

Observations were made at about 60'-80' for nearly an hour before the bird finally flew. Despite efforts to locate and observe it further, the stint could not be found again that evening.

Further observations were made on 1 August, when I had the chance to view the bird in Smith's Questar. This only enhanced impressions obtained at the time of the original observation. On this occasion, the broad, rufous margins of the tertials were more apparent than on the first encounter with the bird, due to the superior quality of the Questar image.

This record marks the second for Massachusetts, the first occurring at Monomoy Island, 19-25 June 1980.

Wayne R. Petersen

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### A QUESTION FOR BIRDERS

*Have you bought your Duck Stamp this year? Any year? Ever?*

On October 21, the first duck hunters loomed on the Massachusetts birdwatchers' horizon, marking the start of the forty-day (never on Sunday) 1985-86 duck-hunting season. If you find shotgun pellets falling around you as you search for a Harris' Sparrow on Bolton Flats this fall, control your indignation and fury. The people firing the guns may have contributed more than you to the wildlife refuge land you value so highly for birdwatching! How so? Read on.

The 1920s witnessed extensive draining of wetlands for farming and development, and the 1930s brought a prolonged drought that carried a double whammy. Drought eliminates wetlands in two ways: by drying them up directly and, indirectly, as a result of the practice of putting farm wetlands into cultivation once they become sufficiently dry and then "improving" the drainage. Federal studies have shown that less than half remains of 215 million acres of wetlands existing in colonial America and that 87 percent of this loss resulted from agricultural development.


Fifty years ago, the combined effects of cultivation, drainage, and drought on wildlife habitat so alarmed a group of hunters and conservationists led by Jay ("Ding") Darling, a political cartoonist for the *Des Moines Register*, that they petitioned Congress to act. The upshot was the passage of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act of 1934, requiring every waterfowl hunter sixteen or older to buy (for one dollar then, \$7.50 now) a Duck Stamp to be attached to the hunting license. Jay Darling was the artist for that first stamp, and in the half-century since, 89 million stamps have produced \$285 million in revenues used to acquire 3.5 million acres of wetland habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. Today the artwork for the stamp is chosen in a Duck Stamp Contest, the only art competition regularly sponsored by the federal govern-

ment, and the proceeds are used to preserve wintering and breeding areas of endangered duck species, e.g., American Black, Canvasback, and Redhead. The Duck Stamps are purchased not only by hunters but by conservationists and philatelists and have become such a hot collector's item (both for beauty and for appreciation value) that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's November auction of fifteen sheets of the 1984 Golden Anniversary Duck Stamp (American Wigeon by William Morris) required a minimum bid of \$2000 and limited bids to one per person.

So the hunter who loves and uses the same marshland as the bird-watcher pays for the acquisition of that land but continues to lose ground. In 1985 the federal regulations of the duck-hunting season have been made more restrictive in an effort to reduce the "duck harvest" by 25 percent and thus help restore or maintain the breeding populations of waterfowl, fallen this year to the lowest level in 31 years, a decrease of 19 percent from last year and 24 percent lower than the average for the last 30 years. The species affected are Mallard, pintail, shoveler, Gadwall, scaup, Canvasback, Redhead, and wigeon, and only teal seem to be maintaining their breeding numbers.

And what of the birder - proudly proclaiming affiliation in this honorable avocation by bumper stickers, window decals, T-shirts, badges, and insignia? What contribution does the birder make, tramping along the wetlands added to the National Wildlife Refuge System by the stamp-buying hunter? Someone, somewhere, soon will surely generate the idea of a "Birdwatcher Stamp." In the meantime, why not stop at the post office and invest in the 1985 Duck Stamp that was issued in July? It features Cinnamon Teal by artist Gerald Mobley of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, and it is beautiful!

Dorothy R. Arvidson

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