

National Audubon Society
Testimony
Before the Committee on Resources
Subcommittee on Fisheries and Oceans

JUNIOR DUCK STAMP REAUTHORIZATION, H.R. 3179
Statement of Dr. Gregory S. Butcher
Director of Bird Conservation

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I would like to thank the Chairman and the Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Greg Butcher. I am Director of Bird Conservation for the National Audubon Society. Audubon's mission is to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity. Our national network of community-based nature centers and chapters, scientific and educational programs, and advocacy on behalf of areas sustaining important bird populations, engage millions of people of all ages and backgrounds in positive conservation experiences.

On behalf of National Audubon Society's more than one million members and supporters, I am pleased to be here today to support the reauthorization of the Junior Duck Stamp Program. The Junior Duck Stamp Program is one of the premier environmental education programs in the United States today. Over the past 10 years, more than 175,000 students have participated in the Art Contest associated with the program including more than 26,000 students in 2004, and many thousands more have participated in the related environmental education program. A tremendous amount has been accomplished for a relatively small outlay of funds.

National Audubon Society is pleased to commend Congressman Solomon Ortiz for sponsoring H.R. 3179 to reauthorize this outstanding program for our young students and our shared environment.

I had the privilege of serving as a National Judge for the Junior Duck Stamp Art Contest this spring. The judges were able to review the winners of the competition from each of the 50 states. We were all greatly impressed with the quality of the artwork and found it very difficult to choose just one national winner from among the 50 candidates. In addition to submitting artwork, each contestant was asked to submit a conservation message for judging. These two were of excellent quality. In fact, I was privileged to attend "The Federal Duck Stamp and Junior Duck Stamp 2005-2006 First Day of Sale Ceremony" in the Russell Caucus Room of the United States Senate on June 30 of this year. Miss Kerissa Nelson, the 2005-2006 Junior Duck Stamp Artist, easily gave the best speech of the day and set a high standard for the other speakers, all of whom were adults. She represents well the strong love of wetlands and waterfowl that the Junior Duck Stamp Program strives to instill in all participants.

The Junior Duck Stamp Program is one of the best ways for students in the United States, from grades K-12 to learn about wetlands and the migratory birds that rely on them. Wetlands, ducks, and other migratory birds are among America's most treasured environmental resources, and it is vital that America's youth are taught about these crucial assets. The Junior Duck Stamp Program has been providing leadership in wetlands and waterfowl education for the past 10 years. Audubon is strongly committed to environmental education; thus, we are pleased to support a program as valuable and successful as this one.

The Junior Duck Stamp Program is built upon the highly successful Federal Duck Stamp program, which has raised more than \$600 million for wetlands conservation since 1934. Investing in the Junior Duck Stamp Program is one small way that we can help ensure the continued success of the larger Duck Stamp Program and the future of wetlands conservation in the United States.

I want to emphasize the fact that both of these Duck Stamp programs benefit not just ducks but all migratory birds, including the Neotropical migrants that fly thousands of miles every year to benefit from our productive wetlands and especially the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, the world's rarest bird that has survived unseen for 60 years on wetlands that have been preserved with Duck Stamp dollars. I have just been appointed to serve on the Executive Committee of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker Recovery Team, so I am especially grateful for the past and future role of the Duck Stamp Program in the survival and recovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

The U.S. National Refuge System is the best in the world. It has been built largely with Duck Stamp dollars. This refuge system is not just for duck hunters, but also for birdwatchers and for everyone who enjoys and appreciates America's great outdoor and wildlife heritage.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, the National Audubon Society strongly supports H.R. 3179, the reauthorization of the Junior Duck Stamp Program, as a valuable and highly successful environmental education program that educates large numbers of America's youth on the value of wetlands for migratory birds and many other conservation purposes. We have no modifications to suggest to the proposed bill but urge its swift passage.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you or Members of the Subcommittee may have.