

# The Canvasback

HAVRE DE GRACE DECoy MUSEUM

Spring 2020  
Vol. 30 No. 1

\$3.00

*Jeff Coats*

HONORARY FESTIVAL  
CHAIRMAN 2020



39TH ANNUAL  
**Decoy & Wildlife  
Art Festival**

Special Edition • Details Inside



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### can•vas•back

(kan'ves bak'), n., pl. -backs, (esp. collectively) — back.

1. a north american wild duck, the male of which has a whitish back and a reddish-brown head and neck.
2. a style of decoy made famous by carvers of the Susquehanna Flats region.
3. a quarterly publication of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.

THE MUSEUM WAS INCORPORATED IN 1981 AS A 501(c)(3) TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATION TO COLLECT, DOCUMENT, PRESERVE, AND INTERPRET WATERFOWL DECOYS AS A UNIQUE FORM OF FOLK ART.

FUNDED IN PART BY



The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum is supported in part by the Maryland State Arts Council ([msac.org](http://msac.org))

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2020 Decoy Festival Chairman Capt. Jeff Coats appreciates a fine surf scoter against the backdrop of the Atlantic Ocean in Maryland.



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DECOY & WILDLIFE

Art Festival

May 2 & 3 • 2020

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SUNDAY 10 AM - 4 PM



Scoter  
By Jeff Coats



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## From the President...

As we move into the year 2020, we continue to undertake many initiatives that require our attention.



As you will read later in this magazine, we have recently taken several steps to improve our aging infrastructure at the Museum. We have also taken steps to improve our “curb appeal” by re-landscaping the front façade.

An effort is underway to update the Museum’s Strategic Plan. The current version (August 1997) is very comprehensive and well written, but it is very dated and is in dire need of an update. I have taken the responsibility to complete the new document and am working in conjunction with our Executive Director and other Board members to complete this task by the close of the first quarter of 2020. Once completed, the document will be presented to the full Board of Directors for comments and approval.

A movement is also underway to enhance the presentation of the R. Madison Mitchell Shop for visitors to this area. Several carvers who have worked side by side with Mr. Mitchell have agreed to come together as a special committee to develop an automated audio and possible video presentation. This effort will include LED lighting to highlight areas of the shop and paint area and allow our visitors to hear directly from those who worked with Mr. Mitchell in these surroundings. We expect to advance this initiative in the second half of 2020.

Lastly, the 39th Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival is drawing near. Please make plans to join us on May 2 & 3, 2020 at the Havre de Grace Middle School and Decoy Museum to celebrate this exciting event. We hope to build on the momentum we experienced at last year’s festival.

As always, we thank every one of you for your support in the past and look forward to your continued support as we prepare the Museum for the next decade and beyond.

Mike Tarquini  
*Board President*



# Festival Exhibitors

**Linda Amtmann**  
MS 103, 104

**Capt. Bill Collins**  
*Cat. Bill Collins Decoys*  
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**Darrell Hager**  
MS 011

**Matt Kneisley**  
MS 087

**Josh Blanchette**  
*Blanchette Decoys*  
MS 095

**Rosalyn Daisey**  
MS 181

**Robert Hayes**  
*Mainely Loons Wildlife*  
*Carvings*  
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**Robert Lackey**  
MS 146

**Bryon Bodt**  
MS 061, 065, 066

**Shannon Dimmig**  
*Shannon Dimmig*  
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**Bill Hickson**  
*Wildfowl Carvings*  
MS 064

**Rob Leslie**  
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**Leonard Burcham**  
RMM Shop

**Steve Dorrell**  
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MS 090

**Bob & Debbie Jobes**  
MS 092, 093

**C.L. Marshall**  
*Chesapeake Bay Books*  
MS 107

**Lloyd Cargile**  
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**John Eichelberger**  
MS 089

**Charles Jobes**  
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**John Meredith**  
MS 062, 063

**Vincent Ciesielski**  
MS 179

**Joe Engers**  
*Decoy Magazine*  
MS 037, 042

**Joey Jobes**  
MS 085, 086, 088

**Mike Nichols**  
*Old Dog Woodcrafts*  
MS 006

**Jeff Coats**  
*Honorary Chairman*  
Gym

**Bob Foard**  
MS 018, 019

**Walter Jones**  
*Flyway Decoys*  
MS 055, 056, 057

**Charlie Packard**  
MS 050, 051, 052

**John Collier**  
MS 031

**Chris & Joe Pagano**  
*Walnut Street Studio*  
MS 147





# Festival Exhibitors

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**Allan Schaubert**  
MS 153

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*Mary Lou Troutman Art*  
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*Karen C Pruitt*  
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MS 144

**David Walker**  
*Walker Decoys*  
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**Marshall Purner**  
MS 049, 054

**Mike Smyser**  
*Mike Smyser Decoys*  
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**Upper Bay Museum**  
MS 164, 165

**Walter Williams**  
*Wings Over the Beach*  
MS 020, 021

**Tom Reed**  
*American Sporting  
Classics*  
MS 032, 033

**David Sproates**  
MS 017

**Chuck Usilton**  
*C & L Antiques*  
MS 094

**Dick Robinson**  
*Robinson Decoys*  
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**Al Stickney**  
*A. B Frost Collector*  
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**C. John Sullivan**  
*C. John Sullivan Historic  
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MS 071, 072

**Beverly & Phil Ryser**  
*Birdwing Studios*  
MS 079, 080, 083, 084



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## DECOY MAGAZINE

- Carver profiles
- Features on carving regions, fish decoys, and sporting art
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- National calendar of all decoy shows
- Full-color photographs of over 80 decoys

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# J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest

The 18th annual J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest will be held on Saturday, May 2nd at the Middle School Gym in conjunction with the 2020 Havre de Grace Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival. Joe Engers, Editor and Publisher of Decoy Magazine, will head up a three-member judge's panel. Entries will be accepted at the stage area from 10:00 a.m. until judging commences at noon. Competition decoys will be kept in a highly visible roped-off secure area and will not be handled by the public. At approximately 1:00p.m., the public will be invited to review the roped-off and secured tables once the judges have made their selections. A blue ribbon will be awarded for each of the following ten category winners, and the judges will also select a best-in-show winner. Winners will be requested to display their decoys and ribbons at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum for six months following the Festival.

1 **Best Harry Jobs**  
(pre-1950 age restriction waived)

3 **Best Green-winged Teal**

6 **Best Crisfield Diving Decoy**

9 **Best Shorebird**

4 **Best Vintage Miniature**

7 **Best Talbot County Decoy**

10 **Best Unknown**

2 **Best High-head Decoy**

5 **Best New England Decoy**

8 **Best Potomac River Decoy**

**Rules:** There is a competition ban, regardless of category, on last year's winning birds. Participants must make their best efforts to ensure that all decoy entries were made prior to 1950. Matched pairs entered in other than a Matched Pair category will be considered as one entry. There will be no restrictions as to those who can participate or number of categories entered; however, each decoy will be limited to only one competition category and participants are restricted to no more than three birds per category. Competition issues will be resolved at the sole discretion of the competition chairman and/or competition chief judge. Any questions, please contact contest chairman **Chad Tragakis at 703-593-3024 or chad.tragakis@gmail.com.**

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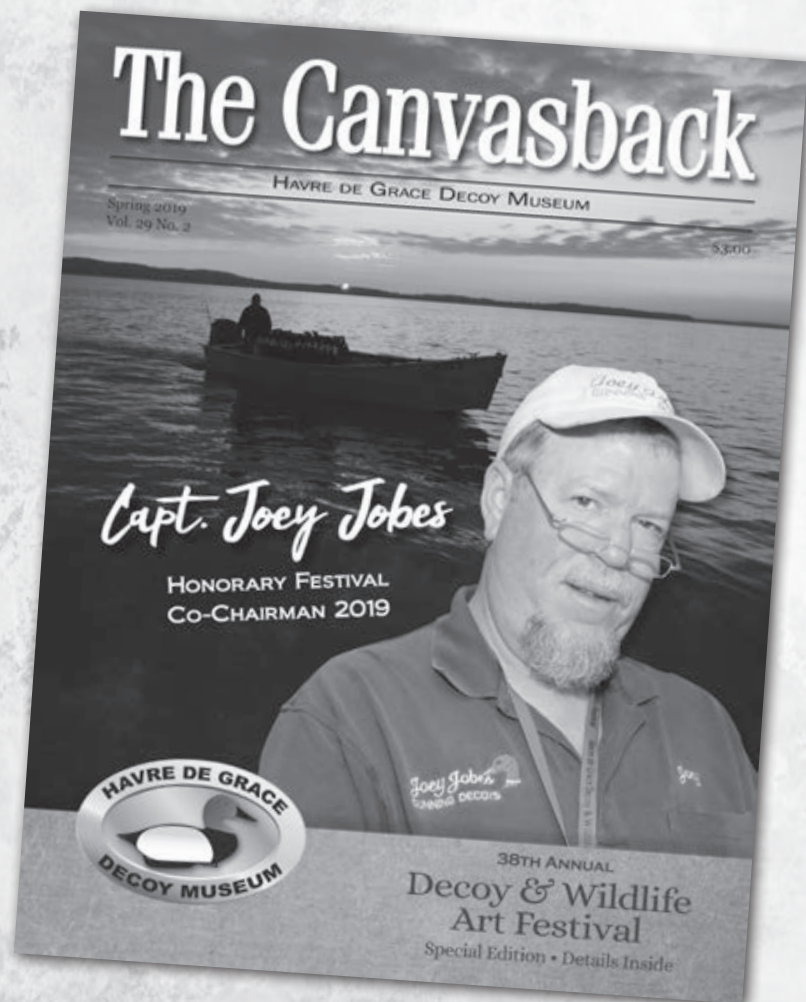
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# A New Landscape at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

By Mike Tarquini

During the summer of 2019, the Museum decided to embark on a project to remove the existing foliage in front of the building and replace it with new landscaping. We partnered with Liam McKaig (*an Eagle Scout candidate from Troop 238, Hickory, MD*) who made this effort his Eagle Scout Service Project. Teams comprised of members of Troop 238 and some friends of the Decoy Museum in conjunction with some commercial partners began the project in earnest on Labor Day weekend.



**Stumps and roots from overgrown foliage is removed by JK Pierce, along with old soil near the Museum building.**

**Stage I** of the project involved the planning for the entire effort. It was learned early on that the Museum property lies in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and all new foliage was required to be Maryland native plants. Working closely with commercial partners Diane Klair (*City of Havre de Grace Planning*), John Akehurst (*Akehurst Landscaping*) and David Farrow (*Holly Hill Farm*), Liam and his team arrived at a concept that satisfied all the requirements of the City of Havre de Grace and the Decoy Museum. Special thanks to John Akehurst for drawing a concept from which we worked.

**Stage II** of the project involved the removal of all existing foliage. This stage went according to plan and presented no complications that were unexpected. The existing foliage was cut down using hand tools and the roots were removed using a small backhoe and hauled away for disposal. The soil was sampled, chemically tested and determined to be deficient to sustain the new plants. We were advised by one of our partners, Holly Hill Farm, to remove twelve inches of soil and replace it with more suitable top soil to give the new plants their best chance for survival.

**Stage III** saw all the old soil excavated, hauled away and replaced with new soil. This stage was heavily dependent on DXI Construction (*a local contractor who provided heavy equipment and dump trucks*). Prior to



**New soil is added to the landscape area and raked prior to planting.**



**Liam McKaig and David Farrow discuss plant placement on planting day.**

the soil replacement, it was discovered that the stucco was delaminating on parts of the Museum's exterior walls. Mark Gorrera (*Imark Builders*) was gracious enough to make the repairs and repaint the parts of the building that required it at no cost. The old soil removal proved much more challenging than originally expected. The drought conditions of the late summer/early fall made excavation very difficult. The new soil (*provided at no charge by DXI Construction*) was placed onto our site

**DXI Construction furnishes a rubber tire backhoe and dump truck to aid in old soil removal.**







**Scouts take a break for a photo with partner DXI Construction dump truck.**

without complication. Liam and his team completely hand raked the landscape areas and removed all rocks and debris that were present. A few large landscape boulders (*obtained at Wirtz & Daughters, Joppa, MD*) were used to accent the planting area.

The last stage of the project **Stage IV** saw 286 Maryland native plants (*provided by Holly Hill Farm at a reduced cost*) planted in our landscape area. David Farrow graciously came to lay out each plant to ensure its placement was consistent with the landscape plan. Once the plants were in position, Liam and his team dug the holes and inserted the plants. Once an area was planted, Liam led a separate team of volunteers to spread mulch (*provided at a reduced cost by Wirtz & Daughters*). Once the mulching was complete, the entire area was cleaned, and the excess mulch was relocated to the rear of the Museum for future use.

As an accent to our new landscape project, the Museum Board of Directors approved the contracting of Harris Metalsmith Studio (*Perryville, MD*) to design and fabricate full-size, three-dimensional aluminum flying waterfowl that give the appearance of flying from the Museum landscape area towards the Susquehanna Flats. It is currently envisioned that geese and canvasback ducks will be used. We thank County Executive Barry Glassman and Harford County Government for their generous support of this outdoor art project. It is our intention to light this outdoor artwork using LED lights and repair the pole lighting in the same area to provide an inviting area for visitors to the Promenade.

Liam McKaig and the Museum would like to thank the many volunteers that made this project successful. Special thanks to

James K. Pierce for operating all heavy equipment and dump trucks. His countless volunteer hours were instrumental for the success of this project. Liam and the Decoy Museum would like to thank the Susquehanna Flats Chapter of Delta Waterfowl who provided major financial support to this effort. The Museum extends our thanks to Liam McKaig for his tireless effort in completing this project. We wish him luck as he completes his Eagle Scout requirements. We look forward to seeing our new Eagle Scout at the Museum on Friday, May 1 when we plan to reveal the new outdoor artwork.



**All plants are planted and mulch is added to produce a finished project.**





## *Capt. Jeff Coats*

### **CAPT. JEFF COATS, HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF THE 39TH ANNUAL DECOY & WILDLIFE ART FESTIVAL**

*By Kerri Kneisley*

**Capt. Jeff Coats leads a very full life – he is a decoy carver, a guide and owner of both Pitboss Waterfowl and Pitboss Fishing, a radio/video personality, and a social media icon.**

Jeff was born in Havre de Grace in 1965 and, like so many others, started carving decoys in order to hunt over them. His first attempt came in 1992, when he saw a pattern for a blue-winged teal in a magazine and decided to give it a go. So, he headed to the local hardware store to purchase some pine 2"x6" boards. All said and done, it didn't look too much like a duck, per Jeff, but it was his.

The next year, 1993, proved to be much more influential for this fledgling carver. That year, Jeff's mother purchased a decoy from local carver Patrick Vincenti as a gift for Jeff. He was so inspired by this gift that he began spending time at Pat's shop in Churchville, learning from both Pat and Capt. Bill Collins, who was working in the same shop. While Jeff

would eventually latch onto a style different than the typical Upper Bay decoy, to this day he credits Pat, Capt. Bill, George Williams and Tom Matus as his biggest mentors.

1993 was also the first year that Jeff attended the Havre de Grace Decoy Festival. However, it wasn't until 1995 that he decided to try his hand at carving a rig (*in this case, 4 drakes and 2 hens*) of black ducks for the River Gunning competition. He had done some carving in the interim years, but was looking for more consistency, in both his carving and painting, and thought that maybe he could earn a ribbon to boot. As was his preference, he carved the black ducks in a flat bottom style. He chose Chesapeake tan cork for his bodies, basswood for the heads, glass eyes and Ronan oil paint. At the time, he didn't



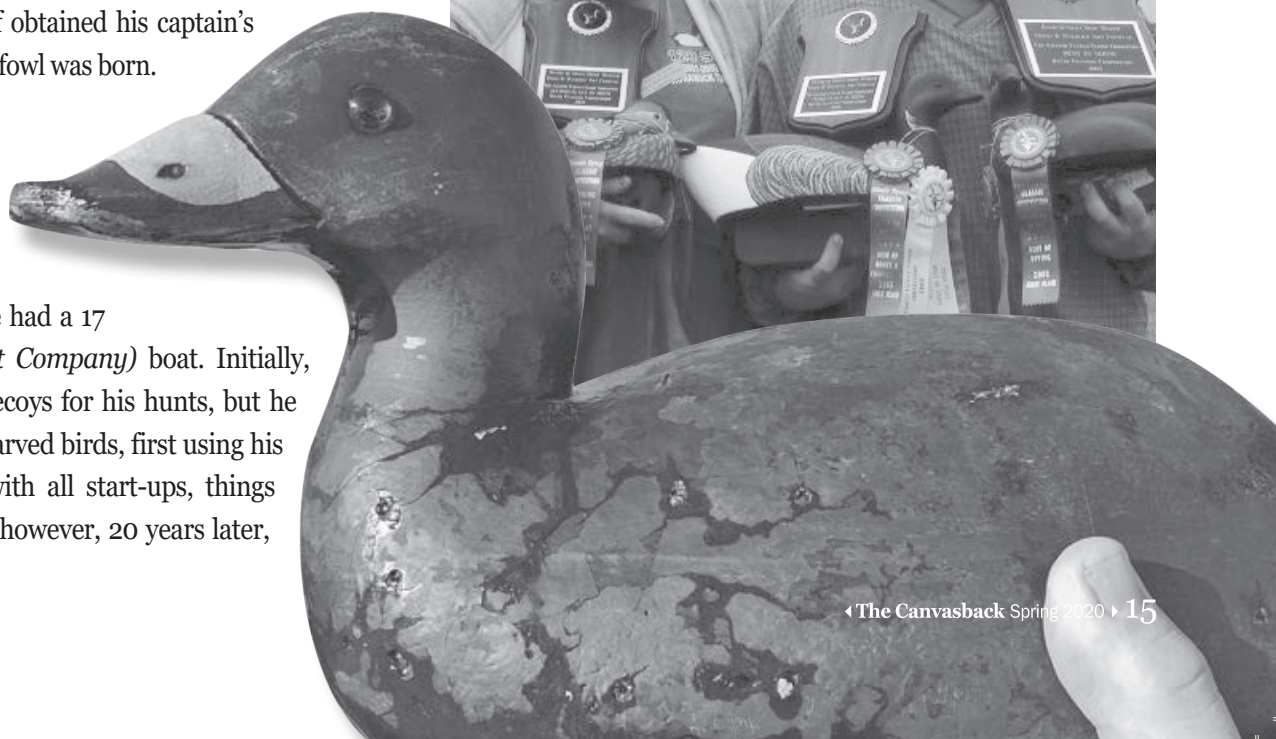
have a bandsaw of his own, so he recalls using the bandsaw in Pat's shop to rough cut the heads and has fond memories of Capt. Collins helping him to refine the details. As for painting the black ducks, he imitated the scratch painting technique he had seen Pat and Bill utilize.

Jeff was quite proud of his rig of black ducks; however, he recalls feeling very humbled upon seeing the other entrants floating on the Flats that day. He did not receive a ribbon and, in fact, recalls receiving some pretty harsh criticism from another carver. However, that experience motivated him to improve his skills and propelled him into the competition world. He would go on to compete in the Decoy Museum's rig competition for the next several years and he did achieve his goal of earning some ribbons (*being awarded Best of Show in 2001, 2002 & 2003, one for the Rigs and two for the River Single Bird.*). He also competed in carving competitions in New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

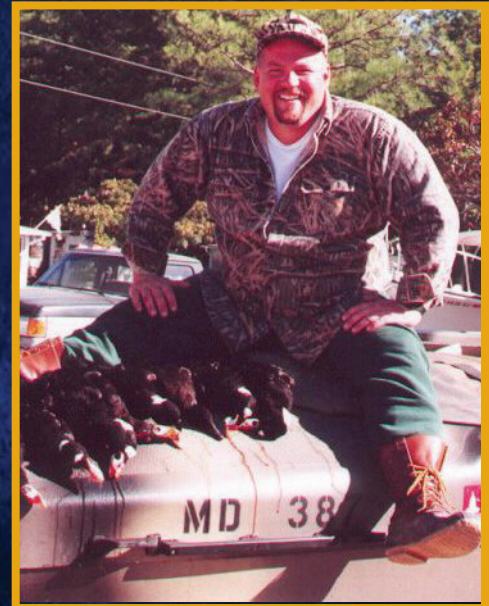
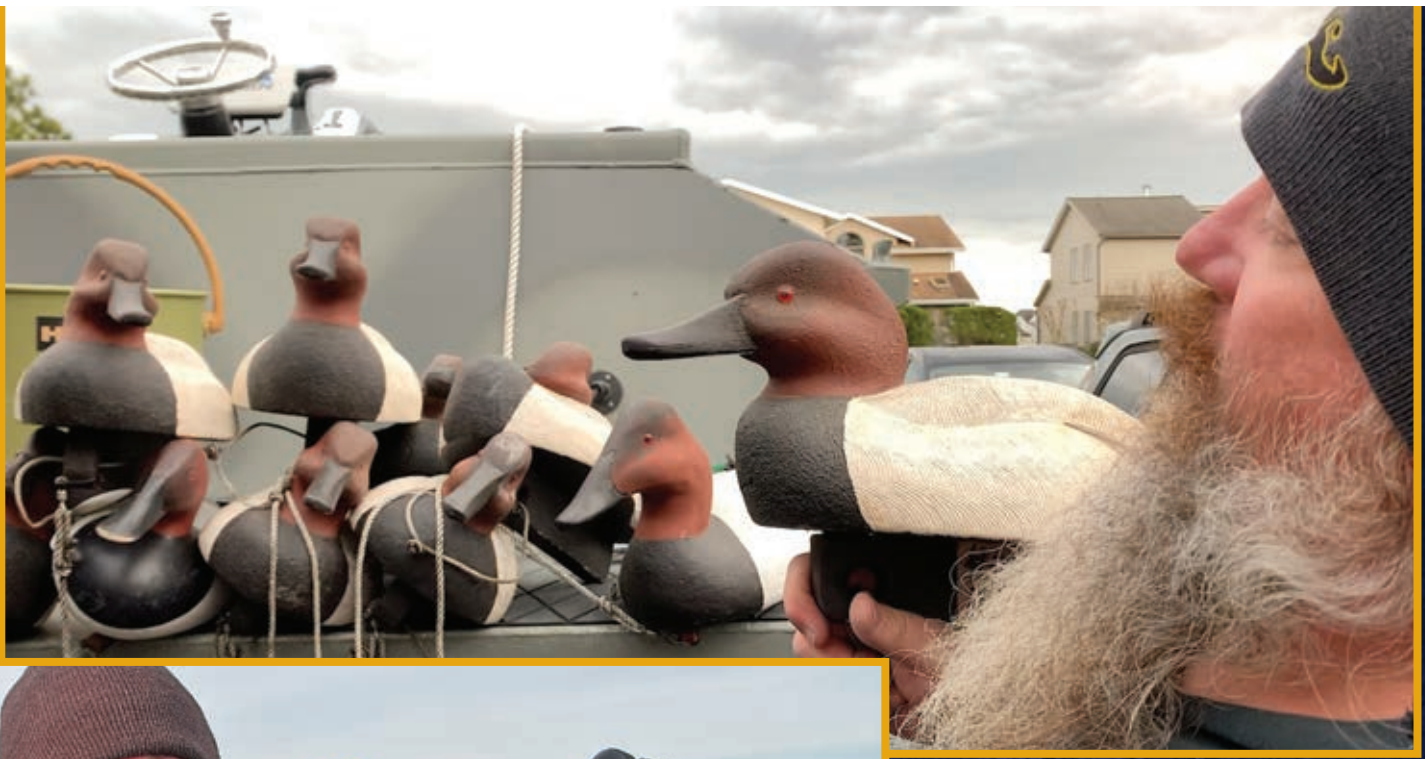
Through the years, Jeff continued to fine tune his carving skills. Today, he utilizes tan high density cork as well as north white cedar for bodies and that same cedar for all of his heads. All birds have glass eyes and for paint, he uses either Golden's Heavy Body Matte or oils.

In the mid-1990s, Jeff found himself at a career crossroads of sorts and needed to make a change. An avid waterfowler, he was interested in doing something which sparked his passion. He recalls befriending a fellow waterfowler, Donald Hughes of Dorchester County, who would later become the catalyst for Jeff's career as a guide. The two men hunted together for quite a few years. In 1999, Jeff obtained his captain's license and Pitboss Waterfowl was born.

Seeing a unique need and opportunity for sea duck guiding, Jeff chose this particular specialty. At the time, he had a 17 ft. TDB (*The Duck Boat Company*) boat. Initially, Jeff utilized all plastic decoys for his hunts, but he quickly turned to hand carved birds, first using his own brant decoys. As with all start-ups, things were a bit tough at first; however, 20 years later, business is booming!















In 2006 and 2007, Jeff added the title “TV Personality” to his repertoire. During those years, he hosted the wildly popular outdoor shows Migration Nation and Ducks, Dog & Decoys TV, helping to promote his love of waterfowling traditions. He often visited the Museum to film segments for his shows.

Speaking of dogs, like many waterfowl hunters, a retriever has always played a huge role in Jeff’s life. And in 2013, he first met his lovely wife, Karen (*a veterinary tech*) thanks to his 5 black labs. According to Karen, “everyone knew when Mr. Coats arrived with all 5 dogs for a visit.” In 2015, Jeff and Karen moved to Berlin, MD and started Pitboss Fishing. The two were married in 2017 and today, she is very much a part of his guiding business.

Jeff served on the Decoy Museum’s Board of Directors from 2011 through 2015. As a Board Member during those years, he was most actively involved in the planning of the Annual Decoy Festival. In 2013, he also organized the Museum’s first-ever 5K, which was held in September in conjunction with Waterfowl Day. Over 80 runners (including this writer) participated in the event, weaving through the downtown streets of beautiful Havre de Grace.

Today, Jeff works non-stop at his guiding business. During the off-hunting seasons, he is busy planning and scheduling the next year’s trips. For anyone interested in booking, call now because his calendar fills quickly! And as anyone who is on social media knows, he works daily at marketing his business and keeping up his brand.

WE ARE THRILLED TO BRING THIS HOMETOWN BOY BACK TO HAVRE DE GRACE FOR THE WEEKEND  
AS OUR HONORARY CHAIRMAN!



## Decoys - Seaduck Hunting - Brant Hunting



Capt. Jeff Coats



[pitbosswaterfowl.com](http://pitbosswaterfowl.com) 410-937-4034

## Got time to spare... time to share?

*Get involved with the Decoy Museum.*

We are grateful for the generous support of our volunteers.

### **What do you like to do?**

Can you lead tours, explain decoy making and the history of the Flats, present programs for school children, greet visitors at the information desk, assist in the museum store, help our curator on special projects, provide carving demonstrations, plan events, maintain IT systems, do exhibit signage and creative work, assist with fundraising and membership, organize chaos?



**Contact the Decoy Museum Today to Join the Flock**

**410.939.3739**



# Festival Program



Admission  
**\$10**



## HONORARY CHAIRMAN CAPT. JEFF COATS

of Berlin, Maryland

### LOCATIONS:

#### Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

Giles Street (DM).....



#### Havre de Grace Middle School

Lewis Street (MS).....



### SATURDAY, MAY 2ND EVENT SCHEDULE

7:00 am – 10:00 am

**Carving Competition River Gunning  
Events Registration**.....



8:00 am – 10:00 am

**Carving Competition Registration**.....



Just \$10.00 for the entire weekend!  
Children under 12 free with a paying adult!

8:30 am – 6:00 pm

**Carvers, Exhibitors, and Vendors**  
all locations (see posted schedules)

8:30 am – 6:00 pm

**Retriever Demonstrations**  
MS grounds.....



8:30 am – 6:00 pm

**Children's Activities** .....



10:00 am

**Old Decoy Contest Registration Opens**  
MS stage .....



10:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Raptors**  
MS near rear admission entrance  
facing the Activity Center.....





# 2 & 3 May 2020



**10:00 am – 12:00 pm**

**Lotto Duck Raffle**

MS Hallway by front admission entrance facing Revolution Street ..... 🏠

**1:00 pm – 3:00 pm**

**Raffle**

MS Hallway by front admission entrance facing Revolution Street ..... 🏠

**SUNDAY, MAY 3RD  
EVENT SCHEDULE**

**10:00 am until complete**

**Atlantic Flyway Classic Carving**

**Competition Judging** - DM grounds..... 🏠

- River Gunning Decoy Division
- Ed Watts Gunning Rig Division
- Tandem, Single, Pairs Competition

**10:00 am – 4:00 pm**

**Carvers, Exhibitors, and Vendors**

all locations (see posted schedules)

**10:30 am until complete**

**Atlantic Flyway Classic Carving**

**Competition Judging** - MS..... 🏠

- Decorative L/S Floating Division
- Decorative L/S Non-Floating Division
- Decorative Miniature Division
- Whitey Frank Decorative Slick Division
- Decorative L/S Fish Division
- Youth Gunning Division
- Gunning Decoy Division
- Shorebird Division

**10:00 am – 4:00 pm**

**Retriever Demonstrations**

MS grounds..... 🏠

**10:00 am – 4:00 pm**

**Children's Activities** ..... 🏠

**1:00 pm**

**Student Art Contest winners Announced** ..... 🏠

**3:30 pm**

**Festival Raffle Drawing**

MS Lobby front admission facing Revolution Street..... 🏠

**12:00 pm – 1:00 pm**

**Old Decoy Contest** - MS stage ..... 🏠

**4:00 pm**

**Festival Closes**







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# Crowbills, Mudhens, Blue Peters

## Interpretations of the Coot Decoy

By Chad Tragakis

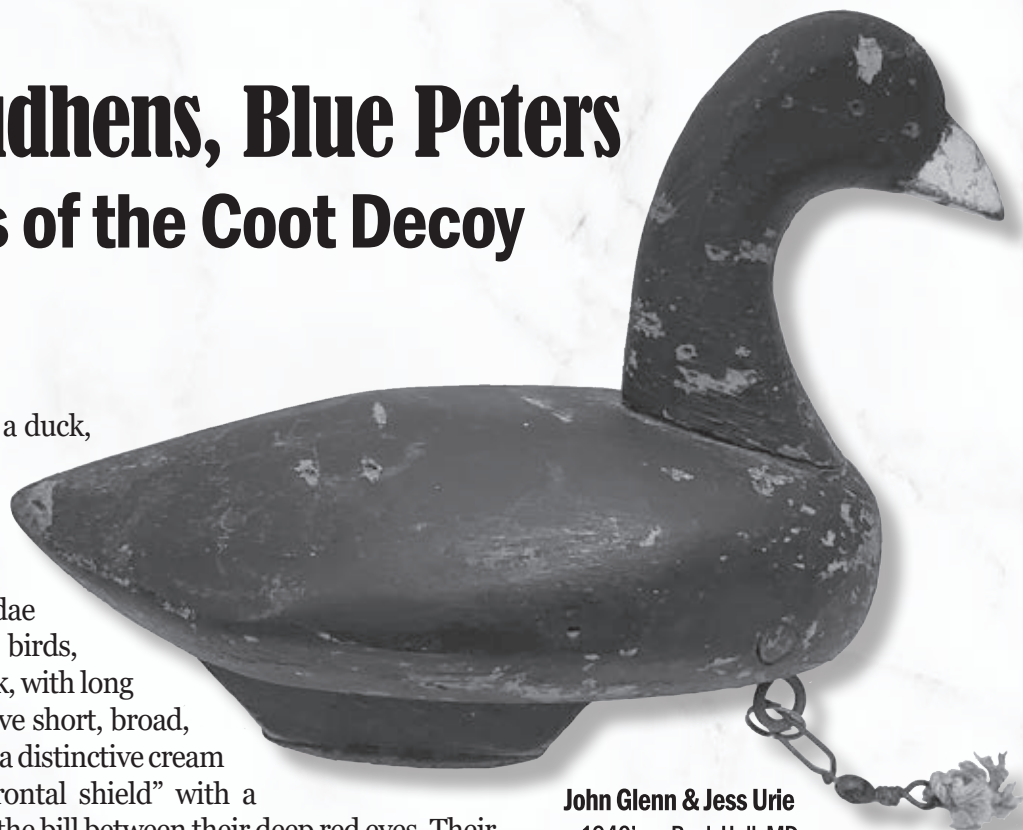
Photos by Cindy Currier

If it looks like a duck, swims like a duck, rafts and eats with the ducks, it's probably a duck. Unless it's a coot. **American coot** (*Fulica americana*) are often mistaken for ducks, but they belong to the Rallidae family of birds. Coots are smallish birds, about the size of a teal or ruddy duck, with long necks and compact heads. They have short, broad, off-white bills that end sharply, and a distinctive cream or bone-colored facial plate or "frontal shield" with a reddish-brown spot near the top of the bill between their deep red eyes. Their legs and long lobed toes are entirely different from the familiar webbed feet seen on ducks.

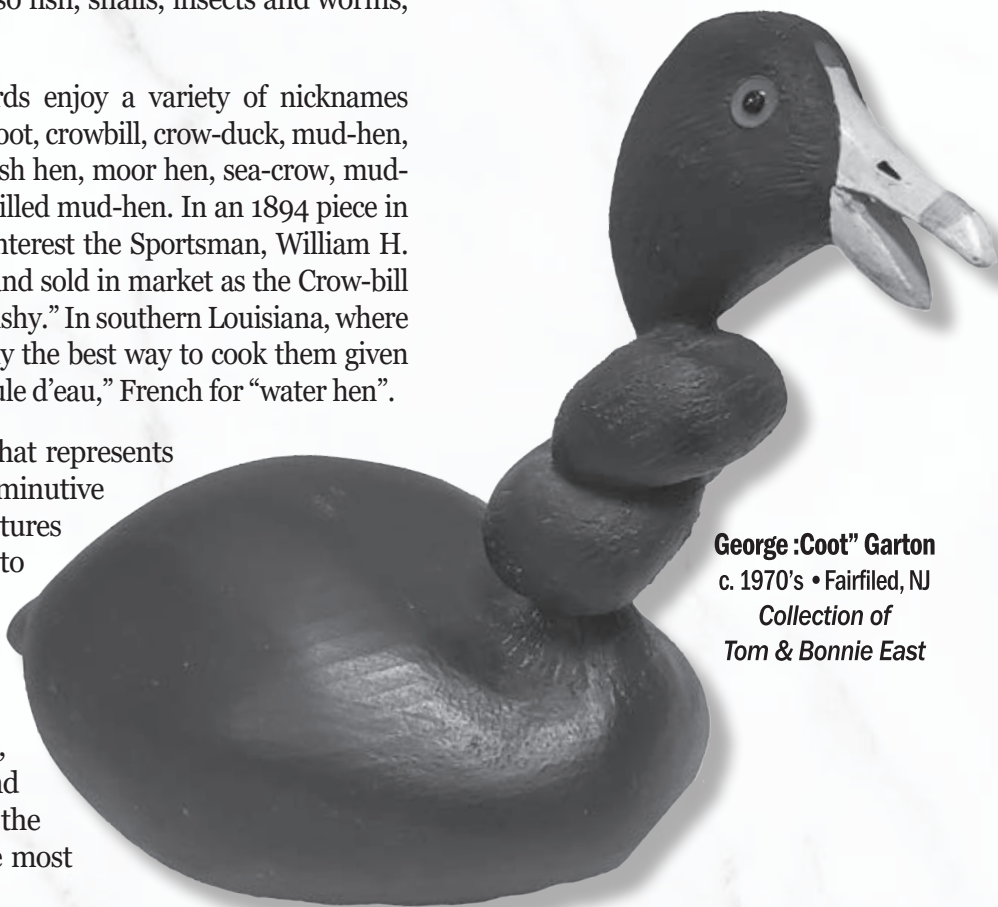
There is no difference in the appearance of male and female coots, but females are slightly smaller. They prefer freshwater, frequenting ponds, marshes and rivers, but also visit saltwater environments in winter. Coots are omnivorous, eating a variety of plants and algae, but also fish, snails, insects and worms, diving, foraging and scavenging on land.

These ubiquitous, migratory duck-like birds enjoy a variety of nicknames among hunters, including black coot, gray coot, crowbill, crow-duck, mud-hen, water-hen, water chicken, sea chicken, marsh hen, moor hen, sea-crow, mud-coot, marsh chicken, pond hen and white-billed mud-hen. In an 1894 piece in *The Oölogist* titled, *Maryland Birds That Interest the Sportsman*, William H. Fisher writes that: "This bird is often shot and sold in market as the Crow-bill Duck. They are poor eating being rank and fishy." In southern Louisiana, where the birds are often used in gumbo (probably the best way to cook them given their fishy taste), they are referred to as "poule d'eau," French for "water hen".

For many decoy collectors, it is the coot that represents the "cutest" piece on their shelves, as the diminutive size, dainty proportions and unusual features of this species seem to lend themselves to small and whimsical carvings. In terms of their natural distribution, American coots are found in abundance across the country. By the early 20th century, they were commonly hunted in Michigan, Illinois and Wisconsin in the mid-west, and Virginia, North Carolina and Louisiana in the south. Coot decoys of an early vintage are most often found in and from these areas.



**John Glenn & Jess Urie**  
c. 1940's • Rock Hall, MD  
Collection of  
Chris & Jan Nelson



**George "Coot" Garton**  
c. 1970's • Fairfield, NJ  
Collection of  
Tom & Bonnie East



**William E. Pratt Co**  
c. 1930's • Joliet & Chicago, IL  
*Collection of*  
*Chris & Jan Nelson*



**Sam Barnes**  
c. 1890-1900's • Havre de Grace, MD  
*Collection of*  
*Chad & Christy Tragakis*



**Matt Kneisley**  
c. 2019 • Conestoga, PA  
*Collection of*  
*Matt Kneisley*



**Wildfowler Decoy Co**  
c. 1950 • Old Saybrook, CT  
*Collection of*  
*Chris & Jan Nelson*



**Mark Daisey**  
c. 1980's • Chincoteague, VA  
*Collection of*  
*Chris & Jan Nelson*

**Bruce Eppard**  
c. 2019 • Crofton, MD  
*Collection of Bruce Eppard*

**Carry-Lite Decoy Co**  
c. 1950's • Milwaukee, WI  
*Collection of Jim Lockard*



**Albert Twiford**  
c. 1944 • Currituck, NC  
Cotton Sock Material  
*Collection of*  
*Chris & Jan Nelson*



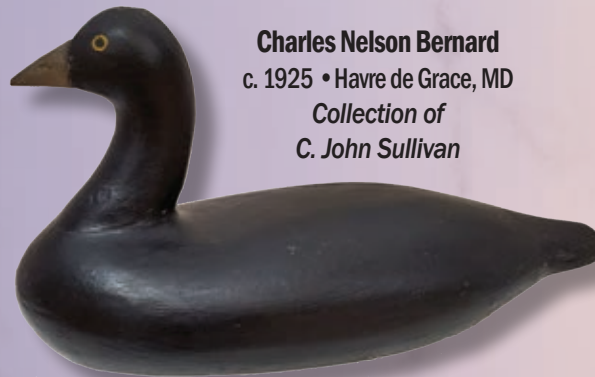




**James L. "Jimmy" Rowe**  
c. 1938  
Knott's Island, NC & Norfolk, VA  
*Collection of  
Chris & Jan Nelson*



**Jim Pierce**  
c. 1960's • Havre de Grace, MD  
*Collection of Chris & Jan Nelson*



**Charles Nelson Bernard**  
c. 1925 • Havre de Grace, MD  
*Collection of  
C. John Sullivan*



**Herb Daisey, Jr.**  
c. 1975 • Chincoteague, VA  
*Collection of  
Tom & Bonnie East*



**Unknown French Maker**  
c. 1930's • Loire Valley or Sologne Region  
*Collection of  
Chris & Jan Nelson*



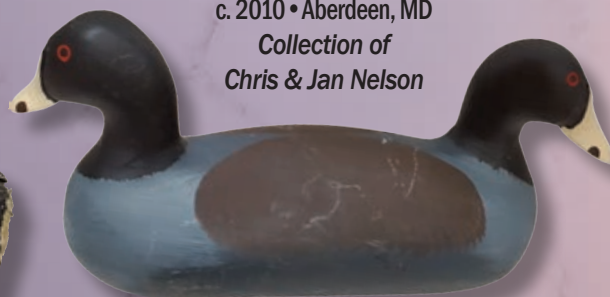
**Unknown Maker**  
c. 1930's • Yorkshire River Area, England  
*Collection of  
Chris & Jan Nelson*



**Unknown Maker**  
c. 1945-1950 • VA or NC  
Made from WWII Balsa Life Raft  
*Collection of Chris & Jan Nelson*



**Unknown Maker**  
c. 1950's • Virginia's Eastern Shore  
Made of balsa wood  
*Collection of  
Chris & Jan Nelson*



**Harry Jobes**  
c. 2010 • Aberdeen, MD  
*Collection of  
Chris & Jan Nelson*



**Unknown Maker**  
c. 1940's • NC or Back Bay, VA  
*Collection of  
Chris & Jan Nelson*



**Herter's Decoy Co**  
c. 1950's • Waseca, MN  
Collection of  
Tom & Bonnie East



During the “golden age” of waterfowling, coot hunting in the Upper Chesapeake Bay region was a sideline activity at best, so decoys of this species of an early vintage made there are unusual. Some early gunners used a few coot decoys on the outer edges of their rigs as confidence birds, and that purpose was likely the genesis for the creation of most early examples.

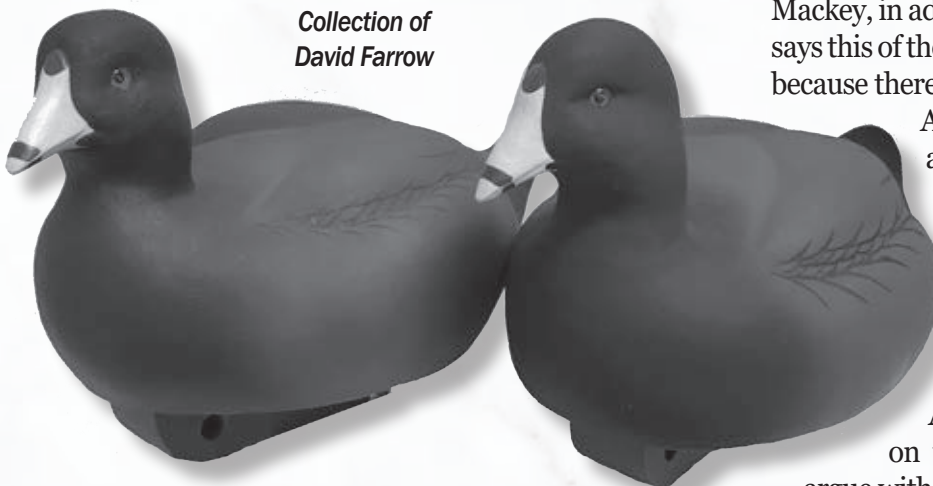
The Potomac Decoy Collectors Association is delighted to present an exhibition of more than 50 coot decoys from member collections, featuring vintage working examples, contemporary gunning birds and beautiful decorative carvings. Among those on display are works by Chesapeake Bay makers Sam Barnes, Charles Nelson Barnard, Severn Hall, James Baines, Madison Mitchell, Paul Gibson, John Glenn, Jess Urie, George Edwards, Jr., Bob Litzenberg, Jim Pierce and Captain Harry Jobes. Virginia and Carolina makers represented include Miles Hancock, Blanton Saunders, Jimmy Rowe, Joshua Goodrich, Grandy Henley and Albert Twiford.

**Bruce Eppard**  
c. 2005 • Crofton, MD  
Collection of  
Chad & Christy Tragakis



Factory examples on display include coot decoys from the William E. Pratt Company, the Wildfowler Decoy Company, the Herter's Decoy Company and the Carry-Lite Decoy Company. Contemporary makers featured include Bruce Eppard, David Farrow, Matt Kneisley, George “Coot” Garton, Mark Daisey and Herb Daisey, Jr. Additionally, several wonderful coot decoys by unknown makers are also featured, including examples from France and England.

**David Farrow**  
c. 2019  
Collection of  
David Farrow



In his timeless 1965 survey, *American Bird Decoys*, Bill Mackey, in addressing the collectability of coot decoys, says this of the little birds: “For good measure, and also because there is nowhere else to include it, we add the American Coot or ‘blue peter,’ which isn’t a duck but a first cousin of the gallinules and rails. Though factual, heartless viewers describe them as clumsy, gawky birds with a silly countenance, from the collector’s viewpoint some of the cutest, most interesting decoys are of these appealing little bird clowns.” As any collector with a good coot decoy on the shelf can attest, it’s pretty hard to argue with that.



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# Museum Improvements

By Kerri Kneisley

If you haven't been to the Museum recently, things might look a bit different when you do visit. The past six months have seen a whirlwind of improvements meant to address our aging infrastructure and to improve the visitor experience. Some of these improvements have been made possible through a matching grant from the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, with a portion of the Museum's match being funded by the R. Madison Mitchell Endowment. The remainder of the improvements have been made possible thanks to a very generous gift from the Carolyn Hargis estate. We are extremely grateful for the support of our many friends and sponsors.

In early October 2019, the stucco on the building's exterior was repaired due to delamination and sections of the building were power washed and repainted (*courtesy of Imark Builders*). In late October, we replaced the carpet in our Museum Store, in the 2nd Floor Library, in the elevator and on the stairwell. An inefficient pump station (*to pump oil from the tanks on the lower level to the higher levels*) was replaced in early December. Just prior to Christmas, two oil-fired furnaces were replaced on the second floor after the Museum experienced smoke alarms from the existing furnaces due to a malfunction of these units. During the final week of December, all South-facing patio doors and windows in the Carvers Gallery were tinted to reduce the cooling load in that area and to better protect our displays from potential UV damage.



Carver's Gallery Window Tinting



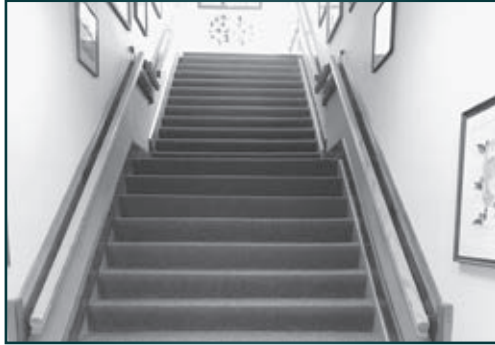
Library Carpeting & LED Lighting

Carver's Gallery  
New LED Spots





**Gift Shop Carpeting & LED Lighting**



**Stairwell Carpeting**

Improvements covered under the matching grant include 1) the enlargement of the building's chimney to improve efficiency, which was done in late October and 2) completion of our LED lighting project which began in 2017 with the installation of track lighting over the center exhibits in our 2nd floor Carver's Gallery. During February of 2020, an additional section of track lighting was installed over the exhibits along the rear wall of the Carver's Gallery. Similar to the first "round" of track lighting which was wired to activate via motion sensor, this new section is also on motion sensor. Not only does this lighting beautifully enhance the decoys on display, but it provides tremendous energy efficiency as well. Furthermore, all lighting in the Library, Museum Store, hallways, and the Gunning the Flats Gallery has been converted to LED. I must say, it truly is amazing how light can change the appearance of items!

Finally, we upgraded all Museum computers (*most of which were many years outdated*) in November 2019 and staff members are thrilled to have some new functionalities to better serve our guests.

Again, thanks to those who have made all of these things possible to keep your Museum moving forward in the 21st century!

**Gunning the Flats LED Lighting**





All proceeds  
benefit the Havre  
de Grace Decoy  
Museum!

# Sporting Clay Classic

**September 13, 2020**

Registration 8:30 a.m. • Must start by 11:00 a.m.

**50 Targets/Lunch - \$75**  
**Trappers Provided**

Collector Decoys Awarded as Prizes  
High Overall Member/Non-member  
3 Lewis 3 deep • Cash Lewis Class  
Shell Game Available

Special Side-by-side & Pump-gun Only Class

**30 targets/\$30.00**

(Must shoot main first)

**Schrader's Outdoors**

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**Susquehanna Flats  
Chapter of  
Delta Waterfowl**



## Annual Banquet

**September 19, 2020**  
**HdG Community Center**

**FOR TICKETS:**

Call either (410) 688-9832  
or (443) 350-6217 or visit

**[www.deltawaterfowl.org](http://www.deltawaterfowl.org)**

Stop and visit us at the Food  
Tent during the Festival!

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pit turkey, snacks & drinks.

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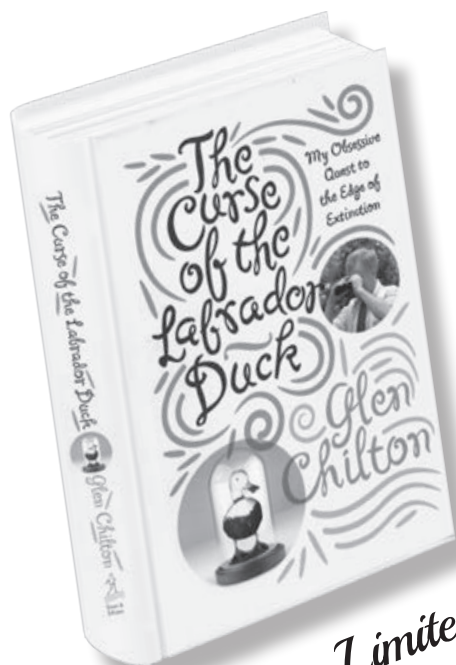


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**Fly by the  
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**Members get a 10%  
Discount!**

## THE CURSE OF THE LABRADOR DUCK

A magnificent blend of travel writing, science, detective work, and mishap, *The Curse of the Labrador Duck* is the zany adventure of one biologist's obsessive quest to uncover the mysteries of one of the world's most enigmatic birds. Breeding in places so obscure that no certain records exist of its nests, the Labrador duck succumbed to extinction almost before anyone realized it was in decline. Dr. Glen Chilton, the world's leading authority on the extinct Labrador duck, shares the story of his frenzied obsession to reveal the histories behind the mysterious bird – a saga wherein he sets out to examine the remains of every Labrador duck, conduct genetic analysis on every Labrador duck egg, and visit every site where the duck was shot. When Chilton began his travels, there were thought to be approximately fifty stuffed specimens, scattered among the museums of Europe and North America. However, as his search progressed, it became clear that some specimens had been lost to war and theft, while others lay hidden in far-flung collections, overseen by secretive curators. After traveling the equivalent of 3.3 times around the world with a series of odd ball companions and many a (mis)adventure along the way, Chilton finally began to close in on every known specimen.



# Museum News



Fall 2019

## Raffle Winners

### First Prize:

Canvasback Pair  
by Charlie Joiner 2008  
Allen Fair, Havre de Grace, MD



### Second Prize:

\$400 cash  
Donald Walter,  
Severna Park, MD



### Third Prize:

1/4 size Mallard Pair  
by Clarence Bauer 1985  
Stuart Williard,  
Elizabeth City, NC



### Fourth Prize:

"Lords of the Bay –  
Canvasbacks" print by  
Wm. Redd Taylor  
Jack Harris,  
Havre de Grace, MD



Spring 2020

## Raffle

A chance to win ONE of four valuable prizes. Four tickets will be drawn.

**Tickets are \$5.00 each  
6 for \$25.00 • 10 for \$40.00**

1st Prize:  
\$500 Cash



### 2nd Prize:

Hooded Merganser  
by Jeanne Hiss



### 3rd Prize:

Print - "Mitchell  
Shop & 1950's  
Canvasbacks"



### 4th Prize:

Redhead Drake  
by Joe Cook



**Drawing  
Sunday, May 3, 2020 at 3:30 pm.**

Havre de Grace Middle School  
For tickets call **410.939.3739**  
or email

information@DecoyMuseum.com  
(additional tickets will be available at the Museum)





# Museum News

## From the Executive Director...

As you have read in other sections of the Magazine, life here at the Museum continues to be busy – not only with facility projects and new programs, but with visitation as well. We are honored to remain one of the few attractions in Havre de Grace which is open seven days a week, year-round!



This past fall, we were asked to return as an exhibitor at the Waterfowl Festival in Easton, and I was thrilled to man our table there for the weekend! I was also thrilled to be invited by the Maryland Department of Commerce Office of Tourism to participate in their new Chesapeake Bay Storytellers Training. This was an intense, 6-day training targeted for organizations which serve visitors to the Chesapeake Bay area with a focus on developing interpretive content.

I am currently in the process of preparing our annual grant application to Harford County. A big “thank you” goes to the Harford County government and especially County Executive Barry Glassman who has been such a wonderful supporter of the Museum for years.

Finally, we have been in full-swing planning for our 39 th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival and are looking forward to another successful event. With this year’s Honorary Chairman Capt. Jeff Coats, it promises to be nothing less than spectacular, so please plan to join us for this exceptional weekend!

And if you have a bit of spare time and would like to help us out in some small way during the weekend, please give me a call. I look forward to seeing you all there!

Best,

*Keri*

## Current Exhibits @ the Museum

- A new exhibit in the library of Art Boxleitner’s carvings and flat art.



- A new collection of Len Burcham’s unpainted cedar miniatures with beautiful grain patterns.

- The breathtaking decorative carvings from the personal collection of master carver and 2018 Festival honoree J. Noble Mentzer.



- The Potomac Decoy Collectors Association’s stunning NEW collection of coots in the Carver’s Gallery.

- The Home Run Baker rig and bushwhack boat.

- A traditional tule decoy in the centuries-old “Lovelock style” by Paiute decoy maker Joe Allen.



- A teal carved in the 1930s by Joseph Coudon of H, a gift from Pat Doherty.

- A lifelike rockfish (striped bass) carved by master carver Lee Tate, Sr.

- A beautiful decorative eastern blue bird carved by master carver Barb Wachter

- The extraordinary pair of “Daddy” Holly canvasbacks, a gift from the Michael family.



# Museum News



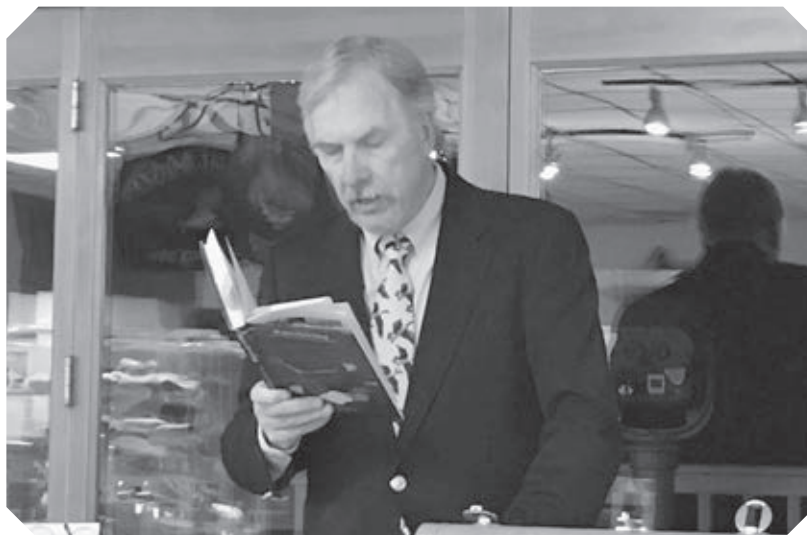
## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

*By Kerri Kneisley*

A long-standing goal of mine since joining the Decoy Museum in 2015, I am thrilled to report that we are now making some strides toward more robust education programming. Thanks to Board approval of a new Education Coordinator position and the institutional knowledge of one member in particular, retired John Carroll School educator John Hughes, our future is looking very bright.

First, the Museum welcomed a new face in October 2019. Heather Thompson, retired Harford County Public Schools educator, was hired as our new Education Coordinator. After a brief period of training, Heather jumped right in with both feet. She has been developing and implementing new programming for elementary aged children, reaching out to administrators with the Boy Scouts of America to determine how we can better meet their needs and providing comprehensive docent-led tours to multitudes of different age groups.

We also implemented a new speaker series and have held two successful events to date. First, in November, C. John Sullivan presented “A Legacy of Waterfowling” which highlighted some of the early gunning clubs of the area which became the Edgewood and Aberdeen areas of the Proving Grounds. In January, we hosted “Past to Present with Jim Pierce” and Mr. Pierce regaled our guests with tales of Havre de Grace gunning. Our third event, “The Pulaski Saga with author Robert Lackey” will occur in March.



**C. John Sullivan – “Legacy of Waterfowling”**



**Jim Pierce – “Past to Present”**

***We look forward to a multitude of new offerings for all ages – stay tuned!***



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to school classes,  
including home  
schooled children!

**Tours can be tailored to the curriculum  
and different age/grade levels.**

Book your tours early, call Kerri Kneisley at

**410.939.3739**

or email the Museum at  
**information@decoymuseum.com**







# Level Show

*By Cindy Currier*

On January 25, 2020, the Level Volunteer Fire Company hosted the 13th Annual Susquehanna Flats Vintage Hunting and Fishing Collectibles Show. The event is co-sponsored by The Fire Company and The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. Those familiar with it simply call it the Level Show.

After a local decoy and collectibles show drought following the holidays, many collectors get excited for this show and the opportunity to add another piece or more to their collections. Some buy, some sell and some trade, but it's safe to say that everyone there enjoys the like-minded company of their fellow enthusiasts. It truly is as much a social event as a retail experience, where old friends and acquaintances reunite and catch up on each other's stories.

Co-Chairs Patrick and Jeannie Vincenti and Chuck and Lynn Usilton work hard each year to produce a first rate comprehensive show chock full of 95% vintage merchandise to offer the eager and motivated buyers. With over 600 attendees and 100 vendor tables, it was busy all day long. There was something for everyone, from modestly priced pieces to valuable, upscale items.



A few carving family names were also represented as merchants with the familiar local names of Pierce, Jobes, Schaubert, Purner and Vincenti.

The vendors reportedly did very well, with some selling a good majority of their wares and the Ladies Auxiliary worked hard to supply good food and beverages to the crowd.

All show proceeds are donated to the Level Volunteer Fire Company and the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum.







# Museum News

Thank you and welcome to the following members and businesses that recently renewed their membership or newly joined us. Your continued support and contributions are essential to the overall success of the Decoy Museum:

## **FAMILY**

Kathy & Harry Acker  
Roy Albert  
Charles & Nadine Anderson  
Tom & Janet Benner  
Steve Bird  
Harold & Marcia Boccia  
Jim & Sue Brackbill  
Edward McDonald Bridges Jr.  
Bernie & Doris Brown  
Sandra & Philip Butt  
Frank & Joanne Calder  
Dudley Campbell  
Mr. Carroll Cook  
Edwin & Denise Crocker  
Rod Cromley  
Mark S Daly  
Rocco & Ann DiGiovanni  
Dr. Joel & Charlotte Gaydos  
John & Hazel Goodwin Sr.  
Chip & Patty Heaps

Ken & Kay Keetley  
Matthew & Kerri Kneisley  
Arthur & Katherine Long  
Long Island Decoy Collectors Assoc  
Bronwyn Martin  
William Master  
Joe & Belinda Miller  
Margaret & Andrew O'Connor  
Greg Pabst  
Ellis & Edith Porter  
Norman Pritchett  
R.L Rich  
Lloyd & Virginia Sanders Jr.  
Kevin Siple  
Stephen & Patricia Smith  
Jay & Dixie Stauffer  
Paul Stokes III  
Joseph W Taylor  
Joe Walsh  
Pat & Jerry Whited  
Chris & Vivan Worch

Andrew & Karen Zielinski Jr.

## **INDIVIDUAL**

Carol Abrams  
David Baker  
Robert Bastedo  
John Bauer  
Lorenzo Bavoso  
Samuel C Bennett  
Norma Bennington  
Bodkin Point Decoys  
William Brock  
Howard Brown  
Vernon Bryant  
Juilliard V. Carr  
Robert Carson  
Daniel Carson  
Anne Conover  
Sara Corbishley  
John Cox  
Kenneth Creeden  
Anna Culler

Michael Dedekind  
Maryann Dick  
Charles Dilla PT, PA  
Larry Dougherty  
Dale Druyor  
Frank Duchacek Jr  
Jean Auten Duncan  
David B Farrow  
John Gillespie  
Robert Glassman  
Mason Goodpaster  
Carl Grovel  
Jim Hackett  
John Hoffman  
Ron Hoffman  
Judy Horne  
Daniel H Hurt  
Thomas L. Jacobs Sr  
Wayne Jarman  
James Jordan Jr.  
Patti Keller

James C Kelly  
Glenn Lang  
Logan Lowers Jr.  
Carolyn Mathias  
Freeda McClure  
LeRoy Metker  
James Miele  
George Milton  
Ron Moffatt  
Chris Nelson  
Howard Nickle  
Nicholas Oakes  
David G Orr  
Larry Ortt Jr  
Tyson Parkhurst  
John Paxton  
Lawrence Pollin  
Jason Sanderson  
Scott Sargent  
Michael Schleupner  
Gary Schuchardt

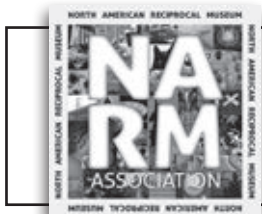
Rod Schwarm  
Jane Scocca  
R W Smoker Wildfowl  
Carving  
Phil Stanton  
Donald Walter  
Chris Wilson  
Donald Young

## **NARM**

Robert & Elida Bassett  
Ralph & Pat Hockman  
C A Porter & Patti  
Hopkins  
Kenneth Laubsch  
Evan & Julia Nutter  
Stephen Swanson

## **STUDENT**

Parker W Zane



The North American Reciprocal Museum (NARM) Association<sup>sm</sup> is one of the largest reciprocal membership programs in the world with 1,137 arts, cultural, and historical institutions along with botanical gardens, children's museums, science and technology centers that offer NARM-qualified members reciprocal benefits.

## Get in the FORMATION!

**Our members are a very close-knit and loyal community!**

**Help us spread the word and fulfill our mission.**

A Decoy Museum membership provides financial support for museum exhibits and programming, as well as offering individuals special benefits and opportunities. All members receive a membership card, free admission year round, and a subscription to **The Canvasback** magazine, invitations to special events, and discounts in the Gift Shop.

**Not a member? Join Now! — Already a member? Tell a Friend!**  
**Go to DecoyMuseum.com or call us at 410.939.3739**



# *A Room with A View*



*Host Your Next Event at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum!*



**The Carver's Gallery at the Decoy Museum  
can accommodate up to 200 people, and the deck  
offers one of the best views in Harford County.**



**For more information contact the museum 410.939.3739**





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Waterview**

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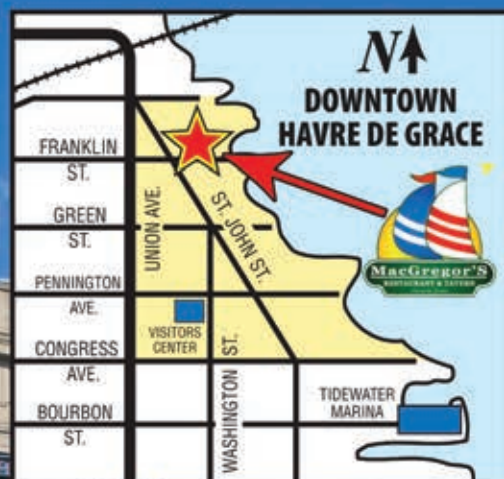
**Lunch, Dinner**

**Lite Fare & Sunday**

**Brunch**

**Children's Menu**

**All-Season Pearl Bar  
& Deck**



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