

On Wisconsin *Outdoors*

With the Dick Ellis Experts

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Stamp of Approval

Artist wins Great Lakes trout and salmon competition

By Dick Ellis



Wildlife artist Jim Tostrud's rendering of a Seeforellen Brown Trout won first place in the 2009 Great Lakes Trout and Salmon stamp competition conducted annually by the Department of Natural Resources.

There was something fishy about the bicycle accident just west of the Kenosha Harbor in the 1970s. Twelve year old Jim Tostrud peddled for home, one

20-pound King salmon tethered to each side of the handle bars for balance. Such a performance would ordinarily pose no problem for the young angling addict

and aspiring Wisconsin wildlife artist. Tostrud had made more difficult journeys home with up to a limit of five steelhead, browns, Chinook or Cohos many

times before after successful trips to fish the rocks, piers and tributaries of the big lake.

It was a shore thing; Tostrud would routinely catch fish and safely deliver the catch. This though, this is where a fish tail enters our fish tale. Tostrud labored on, his stinky cargo shifted, the bike wobbled and the tail of one big King found the spokes of one little bike. And one little fisherman took a solo flight.

"That's when I went right over the handle bars," Tostrud said. "I got a little beat up when I landed but I was okay. But even as a little guy I would fish Lake Michigan any time I could. I really studied the fish and the habitat. As an artist, I want to make sure that the anatomy and the posture or movement of the wildlife I paint is accurate."

It was that early and ongoing education in the fields and on the water of Wisconsin and his attention to detail that helped Tostrud earn first place recognition in the 2009 Great Lakes trout and salmon stamp competition coordinated by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). His combination acrylic airbrush and hand brush rendering of a Seeforellen Brown Trout will adorn the state stamp required of all anglers next year fishing Lake



Many years fishing Lake Michigan from shore as a young boy and later from boats helped Wildlife artist Jim Tostrud become acclimated to the fish species and habitat that would help him win the 2009 Great Lakes trout and salmon stamp competition

Superior, Lake Michigan, and Great Lakes tributaries upstream to the first obstruction, or dam.

The competition is one of several state art competitions for hunting and fishing seasons that require a stamp purchase to participate, including inland trout, turkey, pheasant, and waterfowl. The artist entry must be original, previously unpublished art in work that might be oil, acrylic or colored pencil, he said, and the 8-inch by 10-inch art must be submitted unsigned to ensure unbiased judging.

Revenue raised through purchase by sportsmen and women goes back to the resource, often in habitat management. Although Tostrud has placed in all of the competitions and been runner-up in the three of the contests including the Great Lakes Trout and Salmon competition, this is his first, 1st place.

"I grew up fishing Lake Michigan," Tostrud said. "I've seen the trout and salmon fishing evolve in the 1960s, seventies and eighties. After fishing all the time from shore as a kid I worked on several charter boats as a first

mate. The painting shows the brown trout accurately, the sun rays carrying through the clear water on a clear day, and the big rocks that are close to the Lake Michigan shore."

"I worked as guide on Pikes Creek during the Lake Michigan hey-day when everyone fished the Root River in Racine. The Wehr steelhead facility is on the Root but we have our own fish rearing facility on Pike's Creek run by the great people of the Kenosha Sportfishing Association."

It was to that association that Tostrud donated all earnings several years ago when, after finishing as runner-up in the state trout and salmon stamp competition, he produced and sold limited edition prints of the original art. Reflective of the association's non-profit efforts to improve the fishery, 40,000 salmon were raised at the rearing facility and released in 2008.

"Being the runner-up is just being the first loser," Tostrud said. "All you get is a certificate but I wanted to help the associa-

tion because those people do so much for the lake and they do things like stock ponds with trout and have kids come to learn how to fish."

After 10 years of entering the state stamp competitions and being so close but so far, so often, learning he had won the Great Lakes trout and salmon contest was almost a surreal experience. Filming a turkey hunt in the northland for a cable television program had not been successful and his truck on the trip home nearly broke down. Nursing the truck home on the highway, Tostrud "nearly broke down too", when the phone call came in from the DNR informing the artist of his win.

"I've worked so hard entering these contest over the years," he said. "But I never won. It was so exciting. I've been painting for most of my life.

I've owned my own art business for 20 years. My work has been published on the cover of Wisconsin Outdoor Journal, Woods and Waters, Midwest Outdoors and Deer & Deer Hunting. But to win a stamp contest gives a big boost to your artwork. It's huge. It's like winning the Super Bowl for me."

"My talent is a gift from God. The cool thing about this painting is that I have caught so many browns, and have fished Lake Michigan so long, and know the habitat so well. I come up with visions all the time before painting. And this is how I envisioned this piece of art before I started."

To view the artwork of Jim Tostrud, or contact the Wisconsin licensed fishing guide directly, connect with this website at www.wildlifevisions.com. ^{wo}



Great Lakes rainbow, or steelhead, have long been a target of fishing guide and wildlife artist Jim Tostrud. He won the 2009 Great Lakes trout and salmon stamp competition.

Many species of Great Lakes fish targeted by wildlife artist and fishing guide Jim Tostrud since he was a boy, like this huge Coho salmon, helped Tostrud study the detail of fish and habitat and win the 2009 Great Lake trout and salmon stamp competition