

All of the annual stamps have depicted waterfowl in their natural environment. Until 1949, a nationally recognized wildlife artist was commissioned annually to produce a Duck Stamp design. Since that year, however, an annual Duck Stamp Design Competition has taken place. The winning drawing is chosen by a panel of waterfowl and art experts. By 1981 the number of annual entries had risen to 2,099 designs. The number has since leveled off at between 800 and 1,000. It has been widely noted that this is the only art competition sponsored by the Federal Government.



Blue-winged Teal Pair
© David McEwen



Wood Duck
© David McEwen

Any artist can enter the contest by submitting a 7 x 10 inch waterfowl design and paying an entry fee. The winner receives a pane of stamps bearing his or her design. Winning artists also sell prints of their prize entries which are eagerly sought by collectors.

The Federal Duck Stamp Program has become one of the most successful conservation programs ever initiated and to date over 313 million Duck Stamp dollars have gone to preserve over 3.7 million acres of wetland refuges for North American waterfowl. Many of the over 400 National Wildlife Refuges in the United States have been paid for entirely or in part by Duck Stamp receipts.

The focus of the program has changed over the

decades. The goal in recent years has been to preserve key wintering and breeding habitats in each of the four major north-south waterfowl migratory flyways, particularly those most threatened by development. Efforts are also underway to save areas needed by species whose numbers are low or declining, such as black ducks, cackling Canada geese, canvasbacks, mallards, Pacific brants, Pacific white-fronted geese, pintails, redheads and wood ducks.

The Duck Stamp program also aids wildlife other than waterfowl. One-third of the nation's endangered



Tundra Swans
Ray Ericson, USFWS



Canvasback Duck
© William Vinje

or threatened species find food and shelter in wetland habitats provided by the program, and the enhancement of the marine life food chain provides nourishment for coastal spawning and nursery grounds.

Man himself, not always waterfowl's best friend, benefits immeasurably from the preservation of the wetlands. Their natural filtering action purifies our water, they temporarily store excess runoff and floodwaters and, by brunting the force of storm waves, they protect our shorelines and fragile barrier islands.

The purchase of a Federal Duck Stamp provides an opportunity for every citizen to make a small investment in an enormous endeavor — the preservation of our natural heritage.

Buy Duck Stamps

Duck stamps may be purchased for \$10.00 at most U. S. Post Offices and selected National Wildlife Refuges, or by mail for \$10.50 (includes \$.50 for postage and handling).

Send your Duck Stamp order to:

**U. S. Postal Service
Philatelic Sales Division
Washington, DC 20265-9997**

____ Yes, send me the current Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (The Duck Stamp).

Enclosed is a check or money order for \$10.50 (\$10.00 plus \$.50 postage and handling).

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____



Ducks Lifting Off Wetland Glen D. Chambers, Ducks Unlimited, Inc.

The Department of the Interior and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service wish to express their thanks to the following for the production of this brochure:

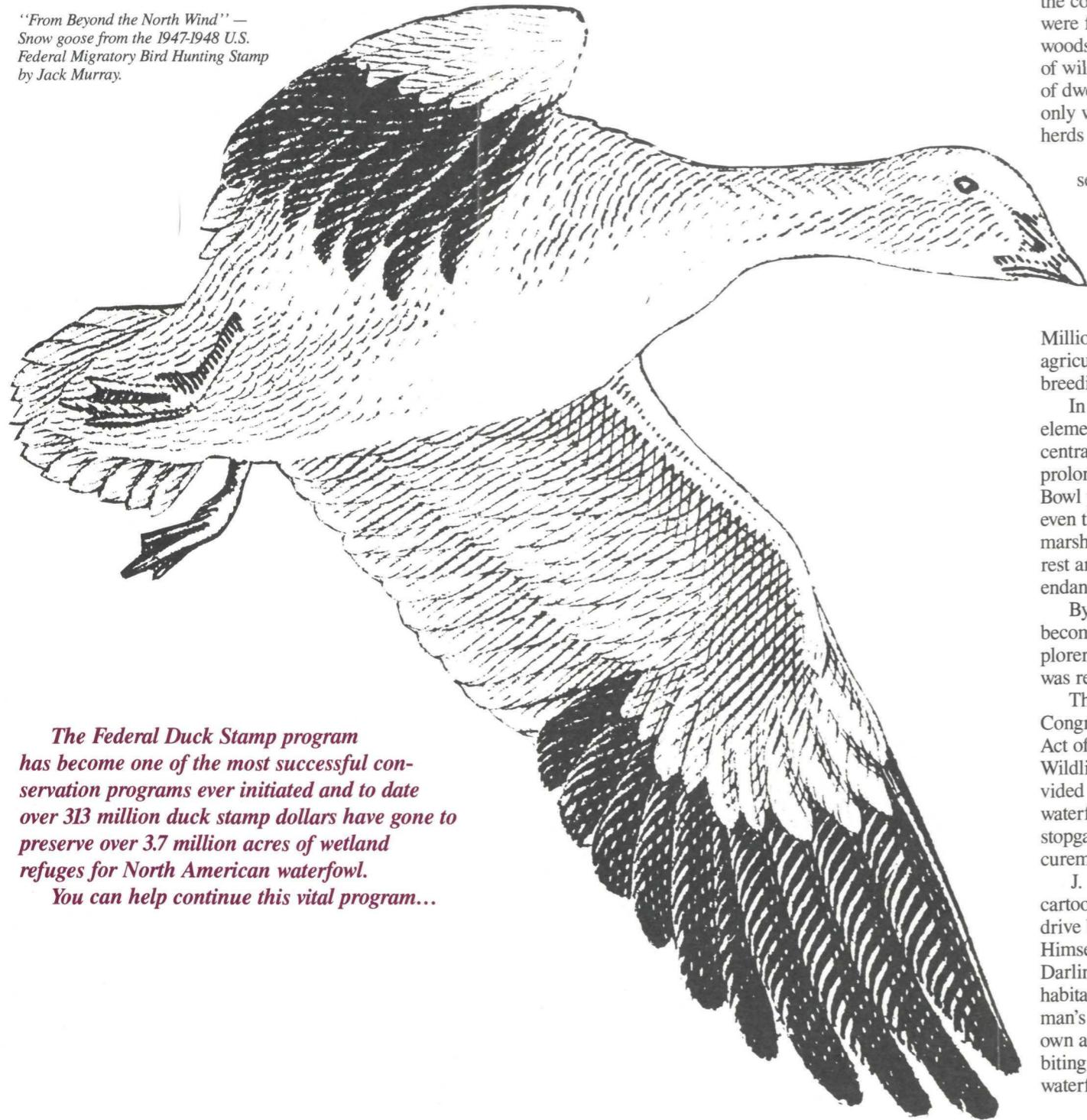
**The J. N. "Ding" Darling Foundation
Des Moines, Iowa 50303-2580**

**National Wildlife Philatelic Corporation
Fort Myers, Florida 33906-1397**

The Duck Stamp Story



*"From Beyond the North Wind" —
Snow goose from the 1947-1948 U.S.
Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp
by Jack Murray.*



The Federal Duck Stamp program has become one of the most successful conservation programs ever initiated and to date over 313 million duck stamp dollars have gone to preserve over 3.7 million acres of wetland refuges for North American waterfowl.

You can help continue this vital program...

When the explorers from Europe first set foot upon the continent of North America, the skies and marshes were filled with millions of ducks and geese and the woods and plains abounded with an astonishing variety of wildlife. The native Indians, in their many centuries of dwelling in this plenteous land, had taken from it only what they could use and had seen the flocks and herds flourish and multiply.

It took the explorers and the thousands of settlers who quickly followed them only a little over 400 years to deplete these great flocks and herds, reducing some by millions and completely extinguishing others. Migratory waterfowl especially were decimated as market hunters and overeager sports enthusiasts laid waste to the vast flocks.

Millions of acres of marshland were drained for agriculture and urban growth, greatly reducing breeding and nesting areas.

In addition to man's heedless destruction even the elements joined forces to reduce wetland areas as the central portion of the continent was devastated by a prolonged drought of historic proportions. The Dust Bowl years had left that area sere and withered, and even the lush timbered swamps of the south and the marshes of the Gulf Coast were suffering. Migration rest areas and wintering grounds were greatly endangered.

By the late 1920s the waterfowl situation had become acute and the descendants of the early explorers and settlers finally realized that urgent action was required to remedy the problem.

The first positive step was taken when the U.S. Congress enacted the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929. The law expanded the existing National Wildlife Refuge System, established in 1903, and provided authorization for the acquisition of wetlands for waterfowl habitat. The law was, however, only a stopgap measure, as it made no provision for the procurement of funds with which to purchase the land.

J. N. "Ding" Darling, nationally known political cartoonist for the *Des Moines Register*, spearheaded a drive by conservationists to remedy that oversight. Himself keenly interested in hunting and wildlife, Darling had watched in dismay as the waterfowl habitat in his own state had been severely reduced by man's insatiable thirst for the land. Darling put his own artistic talents to use and frequently published biting cartoons depicting the destruction of the nation's waterfowl.

Undoubtedly, though, Darling's most significant contribution was the concept of a Federal revenue stamp to generate the necessary funds for the acquisition of waterfowl habitat. His ideal became reality on March 16, 1934, when Congress passed the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act which required every waterfowl hunter 16 years of age or older to purchase a stamp annually. Proceeds from the sale of the Duck Stamps were earmarked to buy and lease waterfowl sanctuaries.



*First Federal
Duck Stamp,
1934-35.
Designed by J. N.
"Ding" Darling.*

It seemed only fitting to President Franklin D. Roosevelt that Darling be commissioned to design the first Federal Duck Stamp. Roosevelt had previously appointed Darling as Chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, predecessor of the present U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Darling produced a small pencil sketch of a pair of mallards coming in over a marsh pond. In August of 1934 the stamps went on sale and a total of 635,000 were sold at one dollar each. The price and sales of Duck Stamps have increased with the value and decreasing availability of wetlands. Waterfowl habitat once selling for as little as \$1 an acre now costs thousands of times that price.

Duck Stamp sales hit a peak of over 2.4 million in 1970-1971. A collector who purchased each of the 53 stamps at the issue price would have spent a total of \$169. His investment would presently be worth over \$4,000. That percentage increase has turned many stamp purchasers into avid collectors. All stamps not sold are destroyed three years after issue, thus preserving the value of the stamps purchased by collectors.

As a hobby, the collecting of stamps has become a predominant pastime for both old and young. As philatelists are fond of saying, "Stamp collecting is fun!" And unlike many more expensive interests such as rare gems and antiques, the collecting of stamps can be funded on a continuing basis by even a child's weekly allowance.