

NTSS 2012

Jack R. Congrove, BU1424

The American Topical Association, of which the Biology Unit is one of the larger study units in terms of membership, held its 2012 National Topical Stamp Show in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, over the weekend of 22–24 June. I do not know the official evaluation of the show, but from my own perspective and informal comments from others, I believe it was highly successful.

The US Postal Service held two separate first-day issue ceremonies during the show. The first was for the Sailboat postal card on Friday, and the second was for the second set of ten Scenic American Landscape Postal Cards on Saturday. One of the Scenic American Landscape cards was the Lancaster County scene previously issued as a \$1.05 stamp in January to pay the one-ounce first class mail rate for international mail to countries other than Canada and Mexico, which made it especially appropriate for this show. Several first-day cover and cachet vendors were available to provide souvenir items.



The show included a dealer bourse with about 40 vendors providing philatelic items of all sorts. I regret that I was only able to visit a few of them to look through their offerings. As a regular feature of NTSS, the National Stamp Dealers Association provided a “What’s In Your Attic” free stamp evaluation table. I learned that on Sunday, the evaluators saw the most visitors they have ever had on a single day at any show. From the high number of attendees that I noted, I suspect that the vendors had a profitable weekend.

At the awards dinner on Saturday, ATA President, Jack Denys, presented the 2012 Distinguished Topical Philatelist award to Dr. Fred Skvara, one of our Unit directors. This is the highest honor bestowed by the ATA.

The NTSS is also the venue for the annual meetings of several ATA Study Units, including the Biology Unit. We held our meeting on Saturday morning with 17 persons in attendance. This is the largest number we have had at any of the meetings I have attended. Unit President, Alan Hanks, opened the meeting with a welcome. Chris Dahle provided copies of the Secretary and Treasurer reports that you will find on page 131.



Chris Dahle, Fred Skvara, and Alan Hanks

The discussion among the attendees resulted in many good suggestions for improving services to the members. Most ideas involved the Biology Unit web site and the *Biophilately* journal, including adding bibliographies, indexes, and listings and web links to on-line resources for stamps with biology topics. You will find the first of these listings on page 185.

A suggestion for producing the print version of the journal in color was tabled. Currently, the cost is prohibitive given the size of our publication. However, we are investigating some alternatives. The illustrations do look much better in color. The on-line version of the journal is in full color, so if a member wants to view or download a color copy, subscribing to the web version is a great alternative. In addition, web subscriptions cost members less and save the unit significant printing and postage costs. If members have any suggestions or views about this idea, please contact me. See the inside cover for contact information.

Because the NTSS is one of the American Philatelic Society’s World Series of Philately national shows, it included 34 competitive exhibits on a wide variety of topics in several exhibit divisions. The Grand award winner gets to represent NTSS at the annual APS Stamp Show to be held this year in Sacramento, California, 16–19 August. This year the Grand award went to Raymond Ireson for his exhibit titled, “The Panama Canal Story.”

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The Thematic Division included four exhibits with biology topics. Robert Mather won a vermeil medal for “The Donkey in Man’s World.” Greg Balagian won a vermeil for “The Lion—Most Symbolic Animal of All,” which also won the American Association of Philatelic Exhibitors Creativity Award. Alan Hanks also won a vermeil for “Microcosmos—The Insect World.” Chris Dahle won a silver medal for “Exploring the Evolution of Plants: From Phytoplankton to Orchids,” which also won the Women Exhibitors Sterling Achievement Award.

The Display Division contained two exhibits dealing with biology topics. Larry Davidson won a vermeil medal for “Beavers: Nature’s Engineers,” which additionally won the Biology Unit Award. Dawn Hamman, a first-time exhibitor, won a silver medal for “Manatees and Dugongs: The Story of Their Struggle to Survive,” which also won the ATA Chapter V Incentive Award, the AAPE Award of Excellence, and the AAPE Novice Award. By my calculations, biology topics, which accounted for only 18 percent of the exhibits, won 40 percent of the special recognition awards. So congratulations to all these exhibitors.

In addition to the actual show, the ATA offered two special tours. I took advantage of both and found each one enjoyable and informative. On Thursday before the show, we toured the local Amish country. Our guide took us through an example Amish schoolroom and a typical Amish home. We learned much about the Amish culture and way of life. Following this, we boarded our bus for a tour of the countryside with its immaculate fields and large Amish homes and included a stop at a farm and gift shop offering beautiful locally made quilts, needle arts, and other craft items.

The second tour on Monday following the show was a visit to the American Philatelic Center at the Match Factory building in Bellefonte. Our group got a personal tour by Ken Martin, the Executive Director, and presentations by some of the staff members. In addition, we had an opportunity to use the philatelic library and I want to compliment the staff there on their helpfulness and knowledge. Some members of our group also spent some time with the circuit sales section looking for items to add to their collections. I would recommend to anyone who has the opportunity, a visit to the APC is well worth the time.

Next year the NTSS will be held 17–19 May in Rochester, New York, in conjunction with ROPEX 2013. So there will be two major shows combined into one. I am not sure how the logistics of all that works, but fortunately I am not the one who has to plan and execute it. In any case, as you can see from this report, there is sure to be something to interest every one of you, so I hope to see you at the show next year.



APC Tour with Director Ken Martin