



An overview of Drake University, which will host this year's Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest.

Drake U., Darling Institute Host Federal Duck Stamp Contest

The original article was submitted by Drake University; it was edited per the Duck Tracks editor.

When asked to present an article for the 2023 Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest, the question arises, where to begin? Well, we went straight to the source, Jay N. "Ding" Darling, himself, and continued our narrative through the voices of some of those you will meet at the Duck Stamp Art Contest and who enthusiastically share Darling's passion for art, conservation, and vision. Enjoy our story and see you in September at Drake University!

— Samuel Koltinsky and Alanna Wuensch

Darling Tells the Origin Story of the Duck Stamp Art

Following is a retelling of the federal duck stamp story in Jay Norwood Darling's words:

"The Duck Stamp Bill, which had been kicking around Congress for several years, was finally passed about six weeks after I accepted an emergency appointment as chief of the biological survey. No plans had been made for the design of the duck stamp, its engraving, or its distribution. Inquiry at the bureau of engrav-



The first federal migratory bird hunting stamp, issued in 1934, with artwork by Jay N. "Ding" Darling.

ing developed the fact that it would take about six weeks at the shortest possible time to engrave and print the stamps after the design was submitted.

"And, as usual, the red tape necessary to get authorization for the bureau of engraving to make the stamp was a delay the length of which no one was willing to predict. We were confronted with the problem of getting the stamps printed and distributed to every post office in the United States and the territories prior to the opening of the hunting season.

"The first draft of the duck stamp bill provided that the stamps could only be purchased through the postal service, a mistake which was later corrected. In order to get the correct picture of the situation, you must un-



Jay N. "Ding" Darling (center) buys the first federal duck stamp in 1934. The stamp features Darling's design, which he said was meant to be a rough draft.

derstand that there were probably several thousand of the rural post masters who had never heard of the duck stamp at all, nor did they know what to do with them once they got them. Complete instructions had to be printed and distributed, a condition which we had not counted on in the beginning.

“It was touch and go to see whether we could get a design approved and then engraved and distributed before the opening of the fall hunting season. And since the law provided that no man could shoot a duck unless he had one of these stamps on his person, the necessity for quick action and forced draft on the project was obvious. Old Colonel Sheldon, then in charge of public relations for the bureau of biological surveys, came to me waving a time schedule in his hand and tears in his eyes said he didn’t know how it could be done because nobody he know anything about had the faintest idea what a design for a conservation duck stamp should include.

“Neither did I. but having spent most of my life making a cartoon every day for newspapers, I figured there must be some way to get a duck stamp out rather quickly.

“So that evening after the routine of the day had been completed, I took some sheets of cardboard and made six experimental sketches of what I thought a duck stamp might look like, and the next morning delivered them to Colonel Sheldon explaining to him that they were only preliminary sketches. If any one of them approached the specifications which the bureau of engraving might have for a stamp design, I would re-draw and refine the sketch to the extent required so far as my ability was concerned.

“The chief of the public relations department rushed them over to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and two or three days later when I inquired of him what had happened, he said ‘oh they selected one and the engravers were already at work on it.’ I could have murdered Colonel Sheldon and all the bureau of engraving personnel.



Rich and Nancy Houk reviewing federal duck stamp prints by author Russell A. Fink.

And every time I look at that crude design of the first duck stamp, I still want to do it. But it was too late to recall the design and make a new one.”

Duck Stamps for Fun and for Conservation

The following section is by Richard Houk, duck stamp dealer and specialist, judge for the 2022 federal duck stamp contest, former vice president of the National Duck Stamp Collectors Society and co-owner with his wife Nancy, of Canvasback Galleries.

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the Federal Duck Stamp Act of 1934, he recognized that the main intentions of the law were to protect the waterfowl species that were being market hunted toward extinction, while securing much needed funds to conserve wetlands that were rapidly disappearing.

It is interesting to note that the president was also an avid stamp collector, a philatelist, and one of the initial proponents who encouraged people to collect those new annual stamps.

During the 1930s stamp collecting in general was quite popular, as after all, there were no televisions, computers, or iPhones to entertain and occupy people’s time.

Prior to the initial Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest first held in 1949, the artists for the first 15 stamps were selected on a commission basis. Initial duck stamp designer artist, Jay N. “Ding” Darling was instrumental in that process as he encouraged the Department of Interior to use artist Franklin Benson for the second federal stamp in 1935. Although the early federal stamps consisted of only a single-color outline, the designs were created by the most popular wildlife artists in the country and their attractiveness quickly appealed to stamp collectors.



Drake University colleagues work on a grasslands project.

I often wonder how many duck stamps in those early years were purchased by stamp collectors rather than the hunters that were required to purchase them.

More than 600,000 stamps were purchased in the first two years of issuance (1934 and 1935) and more than 1 million stamps were sold starting in 1938. In 1946, following the end of World War II, our military personnel returned home and were able to return to waterfowl hunting.

The number of stamps sold in 1946 sky-rocketed to more than 2 million, with sales peaking in 1971 at 2,412,651. Annual sales of the stamp over the past 10 years have averaged around 1.5 million, which currently brings in more than \$41 million to the Fish & Wildlife Service.

While most waterfowl hunters primarily purchase their annual stamp for hunting, many hunters also purchase one or more for collecting purposes. Most waterfowl hunters agree that the money they spend purchasing the stamp is in their best interest for hunting and most know that the use of these funds directly benefits their sport of waterfowl hunting. In addition to the hunters who collect the stamps, there are numerous philatelists who look forward to every June, when the new annual stamp becomes



Cowles Library on the Drake University campus.

available for sale, and they can add it to their duck stamp collections.

Some collectors also collect other types of U.S. stamps, however, there is a group of extremely avid duck stamp collectors, such as members of the National Duck Stamp Collectors Society (NDSCS), who collect several mint issues each year, as well as artist signed ducks, plate blocks and even the full sheets of 20.

It is very easy for anyone to collect federal duck stamps since current issues are available at all U.S. post offices as well as from most stamp dealers. Past years' stamps can be purchased through those dealers; however, the best selections of quality stamps are usually found from actual duck stamp dealers that mainly specialize in just duck stamps.

Collecting federal duck stamps is not only a fun hobby but also provides an opportunity for new collectors to contribute to the country's National Wildlife Refuge System.

Approximately 98 cents of every duck stamp dollar go directly into the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund for the purchase and enhancement of the current 567 federal wildlife refuges. These refuges not only provide waterfowl habitat, but are home to hundreds of other fish and wildlife species, songbirds, butterfly species, etc.

I am always amazed at how many people do not realize that although it is called a duck stamp, access to these federal refuges is free with the purchase of a duck stamp. It is just another great reason to purchase a stamp each year even if one does not waterfowl hunt or collect stamps.

For a first-time purchaser of a duck stamp who wants to start their duck stamp collection, there are many available ways to display and collect the beautiful stamps.

Most avid collectors prefer to keep their stamps in protective albums using stamp mounts, while other collectors prefer to display their stamps in a frame set on the wall where they can be enjoyed on a more daily basis. Both are an excellent way to keep the stamps in perfect condition while enjoying the hobby of duck stamp collecting.

Since 1934, the Federal Duck Stamp Program has been one of the most successful government programs and is much more than just a governmental fee for the privilege to go waterfowl hunting. The duck stamp is a beautiful little piece of art with many uses.

I encourage anyone and everyone that cares about conservation to make an annual purchase of a federal duck stamp and become a "duck stamp collector."

For more information on duck stamp collecting contact me, Rich Houk, at rth@hometel.com, or by phone at 618-670-6523.



The Drake University Archives and Special Collections.



Drake student Alanna Wuensch conducts some research at the Jay N. Darling exhibit.

Drake U. to Host Federal Duck Stamp Art Competition

The following is by John Smith, vice president of university advancement, Drake University.

Drake University is honored to host the Federal Duck Stamp Art competition September 15-16 on campus in Des Moines, Iowa. The origins of this powerful program connect directly to the vision and execution of Jay N. Darling.

Darling's tireless commitment to conservation, collaborative leadership, social change, journalism excellence, and environmental sustainability inspired Drake University to present him with an honorary doctorate degree in 1926. As an institution, we are extremely proud of our historic connection to him.

Today, Drake University celebrates Darling through the newly established Jay N. Darling Institute. Combining the university's institutional strengths with Darling's powerful legacy, The Darling Institute collaborates with rural communities to make them more sustainable, competitive in the global economy, and resilient for future generations.

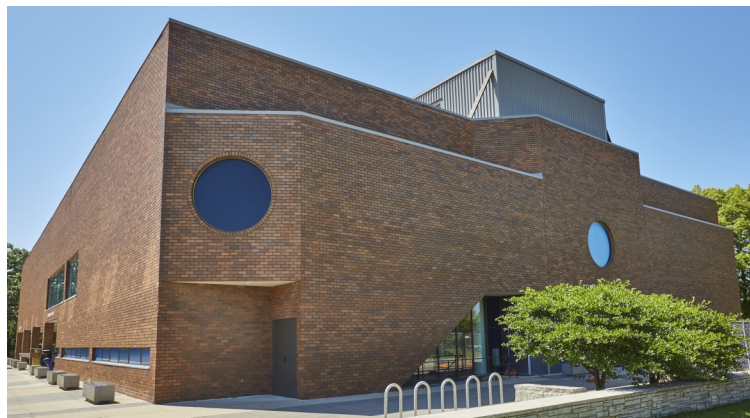
By hosting the Federal Duck Stamp Art competition, Drake University will proudly amplify the critically important work of conservation while

also bringing awareness and hands-on opportunities for our students. Specifically, leaning into Darling's legacy and the spirit of the competition, we see meaningful possibilities through this event for our students studying journalism, art, public policy, environmental science, agriculture law, and politics. Drake University looks forward to welcoming all to campus in September who share our commitment to fostering and developing an environmentally sustainable future.

Sustaining Darling's Legacy

The following is from Keith Summerville, director, Jay N. Darling Institute for rural sustainability, professor of environmental science and sustainability, Drake University.

Drake University formally launched the Jay N. Darling Institute for Rural Sustainability in the fall of 2021.



The Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest will be held at the Olmsted Center.

Envisioned as a way to channel Darling's passion and expertise in natural resource stewardship, non-partisan social and political commentary, and artistic vision, the mission of the Darling Institute is a commitment to provide educational and scholarly expertise and service to rural communities so that their citizens have sustained access to quality health care and education, nutritious food, unimpaired natural resources, and ongoing economic and cultural opportunities.

Furthermore, the Darling Institute, through the Darling Archive, has curated among the largest collections of Darling artwork, artifacts, and historical contributions.

The student experience is at the core of the Institute's work, with students engaged in institute projects receiving scholarships in recognition of their efforts of embed within rural communities to help pursue opportunities that feed local stakeholders' interests.

The Duck Stamp Art Competition is an additional opportunity to celebrate Darling's legacy and advance the work that he so tirelessly led during his lifetime. By advantaging themselves of opportunities to connect with artists and other stakeholders that attend the competition, students will have their personal and professional lives enriched as they learn the myriad ways Darling touched lives.

Faculty will have the opportunity to use the event and its rich history to

enhance teaching and learning in classrooms with diverse subjects such as ecology, conservation biology, art and design, journalism, and environmental history. Community and shared experience are at the core of rural sustainability. By uniting diverse attendees in one place to celebrate the legacy of Darling, Drake University will leverage the energy of the Duck Stamp Competition to power the Institute's work for years to come.

Collecting, Preserving, Digitalizing Legacies

The following is from Hope Bibens, director of Archives & Special Collections, Drake University.

Drake University Archives and Special Collections is responsible for collecting, preserving, and making accessible the permanent records of Drake University, as well as unique collections that document the history of the Drake neighborhood, Des Moines, and the state of Iowa. Archival holdings include more than 3,400 linear feet of collections within nearly 300 separate collections, more than 5,500 special collections volumes, and around five terabytes of electronic records.

The Archives and Special Collections is proud to hold a collection of artist's proofs of "Ding" Darling's work. The collection includes more than 6,500 different cartoons. These images were digitized and organized through the work of the former J.N. "Ding" Darling Foundation, headed by Christopher "Kip" Koss. They can be accessed at <http://content.library.drake.edu/digital/collection/ddarling>.

Darling works can also be found throughout other collections in the University Archives. For example, the Cowles Family Papers are the personal and business papers of Gardner (Mike) Cowles Jr., John Cowles, and David Kruidenier. The majority relate to the Cowles Media Company and the Des Moines Register. The Cowles Family Papers include folders of correspondence with Darling as well as information on the Darling Foundation. The Harlan Family Collection, and specifically the papers of James R. Harlan, also have ties to Darling. Harlan served as assistant director of the Iowa Conservation Commission and his papers include a series of Darling-related materials, including correspondence, cartoons, and federal duck stamp information.

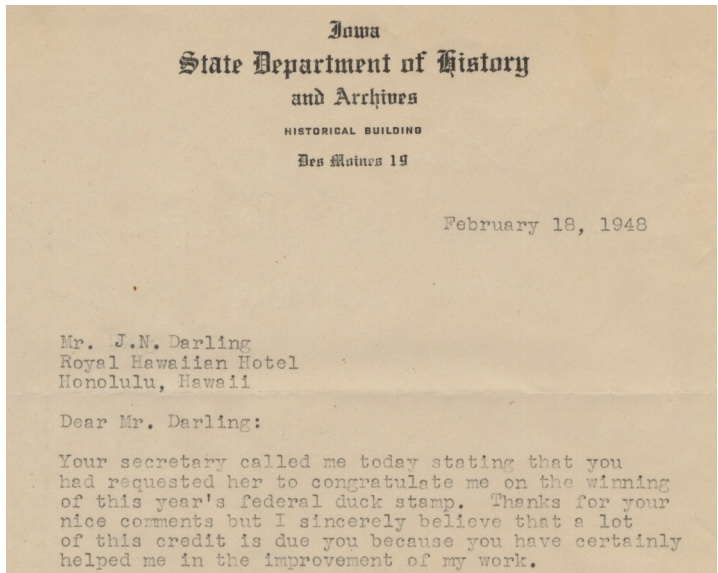
A Lasting Legacy and Tribute

The following is from Alanna Wuensch, student representative, Drake Steering Committee for Duck Stamp 2023.

Coming from La Crosse, Wisconsin, I had never heard of "Ding" Darling or his numerous efforts before my arrival at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. Thankfully, due to a wonderful opportunity presented to me by my



Artist Maynard Reese stands before one of his paintings. Below, A detail of a letter from artist Maynard Reese to Jay Darling commenting on the selection of his artwork for the 1946 duck stamp.



professor, I have had the pleasure of interning at the Jay N. Darling Institute for the past three years.

As an environmental science and drawing student, Darling's legacy appears in many of my classes. I learned about his impact through artifacts and written word, and discovered more about him through his political cartoons. Looking through his cartoons – reading, feeling, the processes that occurred, looking at what was happening in the world at the time – I could see it through Darling's eyes.

Darling's legacy shows that there is not one path you must take and follow throughout your life, but that it's okay to stumble and find your way. Though it may not always be recognized, Darling's legacy is global. Politically, artistically, and environmentally, you can find small pieces of Darling within the history books.

I am contributing to Darling's everlasting legacy, which has brought incredible opportunities my university and colleagues, as well as myself. Darling's legacy lives as he did: full, silly, humble, and great.

Darling's legacy has taught me what it means to value greatness. It is not someone who needs to be put on a pedestal, but someone who puts in the work of everyone to see their impact for the betterment of society and our world. Jay N. "Ding" Darling is a name that was foreign to me three years ago, but will forever be a part of my life and legacy here at Drake University.

In the Spirit of 'The Man Who Never Forgot He Once Was A Boy'

The following is from Samuel Koltinsky, Jay N. Darling Legacy, chairperson, Drake University Federal Duck Stamp Contest 2023, sam@jayndarlingcenter.org.

Des Moines is the place where Jay N. Darling lived, worked and played for most of his life. His legacy footprint lives through the art that he created, the people he mentored including the great Maynard Reece and the art center that he helped to establish. His passion for conservation can be found in the organizations of whose roots can be traced here and continue to have both a national and international impact. His visionary thinking and values now have a home at one of the finest academic institutions in the country, Drake University.

When Darling's grandson, Christopher "Kip" Koss reached for the phone back in 2005, little could I im-



Jay N. "Ding" Darling at work at the Sioux City Journal, 1904.

agine what paths would unfold over the next decades.

As we celebrate art, conservation and vision with this year's Federal Duck Stamp Art Contest, we have lots of surprises in store for those who will be on hand; surprises that would even astound Mr. Darling!

Our venue at the Olmsted Center located on Drake's campus will offer a welcome with the friendliness for which Iowa is known.

Organizers have their ducks in a row with this spectacular location for this year's contest.

There will be exhibits featuring works from "Ding" Darling, Maynard Reece, Robert W. Hines along with other artists. A guest speaker series which will delight you with great storytelling. We have

been planning a special auction that will include duck stamp artifacts, Reece master editions, Darling treasures, and specially donated collectables. We have award-winning films especially chosen that have not been featured before at the contests. We will welcome exhibitors once again who are fostering and enhancing the duck stamp legacy.

Organizers have extended a special invitation to former duck stamp winning artists to recognize their stewardship in art and conservation. And, there will be two very special surprises from "the man who never forgot, he once was a boy," Jay Darling. No hints on this one, you'll have to attend!

Our contest artists, their works and our young people who will make this a memory for a lifetime. We are grateful to Suzanne Fellows at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and her team for bringing the contest to Drake. I'm grateful for President Marty Martin and Provost Sue Mattison for their teams, department chairs, and faculty for stewarding our academic world, one of standards, values, inspiration, and hope, much like the world that Darling demanded. We offer a big shout-out to two of our sponsoring organizations: Ducks Unlimited and Friends of Lake Darling. Thank you for your financial and legacy support.

We hope you can join us on September 15 and 16 and discover the excitement and magic that we have awaiting you at Drake.