

BILLY POPE

American Wigeon Selected for Alabama Waterfowl Stamp

An American wigeon painted in acrylic by David Nix of Cottondale, Ala., is the winner of the 2010 Alabama Waterfowl Stamp Art Contest. The winning artwork will adorn the 2011-2012 Alabama Waterfowl Stamp. Nix also won the 2006 contest with a painting of a blue-winged teal.

Nix has been painting since he was six years old and has submitted artwork to the contest since 1980. "Winning this contest, it humbles you," Nix said. "I was surprised to have won the first time in 2006, and I am just as surprised today."

The first runner-up was a cinnamon teal painted by Eddie LeRoy of Eufaula. A redhead painted by Steven Burney of Town Creek, and an American wigeon painted by Bill Stem of Madison tied for second runner-up. Fourth runner-up was by Wayne Gautney of Mobile, who painted a blue-winged teal.


Entries were judged on suitability for reproduction as a stamp, originality, artistic composition, anatomical accuracy and general rendering. The designs were limited to living species of North American migratory ducks or geese, and winning species from the past three years – hooded merganser, wood duck and northern pintail drake – were not eligible subjects for the 2010 contest.

The artwork was publicly displayed and judged by a panel of experts in the fields of art,

ornithology, and conservation. Representing the field of art was Rachel Dudley, advanced placement art instructor at Booker T. Washington Magnet High School in Montgomery. Representing the field of ornithology was Keith McCutcheon, retired ADCNR Supervising Wildlife Biologist of 28 years. Representing the field of conservation was Bill Wright, former vice president of the Alabama Wildlife Federation and two-time world champion turkey caller.

According to Dudley the high quality of the entries makes the contest very difficult to judge. "The artists chose challenging and original compositions often displaying the birds frozen in motion," Dudley said. "In order to pick a winner you had to stick strictly to the judging criteria."

The annual contest, sponsored by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, is open to all resident Alabama artists only.

The funds from stamp sales are used to procure and manage wetland habitats for waterfowl. All licensed waterfowl hunters are required to be in possession of state and federal migratory waterfowl stamps signed in ink across the face. Like the federal stamps, state issued stamps are popular with collectors. 



Sims Named Alabama Enforcement Officer of the Year by the NWTF

Sergeant Jon Sims has been named the National Wild Turkey Federation's (NWTF) Alabama State Chapter Officer of the Year. Sims was recognized for the award during the Federation's 34th Annual Convention and Sport Show Awards Banquet in Nashville on February 20, 2010. The NWTF is a national conservation organization dedicated to the improvement of critical wildlife habitat and increased access to public hunting land.

Since joining the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in 2002, Sims has distinguished himself in the field as a conservation enforcement officer and was promoted to investigator with the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF) Special Investigations Unit (SIU) in 2007. Sims was promoted to SIU Acting Supervisor in 2009.

According to WFF Enforcement Chief Allan Andress the effectiveness and productivity of the SIU has reached new heights under Sims' leadership. "Sergeant Sims has been so successful in the SIU because of his attitude, enthusiasm and

professionalism," Andress said. "He accepts every assignment with a positive frame of mind and gives a complete effort to any case small or large. Sergeant Sims is very deserving of this recognition."

Since joining the SIU Sims has been the lead investigator on many high priority cases. Two of his most important cases involved the sale and importation of wild turkeys. In September 2008 a Sims-led investigation resulted in the conviction of Bobby Joe Broadway of Jackson County, for taking wood duck eggs from the wild, taking wild turkeys off an Alabama Wildlife Management Area and for importing wild turkeys into the state. Officers seized 70 Eastern wild turkeys, 17 Eastern wild turkey eggs and eight wood ducks during the arrest.

In August 2009, another Sims investigation led to the arrest of a Coosa County couple who took turkey eggs from the wild, imported Merriam's turkeys from Georgia and were selling Eastern wild turkeys. During the arrest 28 Eastern wild turkeys and six Merriam's were seized.

The couple is currently awaiting a court date.

Sergeant Sims is adamant about the dangers of importing and releasing turkeys into the state. "The spread of diseases and pathogens could have a devastating effect on the intense efforts our wildlife biologists and sportsmen have put into restoring wild turkey populations in Alabama," Sims said.

A true sportsman, Sims' love for the outdoors extends beyond his official duties with the state. Sims hunts and manages hundreds of acres of wildlife habitat in Lee County, and particularly enjoys the challenge of turkey hunting. Sims also promotes the sport of hunting by preparing a dove field each year for conservation officers and their children to hunt free of charge.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources promotes wise stewardship, management and enjoyment of Alabama's natural resources through five divisions: Marine Police, Marine Resources, State Lands, State Parks, and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. To learn more about ADCNR, visit www.outdooralabama.com. **GA**



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Free Fishing Day Statewide on June 12

On Saturday, June 12, 2010, Alabamians will have the opportunity to fish for free in most state waters. Approved by the Alabama Legislature, Free Fishing Day allows residents and non-residents to fish without a fishing license for a day.

The fishing license exemption on Free Fishing Day does not affect some lakes that may still require fees and permits. Fishing in a private pond requires the pond owner's permission.

"Fishing is a gateway activity that can inspire a life-long love of nature," said Stan Cook, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Section Chief. "Free Fishing Day allows seasoned anglers and newcomers to fishing the chance to recharge by spending quality time with friends and family in the outdoors." **GA**

Forever Wild Opens New Horse Trail in Freedom Hills WMA

The Alabama Forever Wild Land Trust has recently opened a new horse trail in the Freedom Hills Wildlife Management Area (WMA) located in Colbert County, 5 miles south of Highway 72 near Barton and Cherokee, Ala. The Freedom Hills trail opened March 1, but will close temporarily during the spring turkey season and fall hunting seasons. The new horse trail expands the number of public horse riding trails on Forever Wild lands to five.

The 15-mile trail system offers diverse landscapes and conditions for trail riding. Riders have the option of the 6.5-mile main loop that begins and ends at the trailhead parking area located off of County Road 33, near the community of Newsome Springs, and three additional loops that extend from the main trail and provide riders with alternate durations of the riding experience.

According to Sandy Pegram, Trails Chairman with the Alabama Horse Council, the development of the Freedom Hills horse trails is not only a plus for horse enthusiasts, but will also provide an economic and tourism boost to the state. "With horse activities generating \$2.4 billion annually in Alabama, this recent project is just another step in providing more recreational areas for our equine enthusiasts and we applaud ADCNR's staff and efforts in this behalf," Pegram said.

Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) staff utilized existing woods roads that were closed to vehicle traffic outside of the normal hunting seasons and connecting trails to develop a 15-mile trail at Freedom Hills. While the initial trail work was performed by the ADCNR staff, this project is intended to follow

other successful recreational ventures utilizing volunteers to maintain the existing trails. These efforts have capitalized on the membership of the Alabama Horse Council and other local clubs who support horse back riding.

Barnett Lawley, ADCNR Commissioner and Chairman of the Forever Wild Board of Trustees, believes horse trails like those at the Freedom Hills and the Walls of Jericho offer recreational opportunities that are a valued benefit to the public and the communities where they are located. "The multi-purpose nature of Forever Wild lands offers the public a wide variety of recreational options," Lawley said. "Projects such as these new horse trails help Alabamians experience our rich natural diversity first hand from the unique perspective of horseback." 

Alabama Prescribed Fire Council

By Frank Allen, Area Wildlife Biologist, Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries


Prescribed burning is the controlled application of fire to naturally occurring vegetative fuels under specified environmental conditions and the following of appropriate precautionary measures, which cause the fire to be confined to a predetermined area and accomplish the planned land management objectives. In 1995, the Alabama State Legislature declared that the application of prescribed burning is a landowner property right and a management tool that benefits the safety of the public, the environment, the natural resources, and the economy of Alabama. The purpose of Alabama's Prescribed Burning Act is to authorize and promote the continued use of prescribed burning for ecological, silvicultural, agricultural, and wildlife management purposes.

The Alabama Prescribed Fire Council (APFC) was formed in October 2007, and its mission is to "protect, conserve, and expand the safe use of prescribed fire on Alabama's fire adapted landscape." Some of the goals the council strives for include facilitating communication and the exchange of information regarding the benefits of prescribed fire, promoting a public understanding of prescribed burning benefits and the difference between wildfire and prescribed fire, and providing a focus for issues

and concerns surrounding prescribed fire in Alabama. Other purposes of the council are to provide a forum where interested parties may participate in meetings and gain information generated by APFC, promote safety, training and research in the science of prescribed fire, and to promote an increase in acreage annually managed by prescribed fire.

The APFC is governed by a steering committee composed of landowners, consultants, representatives from state and federal agencies, professionals from forest industry, and non-profit organizations. There are working groups that deal with certain prescribed burning issues such as policy and legislation, litigation, insurance, smoke management, fire behavior, public relations, education, and Web site maintenance.

The national Coalition of Prescribed Fire Councils is comprised of 28 states, Canada, and Mexico. The APFC is also a member of the coalition, and its primary objective is to promote prescribed burning on a national level.

To become a member of the APFC, simply send an e-mail to rxburning@aol.com with your name and contact information. Please visit www.alpfc.org for more information. 



Sam Hamilton

A Tribute to Sam Hamilton

By Corky Pugh, Director,
Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries

Hunters, anglers, and all wildlife enthusiasts suffered a huge loss with the sudden passing of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Sam D. Hamilton on February 20, 2010. At the age of 54, he left a tremendous positive legacy for America's fish and wildlife resources and all of us who enjoy them.

Sam Hamilton's parents gave him the greatest gift parents can give a child — balanced self-confidence and humility. Sam always displayed incredible courage to do the right thing, often in the face of tremendous pressure or adversity. Yet he looked diligently for win-win relationships. Out of such thinking came the kind of lasting successes that benefit living natural resources for generations to come.

Despite his many accomplishments, Sam remained a man of great humility. As an unequalled leader, he came to work every day with the crystal-clear realization that it was not about him, but rather the others with whom he worked. Always quick to accept responsibility and to share credit, Sam never failed to recognize the contributions of others, regardless of their position or station.

Sam's unwavering commitment to genuine partnership with the states was the hallmark of his career, and he knew we could accomplish so much more together than at cross purposes. Sam clearly saw that wild creatures know no political boundaries or subdivisions. Transparency and forthrightness characterized his work, and predictability and trustworthiness were his watchwords. Consequently, relationships built on trust flourished, bearing great fruit for wildlife populations and habitats, and related recreational opportunities.

Sam's love for the outdoors was the basis of his career in fish and wildlife. He was firmly grounded in hunting and fishing, and it was a personal affirmation of his professional recognition that license purchases and excise taxes on equipment pay for management and protection of fish and wildlife populations.

Spending time afield with a person allows you to see the true character and fiber of an individual. Consistency permeated Sam Hamilton's life. He was the same person regardless of the circumstances. His strong and unconditional love for his wife Becky and their family was self-evident. Watching Sam's pride when his youngest son Clay killed his first deer many years ago, you would have seen a man who was intent on passing the hunting tradition along.

Turkey hunting with Sam in southwest Alabama, you would have seen a man with the sheer determination and will to wade up to his chin across the cold waters of Johnson Creek to get to a gobbling turkey. On another occasion, we scrambled down a 300-foot Monroe County bluff in the dark going to a gobbler. It's a wonder Sam would come back to hunt again, but we had planned to hunt together this April in south Alabama.

You may or may not have heard it, but if you were listening this morning just as the sky was beginning to gray up, 2 million Eastern wild turkey gobblers sang for Sam. 🇺🇸