

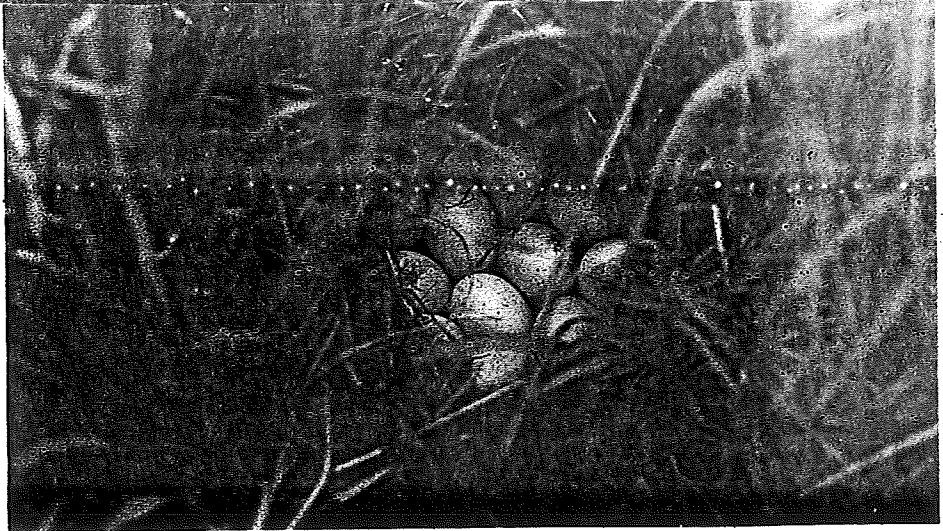
waterfowl base dwindles more and more each year from drainage, intensive agriculture, urban encroachment and the latest threat—irrigation.

Once purchased, land cannot always be immediately developed for waterfowl. Even so, it must be maintained or possibly lose its original value. A piece of land cannot help waterfowl if it grows up to brush or if its nesting cover deteriorates. Neighbors and town officials become upset if weeds grow or fences fail.

The department has been struggling to develop and maintain these lands with only a handful of field employes—the same number it had 15 years ago—and with the same number of dollars it had five years ago. These dollars—as everyone is aware—have been buying about 10% less each year because of inflation.

Obviously, this new state waterfowl stamp revenue comes at a critical time. Wetlands and the wild creatures that depend on them can now be preserved. During the first year, some 28 projects in more than 20 counties have been selected for immediate attention. Others will follow in the future. The outlook for water birds in Wisconsin is rosy thanks to the new duck stamp.

By any measure, it's worth the extra \$3.25.



Much duck stamp money will go to establish nesting cover.
 Photo by John Burckardt

Priority State Duck Stamp Projects

County	Wildlife Area	County	Wildlife Area
Barron	Loon Lake, New Auburn	Dane	Mazomanie, Bad Fish Creek
Vilas	Powell Marsh	Columbia	Springvale, French Creek
Jackson	Dike 17	Fond du Lac	Eldorado, Mullet Creek
Eau Claire	Augusta	Green Lake	Grand River Marsh
Waushara	Poygan	Dodge	Horicon, Mud Lake
Outagamie	Outagamie	Burnett	Amsterdam Slough, Crex Meadows
Calumet	Killsnake	Rock	Storr's Lake
Brown	Sensiba	Taylor	Pershing
Manitowoc	Collins	St. Croix	Ceylon
Sheboygan	Sheboygan Marsh	Several Counties	Waterfowl Production Areas
Jefferson	Princess Point, Rome Pond, Lake Mills		

Owen Gromme: Duck stamp artist

"A life that's
 been a dream"

J. WOLFRED TAYLOR, Editor,
 Wisconsin Natural Resources

Wisconsin's first duck stamp is typical Owen Gromme art. It is not a pair of wood ducks, but a trio. Gromme painted one hen for us. But to make the beauty and detail of the male wings, above and below completely explicit, he gave us two drakes. This telltale distinction, coupled with absolute adherence to nature and work that is better than anybody's is the Gromme goal. At age 82,

disciplined and productive, he still achieves it and keeps improving.

Gromme is the acknowledged master among Wisconsin bird artists and many think he is best in the world. Like Audubon, he has become a standard. His *Birds of Wisconsin*, published in 1963 is in its fourth printing. He designed the Federal Duck Stamp in 1945 and this year was named Ducks Unlimited Artist of the year.

It was a foregone conclusion that he would paint Wisconsin's first stamp. When tentatively asked to do so, providing the Governor signed authorizing legislation, Gromme readily agreed, then

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"I've done everything a boy dreams of. I pulled the throttle on a locomotive in the SOO Line yard at Fond du Lac. I rode on top of a circus wagon in the Schlitz parade. I've been in the funnies. I was Mark Trail's pal for a couple of years. Ed Dodd called me Owen Gunn. I've shot big game in Africa.

I was there when it was real and primitive. A trip like that opens up a whole world of action and adventure to a young man. And I ended up as an artist. An artist has a big advantage over the ordinary hunter. He can study a bird, photograph it, shoot it, eat it, and then by god, he can paint it and it'll live forever. And now I'm being awarded a Doctorate at Marian College in Fond du Lac. I've lived a life that's been a dream.

If I had it to do over, I wouldn't change a thing. I'd even marry the same woman." (Gromme and his wife, the former Anne Nielson, celebrated their 50th anniversary last year.)

surprised everybody. A bird in hand might induce a signature in case there was doubt. Therefore, the painting was in the Governor's office in a matter of weeks, long before the law was signed.

It would have been signed anyhow, but the incident affirms two other traits: Gromme works fast. He's also an environmental activist. He has been an activist for more than 50 years.— one of the old time sportsman-conservationist originals referred to in John Reiger's article (page 12). Gromme loved hunting

"I was brought up very self disciplined. Every day for instance now I'll paint a little on one of these pictures, even if its only for 15 minutes. That's a start on what's going to be five cheetahs on the Tanganyika Plains of Africa. This goshawk is from a photograph I took which was the first picture ever taken of a goshawk at the nest. That one is going to be Aldo Leopold's shack to illustrate his marshland elegy. It's going to be some sandhill cranes dancing right at the edge of Leopold's favorite duck shooting place with his shack in the background. And that's just the beginning of it. That barn owl there is my model and so is the leopard skin. All these wings are props. I've mounted them because if someone wants a picture of a mallard, a redhead, a canvasback, a teal or a Canada goose, I've got the wings all here. The most expressive part of a bird is the wing if its flying. Otherwise, it's the eyes. The eye is the mirror of the soul, you know, in man, bird, beast or mammal."

since childhood and it molded the patterns of his life. He learned taxidermy from a fur buyer, and that plus his ability to shoot landed him a job with the Milwaukee Public Museum. There, without a lesson, he evolved into a scientist, administrator and finally an artist. When he retired after more than 40 years he was curator of birds.

Gromme saw Horicon Marsh drained in 1915 and was outraged. He was one of the principles in a movement that worked for decades to reflood it and even today, any drainage there draws his wrath. He recently did "the first propaganda painting of my career," called Horicon Requiem to help finance opposition to a proposed drawdown on the marsh. Managers thought dropping the water level would help disperse the too-crowded hordes of geese but Gromme felt it to be a repetition of 1915.

He is an octogenarian of rare vitality, eloquent in art and eloquent in talk about life, painting and nature.

All Owen Gromme paintings reprinted courtesy of Wild Wings, Lake City Minnesota 55041



Photo by Jim Escalante

Owen Gromme's favorite, Whistling Swans.

