



PENNSYLVANIA CONSERVATION
HERITAGE
PROJECT

Fact Sheet to accompany “Ned Smith: Gone for the Day”

“Seeing is more than merely looking, it involves noticing things.” - Ned Smith

Edmund Stanley "Ned" Smith was born October 9, 1919 in Millersburg, Pennsylvania, a small town on the Susquehanna River, north of Harrisburg. A self-trained artist and naturalist, in his 46-year career he created thousands of astonishingly accurate drawings and paintings of wildlife for books, magazines and other publications, as well as dozens of limited edition prints. Smith grew up in a household that was attuned to nature; his mother was an avid birder, and his father, who managed a local shoe factory, had a passion for botany. Combining his love of natural history with an innate aptitude for art, Ned was already producing quality wildlife illustrations when he completed high school in the 1930s, but after graduation he began working, not as an artist, but as a lathe operator in a machine shop — a steady income for him and his new wife, Marie Reynolds, his childhood sweetheart.

Early Artist Days

He continued to draw and paint, however, spending every spare moment in the field — a habit that continued throughout his life, and honed his abilities as both an observer of wildlife and a naturalist. In 1939 he made his first commercial sale, a cover painting for Pennsylvania Angler magazine, and a full time illustration job for Samworth Publishing soon followed; the Smiths lived for a year on the Samworth estate in South Carolina as Ned illustrated the hunting and firearms books that Samworth produced.

Pennsylvania Game Commission

After their return to Pennsylvania, Smith landed a job as the staff illustrator with the PA Game Commission, the beginning of a lifelong association with the state's wildlife agency. Over the years, he created nearly 120 cover paintings for Pennsylvania Game News, the agency's magazine, and in the 1960s he began a monthly column he dubbed "Gone for the Day" that proved to be enduringly popular. Drawn from his voluminous field journals and sketchbooks, the column was deceptively simple — a diary-like account of the animals and plants he encountered, illustrated in his by-then-signature style, using small, crisp pen-and-ink drawings and larger, more complex renderings in pencil and gouache on toned paper. The column ran for four years, and in 1971 was published in book form. It remains in print, one of the classics of Pennsylvania nature writing.

Finding Success

With Marie functioning as his business partner as well as his birding, camping and fishing companion, and with his Game Commission work as a platform, Smith's reputation and reach as an artist quickly grew. He left the Game Commission's employ in 1953 to work fulltime as a freelance artist (though the agency always remained a major client). His freelance work included long-running columns, articles and illustrations in *Sports Afield*, *National Wildlife Federation*, *Pennsylvania Angler*, *South Carolina Wildlife*, *National Geographic* and other magazines, and over the years he illustrated 14 books, including the *Peterson Field Guide to Birds' Nests* by the noted naturalist Hal Harrison. In 1983 he was given the honor of creating Pennsylvania's first-ever state duck stamp, and he painted a second design two years later.

Smith was, however, more than just a wildlife illustrator. He was a talented photographer and a skilled writer with an informal, conversational style, as well as a musician and inventor. He and Marie were avid amateur archaeologists, once excavating an Indian encampment on an island in the Susquehanna that had been laid bare by floods caused by Tropical Storm Agnes in 1972. Many of their discoveries are now in the State Museum in Harrisburg.

In the late 1970s, Smith began to work in the burgeoning field of fine art prints, initially publishing them himself, but eventually joining with Sportsman Specialties, a gallery and publisher in western Pennsylvania. In the final five years of his life, Smith produced a series of exceptionally popular prints from large acrylics and oils, including such masterworks as "Waiting for Dusk," which portrays a pair of red foxes on a late-winter evening, or "A Little Bit Cautious," in which a large black bear gives a porcupine a wide berth.

During the same period, he also created several of the Game Commission's Working Together for Wildlife prints, including "Dutch Country Bluebirds," one of his most popular pieces, as well as fundraising prints for the National Wild Turkey Federation, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, and other organizations.

Ned Smith's Legacy

For many years, Ned Smith battled heart disease; on April 22, 1985, while working in the garden of their Millersburg home, he died of a heart attack at the age of 65. Since his death, the value of his work has continued to rise. From Marie's initial desire to find an institution to house her extensive collection of Ned's art eventually grew the idea for the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, which uses Ned's many overlapping interests and talents as a springboard for bridging the worlds of art and natural science.