

The Canvasback

HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

Vol. 33 No. 4

Fall 2023



John "Daddy" Holly



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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.

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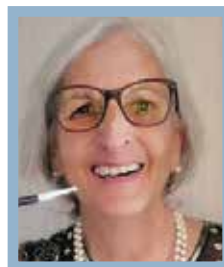
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ON THE COVER

A group of period artifacts from the collection of C. John Sullivan, Jr. Displayed inside the muzzle loading gunning box are the actual Havre de Grace assessment records for John W. Holly. The large bore gun was used on the Susquehanna Flats and retains it's ancient paint to disguise it during use. The large cast iron sinkbox decoys retain their original paint. Daddy Holly's blue-wing teal is one of only a very few examples known.

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Anne Popowski *Obituary*

ANNE FRANCIS POPOWSKI
(NEE SCHLEUPNER)

PASSED AWAY ON SUNDAY JULY 9, 2023.

SHE WAS THE BELOVED WIFE OF
JOHN A. POPOWSKI AND DAUGHTER OF THE LATE
JOHN & JANE SCHLEUPNER. ANNE IS SURVIVED BY HER
DEVOTED CHILDREN DENA ANNE (RONALD) CARDWELL,
ANGELA M. (GREGORY) CHERRY &
HEATHER P. (BRANDON) HAMILTON.

CHERISHED GRANDMOTHER TO SHAWN C. CARDWELL,
ALEXANDER M. CARDWELL, SHANE P. CARDWELL,
GWENDOLYN N. CHERRY, JAMESON J. HAMILTON & EVELYN
L. CHERRY. SHE IS SURVIVED BY MANY FAMILY & FRIENDS.
ANNE WAS A DEDICATED VOLUNTEER AT THE HAVRE
DE GRACE DECAY MUSEUM.

IT WAS ANNE'S WISHES THAT NO SERVICES BE
HELD, HOWEVER A CELEBRATION OF LIFE WILL
TAKE PLACE IN THE FALL. IN LIEU OF FLOWERS
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DE GRACE DECAY MUSEUM, DISABLED
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From the President...

It's late September and the question is where has the summer gone? As I write this message, I find myself wrapping up summer stuff and getting ready for all things fall.



The Fall kicks off a series of Decoy Shows. By the time this edition is in print we will have already made our way through the September events such as the 5th Annual Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show and the Delmarva Decoy Club's event in New Market, VA.

Local events in October feature the 54th Upper Shore Decoy Show in Perryville, MD with the Easton Waterfowl Festival being held in November. After a break for the Holidays, the Level Vintage Collectibles Show will take place at the end of January.

After hosting a very successful Decoy Summer Camp, the museum staff are busy planning the Carve & Candy Event (October 29) and two children's Christmas Movie Nights (December 15 & 16). The Decoy Museum will again be a stop on the Annual Candlelight Tour hosted by the Susquehanna Lock House Museum (December 9).

About the time this edition arrives in your mailboxes, the Decoy Museum will be teaming up with The Billy Comegys Chapter of Ducks Unlimited Queen Anne's County to host a joint Clay Shoot (October 8) at Schrader's Outdoors to honor the late Ed Henry, a long-time supporter of both organizations. I hope many of you ventured out to pay tribute to a very fine man who contributed so much to so many.

In July, the Museum was very fortunate to be awarded a grant through Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) to establish a new exhibit on the "Influence of African Americans on Decoy Making". Work has begun to identify those who can contribute knowledge, experiences, and collectibles to make this long overdue exhibit a reality. If you have something to share with us to strengthen our effort, please do not hesitate to contact the Museum.

Perhaps the most significant effort in front of the Museum leadership is the preservation of the R. Madison Mitchell Decoy Shop. The shop was purchased from Bill Collins in 1987 and relocated to the grounds of the Museum in 1989. Some thirty-four years later, the structure has been continually punished by the weather and needs to be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. The Museum Executive Committee is spearheading a project to determine the feasibility of expanding the footprint of the Museum to encapsulate the shop bringing it inside the museum walls and out of the weather. The Museum has retained Towson, MD based Architectural Design Works (ADW) to organize a project team of subject matter experts to consider options to achieve our goal and establish the financial impact of this effort. The next step for the Museum will be to raise the necessary funds to carry out the project. A parallel effort is underway to evaluate the space utilization within the current museum footprint and the development of a Master Plan. The Museum has established a relationship with Columbia, MD based Quatrefoil Associates to guide us through this process.

As you can see, there are a good deal of things going on at the Museum keeping everyone on their toes. We are always looking for volunteers to help us achieve our goals.

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by Cynthia Fisher

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*Madison Mitchell
sleeping canvasback duck*



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A Closer Look at the Decoys of John “Daddy” Holly

By: Kevin Peel



**Part One:
Exploring His Early Style(s)**



Canvasback drake *circa 1840s-1850s* in original paint. Branded "1820" in the top of the head. Exhibits detailed wing painting. Body length: 12 ½". Body width: 5 15/16".
Collection of Kevin Peel

Background

This effort builds on scholarship conducted by the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association (PDCA) going back more than 25 years. It began at club meetings in 1997 and 1998, when members brought Holly family decoys to meetings, studied, discussed, compared and contrasted the various styles. With so many members having at least a few Holly decoys in their collections, and understanding the importance and influence of their work on Upper Chesapeake Bay decoys, the club elected to dedicate an entire meeting to a group roundtable and study session. Members brought upwards of 40 or 50 Holly family decoys, which were grouped by probable maker and time period.

Building on the notes from the discussion and consensus achieved that evening, combined with a review of available literature and follow-up conversations with other collectors, Chris Nelson and Chad Tragakis were invited to develop an article for *The Canvasback* magazine. The result was a two-part in-depth analysis titled, "Like Father, Like Sons? Identifying the Decoys of the Hollys of Havre de Grace," published consecutively in the Spring and Summer 1999 issues.

Fast forward to 2023. In the 25 years that have passed, we've seen additional study and careful analysis (and dozens of additional published works exploring different facets of the

Hollys and their decoys), improved digital photographic and X-ray technology, the ability to see and share vast amounts of information instantly and broadly via the power of the internet, proliferation of the numerous decoy collector social networking sites that now exist, and the additional hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Holly family decoys that have come to light since then, in many cases, aided by the aforementioned tools, platforms and factors.

In the spring of 2023, the PDCA installed the largest exhibit of John "Daddy" Holly decoys ever assembled at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. This article (and subsequent articles) will attempt to continue and advance the aforementioned work. Access to this exhibit provides an opportunity to examine a significant sample size of decoys, gather specific data, and publish that data for the benefit of decoy historians and the collecting community. The exhibit is roughly organized into three stylistic periods: early (1850-1860s), middle (1860s-1870s), and late (1870s-1892). In addition to the stylistic periods, examples of branded decoys, possible Holly family collaborations, and decoys attributed to Dick Howlett are included in the exhibit.



Canvasback drake *circa 1860s*. Branded "TA LOGAN" on the back and used on Lake Koshkonong, WI. Exhibits the same wing painting as the canvasback at the top of Page 8. Body length: 12 ½". Body width: 6 ½".
Collection of Kevin Peel.



Canvasback hen *circa 1850-1860*. Branded "CARROLL'S ISLAND." Body length: 11 ¾". Body width: 6 ½".
Collection of Kevin Peel.



Canvasback hen *circa 1860s-1870s*. Branded "RSDFC" (Raymond, San Domingo Farm Club). Body length: 12 ¼". Body width: 6 ¼". *Collection of Kevin Peel.*



Canvasback drake *circa 1860s-1870s*. Branded "CARROLL'S ISLAND" and "J. SCHICK." Body length: 12". Body width: 6". *Collection of Kevin Peel.*



Canvasback drake *circa 1860s-1870s in worn original paint. Branded "HW." Body length: 12". Body width: 6 ½". Collection of Kevin Peel.*

Where to Start?

Most new collectors of Upper Bay decoys invariably ask, "How can you tell which Holly carved this decoy?" That's a reasonable question. It takes both study of reference material, and handling many decoys before one begins to get a feel for differentiating between a John "Daddy" Holly and a James T. Holly decoy. Once seasoned, some collectors will go as far as identifying a decoy as a John, Jr. or William Holly. However, it's fairly well accepted in Upper Bay collector circles that when attempting to identify a decoy with Holly attributes that aren't solid enough to assign it to Daddy or James, then it's best to call it Holly family. It's believed that all three sons assisted in decoy production until James started his own business, and that John, Jr. and William continued to assist Daddy until his death in 1892. This makes sense since they lived both in Daddy's house and next door throughout this period. It's also believed that the two brothers completed Daddy's unfilled orders for decoys after his passing.

When considering Daddy Holly's earliest style(s), we must discount the sons as having been too young to seriously contribute to the production of decoys for most of the 1850s, and at least a portion of the 1860s. Therefore, the logical conclusion is that he had other help. Just as the many contemporary carvers from Havre de Grace who learned the craft from R. Madison Mitchell, there are likely many unidentified carvers who did the same under Daddy Holly. We know this was the case in James T. Holly's shop so it's reasonable to assume

he was simply carrying on the family tradition. It's really a foregone conclusion, given his prolific production, that Daddy Holly employed other help in order to meet customer demand to support market gunning sinkbox rigs that employed as many as 500-700 decoys, particularly in an era when decoys were entirely hand-chopped. If this was the case, we must also assume that many decoys identified as the work of Daddy Holly may actually be the work of apprentices or helpers (using Holly patterns). A number of decoys displayed in the Daddy Holly exhibit were submitted as possibly being the work of Dick Howlett. Howlett was born in 1829 in Aberdeen, MD and his family moved to Havre de Grace in 1831. Howlett is unique among Havre de Grace decoy makers as he is the only one to list himself as a "decoy maker" in a United States Census (1880). In prior censuses, he listed himself as a laborer. Many collectors believe that Howlett may have apprenticed under Daddy Holly. There's only one decoy attributed to Howlett that has any provenance. Bill Mackey collected the decoy from Jim Currier in the 1950s. Currier told Mackey that Howlett had given it to him directly from his rig. This decoy is pictured in Chad Tragakis' Holly and Howlett article in the January/February 2012 issue of Decoy Magazine. Howlett would meet the definition of apprentice in that we know he went on to become a decoy carver in his own right.

Another documented example of a decoy maker who may have worked in Daddy Holly's shop is a man named William



Canvasback hen *circa 1860s-1870s*. Branded "CARROLL'S ISLAND." Body length: 12". Body width: 6".
Collection of John Henry.



Canvasback drake *circa 1860s-1870s*. Branded "PK BARNES." Body length: 12". Body width: 6 ½".
Collection of Kevin Peel.



Canvasback drake *circa 1860s*. Branded "J.P." (Joel Pusey). Body length: 12 ¼". Body width: 6 ¼".
Collection of C. John Sullivan.



Canvasback drake *circa 1860s*. Branded "HHW." Body length: 11 ¾". Body width: 6".
Collection of Harry Kenney.



Canvasback drake *circa 1860s-1870s. Branded "RECKLESS." Body length: 12". Body width: 6".
Collection of Kevin Peel.*

Methodology

Dobson. Dobson was born in 1834 and like Holly, was a market gunner and extraordinary wing shot. The following is an excerpt from an article in the Baltimore Sun published on November 9, 1888: Though professional shooting is not so large a business as it was, there is one old gunner who still holds his own. Wm. Dobson is his name. He has the reputation of being the best duck shot in the United States. He was born and raised in Havre de Grace, and is said to have begun gunning when he was so young that he had to carry something along to support his gun while taking aim. He has lived on the water for fifty odd years, gunning in season and spending the rest of the time making decoys.

It's puzzling that being as well known as he was and having spent such a great deal of time making decoys, that there are no decoys attributed to Dobson- that is, unless he was working for Holly and possibly other makers. This is important, because unlike the apprentices and helpers who worked in Mitchell's shop, anyone who worked in Daddy Holly's shop would have been hand-chopping decoy bodies versus finishing bodies turned on a duplicating lathe. This may account for some stylistic differences observed in Daddy Holly decoys in the early years of production as well as subsequent periods of his career.

Describing the physical attributes of a decoy, beyond actual measurements, can be difficult and many collectors have their own way of describing them. J. Evans McKinney provides the most comprehensive descriptive examination of Upper Bay decoys in his book, *Decoys of the Susquehanna Flats and Their Makers*. In the section on John "Daddy" Holly decoys, McKinney describes canvasbacks and redheads. He also provides measurements for: body length, body width, body thickness, head height, and head thickness. What we don't know about this work is the sample size of decoys McKinney had available to him when compiling the information. Regardless of the sample size, McKinney's measurements provide a baseline for examining the decoys in the Daddy Holly exhibit with a sample size of over one hundred.

The Early Style(s), Perspective, and the Common Denominator

What's perhaps the most confounding element of style when examining early Daddy Holly decoys are the differences in shape of the bodies, particularly the tails. Some canvasbacks have what we consider to be "paddle" tails, an attribute typically seen in Cecil County decoys. Others have upswept tails with varying degrees of upward "flip" at the tip. This can be confusing to collectors, and can result in second guessing an attribution to Daddy Holly. This is a matter of perspective.



Canvasback drake *circa 1850s-1860s. Paddle tail model. Body length: 12 ¼". Body width: 7".*
Collection of Kevin Peel.



Canvasback drake *circa 1850s-1860s. Inlet iron pad weight and iron keel. Body length: 12 ½".*
Body width: 6". Collection of C. John Sullivan.



Canvasback drake *circa 1860s. Branded "J. Pusey" (Joel Pusey). Body length: 11 ¾". Body width: 6".*
Collection of C. John Sullivan.



Canvasback drake *circa 1860s. Branded "J.G." (John Sterrett Gittings). Body length: 12". Body width: 6".*
Collection of Kevin Peel



Canvasback drake *circa 1850s-1860s, possibly the work of Dick Howlett. Body length: 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Body width: 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Collection of Chad & Christy Tragakis.*

The majority of collectors, particularly novices, tend to look at decoys from the side profile. This is where these differences are most pronounced.

Let's examine these decoys from a different perspective. When we look at Daddy Holly decoys from the perspective of a top-down view, the "common denominator," we can now see a remarkable consistency for hand-chopped decoys, even in later periods. Why is this the case? I submit that this is because Daddy Holly (and his apprentices) used a pattern on the top of the block of wood to begin shaping the body. A pattern may or may not have been used on the side of the block. Given the variation observed in the side profiles of these decoys, it's possible that they were shaped based on how the wood carved, available time, experimentation, or how the carver / apprentice felt that day in terms of expressing what a canvasback looked like in his mind's eye.

Canvasbacks

A sample size of eighteen canvasbacks deemed to be early period (1850s-1860s) were measured using Evans McKinney's baseline. Two of these decoys were submitted as possibly being the work of Dick Howlett. The most important dimensions from the top-down perspective are body length and width. The lengths of these decoys are all between 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches long with the majority of seven being 12 inches in length. There

were four that measured 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches (one being a possible Dick Howlett), three that measured 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, and four that measured 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (one being a possible Dick Howlett). Evans McKinney stated that body lengths measured between 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches and 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, a notable difference in lengths.

The body widths had a little more variance measuring between 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 7 inches with the majority of seven being 6 inches in width at the widest point. Other widths measured: one at 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, one at 5 $\frac{15}{16}$ inches, two at 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, five at 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and two at 7 inches. McKinney stated that body widths were between 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide. Again we see quite a difference in what's likely a greater sample size.

The final body dimension is body thickness. Although this dimension isn't relevant in terms of the top-down perspective, it's worth noting in drawing conclusions as to observed variation in the decoys. The bodies measured between 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ and 4 inches thick, with the majority of seven being 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick at the highest point of the back. Other thicknesses measured: two at 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches, one at 3 $\frac{37}{64}$ inches, six at 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, and two at 4 inches thick.



Canvasback drake circa 1860s-1870s, possibly the work of another carver. Branded "W.S.D."
 Body length: 12". Body width: 6 ½". Collection Steve Brown.



Canvasback drake circa 1860s, possibly the work of Dick Howlett. Body length: 12 ½". Body width: 7".
 Collection of Kevin Peel.



Redhead drake circa 1860s. Body length: 11 ½". Body width: 6". Collection of C. John Sullivan.



Redhead drake circa 1860s. Branded "E.H.S." & "JFW." Body length: 11 ¾". Body width: 6".
 Collection of C. John Sullivan.



Redhead drake *circa 1860s-1870s. Body length: 11 1/4". Body width: 6". Collection of Harry Kenney.*

Redheads

A sample size of five redheads deemed to be early period (1850s-1860s) were measured using Evans McKinney's baseline. An additional redhead that's likely later, and may be a Howlett, was also examined. Again, the most important dimensions from the top-down perspective are body length and width. The lengths of these decoys are all between 11 1/4 and 12 1/4 inches long. There was no one measurement that stood out other than the possible Howlett that's larger than the other decoys at 12 1/4 inches. The others measured two at 11 1/4 inches, two at 11 1/2 inches, and one at 11 3/4 inches. Evans McKinney stated that redhead body lengths measured between 11 inches and 11 1/4 inches. Again, we see a difference in what may be a larger sample size.

The body widths are very uniform with the majority of four measuring 6 inches in width at the widest point. Other widths measured: one at 5 3/4 inches and the later possible Howlett at 6 1/4 inches. McKinney stated that body widths were between 6 and 6 1/4 inches wide.

The body thicknesses, with the exception of the later possible Howlett, all measured 3 3/4 inches thick. The possible Howlett was slightly thinner with a measurement of 3 1/2 inches thick at the highest point of the back. McKinney's stated measurement of body thickness is right on at 3 3/4 inches thick.

Heads

The two head dimensions recorded by McKinney are head height and thickness, but that just scratches the surface. The heads of Daddy Holly decoys show a lot of variation in style, but are fairly recognizable relative to other carvers. The so-called "snakey" heads with a long, rearward s-curvature from the point of where the neck meets the breast to the base of the throat are particularly recognizable and prized by collectors. Many of Daddy's heads exhibit varying degrees of jowl, a rounding between the bottom base of the bill and where the neck meets the head. This is another attractive trait desired by collectors looking for that classic Daddy Holly decoy. These stylistic nuances are worth noting, but they're problematic in terms of drawing overall conclusions. It's difficult to determine whether different head patterns were employed or if differences are due to who was whittling the heads at any given time.

In studying Holly decoys, there are certain stylistic themes that remain a constant. When there's a departure from the theme, it raises a red flag. In terms of canvasback heads, the forehead / bill carving is a theme. This is a trait present in both Daddy and James Holly decoys, and something James probably learned from his father. There is a flat that runs from the crown of the head, down the forehead, through the v-notch to about halfway down the bill where it then gradually narrows / tapers down to the tip of the bill. The flat is the key as how it tapers can vary. If this trait is not present, the head may not be correct or it may not be a Holly decoy. This isn't always the case with redhead decoys, but generally still applies.



Redhead drake *circa 1860s-1870s*. Branded "WIDGEON" (gunning scow). Body length: 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".
Body width: 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Collection of Kevin Peel.



Redhead drake *circa 1860s-1870s*. Branded "GAE" (George Albert Edwards). Body length: 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".
Body width: 6". Collection of Kevin Peel.



Redhead drake *circa 1870s*, possibly the work of Dick Howlett (attributed to Holly by Henry Fleckenstein).
Body length: 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Body width: 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Collection of Kevin Peel.



Kevin Peel & Chad Tragakis at the installation of the Potomac Decoy Collector's Association John "Daddy" Holly exhibit at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum in March 2023.

Head height measurements for canvasbacks are very consistent for the eighteen canvasbacks examined. A majority of eleven measured 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches in height. The remaining decoys measured: one at 2 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches, three at 3 $\frac{1}{8}$ inches, one at 3 $\frac{11}{32}$ inches, and two at 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. McKinney measured head height uniformly at 3 inches. No two head thicknesses were the same for the canvasbacks, but all were just slightly thinner or thicker than 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches with none being exactly that measurement. McKinney stated that head thicknesses were between 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

Redhead head heights measured three at 3 inches and two at 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches. The possible Howlett was measured at 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches. McKinney stated head height to be 3 inches. Head thicknesses were similar to the canvasbacks hovering right around 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches with two heads being exactly that thick. McKinney's measurements were 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick.

Conclusions

As previously stated, there can be little doubt that John "Daddy" Holly had help from outside the family during this early period of the 1850s-1860s. The boys certainly could have been learning from the mid-1850s, but it's unlikely that they were ready to seriously contribute to the business until they neared their teenage years. The employment of apprentices and helpers may certainly be one of the explanations for stylistic variation during this early period. Another possibility that should be considered, not just during this early period, but throughout Daddy's career,

is that other market gunners who didn't have the means to buy decoys were attempting to copy his style.

Yet another explanation is that Holly was experimenting with styles to strike a balance between what was most efficient to produce, worked well on the water, and met customer expectations. The primary customer during this period would have been a market gunner. Developing a decoy design that made their job easier by self-righting upon deployment and riding well in rough water would sell decoys- and make Holly's job easier since he was a market gunner himself.

When examining the "common denominator" or top-down view, it would be tough to argue that Holly wasn't using a pattern on the top of the block. There is variation in the length and width of the decoys examined as one would expect with hand-chopped decoys. The Upper Bay decoy carvers of the 1800s were mostly common men working the trades or water to scratch out a living. They used everything at their disposal and wasted nothing. When it came to wood, much of what they used was provided by the Susquehanna River by way of old logs, beams, etc. that ended up drifting down from mills and the like upriver. This wood was not milled to specification. If they had to adjust the size of a pattern based on the size of an order and how many blocks they could get out of the wood they had, they did so. Even so, it's remarkable how little variation there is in the "common denominator." This is a testament to the skill and ingenuity of John "Daddy" Holly, the pioneer of the Harford County style of decoy carving, and he would only get better with time.



Museum Members

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:

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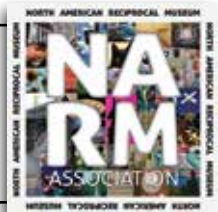
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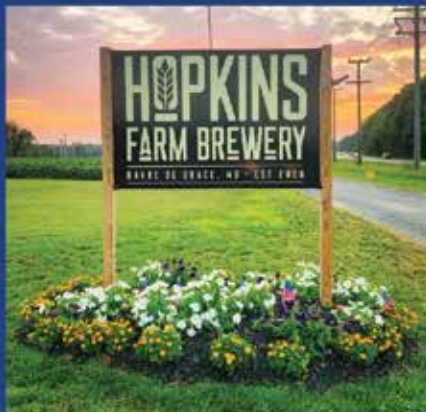
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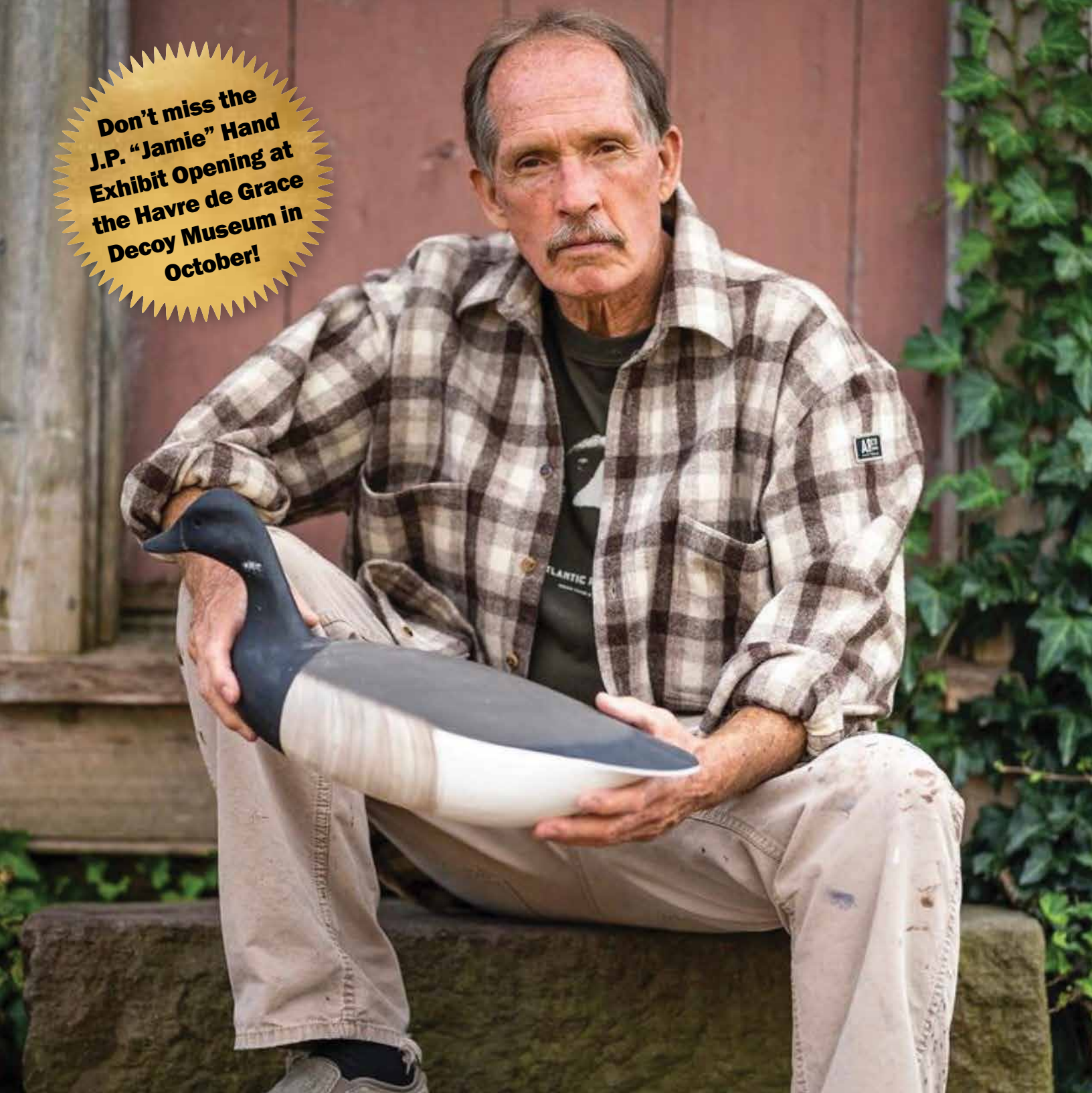
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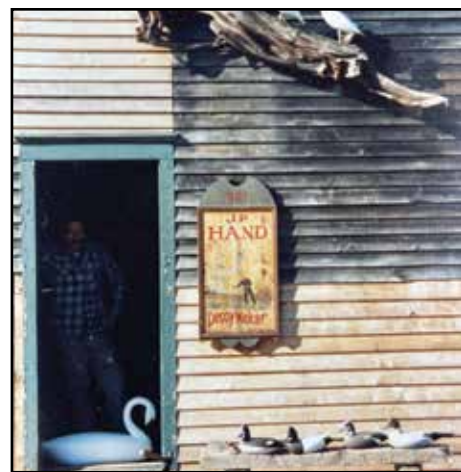
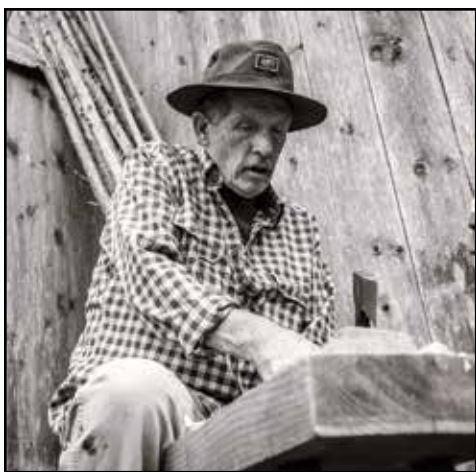
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**Don't miss the
J.P. "Jamie" Hand
Exhibit Opening at
the Havre de Grace
Decoy Museum in
October!**



J.P. "Jamie" Hand

Goshen, NJ



My grandfather, Harold Teal Hand was a well-known hunter in Cape May County, NJ; my father, Carlton Hildreth Hand was a local war hero (WWII) who I suspect lost some of his taste for hunting after having to kill German soldiers while fighting in Italy.

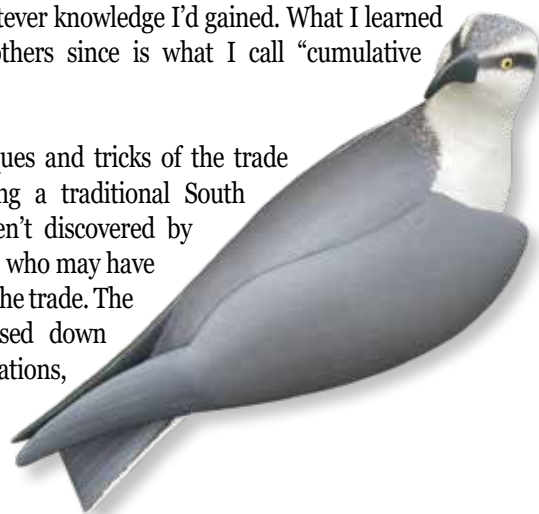
My father died when I was seven years of age . . . when I was fourteen, I bought my first gun on the street for \$14; a Harrington Richardson single shot goose gun which served me well for many years. My friends and I didn't have any decoys, we were lucky to have a gun, shotgun shells and a pair of hip boots! In those days we walked the meadow jump-shooting ducks, and with the energy and enthusiasm of youth . . . we were damned good at it.

We also hunted freshwater ponds adjacent to the salt marsh, without decoys . . . we knew where the ducks wanted to be. Eventually I realized that using decoys would be beneficial, but therein lie a problem; I needed decoys but didn't have the money to buy them. So, at the age of seventeen, I decided to make my own. I knew nothing of the rich South Jersey tradition of making hollow decoys

of the local white cedar, but that didn't deter me. I managed to carve serviceable decoys for a few years and even started to collect decoys.

After a few years, I met two men . . . grand masters of the craft, who would become my mentors: Hurley Conklin of Manahawkin, NJ, and Harry Shourds III, of Seaville, N.J. Both men helped me master the craft, but as I like to say, "Harry let me watch him, Hurley took me under his wing." They taught me a lot about carving decoys, but more importantly they taught me the merits of helping others and passing along whatever knowledge I'd gained. What I learned from them and others since is what I call "cumulative knowledge".

The many techniques and tricks of the trade involved in making a traditional South Jersey decoy weren't discovered by one man, even one who may have spent a lifetime at the trade. The knowledge is passed down through the generations,





father to son or daughter, friend to friend, master to apprentice. Every master carver of each generation may add a little to the “arts and mysteries” of the trade.

So, I’ve been hunting ducks for over 55 years now and carving decoys for close to that. I like to say, “I was too lazy to work and too nervous to steal, so I decided to make decoys”. The truth be known – I never found anything else I wanted to do every day, and I’ve been lucky enough to make a living at it for the past forty years! I haven’t had a “real job” since I was about 25 years old, though I supplemented my income in a few other ways. I still remember the time when a decoy customer asked me, “can I hire you to take me duck hunting?”, what a happy day that was! In addition to guiding “sports” for ducks, geese, and railbirds, I trapped furs until I was about 30 and later on put my talents to work restoring 17th and 18th century houses here in Cape May County.

These days, I work on decoys every day, unless I have something more pressing to do. On some days I am in the shop with an apprentice or two or three mentoring young carvers as Hurley and Harry did for me so many years ago.

George’s Strunk (Glendora, NJ) remembers the early eighties when his family owned a private cabin that backed up to the marshes in Goshen, NJ near the Jersey Shore where they spent all of their vacations. While at the cabin, George and his brother Glenn spent their time hunting and fishing. George recalls the neighboring property being up for sale at one point, eventually being purchased by a guy who erected a sign outside reading “Decoy Maker”. Inquisitive George went on to meet and spend time with the new neighbor, who was none other than New Jersey decoy carver J.P. “Jamie” Hand.

George and his brother spent a good bit of time with Jamie during those times. They hunted together and became good friends. Jamie encouraged George to try his hand at decoy making. According to George, “I was hooked from my very first visit.” George describes Jamie as “the real deal, a traditional decoy maker that has stayed true to his New Jersey traditions”. Jamie crafts his decoys in the Barnegat Bay style in the tradition of Nathaniel Rowley Horner, Hurley Conklin, and Harry V. Shourds.



According to New Jersey decoy maker Bob White, Jamie Hand may well be considered the last of the students of the Horner, Conklin, and Shourds style. Despite having the ability to change stylistic direction, Jamie has always remained loyal to that style. Bob feels that Jamie may go down as the best at that style someday. According to Bob, “Jamie is a guy who cannot keep still and works all the time. Jamie should have been nicknamed “teach” for he spends countless hours sharing his knowledge with those wanting to learn the craft. Aside from being a good decoy carver, Jamie Hand is a great person, who always has his wife Gwen standing by his side.”

Jack Murray had the pleasure to have met Jamie Hand five and one-half years ago when Jamie took Jack into his program as an apprentice carver. Jack says, “when I met Jamie I had just retired from forty years of banking and real estate work. Jamie showed me a craft and I’ve never been happier.”

Over the years they have spent together they have become good friends beyond decoy carving. Jack goes on to say, “Jamie and I are very close in age and enjoy reminiscing about our younger days, he from South Jersey and me from Philadelphia.” In addition to being

a master carver, Jamie Hand is an historian, outdoorsman, husband, and father with a keen interest in genealogy. He’s well-schooled in early American architecture and has restored a number of historical buildings and houses in South Jersey.

Jack shared, “a lot of the men and women I’ve met along the way are very nice, but none are as generous as J.P. Jamie Hand.”

Though my Baptist ancestors may look down from above and frown, I like to say that my church is in the woods, the fields, and out on the salt meadow. Today I ship my decoys to waterfowlers and collectors throughout the U. S. and Europe . . . I try to put a little bit of that church in every bird I carve.

**- J.P. “Jamie” Hand,
Goshen, New Jersey**





One Man's Birds

By: C. John Sullivan, Jr



Pied Jones Dove



Basket of Dove - Various Makers



Natural Dove - Cameron McIntyre

Do any of us know why we collect? What drives us to accumulate more stuff than we need or much less have any possible use for? But we do, and by doing we develop clubs, groups, forums, museums, and auction houses. We form a camaraderie which binds us collectors together. The first day of the autumn dove season is a ritual throughout Maryland. It is as much a social event as it is a sporting event. Although typical summer heat surrounds the sportsmen, the opening day marks the end of summer and the beginning of fall activities. Dove hunters pride themselves with their particular arrangement of decoys, resting on fence boards, suspended from wires, or resting in open fields. The hunters can admire the accurate imitations of the live birds and the well thought out placement of their decoys. I purchased a few pigeon decoys in the 1960's; that group of birds attracted more and more of their kind. I used a few wooden dove decoys on my uncle's farm in northern Harford County. I also used a small rig of pigeon decoys on our farm in Fallston. I have no idea if it was pure luck or the decoys, but I actually shot a few dove and pigeon. It was to be my son's first experience in cleaning and preparing the breasts of those birds. Soon after their use, those decoys returned to the house and assumed their rightful place on a shelf adjacent to a few old wooden duck decoys. I began in earnest to gather more of those birds for my shelves. I vividly recall admiring a group of dove decoys that the late Michael Keating had very tastefully arranged in an alcove in his home in Trappe, Maryland. I have never achieved that precise look, but I have kept my dove and pigeon decoys close by me to admire, handle, and decorate baskets, boxes, clothes trees, and once a year my Christmas tree. The carvers of these many birds became my friends over the years, and as I admire the decoys, I recall pleasant visits with each of the carvers that created those birds.

One carver that I met through my oldest decoy friend, the late Henry A. Fleckenstein, Jr., was Capt. Jimmy Wright of Massey, Maryland. Jimmy carved more dove and pigeon decoys for me and Henry than any of the carvers we knew. I'm sure that over the years we probably bought nearly 100 birds from him. His creative spirit led him to create miniature dove, and not unlike his full-size birds, they took on many forms---flyers with attached metal wings, preeners, straight heads, feeders, paper mache, silhouettes, undersize ones that he referred to as pocket models, and lastly, an attempt at several birds on fold-out bottom boards to mimic full-size goose V-boards. When Jimmy passed away, my son and I were granted permission to purchase the balance of the inventory from his estate. One of the highest forms of compliments occurs when one's work is imitated by others. At the Ward World Championship Carving Contest held in Ocean City, Maryland this past April, one of the champion carvings in the contemporary antique category was a replica of a Capt. Jimmy Wright erect-head dove decoy, his most practical and sturdy working decoy.

In the collecting community, many times we refer to fowlers who made decoys just for themselves, and C. A. Porter Hopkins of Cambridge is among them. He uses these decoys each dove season on the dove fields of his own farm. They are practical, sturdy, and catch the spirit of the live birds. Porter's miniature dove creations are among my favorites. He creates tiny miniatures in various poses and places them on natural branches, achieving a realistic grouping. Another local carver who creates sturdy well carved dove is Derek McGuirk. His carvings add to the group on my shelves.

Danny Brannock, also of Cambridge, has carved many wonderful dove decoys in his own unique style. The late John Ulrich of Monkton carved excellent working dove decoys, and on a whimsy, he created larger-than-life mammoth doves the size of a pheasant. They are extremely well carved and useful as great conversation starters. In 1993, I bought five wonderful dove decoys at the old Cliff House in Ogunquit, Maine. Cameron McIntyre carved those wonderful birds. In a weak moment, I carried one of those birds to the Easton Waterfowl Festival that fall; it sold fast. I thought about that missing dove for 30 years and finally was able to buy it back from the purchaser of years ago. Those five are gathered together and happily, as least for me, reside in front of the original James T. Holly sinkbox illustration. I can enjoy the beauty of those birds as I imagine Holly's thoughts as he crafted his masterpiece. Yet another McIntyre dove in a unique tucked-head pose, acquired a mere 5 years ago, resides in my son's home. I have gathered dove and pigeons from most of the Havre de Grace Carvers. From Pennsylvania I collected a stylish pigeon made by Norris Pratt. In 1992, my son and I traveled across the ocean to visit Guy Taplin, carver, and collector, in Wivenhoe, United Kingdom; from that journey, I returned home with the seven earliest pigeons in my growing flock. I've added some factory pieces to my collection as well as a dozen beautiful birds by master carver Frank Finney and one of my favorites from the late Nelson Berg, Charles Nelson Barnard's grandson. Ronnie Newcomb from Church Creek in Dorchester County carved dove decoys for his own personal use; they are perfect in form and wear well executed paint. A recent discovery of a pair of folky dove decoys from Crisfield were created by the African American carver Pied Jones. They are accurately formed and demonstrate early Crisfield paint. At a round table discussion, several decoy enthusiasts reached the conclusion that these decoys are indeed the work of Jones, a remarkable discovery of genuine folk art.

All of these birds surround me in my home. They give me pleasure and somehow help me to better appreciate and enjoy birds in the wild. I often wonder if any of my readers understand this passion. I know for a fact that some do, and for the others, if I have done anything to inspire them to appreciate this art form, I will be satisfied.



Basket of Pigeons - Tom Harman



Box of Pigeons - English Wood Pigeons



Gate - C.A. Porter Hopkins, Harry Jobs & Cliff Simms

5th Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show

By: Mike Tarquini

Celebrating its fifth year, the Annual Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show took place on Saturday, September 9, 2023. The event took place at Galena Volunteer Fire Company (Galena, MD). According to show coordinator Allan Schauber, "The Charlie Joiner Memorial Show is a great opportunity to recognize the accomplishments of legendary carver Charlie "Speed" Joiner (Chestertown, MD) and to raise money for his endowment fund at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum."

Charlie Joiner was from Maryland's Eastern Shore and hunted for years around his childhood home in Betterton, MD. He often picked up waterfowl decoys that washed onto the shore. Charlie took a job at the expanding Aberdeen Proving Ground (Aberdeen, MD) in the early 1940s. Although he would eventually make a career of working for Chestertown Power and Light Company, his days of working at the Aberdeen, MD Army base would shape his decoy making development.

Charlie met R. Madison Mitchell in 1942 while staying at a boarding house in Havre de Grace. He credited Mr. Mitchell for teaching him most of what he knows about carving and painting decoys. After returning to Betterton, he began learning from the Ward brothers. They inspired him to carve half-sized and miniature decoys. By combining the techniques he learned from Mr. Mitchell and the Wards, Charlie created his own distinctive style. Some species he carved in the Havre de Grace style, while others he carved in the Crisfield style.

Joiner's round-bottomed, Upper Bay style decoys are lathe-turned, some using Mitchell's patterns. His lead weights are also from Mitchell's mold. The flat-bottomed ducks are hand-carved, as are all his swan. Although he carved on his own, Charlie passed his knowledge to many other carvers including Bill Schauber, Dave Blackiston, and his nephew, Bill Joiner. Growing up with the influences of Charlie Joiner, Allan Schauber decided five years ago to honor him with an annual decoy show.

This year's show featured fifty-four exhibit tables that contained vintage and contemporary decoys, collectibles, books, and specialty sporting prints. This year's event drew approximately three-hundred patrons. Food was again available through the Galena Volunteer Fire Company's Ladies Auxiliary.





Schauber reported that this year's Charlie Joiner Show generated approximately \$3,600 for the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. All told, in five years, the Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show has generated over \$16,000 of revenue which has been donated to the Museum. The Museum owes a debt of gratitude to Allan and Susan Schauber for their tireless efforts to make this event such a success over the last five years.

As with all events of this type, sponsorships are paramount to success. The Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show and the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum would like to recognize and thank those that sponsored this year's show; Red Acres Hydroponics, Valliant Wealth Management, David A. Bramble Inc., Fellows Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Homes, Dukes/Moore Insurance, Todd's Body Shop, Hopkins Hunting & Sporting Clays, The Peoples Bank, Remax Realtor/Lori Leonardi -Agent. Many of these sponsors have been with us every year.

Photo captions:

(Top Row) Pelican by Bryon Bodt. Allan Schauber presented the works of Charlie "Speed" Joiner. Award winning dead mallard and canvasback by Robert Connolly.

(Second Row) Joe Walsh exhibits vintage decoys. Chuck Usilton presents vintage decoys and other collectibles.

(Third Row) Allan (L) and Bill (R) Schauber. Allan Schauber and Mike Tarquini. Pair of blue herons by Linda Robinson.



Workshop Window

By Cindy Currier

John Eichelberger, Jr
Willow Street, PA

In this installment of Workshop Window, we feature the workshop of carver, John Eichelberger, Jr. Through photos, we will take a tour of where he creates his beautiful birds. John's shop is located behind his home in Willow Street, Pennsylvania in the heart of picturesque Amish country. John is self-taught and has been carving for 12 years. Since retiring 7 years ago, John devotes more time to honing his craft.

John's shop is long and narrow, and originally was a chicken house, built in the 1920s. He paints his birds in an area set up away from workshop dust in the lower level of his home. He carves and paints many types of beautiful birds.

Please enjoy this glimpse into John's unique workshop!





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The common Loon

(*Gavia immer*)



“Each species is a masterpiece, a creation assembled with extreme care and genius.”

👤 E.O. Wilson, Scientist

It was formerly thought that the loons were ancient creatures from about 65 to 70 million years ago. More recent determination through the fossil record and DNA suggests much more recent descentance from loon-like birds in the last 20 to 25 million years. Regardless of origins, it is known that the closest relatives of loons are penguins and petrels (*Paruk. Loon Lessons. 2021.*)

CANVASBACK NATURALIST

Each edition will feature a natural history topic relating to the mission of the museum. The author, **John E. Hughes, Jr.** is a retired science teacher from the John Carroll School (1972-2015). His subject areas included Chesapeake Bay Studies, Ecology (freshwater and marine) and Environmental Science. As a naturalist, John helped to develop natural history programs for a myriad of environmental organizations and schools. As a field educator and canoe guide, he led trips throughout the Eastern United States (especially the Southeast), Central America and the Caribbean. He presently serves as a member of the Museum's Board.

Common loon taking flight



There are 5 species of contemporary loons. All have a distribution associated with the northern hemisphere and North America and Eurasia. The largest loon species is the yellow-billed loon at about 34 inches in length and the smallest is the pacific loon at about 26 inches long. The common loon is slightly smaller than the yellow-billed. The two other loons of intermediate size are the arctic and red-throated loons averaging about 28 inches in length.

Loons are remarkably adapted water birds. They have evolved a physical body, behavior, and lifestyle for the water. Whether in spring and summer, breeding and nesting in freshwater lakes, ponds, or occasionally rivers or in fall and winter in our coastal saltwater bays, estuaries, and ocean, loons are rarely more than a few meters from being in water. Their bodies are not designed for movement on land. In fact, they cannot even walk on land but instead push and slide their bodies back to the water. With the exception of sex and nesting, loons would never be on land. The position of the loon's legs and feet are so far to their bodies posterior that the bird is unable to stand erect on land, but in and on the water it becomes an incredible diver and swimmer. Their strong legs and large webbed feet enable loons to rapidly move on the surface and dive to depths greater than 200 feet. Also, because of their nearly solid bone mass and their ability to compress air out of their feathers and lungs, loons are known as the great divers and avian masters of the hydrosphere.

Loons are fairly poor fliers. They possess short stubby wings in relation to their overall body size. As a consequence, they require



Adult loon in breeding plumage



Common loon in winter plumage

long stretches of open water to get airborne as they use both their feet and wings to achieve lift. They must continue to flap their wings for aerial movement, or they would fall out of the sky. Landings appear awkward because loons hit the water with chest and belly. Loons live a migratory lifestyle traveling moderate distances (several hundred miles or more) from breeding to wintering waters. The birds use a step approach in migration moving from an open lake or river to the next open lake or river getting away from ice. This also enables them to maintain adequate energy reserves and to finally reach their destinations. Loons can fly up to 60 miles per hour.

All loons are piscivorous (fish-eating). They are also known for their incredible and eerie vocalizations.

A BIOGRAPHY OF THE COMMON LOON

DESCRIPTION:

Size: Adult common loons can have a 5+ foot wingspan and can measure 3 feet from bill tip to stretched out legs. Males are slightly larger than females. They can weigh from 7 to 17 pounds (Tekiela. Loons, 2021.)

Shape: The common loon has a long linear body which rides low in the water. Its forehead slopes steeply to its bill, just below a knob on its fairly large head. The common loon's legs are located on the extreme rear of the body. Its legs are powerful and end in large, webbed feet. As a result of its skeletal structure, the common loon can lift its feet out of the water to wave them.

Plumage: The breeding plumage of the common loon is a beautiful black and white feathering. The bird's black head and dark blue-black bill give way to a black neck with a white necklace. Its back is black with white flecking throughout. The common loon's chest, belly, and underwings are white.

The non-breeding plumage of the common loon is a somewhat dull brownish-gray head, neck and back with a white throat and belly. Overall, its appearance is one of dark gray upper body and a white lower body.

Young common loons hatch with black natal down. In a short time, brownish-black feathers replace the down. As they mature, by the end of the summer, they resemble a non-breeding adult loon. Young loons have a brown eye which turns a bright red as an adult. Male and female birds exhibit the same plumage.

RANGE:

Non-breeding birds are found along both Atlantic and Pacific coastlines as well as the Gulf of Mexico. They can also be found in coastal Iceland, Greenland, and Scotland and other coastal Eurasian areas. Mixed and boreal forests of northern North America with

abundant ponds, lakes, and other waterways provide the breeding range for common loons.



BIOLOGY:

Common loons may begin breeding at about 4 years of age. Courtship is minimal and involves bill dipping, head bobbing, underwater head peering, and various body postures. In many cases extended swimming together in the soon-to-be nesting territory seems to be enough to lead to bonding. It seems that fidelity to a past successful nesting site is more important than to the same mate. Copulation is one of the two events in a loon's life that must occur on land. The male mounts the female from behind, delivers his sperm, and then slides over her head and shoulders into the water when he is done.

Male migrants are the first to return in spring and choose the nest site. The nest is always very close to the water (1-2 meters) and is usually along the shoreline of edge areas especially on small islands. Both male and female build the nest in about a week. It is composed of wetland-like vegetation of grasses and sedges. The nest must still sit in vegetative cover to conceal it from predators. It is high enough from the water level to be protected from rising water levels during flood conditions and also safe from wind-borne wave action. It must also be close enough to allow the adults to push and slide their bodies easily into the water. Recently, man-made, anchored, and floating platforms have proven successful for some birds as nesting sites.

Usually two eggs are laid, rarely three (BNA. Common Loon. 2004). If early nesting fails, a second clutch may be laid. Egg color is olive-brown with dark flecking. The egg weighs on average 5.2 ounces and is about 3.6 inches long. Both birds incubate the eggs which hatch in about 27-30 days, at which time a fully-downed youngster will hit the water as soon as possible (within 15 minutes.) At this time the chick can feed on its own, pursuing all types of slow-moving invertebrates.



Loon feeding

The adults are extremely protective of the young and feed it almost continuously.

The young grow rapidly and begin developing feathers, hunting on their own, and learning other survival skills, but can still be seen hitching a ride on the adult's back for protection and rest. Because hatching of the eggs is not simultaneous, the first-born loon chick exhibits a "Cain effect" often harassing their sibling with unrelenting pecking. By the 8th week the young have become strong swimmers and divers able to obtain all their own food. The birds still maintain the family unit, even after they have fledged at about 10-12 weeks. Independence occurs during migration in the fall after the male and female have departed for wintering waters.

Sometimes the young of various ponds and lakes will group together before the coming of the ice, but migration will be a solo event.

DIET:

Common loons primarily live on fish. They find their prey by peering into the water and rapidly propelling themselves with their feet as they pursue their victim. They will consume the fish underwater unless it is too large and they must come to the surface. They feed throughout the lake or pond but especially in the littoral zone. Clear or slightly turbid waters are a preference even in the ocean environment. Common loons are opportunistic when feeding. The fish species will vary to the specific location and environmental circumstances. Invertebrates such as crustaceans also make up a small portion of

their diet. Whether feeding in freshwater or saltwater, the common loon will satiate on available resources.

MIGRATION:

As summer gives way to fall, loons begin to prepare for their migration to America's coastal margins. Adult common loons are solitary migrators with the males being the first to leave, followed by the females, and finally the young birds. With loons, air temperature change with the potential creation of ice seems to be the most significant factor to migration. Although, photoperiod length is a key stimulus to any bird migration. New data is beginning to suggest that destinations are to a predetermined or once-used site in spring or fall movements.

Overwintering ocean sites are relatively shallow and protected, embayed, or estuarine environments. Altitude during migration varies depending on environmental conditions.

VOICE:

The vocalizations of the common loon are one of its most notable characteristics. The eerie wailing or yodeling of the common loon is indeed iconic to northern lakes and ponds of the Northwoods. Common loon calls or songs fall into one of four categories:

1. The Wail – This call is the most frequently heard by people. It is used as a location call for one loon to find another. In the days of incubation, it is used by the egg sitter to indicate to its mate the need for a trade-off on the nest. It is most commonly heard at night.

2. The Yodel – This is more a song than a call and it is used to intensify and reinforce territory.

3. The Tremolo – This is a call of distress and fear. It can be made in flight. It is an alarm of potential predators or strange loons within the caller's territory.

4. The Hoot – The hoot is sometimes called the “Kwuk” and is the intimate communication between mates and with their young. This contact between the birds is continuous and is especially important for the young.

Many variations of these calls and songs occur. (*Joan Dunning. The Loon: The Voice of the Wilderness. 1985.*)

POPULATION STATUS:

The IUCN lists the common loon's conservation status as of Least Concern. Common loon numbers are increasing in the United States and declining in Canada. It is estimated that there are between 607,000 and 635,000 individual loons which increase upward to 743,000 in fall when young birds are included. (David Evers and Kate Taylor. *Loon Landscapes. 2020.*) Issues of concern relating to common loon population success include shooting and trapping, lake and pond acidification, lead ingestion, pesticide contamination, mercury poisoning, fishing nets and traps, oil spills, degradation of nesting habitat, loss of breeding areas, and human disturbance especially during nesting periods. (BNA. Common Loon. 2004.)

LOON MAGIC SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

“Nature speaks in the call of the loon!”

The late June sky was a soul-enriching deep blue. The morning was cool, probably in the low 40s with a stiff wind blowing from the northwest. All signs of yesterday's gray-filled skies with downpours were past. Surprisingly there were few if any black flies present. A couple of no-see-ums did their thing to remind us who was really in charge of these Adirondack lakes and woods. Today's conditions were far better than the drenching rains and relentless bailing of canoes in our paddle down Lake Kushagua. Our ultimate goal was to take out at Paul Smith College, but that was three days from now. Yesterday's challenging paddle brought our group to Rainbow Narrows where we set camp and tried to find some warmth, nourishment, and overall comfort. Today as we broke camp and reloaded our boats, I was hopeful of a good day suggested by the skies, but cautious of the potential trial by wind. The kids deserved a fun day of relaxed paddling and fellowship with nature's beauty, bounty, and wildness.

I launched my canoe to lead the group down through Rainbow Lake. Helping me with the group were two of my favorite former students and soccer players, Nick Perry and Rob Heubeck. Both were educators and headmasters at their schools; Nick in Lake Placid at the North Country School (later headmaster of The Grammar School in Putney, Vermont) and Rob, recently retired from the Gilman School in Baltimore, Maryland. Over the years, both had attended countless out-of-door trips with me and both loved experiences in





Common loon in a deep dive

the wild. Nick, with his Adirondack's background, would lead 15 seasons of trips with me in the lakes, mountains, and woods of his Lake Placid, New York home. Both Nick and Rob would enrich the trip experience for the present participants revealing their love of nature and memories of John Carroll School. I couldn't have been more proud of them.

Nick and I took the lead and Rob was the sweep boat. To protect the boats from the wind, we paddled down the edge of an esker which separated Rainbow from Clear Lake. An esker is a mound of debris that was left behind as the glaciers of the last glacial maximum melted and retreated about 12,000 years ago. This esker actually formed a ridge about 20-25 feet high. It was the perfect shield to the wind. About halfway down to the cut through to Clear Lake, we pulled our canoes up and had lunch on top of the esker. The wind had begun to subside, and our position gave us a beautiful view of both lakes. After lunch, in a short paddle, we found the cut through the esker and entered Clear Lake. A slight breeze made the paddle very comfortable.

As are most lakes and ponds in the Adirondacks, Clear Pond is a kettle pond. Kettle ponds formed near the end of the glaciers when the immense weight of the retreating glaciers of ice scraped a depression in the earth. Ice broke off into the scrape, melted in time, and assisted by rainwater and surface runoff filled the lake. As such, kettle ponds are relatively shallow (20-25 feet) and many are very clear (non-turbid.) At first, they are non-productive systems, but as they age they become extremely productive (eutrophic). Adirondack lakes are surrounded by mixed forest communities which appear very old and mature but are in reality very young when considering

the whole region had been timbered over in the last 200 years. It is easy in the Adirondacks to have the impression of being in the midst of an ancient region of untouched wilderness, but the reality is very different and we are fooled. It is only through human management of the area that it appears as barely-touched wild. Still, it is one of the most beautiful wild areas you could want to visit.

As Nick and I paddled down the lake, we led the other canoes by a couple hundred yards. We were headed for a small island which would serve as our campsite for the next two evenings. Adjacent to an area called "The Flow", the island was at the bottom of Clear Pond and was almost always favored with a breeze. As we neared the site, our canoes were surprisingly approached by two adult common loons who seemed very interested in our efforts. The birds were beautiful in their breeding plumage, and this was the ideal time for their nesting and producing young. I hoped they hadn't chosen the island for that purpose because our second-choice campsite was of much lesser quality. The birds seemed very committed to discerning our purpose for being in their territory's range. Atypical of normal loon behavior, the loons came even closer to our canoes. Both Nick and I were amazed at their apparent brazenness. They were less than 30 feet from our drifting boats. We watched in amazement as they "stood their water." As the trailing boats came closer, the loons submersed like submarines. Looking down into the very clear, shallow water, it appeared as though two foot-driven black and white torpedoes shot under our canoes. The birds then surfaced about 100 feet from us and close to the far shore. With the other boats now forming a raft around us, the students revealed just how much they had witnessed and how exciting it had been for them. This was a close encounter for everyone and probably for the loons too!

Nick and I circled the island looking for a nest but didn't find one. Later we would discover the loon's nest on the far shore to which they had moved away from our boat's initial encounter. The island was now ours and for the next two days of beautiful weather and setting we would enjoy nature's offerings.

Throughout the remaining afternoon, the loons were busy keeping eyes on our group and the campsite. They seemed ever present. After setting up the campsite, we all decided to go for a swim in Clear Pond and guess who were our lifeguards? The loons kept a good distance from us but were there watching. As we prepared supper and searched for wood for the night's campfire, the loons were keeping us under their gaze and making sure we were behaving. As dusk gave way to night and the countless stars of the Milky Way, the light from our fire reflected onto the surface of the lake. There were the loons. Neither Nick, Rob, nor I had ever witnessed this type of loon behavior. In almost all scenarios, loons are skittish to the presence of humans, especially groups of them. As we lay in our tents, falling fast asleep, the loons decided to serenade us throughout the night. It was as though this pair of loons had adopted our group and were our chaperones for the two days and nights at Clear Pond.

On an early morning, pre-breakfast paddle up the Weir, I was ecstatic to have life-listed a pair of black-backed woodpeckers in a portion of burned-over forest. I had a huge smile on my face as I approached the island, only to have the loons pilot my boat to its takeout point. I was elated to see them again. At breakfast, the group's conversation centered on the loons and revealed how awe-stricken the group was. For me, I was overjoyed to have been a part of the intimate group-loon interaction. I felt as though I had been touched by the "spirit" of the wild. Years later when I encounter some of that group's participants, they still remember those loons and that campsite. It was the kind of experience that only rarely happens and is always set in the wild. Loons did appear on other trips, but never as that one pair of loons at that one time on Clear Pond.

Unfortunately for residents of the Mid-Atlantic, it is rare to see a common loon in breeding plumage, although not impossible. When a common loon is observed in our area, it is the non-breeding colors of gray and white. The loon is still quite large and rides low in the water with its bill parallel to the surface, but it may seem dull in coloring. In the wide-open expanses in the Chesapeake Bay, from the beach at Assateague Island, the inlet at the end of Ocean City, Maryland, and the Chesapeake Bay Bridge/Tunnel at the bay's mouth are some of the best potential areas for viewing wintering loons. It is great fun to watch these birds swim and frequently dive for their food. It is a sight most people will not soon forget. However, to see them in their nesting homelands and waters is a sight which will never be forgotten.

Common loons are remarkable birds, the essence of the wild, and the spirit and magic of the Northwood's lakes, ponds, and forests.

"IN WILDNESS IS THE PRESERVATION OF THE WORLD"

— Henry David Thoreau. *Walden*.



"Every night we sat there looking down the waterway listening to the loons filling the darkening narrows with wild reverberating music But it was when they stopped that the quiet descended, an all pervading Stillness that absorbed all the sounds that had ever been. No one spoke. We sat there so removed from the rest of the world and with a sense of complete remoteness that any sound would have been a sacrilege."

— Sigurd Olson —*Author/Naturalist of the Boundary Waters*

Surf Scoter
Earl Blansfield



SHOTS

From the Wild

Are you a photography enthusiast who loves snapping pictures of the local wildlife?

If so, submit your shots from the wild to wildlifephotography@decoymuseum.com.

Only high resolution photos will be accepted. (i.e. at least 2,500 pixels wide and 300dpi)

Harlequin Duck
Robert Bruch



Common Loon
Earl Blansfield



Eider
Ralph Hockman



Long-Tail Ducks
Ralph Hockman



Eider
Robert Bruch



Long-Tail Duck
Mike Vach



Puffin
Scott Krieger



Common Loon
Scott Krieger





Common Loon
Scott Krieger



Long-Tailed Duck
Earl Blansfield



Puffins
Scott Krieger



Surf Scoter
Robert Bruch



Common Loon
Robert Bruch

Decoy Club News

Decoy Museum Hosts Joint PDCA / UBDCC Meeting...

By: Mike Tarquini

Approximately forty members of the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association (PDCA) and Upper Bay Decoy Collectors Club (UBDCC) descended on the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum on Sunday, August 6 for a joint meeting. The meeting was presided over by David Farrow (VP of PDCA) and Gary Armour (President of UBDCC).

The festivities began as David Farrow welcomed all to the Museum and shared PDCA information for those members in attendance. Kevin Peel enticed the crowd to take in the two newest exhibits at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum; a PDCA sponsored John "Daddy" Holly exhibit featuring over one-hundred decoys and a Cobb's Island exhibit from the private collection of Tommy O'Connor (Capeville, VA). Both of these exhibits were just a few short steps away from where the meeting took place.

Historian C. John Sullivan, Jr. presented a few branded decoys that were used on the famed Susquehanna Flats. John shared some of the history of these decoys, their makers, and those who were associated with the brands that they wore. John presented other artifacts from the same era.

Jim Van Ness (PDCA) and Ward Foundation Board member updated those in attendance with the latest developments concerning the Ward Foundation and the Ward Museum. Van Ness shared that the Chesapeake Challenge would be held during the Crisfield Heritage Festival on September 30. The

Foundation will also sponsor an event at the Easton Waterfowl Festival (Easton, MD) during the November 11-13 event. It was announced that despite conflicting stories, the World Championship Carving Competition would again be held in Ocean City in April 2024. The current plans for the relocation of the Ward Museum are to renovate the Powell Building, a downtown Salisbury, MD storefront to house the collection. There has been opposition to this fate for the Ward Museum and a Citizens Committee in Salisbury have filed a petition protesting what has transpired. A Charitable Trust Document has also been filed.

UBDCC President Gary Armour announced plans for the club to host their annual decoy show honoring legendary carver Jim Pierce in February 2024. Plans are also underway for an event featuring the decoys of Scott Jackson and Will Heverin (both of Charlestown, MD) at the famed Wellwood Club in late March or early April 2024. A waterfront activity is also in the works for that day and will take place in front of the P.K. Barnes Ice House.

As is customary for all PDCA sponsored meetings, a decoy contest was held where the meeting participants judged the decoys in three separate categories: old working decoys, contemporary decoys, and theme decoys. The theme decoy for this event was any decoy made by Bob McGaw. After the formal program, both clubs enjoyed each other's fellowship and shared a meal.



C. John Sullivan, Jr.



David Farrow



Jim Van Ness

Decoy Contest



UPCOMING DECOY SHOW INFORMATION

October 21, 2023

54th Upper Shore Decoy Show

Minker Banquet Hall • Perryville, MD
Info: [upperbaymuseum.org /decoyshow](http://upperbaymuseum.org/decoyshow)

November 10-12, 2023

Easton Waterfowl Festival

Easton, MD
Info: Donnie Satchell (410) 253-2340

December 1-3, 2023

Core Sound Decoy Festival

Harker's Island Elementary School • Harker's Island, NC
Info: info@decoyguild.com

January 27, 2024

Level Vintage Decoy & Collectibles Show

Level Volunteer Fire Company • Level, MD
Info: Chuck Usilton (443) 252-0685

February 3, 2024

The Eastern Shore of Virginia Decoy Show

Pearl Events Center • Cape Charles, VA
Info: Tommy O'Connor (757) 620-8520

February 24, 2024

**3rd Annual Upper Bay Decoy Collectors Club
Sportsman & Decoy Show Honoring Jim Pierce**

Minker Banquet Hall • Perryville, MD
Info: J.K. Pierce (443) 966-0312

May 4 & 5, 2024

42nd Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival

STAR Centre • Havre de Grace, MD
Info: Mike Tarquini (410) 459-8487



ATTEND THE 54TH ANNUAL UPPER SHORE DECOY SHOW

**SATURDAY
OCTOBER 21, 2023**

9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

**EARLY BIRD ADMISSION
AT 8:00 AM: \$10**

REGULAR ADMISSION: \$5

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Many Thanks

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