

# Wingtips

## Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp



10 November 2025



### Sharing a common interest in Stamps

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7-time winner

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Quick takes

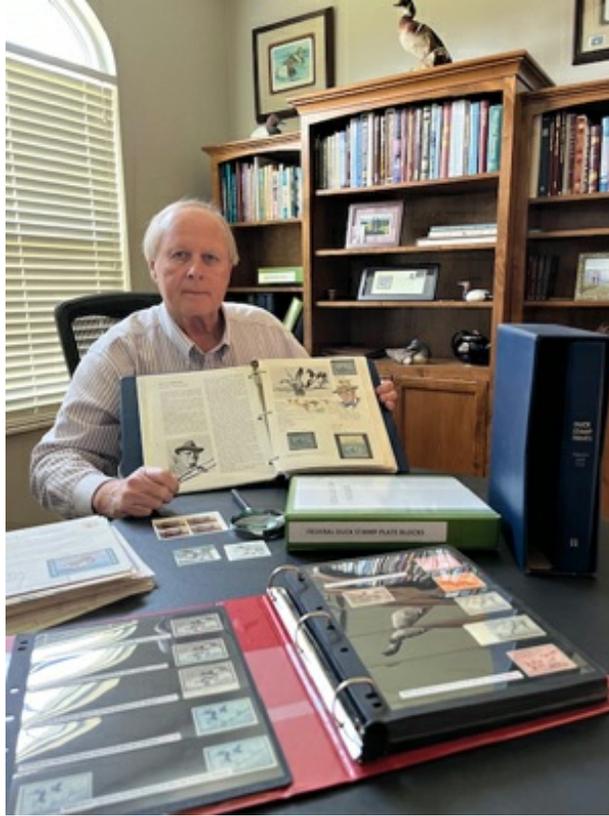
## Sharing a common interest in Stamps

By Tim Eisele, Friends of the Duck Stamp

It's not unusual that many duck hunters save their Federal Duck Stamps long after the seasons have ended. Some even have them framed to display, others keep them with their old hunting licenses.

The reasons for saving stamps are many, but no surprise to the National Duck Stamp Collectors Society (NDSCS), a group that was organized in the early 1990s to promote and encourage the collecting and study of Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps.

Richard Houk, vice president of the Society, recalls that the group began when the late Bob Dumaine, who operated the Sam Houston Duck Stamp Company in Texas, thought that an organization might be needed to increase interest in collecting Duck Stamps.



Richard Houk and his Stamp albums; photo provided by Richard Houk

Bob Dumaine did more to promote the collecting of Duck Stamps than any other person, according to Houk.

Houk, of Highland, Illinois, and his wife, Nancy, owned and operated Canvasback Galleries and have dealt in selling Duck Stamps and Duck Stamp mat frames since the 1970s.

“NDSCS involves avid Duck Stamp collectors, and we put out a quarterly magazine, *Duck Tracks*, to help promote the Duck Stamp as well as collecting Duck Stamps,” Houk said.

Members can be found in every state and even include a serious collector from Scotland.

Houk writes articles for *Duck Tracks*, and has written articles featuring many of the artists who have won the Federal Duck Stamp contest.

In most years, members of the Society operating board of directors attend the Federal Duck Stamp contest and First Day of Issue ceremonies.

In the 1970s, there were over 2.4 million stamps sold per year, and in more recent years about 1.5 million stamps were sold. Federal migratory waterfowl stamps remain on sale for two years from the Duck Stamp office sales agent, Amplex Corporation, and then are closed with the remaining supply of stamps destroyed.

Many Society members also collect individual state hunting stamps. For instance, Wisconsin issues an annual state duck stamp, pheasant stamp, and wild turkey stamp.

“Some of the states are going to a digital stamp rather than a printed stamp,” Houk observed.

But many people feel it is important to keep the actual printed stamps in order to keep alive the history of the conservation program and continue to raise funds for habitat and conservation.

“We encourage hunters to buy two Federal Duck Stamps, to keep the one with your

license for hunting and keep back a mint one for collecting,” Houk said.

Houk said that some people don’t realize that when the cost of the stamp increased in price to \$25, many people stopped collecting and now some of those more recent stamps are harder to find and becoming more valuable to collect.

Like anything else that is collected, the values of stamps involve condition and rarity. Having mint stamps, with original gum on the back, is most collectible, along with a pristine condition.

“My own personal collecting passion is artist-signed stamps,” Houk said. Even the very first stamp drawn by “Ding” Darling in 1934 includes several Darling signature variations.



The society is a non-profit, and memberships are available for \$20 per year or \$90 for five years.

Memberships can be sent to NDSCS Secretary, P.O. Box 43, Harleysville, PA 19438-0043. The [current website](#) is being updated and is expected to be available by the end of 2025.

## 7-time winner

By Tim Eisele, Friends of the Duck Stamp

Jim Hautman, the dean of wildlife artists, won his seventh Federal Duck Stamp at the annual contest held at Patuxent Research Refuge in Laurel, Maryland.

The 61-year-old artist from Chaska, Minnesota, took top honors with an acrylic painting of two drakes and a hen Bufflehead in flight over water with a northern Minnesota background.



Image courtesy of Jim Hautman

The 2026-2027 Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly known as the Duck Stamp, will go on sale in late June 2026, and is required of all waterfowl hunters ages 16 and over.

The two-day judging of 290 entries ended with the selection of Hautman's original on Sept. 19.

"I was watching the contest live on the YouTube feed, and didn't have the feeling that I would win when it started," Hautman admitted.

But as the judging went along, he felt that his work was a little different, as other entries featured birds on the water.

When it got to the final round, he said he had a pretty good feeling, but wasn't sure it would hold up. In the end three other entries ended up just one point behind his painting.

The contest is exciting to watch for anyone who is interested in waterfowl, but is especially exciting to artists who are competing.

### Why Buffleheads?

"I think they are so cool when they are flying and I decided that was what I would paint," he said.

Buffleheads were one of the five species that were eligible in this year's contest. The others were: Gadwall, Wood Duck, Cinnamon Teal, and Ruddy Duck.

He entered a painting of flying Buffleheads back in 1987, before he had even won his first Duck Stamp contest, and took third that time, which he says was an encouraging thing for him when he was 23 years old.

He went out this past spring, painted up decoys to look like Bufflehead, and spent time watching and photographing Bufflehead coming into the decoys. He painted the birds with a background of a favorite northern Minnesota lake.

Hautman paints half the time in acrylics and half in oil, but he always paints his Duck Stamp entry in acrylic because there is a deadline and the paint needs to dry up quickly. Also, because the entry is so small, 7-by-10-inches in size, he finds acrylic better at getting detail into the painting.

Since he won his first Duck Stamp in 1989, he admits his painting style has changed very little, and many people would describe what they see in his work as: "real ducks."

"I've always strived for realism and accuracy, and I've learned to focus on what is important in the painting," Hautman said.

He says he first puts in the general layout, then puts the painting away, and later he begins the final painting several weeks before the deadline to submit it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Hautman family is well known as wildlife artists, and Jim Hautman admits that they do compete, but the brothers also help by critiquing each other's work. In 2015, Joe Hautman took first place, Bob Hautman took second place, and Jim Hautman took third place in the same Federal Duck Stamp contest!

Joe Hautman was not competing this year because he won the 2022 Duck Stamp and according to the rules has to sit out competition for three years. Bob Hautman had an entry of Bufflehead on the water in this year's contest.

Jim Hautman will be helping to promote the Duck Stamp program at some locations where entries are displayed this year, and he has commissioned paintings that he will be working on during the years that he must sit out competition. With the Federal

Government shutdown the display schedule was not available.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) produces the Federal Duck Stamp, which raises approximately \$40 million in sales each year. These funds support conservation of wetland habitats in the [National Wildlife Refuge System](#) for the benefit of wildlife and the enjoyment of people.

Many people consider the Duck Stamp as the most successful conservation program ever. It was started in 1934 when J. N. “Ding” Darling, a talented wildlife political cartoonist from Des Moines, Iowa, served as the director of the Bureau of Biological Survey, forerunner to today’s FWS.

“The stamp created using James’s art will serve as a lasting reminder of our rich waterfowl hunting heritage,” said FWS director Brian Nesvik. “I encourage everyone, including those who do not hunt, to buy a Duck Stamp, which raises millions of dollars to conserve wildlife and healthy wetland habitats for waterfowl and numerous other species.”

Thomas E. Miller of Kilkenny, Minnesota, placed second with an acrylic painting of a Cinnamon Teal and Jeffrey Mobley of Tulsa, Oklahoma, took third place with an acrylic painting of a Bufflehead.

Since it was established in 1934, the [Federal Duck Stamp](#) has been sold to hunters, birdwatchers, outdoor enthusiasts and collectors, raising more than \$1.3 billion to conserve over 6 million acres of habitat for birds and other wildlife and to provide countless opportunities for wildlife-oriented recreation on our public lands.

Of 290 entries judged in this year’s competition, 83 entries made it to the final round of judging. You can view the [online gallery](#) of the 2025 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest entries.

The judges for this year’s Federal Duck Stamp Contest were: Judy Camuso; Gene Clater; Margie Crisp; Tom Landwehr; Paul Padding; and the alternate judge was David Turner.

Waterfowl hunters ages 16 and older are required to purchase and carry the current Federal Duck Stamp. Many non-hunters, including birdwatchers, conservationists, and stamp collectors, also purchase the stamp in support of habitat conservation. Additionally, a current Federal Duck Stamp can be used for free admission to any National Wildlife Refuge.

Federal Duck Stamps are sold at many national wildlife refuges, sporting goods stores, and other retailers, through the U.S. Postal Service, or [online](#).

The Federal Duck Stamp is considered one of the most successful conservation programs in the nation, and everyone interested in natural resources should buy the yearly stamp to help support wildlife and wildlife habitat.

## Quick takes

- The 2025 Waterfowl Festival in Easton, Maryland runs November 14-16, 2025, where Duck Stamp art and many other waterfowling displays will be available. For over 50 years, this event has raised \$6 million for wildlife and habitat conservation, education, scholarships, and research. For details and schedule go to <https://waterfowlfestival.org/>.
- Science Friday addresses "[Why Painters Are Obsessed With The Duck Stamp Contest](#)" on their broadcast of September 26. For more about the 2025 contest, read [an extended article](#).
- How important is the Duck Stamp? Let us count the ways. Whether you are an artist, enjoy being outdoors, or simply value the conservation of wetland habitats, your support of the Stamp and the Federal Duck Stamp Program helps sustain needed revenue for protection of wetlands. While you won’t be able to purchase a

Stamp at a National Wildlife Refuge during the government closure, they are still available through sporting goods stores other retailers, as well as other groups that sell them through consignment, such as refuge Friends groups. [Purchase a Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp](#) and help send a strong message to our decision-makers that the Federal Duck Stamp and Junior Duck Stamp programs need to remain part of our national heritage and legacy.

- 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.

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