



Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act

North America experienced unprecedented declines in waterfowl populations in the early 1900s. In response, Congress passed The Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act of 1934 to provide “funds for the acquisition of areas for use as migratory-bird sanctuaries, refuges, and breeding grounds...for the protection of certain migratory birds.” The Act, later amended in 1976 to the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, is more commonly known as the Duck Stamp Act.

Methods

The Act requires any person, age 16 or older, who hunts waterfowl to buy a Duck Stamp each year—though anyone can purchase one or more of these stamps, including outdoor enthusiasts, birders, and/or stamp collectors. The money raised by the sale of these stamps is placed in the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF) and is used primarily by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to acquire migratory bird habitat.¹ Any new habitat bought or leased by USFWS using MBCF money must be approved by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC). MBCC is comprised of two U.S. Senators, two U.S. Representatives, the EPA Administrator, the Chief of the Division of Realty within USFWS, and the Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture.

Periodically, Congress passes amendments to the Act that increase the price of the Duck Stamp to offset inflation or changes in land value.² The first Duck Stamp sold for \$1 in 1934. Since then, the price has increased to \$2 in 1949, \$3 in 1959, \$5 in 1972, \$7.50 in 1979, \$10 in 1987, \$12.50 in 1989, \$15 in 1991, and finally to the current price of \$25 in 2015.³ The Postal Service prints, issues, and sells the stamp and is reimbursed for its expenses from MBCF.

Results

Over \$800 million have been raised through the Duck Stamp, which has contributed to the protection of over 6 million acres of wetland habitat.⁴ By law, 98 percent of the purchase price of Duck Stamps goes directly to wetlands and associated habitats.³ More than 300 national wildlife refuges were created or have been expanded utilizing revenue generated through the Duck Stamp. Since the implementation of the Duck Stamp,⁵ duck populations have nearly doubled and now exceed 48 million individuals.

Discussion

Wetland habitats conserved through Duck Stamp revenues benefit waterfowl, all wetland-dependent wildlife, hunters, and other wildlife enthusiasts; and local communities benefit through ecotourism and ecological services provided by wetlands. The conserved wetlands mitigate floods, improve water quality, and provide critical habitat for game, fish, and endangered species.⁶

Implications for Wildlife Professionals

Habitat purchased through Duck Stamp revenues is restored and managed by wildlife professionals, thereby enabling and enhancing the ability of wildlife professionals to conserve wildlife populations and habitats through science-based management practices and regulated use of public trust resources.



Various Duck Stamp designs over the years, beginning at the top with the first Duck Stamp issued in 1934 and designed by legendary cartoonist and conservationist, Ding Darling (Credit: USFWS)

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act: Features



The Federal Duck Stamp Competition²

The artwork for each year's stamp has been an important artistic symbol of wildlife conservation. The first Duck Stamp was designed by legendary cartoonist and conservationist, Ding Darling, in 1934. In 1949, the stamp artwork became a contest judged by a panel of art and waterfowl professionals. Hundreds of artists compete each year to have their art on the official stamp. Anyone who is 18 or older may submit artwork to be considered for the design for the Federal Duck Stamp. This is the only art competition sponsored by the federal government.

Winning entries from a Federal Duck Stamp Competition (Credit: USFWS)

Overflow National Wildlife Refuge⁸

Duck Stamp revenue provided 100 percent of the funds needed to purchase the 13,973 acre Overflow National Wildlife Refuge located in Ashley County, Arkansas, in 1980. This refuge protects 12,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forests that provide essential habitat for wintering waterfowl and other wildlife, including black bears, bald eagles, and migrating shorebirds. In addition to the more than 12,000 acres of bottomland hardwoods, the refuge also has approximately 1,600 acres of wetlands and moist soil impoundments managed for waterfowl and 289 acres of upland habitats. The refuge attracts about 10,000 visitors annually.

Mallards at Overflow National Wildlife Refuge (Credit: USFWS)



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

\$5

ROSS'S GEESE



2016-2017 JUNIOR DUCK STAMP

Junior Duck Stamp Program⁹

The Federal Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program was created by USFWS in 1989 as a conservation education initiative. The art and science-based curriculum helps to teach students from kindergarten through high school about wetlands and waterfowl conservation. Revenue generated by the program goes towards environmental education programs throughout the U.S. Each year, students may submit artwork for the opportunity to be featured as the design for the next year's Junior Duck Stamp. Congress recognized the program in 1994 with the enactment of the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program Act.

2016-2017 Junior Duck Stamp featuring Ross's geese by Stacy Shen, age 16 (Credit: USFWS)

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