Smith wins stamp competition

The 1991 Louisiana Duck Stamp was painted by Brett Smith.

As the son of a professional illustrator, Brett Smith's ambition was always to be an artist.

And he became a good one. Smith, 32, has some 20 “sporting oriented” prints — mostly hunting and fishing scenes of the Gulf coast — on the market.

When the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries held its first duck stamp competition, Smith won.
stamp competition in 1988, a blue-winged teal painting by David Noll of New Orleans was selected to appear on the “first-of-state” duck stamp. Smith's green-winged teal painting came in fifth.

Last year his painting of blue-winged teal placed second, outscored only by the entry of Elton Louviere of Lake Charles.

Thursday, Smith hit the jackpot. His painting of wood ducks — in transparent watercolor and oil — was judged best among the 64 entries, and will appear on Louisiana's 1991-92 duck stamp.

Although he has faired well in the state competition, Smith acknowledges he is not best known for painting ducks. He entered the federal duck stamp contest once and realized that wasn't for him.

“My forte is painting scenes sportsmen can relate to — not perfectly painted ducks,” he said. “I'm glad to see that the judges picked something, that in my opinion, is more art and less ducks. The people I admire are mostly impressionist painters.

His winning painting depicts a pair of drake wood ducks and a hen, with swamp trees and glimmering water in the background.

The competition will remain open only to Louisiana artists for the next two years. Rules prohibit a winner from entering the contest for three years. Noll and Louviere were among the five judges who selected the top 13 paintings, and then reduced the field to the top three.

Other judges include Burnett Harshman, president of Sport en Art and publisher of the Louisiana Duck Stamp and prints; Ed Froehner, owner of Sporting Life in Houston, and Jeff King, manager of Wild Wings Gallery in New Orleans.

"The top three were beautiful work and any one of them could have won," Louviere said, adding that he picked the winner because of good contrast, accuracy of the birds and detailed landscape.

Smith's painting was shown at Thursday afternoon's meeting of the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission.

The money received for the sale of duck stamps and a commission on prints is used by the LDWF for waterfowl habitat improvement.