

Federal Migratory Bird Hunting Stamps

Purpose/Scope: This is a multi-frame traditional exhibit showing the Federal duck hunting revenue stamp series from its inception in 1934, through the 2016 issue.

Treatment/Organization: The exhibit is shown in chronological order and presents a mint single example of every reported plate number, a used on-license stamp for each year, examples of odd or improper usages, and many of the reported and non-reported errors and varieties. Artwork shown includes preliminary sketch work, and contest entries. Proofs and pre and post production material is included. Highlight or scarce material has a red border, expertized material has an "E" to the right of the item.

Importance: Since 1934, 98 cents of every dollar raised by the sale of this stamp series has gone into the purchase and preservation of wetland habitat. To date over 6.5 million acres of wildlife refuges have been created throughout the entire country. Without this program, dozens of species, not just ducks and geese, could be on the brink of extinction. No other stamp series in U.S. philately can claim to have had this type of impact.

Knowledge & Research: During the thirty plus years that I have invested in forming this exhibit, countless hours have been spent researching the printing and production methods involved, so that the whys and how of the errors and varieties can be explained. I have had one article published with two more pending. In 2000 I had the privilege of be a judge for the 2001 design.

Challenge: Compared to other types of philatelic material due to the adverse conditions hunting licenses are subjected to, undamaged licenses with attached stamps attached can be difficult to obtain. Only in year 1934 did Federal law require that the stamp be attached to the license. Since then the stamp only needs to be signed and in the hunters' possession. While a few states do have laws that make the hunter put his stamp on the license, attachment is generally at the hunters' whim. Other factors that may reduce the number of licenses: damage done during hunting in less than ideal conditions, licenses thrown away at the end of the season, and stamps removed from the license because they were the "valuable" part. Licenses from states where only small numbers of stamps were sold can be very elusive, especially for the early years. Military reservation hunting permits are rare. Form 3333s are rarely found, and are subject to fierce competition amongst collectors, particularly those improperly used forms from post 1934. The 1934 issue could only be purchased mint during a two-week period. Error stamps in this series are a scarce commodity; small print quantities and very good quality control at BEP have generally limited the errors that have escaped to at most a pane or two. Combined with low sales, most to hunters rather than collectors, few of these reach the marketplace. A prime example is the color missing error on the 1985 stamp, listed in Scott, where the entire world supply is the top row of 5 stamps in a pane located in the National Postal Museum. Not included in this exhibit are the imperforate 1934 stamps, which are known to be printers' waste and were never available to the public. Also not included is an example from the first day of sale of the 1934 stamp: only one example is known, it resides in the National Postal Museum after being sold to Jennette Rudy for \$375,000. Archival and production items are seldom seen on the open market. This exhibit includes one of the two Scott listed trial color proofs for the series and the only reported proof of the self-adhesive 2001 issue. Original artwork for the series, such as the winning artwork for the 1949 stamp, are rarely offered, as are preliminary artwork like that by Stanley Stearns from his winning design in 1967. Listed below are some of the highlights of the exhibit with notes on their relative scarcity.

Highlights

Form 3333 with shifted back	only example reported
Trial Color Proof of RW4	only reported example
1938 rose pink color error	unlisted error
1939 & 1940 on form 3333	only reported example
1946 issue Rose color error	less than 30 reported
1949 winning artwork	unique
1955 issue on the Artists' hunting license	unique
1957 issue with inverted back inscription	less than 15 reported
1966 issue Artists' preliminary sketches	unique
1984 issue with color missing error	unlisted error
1994 issue magenta color missing	unlisted error-
1996 offset lithographic negative	2 reported
2000 chromoline proof	6 panes reported
2001 self-adhesive proof	only known example
2001 imperforate printers' waste	only example known to exhibitor
2003 issue imperforate error	20 reported copies

References

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