "Ding's Darling" about Darling, whom he calls one of his conservation heroes, and the legacy of the Federal Duck Stamp. Readers who would like to get a glimpse into Darling's life, can [watch the presentation](#) and learn more about Darling and how the Duck Stamp has helped America's wildlife resources.

Nurturing Young Artists

By Tim Eisele, Friends of the Duck Stamp

On a recent radio program involving wildlife art, a caller to the program asked how they could get their children involved in art projects.

Of course, the answer to that question was to have the parent look for the rules brochure of the Federal Junior Duck Stamp.

The Federal Junior Duck Stamp, modeled after the successful Federal Duck Stamp that has existed since 1934, helps children from kindergarten to twelfth grade try their hand at drawing or painting waterfowl, while at the same time learning about wildlife.

As one observer dutifully noted, “It works with today’s youth to build a lifelong appreciation for wildlife and explore wildlife conservation needs.”

The actual art competition begins when students submit their artwork to their state or territory contest where entries are judged in four groups: Kindergarten through 3rd grade, 4th through 6th grade, 7th through 9th grade, and 10th through 12th grade.

Awards are given for three first place entries, three second place entries, and three third place entries, along with 16 honorable mentions for each group. These awards help to provide students with support to encourage them to advance with their art and knowledge of natural resources.

One “Best of Show” entry is then selected by judges in each state and territory, and that is entered in the National Junior Duck Stamp competition, where an overall winner is selected.

To further the students' learning, they are encouraged to submit a conservation message along with their artwork.

Entries must feature one of the native species of waterfowl in North America, and be 9-inches by 12-inches in size.

The National Junior Duck Stamp Contest began in 1993 and judging is first held in each participating state or territory followed by national judging which occurs in April. This year's contest will be held on April 22; it is not open to the public.

[Rules for next year's contest](#) are available online.

If you have children or nieces and nephews in these grades, contact the school to see whether teachers would like to learn more about the Junior Duck Stamp Contest.

Fellows Retires

In December, Federal Duck Stamp Office (DSO) Program Manager Suzanne Fellows retired. See our [December 16, 2024 issue of Wingtips](#) for our profile of Suzanne and her tenure at the DSO.

Join us in thanking Suzanne for her years at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and for her service at the Federal Duck Stamp Office since 2013!

The job of head of the Duck Stamp Office is currently open but hiring at the Department of Interior is currently frozen. There is currently one staff member working at the Duck Stamp Office as well as an additional FWS staffer on detail.

Support the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp

The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, also known as the federal Duck Stamp, is a long-standing American tradition with widespread support from the

American public, not only from the hunting community but also from artists, the birding community, conservationists, and recreational users.

Protected wetlands support healthy ecosystems that support birds, other wildlife and habitat, clean water, and open space.

On March 16, 1934, Congress passed, and President Roosevelt signed, the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act, commonly called the Duck Stamp Act. The first Federal Duck Stamp was designed by artist and director of what is now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling. You can learn more about "Ding" Darling elsewhere in this issue.

With 98 percent of the purchase price going directly to help acquire and protect wetland habitat and easements, raising 1.1 billion dollars to help purchase more than six million acres of wildlife habitat, this program is arguably the most successful land protection program in our country's history.

We must protect these hard won, long-term protections. Buy a stamp. Let your representatives know that this program, at over 90 years, must be fostered and supported. Let others in your life know about what this tradition and these places means to you.

Quick takes

- If you know of friends, hunting partners, art enthusiasts, or others who would like to receive this newsletter, please send them to the [Wingtips archive page](#) for a sign-up link.
- **It's not too late** to purchase a 2024-2025 Federal Duck Stamp. Go to your local post office to buy the new stamp, or check the [US Postal Service online postal store](#), or call AMPLEX at 1-800-852-4897. This \$25 purchase will keep on preserving wildlife habitat.

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