



GREAT BIRDING PROJECTS



An approach to bird-related editing, education, tourism, and marketing

9 October 2012

New Artwork for Next Stamp *Very good art and a great investment*

The Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest took place at Weber State University (WSU) in Ogden, Utah, on Friday and Saturday, 28-29 September. There were 192 art submissions, with artwork for five eligible waterfowl species: Brant, Canada Goose, Northern Shoveler, Common Goldeneye, and Ruddy Duck. Of the 192 entries in this year's two-day competition, there were 17 entries that made it to the final round of judging.



The acrylic painting that won the contest, and will appear on the 2013-2014 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (as the Duck Stamp is officially called), was created by [Robert Steiner](#), from San Francisco. His winning piece was of a male Common Goldeneye, shown on the left. This was actually Steiner's second Federal Duck Stamp Contest win. His art previously appeared on the 1998-1999 Federal Duck Stamp.

Curiously, that image was of a closely-related species, a Barrow's Goldeneye. There were

over 1.6 million of those 1998-1999 stamps sold, and they produced more than \$24 million for land acquisition in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

This next 2013-2014 Federal Duck Stamp will go on sale in late June 2013. Of course, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service produces the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, which sells for \$15 and raises about \$25 million each year to provide critical funds to conserve and protect wetland and grassland habitats in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The stamp, moreover, is not something that benefits only ducks. Many other bird species - from shorebirds to songbirds - and other wildlife are dependent on habitat secured through stamp purchases.

For example, last month, the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) met in Washington, DC, to approve the addition of more than 10,000 acres in fee-title (direct purchase) and easements (or leases) to seven units of the National Wildlife Refuge System in Montana, Texas, New York, Oregon, South Carolina, and California. The funding for these acquisitions came from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund, commonly understood as the account where Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation [Duck] Stamp funds are deposited.

In short, buying a stamp - or a few stamps - is one of the simplest and most effective things anyone can do to support a legacy of wetland and grassland conservation for birds. It's a bargain!

For more on the Fish and Wildlife Service's stamp program, see [here](#). And for the Friends group promoting the stamp, see [here](#).

Christmas Bird Count Changes *Free participation initiated*

It all started before "citizen science" ever had a name, back in the Christmas Season of 1900.



That's when ornithologist, editor, and early bird-preservationist, Frank M. Chapman, launched a new holiday project - a "Christmas Bird Census."

So began the Christmas Bird Count (CBC). Thanks to the activities of the first 27 dedicated bird watchers, 25 CBCs were held that day. (They were run from Toronto, Ontario, to Pacific Grove, California, with most counts in northeastern North America. Those original 25 CBCs tallied around 90 species for all the counts.) Over more than 11 decades later, the CBC has grown as a major "citizen science" player in the bird world.

Now, after about two years of discussion, two major changes will come to the CBC program, effective with the upcoming 113th Count, starting in December.

First, the CBC will be a free program for all counter-participants, for the first time since 1955. The National Audubon Society, which runs the CBC, will now waive the \$5 participant fee. This will be replaced with a voluntary donation and sponsorship system. It is expected that by dropping the fee, more participants can be involved, more counts can be included, and more accurate effort data can be collected, all without the perceived obstacle of a fee.

Second, the annual hardcopy summary of CBC results, *American Birds*, will no longer be printed and mailed to all CBC participants. The summary will appear online and with expanded features. A new interactive web presence - including photos, summaries, and features - can now be made available for the CBC.

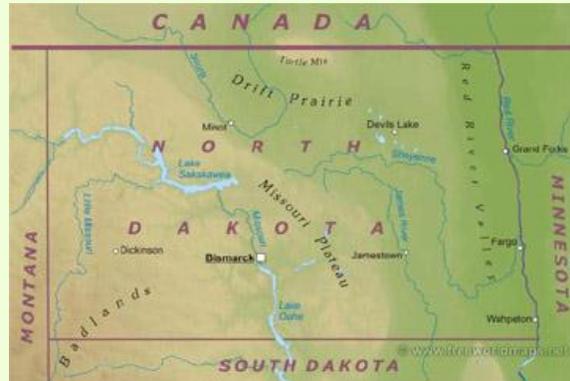
The very last printed version, covering last winter's Christmas Bird Count, is scheduled to be mailed this month.

Read the full announcement on the changes [here](#).

Conservation Setback in North Dakota

Back to the drawing board

Recently, North Dakota has emerged as one of the nation's largest oil producers. This is changing the face of large parts of our Northern Great Plains. At the same time, North Dakota has been at the very center of North America's "duck factory," and it is also the home to countless songbirds unique to the praries, shorebirds, raptors, and waterbirds.



In response, a broad coalition of organizations and concerned citizens in North Dakota, attempted to offset at least some of these recent development trends, proposing an innovative state constitutional amendment - a Clean Water, Lands & Outdoor Heritage Amendment - on the statewide ballot of 6 November. This proposal would take a small portion (5%) of all the revenues collected from oil and gas and reinvest it in water, land, and wildlife conservation. It is described in detail [here](#). (An estimated \$50-\$88 million a year could be made available for these conservation efforts.)

The petition drive to get 27,000 signatures began in January, and more than 37,000 signatures were submitted. In early September, however, the state's Attorney General announced that a number of names - mostly submitted by members in and around the North Dakota State University football team (the Bison) - were fraudulent. The NDSU individuals - a dozen of the 15 individuals charged being present or former members of the team - had been hired by an Iowa company contracted to assist in obtaining qualified petition signatures. By 4 October, 12 had pleaded guilty and were ordered to serve 50 hours of community service, pay minor fees, and remain on unsupervised probation for 360 days. These sentences were mild, to say the least.

The conservation initiative was removed from next month's ballot, and wildlife and habitat conservation for North Dakota has suffered a major setback. The best that the conservation coalition can do is to initiate another petition in January for inclusion on a June 2014 statewide ballot.

This blow to conservation is explained in some detail by Dennis Anderson in an [article](#) from the *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis).

Focus on Diversity Being Livestreamed

Saturday, 13 October

The second "Focus on Diversity - Changing the Face of American Birding" is set for 13 October at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, just south of Minneapolis.



The purpose of this all-day event is to develop effective outreach methods to interest diverse audiences in the U.S. (i.e., Latinos, Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans) using a message of birding and nature-study opportunities, outdoor recreation, and a conservation ethic. Building an expanded audience - one that really "looks more like America" - for birding will benefit those new birders, the general birding community, the broader environment, and, ultimately, the birds.

If you are interested in opportunities for a broader, more welcoming, representative, and stronger birding community for everyone, you can read more about Focus on Diversity II and also view the event via the Internet. Assuming that the technology proves trustworthy, the conference will be available for viewing [here](#).

Words to Consider:

"Out of the blending of human and animal stories comes the theme that I hope is inherent in all my books: that man is an inescapable part of all nature, that its welfare is his welfare, that to survive he cannot continue acting and regarding himself as a spectator looking on from somewhere outside."

- Fred Bodsworth 1918-2012, author of *Last of the Curlews*

GBP Bulletin Archives

Great Birding Projects is a vehicle to promote a creative approach to bird-related editing, education, tourism, and marketing. GBP functions as a bridge to an innovative engagement between people and birds. You can access all previous issues of the *GBP* bulletin on the GBP website [here](#).

