

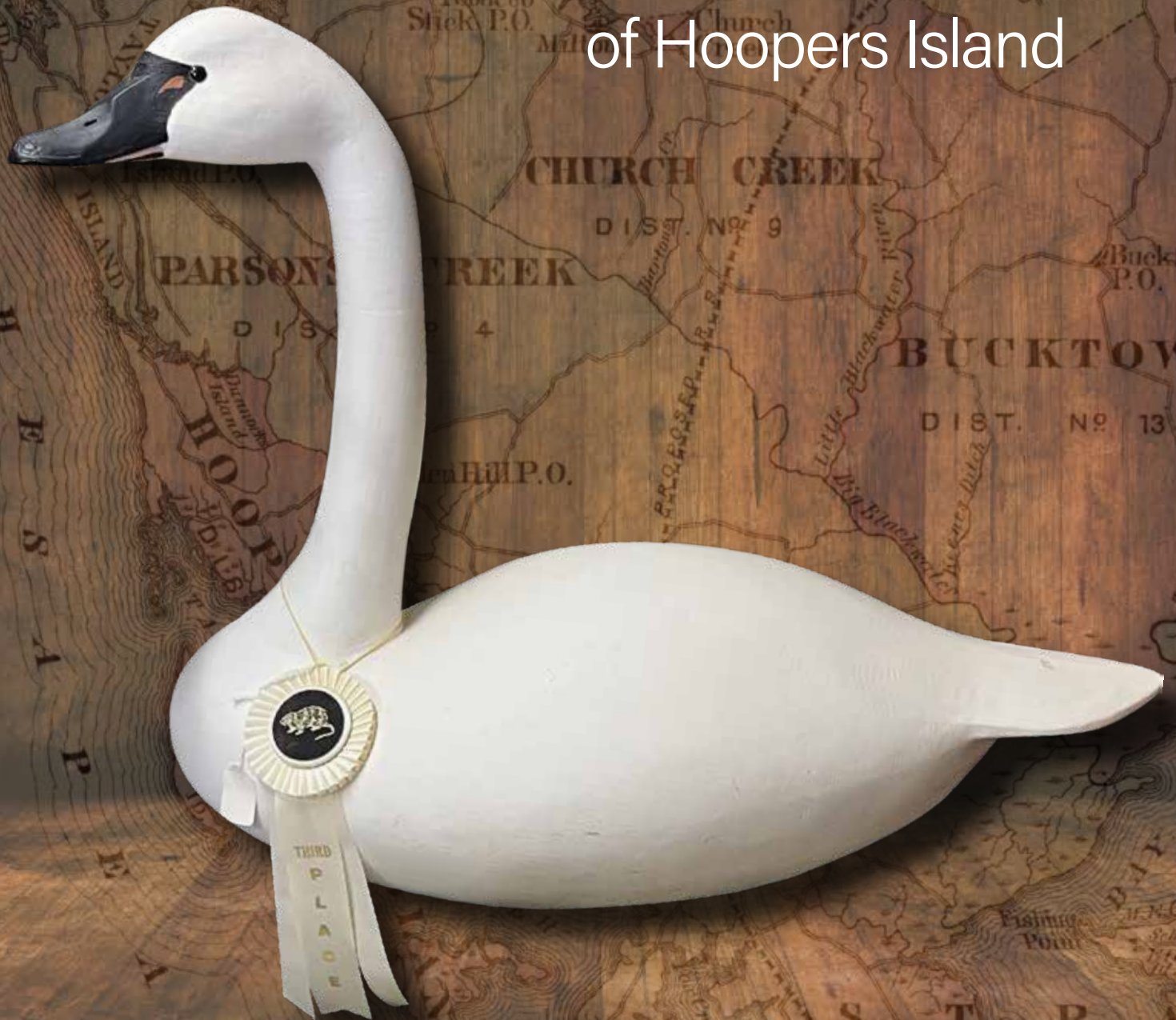
The Canvasback

HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

Vol. 35 No. 3

Summer 2025

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



Contents

Features

- 5 43rd Annual Decoy & Wildlife Festival in Review - *Ethan Van Orden*
- 9 New Exhibits at the Decoy Museum - *Mike Tarquini*
- 15 Eddie Dean Family of Hooper Island - *Bill Waibel*
- 25 Time Capsules - *C. John Sullivan, Jr.*
- 28 Workshop Window - *Cindy Currier*
- 32 Canvasback Naturalist - Mergansers - *John E. Hughes, Jr.*
- 38 Shots from the Wild - Mergansers

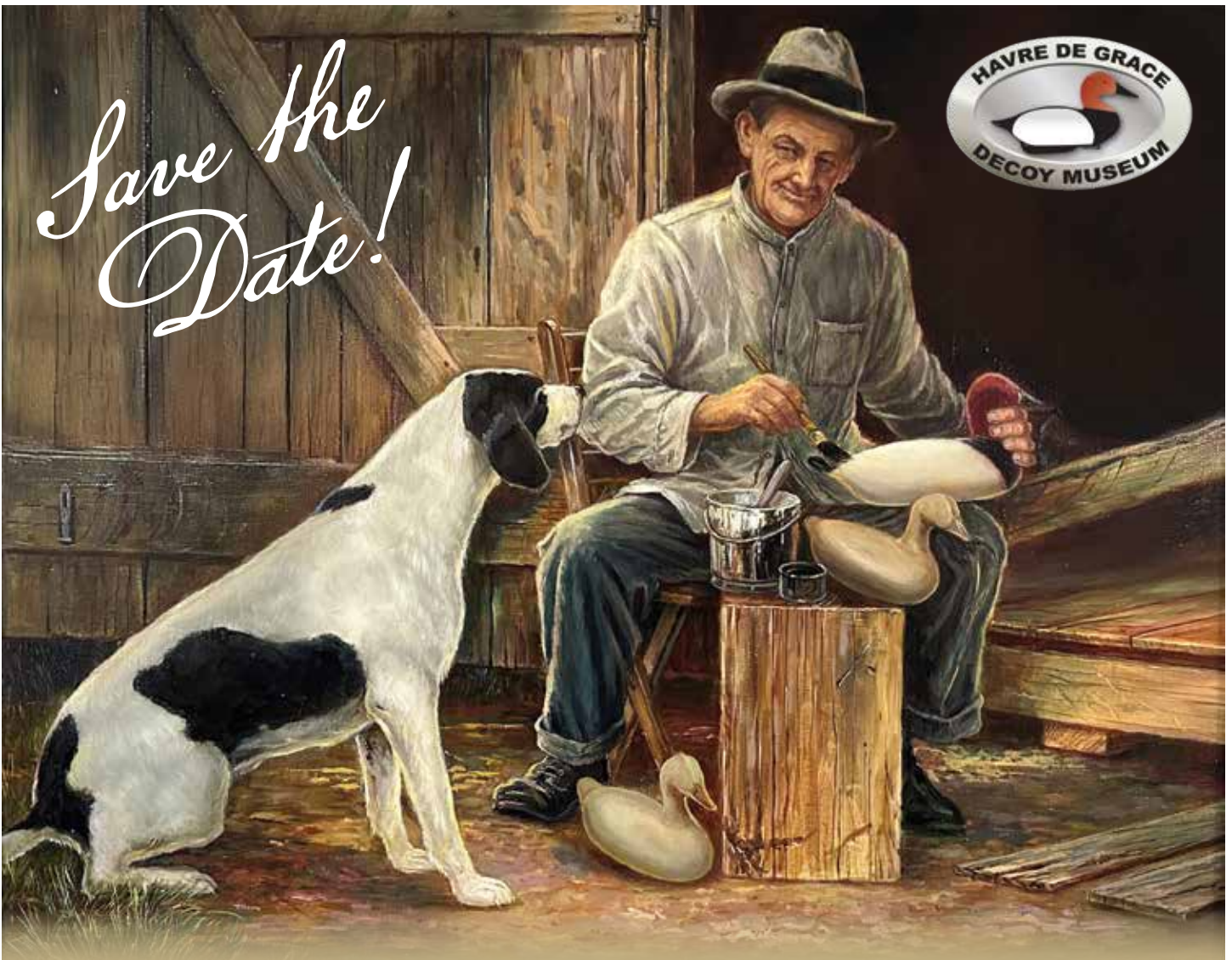
Departments

- 3 From the President
- 30 Museum Members

ON THE COVER

An award winning Swan made by Eddie Dean of Hoopers Island. A old map of Dorchester County in the background. For additional information on Eddie Dean and his family, see the article on page 15.

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EDITOR

Mike Tarquini

CONTRIBUTORS

Cindy Currier
Michael Daley
Darrell Hagar
Ralph Hockman
John E. Hughes, Jr.
Dr. Lloyd Newberry
Kevin Peel
C. John Sullivan, Jr.
Chad Tragakis
Bill Waibel

GRAPHICS

Anne Fullem Design

PRINTING

Prestige Color, Lancaster, PA

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From the President...

It's hard to believe that half of 2025 is behind us. With that, we are upon the start of another fiscal year (FY2026) at the Decoy Museum. Like the years before it, FY2026 will be a challenging one as we attempt to maintain our positive trajectory in transitioning from a local museum to a super-regional one. A major goal in FY2026 will be the hiring of an Executive Director. For five years, the museum has operated without a formal executive director and the time has come to seek someone for this position. The museum requires a focus on its tactical needs while the President and Board concentrate on strategic initiatives.



In order to accommodate the addition of this new tactical leader, the Board is rethinking our organizational structure and looking for ways to generate additional operational funding. Almost all of our current grants exclude their use for operations. Proceeds from the Annual Appeal, Annual Decoy Festival, and Clay Shoot are applied to operations but more is needed. The museum will host an Inaugural Carvers & Collectors Banquet on Saturday, December 6 at the historic Wellwood Club in Charlestown, MD. It is our hope that our members, regional decoy collectors clubs, and waterfowling history enthusiasts join us for an evening of auctions, raffles, and fun while supporting a very worthy cause. Details are being finalized and will be released during the summer.



It's with a heavy heart that we report the passing of R. Madison "Mitch" Mitchell Jr. of Havre de Grace, MD, on June 9, 2025. He was 91. Mr. Mitchell was a lifelong resident of Havre de Grace and was born to R. Madison Mitchell and Helen Maslin Mitchell in 1934. He was brother to Madelyn Mitchell Shank who predeceased him in 2015. He served as the President of the R. Madison Mitchell Endowment Trust established by his father until his death. Mr. Mitchell was named a Harford County Living Treasure in 2015 for his achievements to Harford County and truly lived his life by the Havre de Grace High School motto: "Enter to Learn, Leave to Serve."

ROBERT GETSMER BIDDLE III

November 19, 1937-May 22, 2025

Robert Getsmer Biddle III was born on November 19, 1937 as the second of five children to Robert Getsmer Biddle, Jr., and Mary Coyle Biddle, in North East, MD. Bob's family relocated to Port Herman, a vacation community along the Elk River (Cecil County, MD), four years later, where he remained until the age of twenty-five. While in Port Herman, Bob met his wife of sixty two years, Jeanette Pencek, who was originally from Brooklyn, NY. When asked how he met Jeanette, Bob would always say "I literally married the girl next door."

Bob and Jeanette married in 1962, and relocated to Media, PA where they began a family. They raised four children, Jeanette (Jenny, 1963), Robert Kenneth (Kenny, 1964), John (1966), and Kelly (1967). Their children have provided Bob and Jeanette with eight grandchildren. Bob and Jeanette later relocated to Landenberg, PA.

Outside of his career as an electrical engineer, Bob had many interests and pursued all of them with a good deal of passion. Both he and Jeanette enjoyed painting watercolors and oils. Their house is adorned by samples of their work. Bob enjoyed playing the banjo. Although he never joined a band, he would gather with friends and play. Bob built Windsor chairs as a hobby and they are tastefully placed throughout he and Jeanette's home. At one time, golf was a part of Bob's life but he said, "my belly and bifocals got in the way of my golf swing, so I gave my clubs away." Although he had many different hobbies, Bob always loved wildlife and enjoyed the things that allowed him to spend time in the wild. As a child, Bob fished gill nets, trapped muskrats, and hunted with his father. He enjoyed crabbing and clamming during his many family trips to Bethany Beach, DE. It was his hunting experiences that influenced his decision to make waterfowl decoys.



He made all species of waterfowl but favored mergansers. Bob always said, "mergansers are streamlined and built for speed." Bob Biddle never mass produced his decoys. He hand-chopped his decoy bodies and never used a duplicating lathe. He used New Jersey cedar. With the exception of a band saw, all of his work was carried out with hand tools including a hatchet, wood gouges, draw knives, spoke shaves, and knives; the spoke shave being his favorite. No one was allowed to use Bob's hatchet. Bob once said, "that hatchet fit my hands perfectly, and I could chop the bodies to within one-quarter of an inch to a finished product." Bob felt that each bird that he made had a unique personality.

Bob Biddle celebrated his eighty-seventh birthday in November of 2024. Those who have had the fortune to know Bob would describe him as a very humble man who has never been a self-promoter. He has accomplished a variety of different things in his life and perfected each and everything that ever interested him.

An exhibition of Bob Biddle's work was featured at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum from October 2022 through April 2023. The Biddle family and invited guests celebrated Bob's decoy making career at a special event in December 2022 at the Museum. Bob Biddle passed away on May 22, 2025.

43rd Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival *in Review*

By Ethan Van Orden



Now in its 43rd year, Havre de Grace's Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival is still going strong. The event remains a must-see for decoy enthusiasts, with the attendance to prove it. On the weekend of May 3-4, over 1,000 visitors came to the STAR Centre to enjoy decoy exhibition, competition, and camaraderie at the Decoy Museum's largest fundraising event.

Friday, May 2, saw 54 exhibitors, 7 non-profit organizations, and 5 Marine dealers load into the STAR Centre ahead of the weekend's event. The Decoy Museum hosted approximately 100 guests that evening for the Annual Carvers Reception, bringing together carvers, exhibitors, and guests to enjoy a meal prepared by the Susquehanna Flats Chapter of Delta Waterfowl. Museum Board President Mike Tarquini opened the Reception by welcoming the crowd and giving formal recognition to the Festival's Honorary Chairman. Later, Allan Schaubert presented the Museum with \$4,000 earned from the Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show held in September 2024. Pat & Jeannie Vincenti, joined by Chuck & Lynn Usilton, presented an additional \$2,500 from the Susquehanna Vintage Hunting & Fishing Collectibles Show held in January 2025. Both events have supported the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum financially for several years.

The weather was a mixed bag this year, with a beautifully warm and sunny Saturday offset by heavy wind and rain early on Sunday. While the storm on Sunday even caused a few brief power outages, the majority of the festivities and attendance were on Saturday, so most visitors will be returning home with memories of clearer skies.

Carver John Eichelberger Jr. of Willow Street, Pennsylvania, served as this year's Honorary Chairman of the Decoy Festival. Having previously attended the festival for the past seven years, Eichelberger said it was "a great honor" to be named Chairman in 2025. Discussing how he first became aware of the museum, Eichelberger pointed to his membership with our longtime partners (and festival supporters) Delta Waterfowl, highlighting the museum and festival's close relationship with the East Coast decoy community.

This year saw the Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival continuing to act as a regional hub for decoy enthusiasts, bringing in exhibitors and vendors from around the country. Collector and carver Walt Williams, a festival attendee since 1999, made a five-hour drive from Knotts Island, North Carolina, to exhibit at



this year's festival. Photographer Cameron Evans, exhibiting for the second time, made the trip over both land and sea from his home of Tangier Island, Virginia. Evans cited the "small town feel" of the event, remarking that Havre de Grace is "a lot like home, but a little bigger."

The Decoy Festival serves a tight-knit crowd, but don't fear that it's in danger of stagnation. Throughout the weekend, this writer observed attendees as both young and old. Carver Cody Bryant exhibited at the festival for the second time at just twenty years old, showcasing both his own works and those of his grandfather, Vernon Bryant. Second-year attendee Will Pines of Bel Air brought along his three children, who were all smiles as they walked the hall – passing on a family interest in decoy collecting from his own father. 27-year-old Nick Papavasiliou, of White Marsh, spoke to me briefly about the importance of keeping the decoy tradition alive, saying it's "gotta continue with someone." Attending for the third year in a row, this year marked his first time carving for the gunning decoy contest.

Indeed, Saturday's big event was the three annual decoy contests, with 87 carvers and collectors putting their finest wares to the test. Approximately 305 entries competed across the three competitions. The J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest, sponsored by the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association and Decoy Magazine and named for the pioneering Upper Chesapeake Bay collector and author, saw a record-breaking 118 decoys entered by 25 different collectors in this, its 22nd year. Longtime collectors Nate Heess, Joe Jannsen and Rob Knight judged this year's competition. C. John Sullivan, Jr. took first in the unknown category and best-in-show honors with a stylish, very early Redhead Drake from the Middle, Back or Bush River area of Baltimore County, while Chad and Christy Tragakis won the Susquehanna Flats hen category and second best-in-show with a sleek James T. Holly Pintail. Chad and Christy also won the Up-the-River category and third best-in-show with a pair of William Reitz Canvasbacks, part of a small rig discovered by Bobby Richardson and Henry Fleckenstein in the early 1970s.

The Atlantic Flyway competition's Decorative Carving Division saw 78 entries by 31 different carvers. Best in Show honors for both Decorative Lifesize Floating Waterfowl (Open Class) and Intermediate Class went to Loons, carved by John Henry and Carl Tosi, respectively. Best in Show for Decorative Lifestyle Wildfowl Non-Floating (Open Class) went to a Wood Duck by carver Calvin Haupt. The Novice Class awarded Best in Show to another Wood Duck, carved by Jeff Reibling. Best in Show for The Whitey Franck Decorative Slick Waterfowl Class went to carver Kevin Siple for his Eider. The Intermediate Class Best in Show honors went to a Ruddy Turnstone by carver Gayle Crouch, while Carver Deanna Harkins took Best in Class with her Red-breasted Nuthatch. The Contemporary Antiques (Open Class) Best in Show was awarded to Bill Cordrey's Bufflehead Hen. Carver Jim Hinds took Best in Show for Gunning Shorebirds (Open Class) with a Marbled Godwit, while a Nile Crocodile/Plovers entry from carver Justin Smith took Best in Show honors in the Aquatic (Open Class). Special thanks to John Graf and his volunteer staff for overseeing and judging the Atlantic Flyway competition's Decorative Carving Division.

The Atlantic Flyway competition's Gunning Division processed 109 entries from 31 different carvers. Best in Show honors for Round-Bottoms went to a Ringneck Drake by Ryan Motter (Singles) while Redheads by Antonio Leonardi claimed the top prize for Pairs. Best in Show was awarded to a Whitewing Scoter Drake by Sharon Braun (Singles) with Pintails by Jim Romig (Pairs) in the Flat-Bottom Division. Special thanks to David Farrow and John Day for overseeing the Gunning Division competition and the Upper Bay Decoy Collectors Club who assisted with the logistics.

The festival's silent auction returned this year, with 36 unique lots that raised nearly \$4,000 for the museum in total. Among the highlights were Green Wing Teal and Wigeon pairs by Charlie Joiner that sold for \$725 and \$500, respectively, and a show-stealing carving of duck hunters on a rowboat by Claire Koons that sold for \$300. Museum Curatorial Coordinator Nathaniel Heasley and volunteer John Popowski organized the auction with the help of our longtime supporters Guyette & Deeter and several donors, all of whom we thank for their contribution to the festival.





The Susquehanna Flats Chapter of Delta Waterfowl once again provided catering to the festival, serving up pit barbeque to both festivalgoers and passing members of the public. Signs posted around the neighborhood proudly advertised “the best PIT BEEF today,” a sentiment that attendees generally shared. This writer had a pit beef sandwich for lunch on both days and my only regret is not going back for seconds. Thanks to Delta Waterfowl and all their members for their continued support.

Just as important as the food, festivities, and fine decoys, though, is the community. Across the weekend, the halls of the STAR Centre buzzed with conversation between decoy enthusiasts. For some attendees and visitors, this year’s festival was just the latest round of a decades-long tradition. Flat artist Jim Taylor, returning this year off his sixth win of the Maryland Duck Stamp art competition, recalled carver Jim Pierce helping him set up his table at the second-ever festival in 1983. Author Michael Daley, who’s regularly made the trip to the festival from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, since his Maryland-native wife June got him into decoy collecting in the 70’s, summarized the feeling best: “The museum’s very dear to me. And the people.”

The Decoy and Wildlife Art Festival will return in 2026 for the 44th time, with Honorary Chairman Chad Tragakis of Alexandria, Virginia. As a historian and collector, Chad has been a stalwart member of the decoy community and serves as President of the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association (PDCA). The event will continue to be held on the first weekend of May, with the exhibitor move in and Carvers Reception on Friday, May 1st and exhibitions on May 2nd and 3rd. We thank everyone whose support made this year’s festival possible and look forward to seeing you next year.

Note About the Author:

Ethan Van Ordan served as an Intern with the Curation Group at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum from January through May in 2025. As a recent graduate of Towson University, Ethan earned his B.A. in English with a minor in Museum Studies. He graciously accepted the assignment of authoring the “43rd Decoy & Wildlife Festival in Review” article as his parting gift to the museum. We thank Ethan for his contributions and wish him well in his future endeavors.

NEW EXHIBITS ABOUND AT THE HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM . . .

By Mike Tarquini



On the final day of the Havre de Grace Decoy Festival, Guyette and Deeter removed the last pieces of the coveted Collection of Ted & Judy Harmon from the Museum to enable final preparations for its sale. The Museum and its guests were treated to a fabulous exhibit of Massachusetts decoys for nearly eight months. A special thanks to Guyette and Deeter and the Harmon family for this once in a lifetime opportunity.

Meanwhile, the New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association has treated us to a fine collection of Bob White decoys since early December 2024. The exhibit has run for six months, and the birds are all eager to fly back to their homes in the Garden State. Special thanks to Jaim Lloyd and the entire New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association for sharing the work of this very prominent carver.

While the rest of us were admiring the Harmon and Bob White exhibits, the Museum's Collections Committee was very busy at work securing exhibits to replace them after their departure. The Harmon exhibit has been replaced by combination of Upper Susquehanna River Decoys from the collection of Jeff Van Brookhoven, and Al Bell decoys from Baltimore, MD from the collections of C. John Sullivan, Jr. and Kevin Peel. The Bob White exhibit will be replaced by an exhibit of decoys by Delmarva Peninsula Master Carvers Grayson Chesser (Sanford, VA) and Pete Peterson (Cape Charles, VA) and will be featured in the 2025 Fall edition of the Canvasback. This exhibit will be presented by The Delmarva Decoy Collectors Association.

UPPER SUSQUEHANNA RIVER DECOYS EXHIBIT - THE SELLERS FAMILY

By Jeff Van Brookhoven

When you think of duck hunting on the East Coast, one automatically thinks of the Susquehanna Flats and the famous carvers from that area. A lesser known fact is that the fall migration of waterfowl started further north on the Susquehanna River where it runs between York and Lancaster County, PA. Because of this large concentration of migrating waterfowl in Pennsylvania, this area produced many famous hunters who also carved decoys to lure the birds. Perhaps the most famous family in the area to hunt and carve decoys was the Sellers family of Lancaster County.

WALTER D. SELLERS (1890-1969) was the patriarch of a family of gunners. He married Stella S. Johns and raised 4 children, Robert, James, Francis and Jane in Lancaster County, PA. A 1940 census register shows him as a self-employed plumber that allowed him and his sons to spend many mornings on the river in the fall hunting ducks.

Walter was a very skilled craftsman and his decoys, although crude in the beginning, were very well designed. His earlier canvasback decoys show a round body with a V shaped bottom much like the decoys of the other carvers in the area. One can assume that the V bottom allowed these decoys ride the current



EXAMPLES OF DECOYS BY BOB SELLERS.

better as the waters where he hunted near the Turkey Point area above Columbia seems to be a little swifter than the flats. The wind in this area tends to always be blowing at some point and the V bottom would have kept them from rocking and rolling over. The head on these decoys was purposely set back on the body. This would have made the center of gravity friendlier for the current and wind. Walter's later decoys were much more uniform and the size of the decoys became larger, almost oversize as the trend seen by other makers in the area. This style was more rounded and the bottom was flatter like the makers down the river. He is known to have made many styles of decoys and his design changes over the years were very diverse. Walter carved mostly redheads, bluebills and canvasbacks. All of Walters's decoys have a lead weight on the bottom and a leather strap with brass screws for attaching the anchors. Walter also made small rigs for both of his sons and taught them how to create their own decoys.

ROBERT S. SELLERS (1913-2005) was the oldest son of Walter and Stella. He married Irene Fisher in 1937. Bob lived in Silver Spring, PA in Lancaster County for most of his life. He, like many other young men in the area went to work for Armstrong Flooring which was the largest factory in the Lancaster area at the time. After his boss refused to let him off to go duck hunting one morning, he quit his job at Armstrong and went into the plumbing business.



A CANVASBACK DRAKE BY WALTER SELLERS FROM THE COLLECTION OF JEFF VAN BROOKHOVEN.

Much like all the Sellers decoys, Bob's rigs started out crude. However, he quickly learned to refine his decoys and they were quite well crafted as his talents improved. His early canvasbacks are life size and hand chopped with finely carved heads that were very realistic and the profile was second to none though his paint pattern was very basic on his divers. Bob's early decoys were solid body pine, mostly canvasbacks, redheads and bluebills, however later on he carved many black ducks and mallards out of cork. The cork he used was black cork and was readily available in the area from the Armstrong Cork Company, who made insulated rail cars. While hunting in the Maryland area he started to notice the gunning rigs that were turned on duplicating lathes by carvers such as R. Madison Mitchell. Soon Bob started to have the Havre De Grace Master turn him bodies of oversize decoys where he carved and mounted the heads then took them back to Mitchell's decoy shop to be painted.

JAMES J. SELLERS (1915-2011) was the second son of Walter and Stella. Jim went to Millersville State Teachers College and earned a BS in Industrial Science. He taught shop class to high school students and later went to Westinghouse in Philadelphia as a tool maker where he later became personnel director after his boss found out he had a college degree. Later in his life he was offered a promotion with Westinghouse and turned it down because he did not want to relocate his family out of Lancaster County. He started his own plumbing business and bought a farm near Peach Bottom, PA in the lower part of Lancaster County until retirement.

Bob and Jim hunted together after their father quit so it can be assumed that they shared the decoy making evenly. However, Jim's tag appears on a lot less of the decoys known today. Jim had R. Madison Mitchell make him decoys later in life. He had a large rig of Mitchell "upriver" long body canvasbacks with his own lead weights. Jim hunted proudly with his sons and grandsons over his wooden decoys into his eighties and still would be a crack shot among his group.

JOHN D. SELLERS (1884-1976) was the brother of Walter and the uncle to Bob and Jim. John only having daughters, it's natural to think that he was an active mentor to both Bob and Jim. Bob told me that his uncle Jack made the best duck decoys



A REDHEAD DRAKE BY WALTER SELLERS FROM THE COLLECTION OF JEFF VAN BROOKHOVEN.

out of all of them and his cork decoys were highly prized to hunt over by the family. John's decoys have his tag on the bottom "J.D Sellers" along with his Marietta Avenue, Lancaster address. The author has seen many styles from John, including a rig of long-flat bottom canvasbacks with his hand carved heads with great form.

The Sellers family found many different techniques to be successful at their sport. They had several blinds from which they gunned both offshore and shore line, below the now Lake Clark area on the Lancaster County side and also were very efficient at the art of sculling. In June of 1972, Hurricane Agnes crept up the east coast and the resulting rain and flooding changed the river dramatically. The flooding caused a shift in the sandy bottom of the river and the grass beds were almost totally wiped out changing the gunning area. When the habitat changed, the Sellers were forced to focus their efforts to include a style they have mastered in sculling.

It is always sad to see an era of hunters and history pass us by; however the Sellers family and their gunning style is something we can always reflect on. This family has created many decoys as a reminder of the past and a great legacy. Many Sellers family decoys are now on display at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum courtesy of Jeff Van Brookhoven.

HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM OPENS THE FIRST EVER AL BELL EXHIBIT

By Kevin Peel

In May of 2025, the Collections Committee installed the first ever exhibit dedicated to the work of carver Al Bell. For many years, Bell was somewhat of a mystery. The wonderful swans carved by Bell were, for many years, attributed to the Cockey family of Kent Island on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Additionally, many collectors incorrectly believed Bell to be an African American carver from Baltimore.

A little over a decade ago, C. John Sullivan, Jr. began to unravel the Bell mystery when he wrote an article in Decoy Magazine (September/October 2011) based on a 2009 interview with George B. Keen. He also acquired a swan and duck decoys that the family used at the Miller's Island Ducking Club during his visit. Keen related that his father had been a friend, neighbor, and gunning partner of Bell in the early 1900s. The swan and a rig of eight canvasbacks acquired from Keen are a part of the exhibit along with other wonderful Bell decoys from John's collection.

Since then, subsequent research has revealed much more about Al Bell and will hopefully lead to even more being learned about this wonderful carver in the future. Albert August Bell Sr. was born on November 2, 1864, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to German immigrants John and Wilhelmina Bell. He started gunning at an early age along the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers



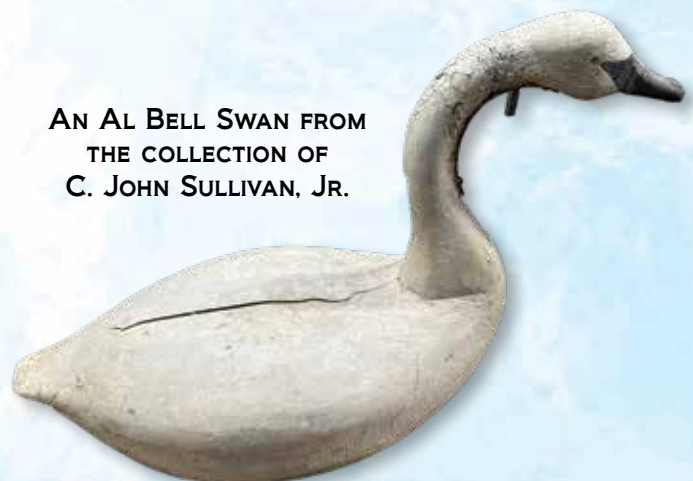
**A CORK BLACK DUCK BY JOHN SELLERS FROM THE
COLLECTION OF JEFF VAN BROOKHOVEN.**



**A CORK MALLARD HEN BY JOHN SELLERS FROM THE
COLLECTION OF JEFF VAN BROOKHOVEN.**



**AN AL BELL SWAN THAT HAS BEEN REPAINTED
AS A GOOSE BY AN UNKNOWN MAKER FROM THE
COLLECTION OF C. JOHN SULLIVAN, JR.**



**AN AL BELL SWAN FROM
THE COLLECTION OF
C. JOHN SULLIVAN, JR.**



in and around Philadelphia. Bell was gunning in the Baltimore area prior to 1890. His occupation as a commercial traveler (traveling salesman) dealing dry goods, specifically groceries, likely made it easier to travel to Baltimore via railroad and arrange to gun with acquaintances in the area while on business.

Bell moved to Baltimore in 1913 and continued to work in the grocery business. This move may have been facilitated by the Keen family as George Keen's father, Austin Jenkins Keen, was a truck farmer dealing in produce and owned a stall in Baltimore's Lexington Market. As it turns out, Bell only spent approximately twelve years in Baltimore as he passed away on March 12, 1925, at the relatively young age of 60.

The exhibit also includes Bell decoys from the author's collection. These include decoys produced from Bell's time in the Baltimore area as well as examples thought to be made while Bell was still living in Philadelphia. These decoys are different in that they're more refined, and exhibit forms that show influence of both Philadelphia School and Upper Bay style of decoy carving. To learn more about how Al Bell came to Baltimore and details about the "connective tissue" that led to the attribution of these earlier decoys to Bell, read the author's article, *Finding Al Bell, A tale of two cities* in the May/June 2025 issue of *Decoy Magazine*.

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Mike Tarquini at **410-459-8487** or
president@decoymuseum.com



Kyle Presnell

(1982 – 2025)



Kyle Robert Presnell, 43 years of North East, MD, passed away Monday, May 26, 2025 at home. Born April 25, 1982 in Havre de Grace, MD, he is the son of G. Robert Presnell, Jr., and Judy Ann Cole Tarquini.

Kyle was employed by the US Army Aberdeen Test Center (ATC) as a Photographer/Engineering Technician. He was employed there over 20 years having started there right after college. He received a bachelor's degree in Multimedia Design from Wilmington University where he was also a four-year member of the men's soccer team. He was a graduate of Perryville High School where he was a captain of the boys' soccer team. In his senior year he was an All-County High School Soccer team selection. He enjoyed watching soccer matches as well as football and baseball games. He loved the outdoors and was an avid hunter with goose hunting being one of his favorites. He was a member of Delta Waterfowl.

Kyle was a steady volunteer at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. In the beginning, he used his photography skills to capture shots at the Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festivals as well as other special museum events. Kyle tapped into his technical skills as we implemented the touchscreen monitors throughout the museum. His most recent project saw him capturing all of the photos for the John Eichelberger story in the spring edition of the "Canvasback". We thank Kyle for his numerous contributions to the museum and will dearly miss him.



Susquehanna Flats Chapter of Delta Waterfowl



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Eddie Dean Family of Hoopers Island

Heritage, Tradition, and Hard Work Carried the Family Name Through the Generations

By Bill Waibel

As happens in life, although not often enough, we meet a true gentleman. Years ago, the writer noticed some photos of fine decoys made by a fellow from Fishing Creek and made the trek, deep into Dorchester County, on a cold February day to Hoopers Island and met Eddie Dean, Sr. After a pleasant visit with Eddie and his lovely wife, Rosemary, it became quickly apparent that these folks were hospitable, friendly and without a trace of pretense.

Hoopers Island has long been associated with hard working folks who lived a hardscrabble existence, earning their keep from the rivers, marshes, and bays. Oysters, crabs, and fish were the commodities that have boosted the local economy for the last two centuries.

Most boys on the Island were operating a 40-foot workboat long before they were old enough to drive their daddy's pickup.

Hoopers is a chain of islands, twenty miles long, with Tar Bay, Barren Island, and the Chesapeake Bay to the west and the Honga river to the east. Numerous creeks, cuts, guts, and marshes stretch everywhere in all directions, interrupted occasionally by a stand of loblolly pine and mixed hardwood. Fishing Creek, Honga and Hoopersville are the small hamlets where most of the Island's residents reside. Bay-built workboats are visible from the road and fishing boats sit in front of many homes. The Island is picturesque teaming with wildlife and good Americans with surnames like Creighton, Parks, Flowers, Dean, Phillips, Tolley and Meekins.

Hoopers Island is also richly steeped in waterfowling lore. In addition to tonging oysters, crabbing, and fishing pound nets, many men supplemented their incomes by killing ducks and geese for the market. This vocation, while profitable, was fraught with peril as we will learn about later.



*Early map of
Dorchester County,
showing Swan Island
off the western shore of
Hoopers Island.
Swan Island has since
disappeared, a victim of
erosion.*



Swan Island Club, circa 1960s.

During the early part of the 20th century, rich men traveled to Hoopers to experience the fabulous duck shooting, hiring local watermen to guide them. Several eventually bought properties on and around the Island and started ducking clubs. This provided a little bump to the local economy as several men took over responsibility as caretaker and guide at these clubs.

To understand the man that Eddie Dean is, we will examine the family who came before him. Eddie's father, Jesse Vernon Dean was born to Albanus and Josephine Tucker Dean in 1900 and his mother, Jennie, was born to Thomas and Amelia Lewis Parker in 1907. Both were natives of Barren Island just across Tar Bay from Hoopers and their fathers were watermen. Eddie's ancestry goes back many generations on Hoopers and Barren Islands.

Albanus (1874-1905), was born to John T. Dean (b. 1833) and Melissa Flowers (b. 1839) on Barren Island. Albanus, known as "Bain," married Josephine (Pheonie) Simmons in 1897 and the couple were blessed with three boys, Roland Floyd (b. 1899), Jesse Vernon (b. 1900) and John Edward (b. 1903).

Capt. Bain was a waterman, oystering in fall and winter, and fishing and crabbing during the warmer months. Like many of his contemporaries, Bain shot ducks for the market to provide for his young family. During this time, a pair of prime ducks (canvasbacks and redheads) would fetch the gunner from one to four dollars, depending on the market. This was a substantial sum at a time of the year when there were fewer opportunities for local watermen to earn.

The level of risk was higher even than the level of reward with this endeavor. One evening in January 1905, Bain and his partner, Capt. Brantly Aaron, were in small, 12-foot skiff, utilizing a big



Jesse's decoy hatchet and chopping block are over one hundred years old.

gun and a gunning light. They pushed off just after sunset into the Honga River, quietly paddling along, towards Wroten Island, searching for a raft of ducks feeding on the lush grass beds.

They knew where the ducks were as they constantly scouted the area while out oystering during the day. When the birds were located, the gunning light was lit, casting a soft glow ahead of the skiff. Using short, hand paddles, the skiff was slowly and skillfully sculled down towards the rafted birds. The gunning light mesmerized the birds and hid the men during the approach. Built of white cedar, the skiff was quite light and designed to cut through the water with little resistance but had the unfortunate byproduct of instability.

A large bore shotgun was used and fired at the resting flock when the skiff drew near enough. The recoil of the shot could capsize the tippy craft, likely what happened on that fateful night. According to newspaper articles, after a shot was heard, Dean and Aaron called for help as they clung to the overturned skiff for some time. Several residents heard the calls but refused to rescue the men, despite seas being calm and a bright moon shining. In fact, a Capt. Phillips excused his refusal to rescue the stricken gunners by saying, "I am not able, and they have no business shooting at night and with a light." Evidently, some local folks resented night gunners as the practice went against local gunning laws. Capt. Aaron's body was recovered on March 28th and Capt. Dean's, two days later. The Honga Tribe Council No. 29, offered a \$25 reward for the recovery of the bodies of these fine men.



Brant decoys made from a cedar channel-marking buoy. Jesse was fond of brant shooting. Circa late twenties.



Blackhead decoys from the 1920s.

When discussing this event with Eddie, he still gets understandably upset at the refusal of locals not to save his grandfather's life. Such a level of petulance by Capt. Phillips and other local men, allowing two good men to suffer a terrible demise and forever change the lives of the two widows and four small children they left behind is crime of moral turpitude to say the least.

This unfortunate event left Pheonie alone with three young boys, Roland, Jesse, and John E. By 1910, however, Phenie married George Tucker, a farmer who lived near Cambridge, and the couple added three more daughters to the family and eventually moved to Virginia.

Jesse was adopted by Edward (Ned) and Clara Simmons, who lived in Fishing Creek. Edward was Pheonie's brother and a waterman. Pheonie wrote a brief note with but few stipulations regarding the adoption; Jesse must be treated kindly, and he must attend school. Ned and Clara raised Jesse as their own and provided a nurturing family environment for a youngster who had lost his father at such a vulnerable time in his young life. After Pheonie moved to Virginia, Roland was taken in by other kin, staying local, and worked on, and eventually bought, an oyster buy boat. He lived in Cambridge until his death in 1982. His brother, Edward, remained in Virginia for the rest of his life.

The Simmons lived on a small farm on the road to House Point, where Ned farmed and tonged oysters, crabbed and fished. Jesse went to school through fifth grade, learning to read and write in a one-room schoolhouse, but earned a PhD in all things' river, bay, and marsh under the tutelage of his uncle. Jesse worked with Ned for many years, helping on the boat, honing his skills, and



Outstanding rig of geese made from a schooner mast, along with Jesse's Remington Model 11, complete with homemade magazine extension. The Remington, along with Jesse's superior wing shooting, likely killed more than 10,000 fowl.



Jesse (far left) guiding men from National Brewing in Baltimore.



Dead cans and redheads, corn sacks and an empty case of "Natty Boh," a truly Maryland scene at Swan Island Club. Circa 1950s.

learning the water, and eventually buying a boat in the early 1940s and starting out on his own. Ned also ran fishing parties and Jesse mated for him, learning customer service, a skill that would help him in his guiding business and caretaking jobs.

Dean made a living as an oysterman, mostly tonging the shallow oyster rocks of Tar Bay and crabbing for hard crabs and peelers. He and a couple friends fished pound nets catching rock, trout, perch, and drum that were sold to market and bunker (menhaden) that sold to local crab potters for bait.

During the 1920s roads improved and men started making their way down to Hoopers Island in search of locals to take them fishing or gunning for ducks. These men, from Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore sought out locals for daily or weekly guide services and were not disappointed. People today have a tough time visualizing the volume of ducks that wintered in the vicinity of Hoopers Island at that time, making the long trip worthwhile for these city sports. Jesse recalled in a 1987 article in the "Dorchester" newspaper, "I've seen so many ducks raise up from Barren Island it looked like smoke". The waters were clean and submerged aquatic vegetation, particularly eelgrass, was plentiful and thick.

This brought the redheads, canvasbacks, pintail (sprig), wigeon (baldcrown), teal, and black ducks to the area. There were many geese and brant in those days and Jesse had a soft spot in his heart for those brant. Regarding the brant, Jesse said, "At night, you could hear them out there hollering." The geese were particularly thick, prompting Jesse to report, "I couldn't take my hat off and throw it without hitting a goose." There were plenty of scaup (blackheads), goldeneye (whifflers), and red breasted merganser



Jesse bringing club members back from Swan Island to the clubhouse. Circa 1950s.

(wajet or pheasant) around if shooting was slow for the more preferred species. Even as a young man, Jesse had a reputation as a solid waterman and duck shooter. He and his friend, Clinton Dean, carried many of these "sports" gunning and fishing, earning some extra cash to supplement their waterman earnings. In the early days, Dean shot out of a sinkbox before it was outlawed in 1935.

One of these gentlemen gunners, Dr. Leslie E. Chappell (1900-1982), a surgeon from Philadelphia, had a profound effect on Jesse's life. This gentleman was the real deal, serving in both world wars and earning two battle stars and two citations. He performed many lifesaving surgeries on American servicemen and was discharged with the rank of lieutenant colonel.

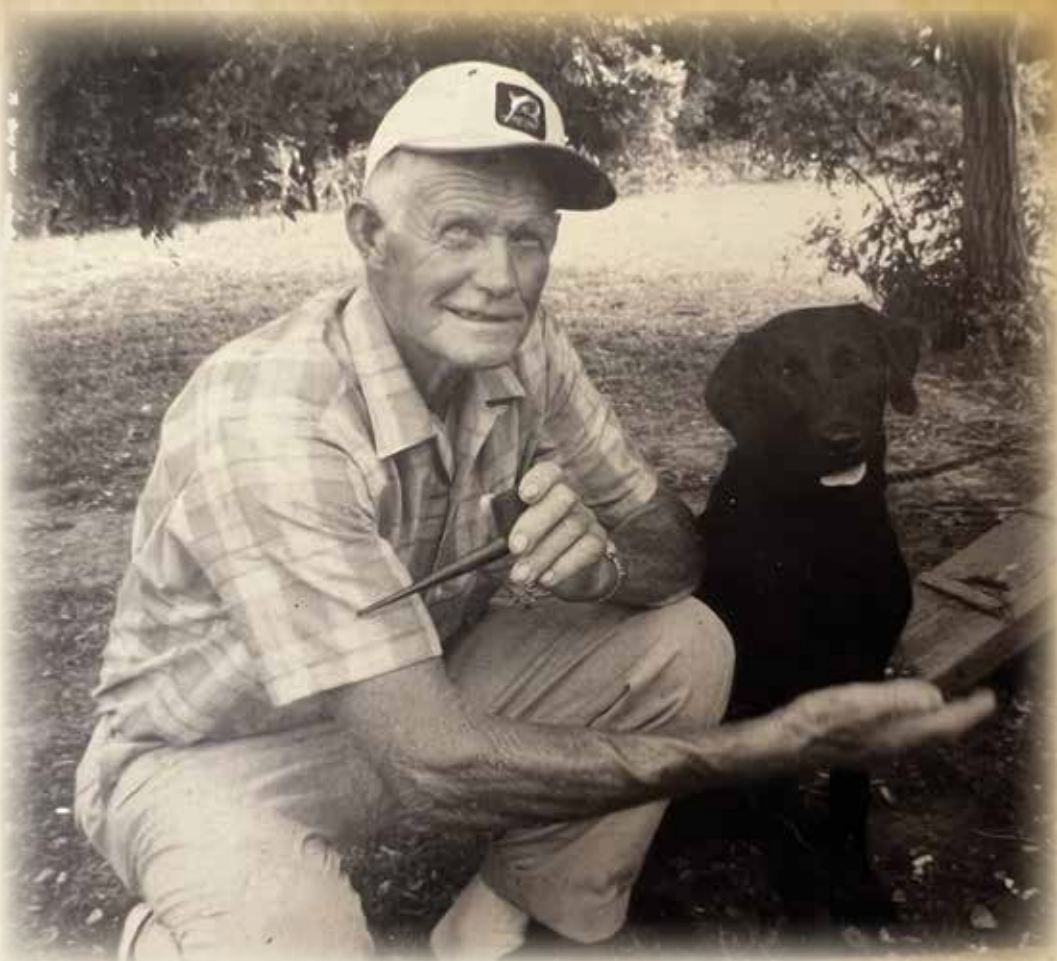
Jesse first met Chappell at a store in Fishing Creek, locally called "Bob Phillips's Store," despite being the "315 Market". Chappell and some friends came in looking for someone to take them hunting, and Dean quickly obliged. Jesse and Clinton guided the men to a great shoot, and they hit it off. Around 1940, Chappell, who had been gunning and fishing with Jesse for more than a decade, decided to buy some property and form a gunning club. He asked Jesse to run the club and be its chief guide, as he had long before proven his mettle as a resourceful guide with a good disposition. The doctor purchased a nice spot off the middle island, two miles south of the bridge and had a clubhouse built, and the Swan Island Gunning Club was born. Jesse was chief guide and caretaker at Swan Island for thirty plus years.

Jesse courted Jennie Parker, daughter of Thomas and Pamela Lewis Parker, from Hoopers Island. They married on July 24, 1941 and lived at the Swan Island Club, where Jennie assisted her husband in running the club. The couple started their family with the birth of Jesse, Jr. in 1942 and Eddie in 1948. They lived at the club until 1951, when they had a home built in Fishing Creek.

The island was large enough at the time that Jesse built a blind on either side so Chapell and his guests could gun on any wind. A pond sat in the middle of the island which also provided many good shoots when the bay was rough, and the birds sought quieter water to rest and eat corn. There was a standing forest on the island, and they cleared timber for sale. The boys assisted Jesse and Jennie with many tasks around the clubhouse and the island. Chapell was a kind man and the Dean's became like family to him. Jesse, Jr., and Eddie referred to Chapell as "Uncle Doc." Chapell became Jesse's best friend despite significant gaps in education and socioeconomic status. These men were bound together by the ties that bind true gunners.

According to Helen, Chapell's daughter, the Doc and Jesse would drive around the island and shoot mistletoe out of the white oaks and swamp maples, using the same shotguns they killed ducks with. The mistletoe was sold in Baltimore during Christmas time as it was a popular adornment during that season.

A waterman and duck shooter relied heavily on their shooting iron and Jesse was no different. His first and favorite shotgun was the venerable Remington Model 11. Jesse put thousands of rounds through it and sent it back to Remington several times over the years to replace worn parts, which they did, faithfully. The last time he sent it; they fixed it up and sent it back with a letter stating not to send that shotgun back anymore. One of Dr. Chappell's hunting guests gave Jesse a Remington Model 11-48, which he used with good success. Of course, like most men on the Island who were involved with gunning, Jesse devised a magazine extension from



Capt. Jesse Dean with "Rock," circa 1979.

the cross section of a bicycle handlebars. This allowed him to shoot 10 or 11 times in rapid succession and never taking the gun from his shoulder. While Eddie could not provide a specific number of fowl Jesse killed with that gun, the writer believes the number, conservatively, reached five figures.

Jesse engaged in outlaw market gunning as were most of his contemporaries. He gunned at night using a gunning light and the unplugged Remington. A small, sharp skiff was used with short paddles that were used to quietly move the skiff towards the ducks. Jesse tied the paddles to the side of the skiff so when he got in range of the birds, he could let the paddles fall into the water, freeing up his hands to mount his shotgun. The light hypnotized the ducks and hid the skiff from their view. When he worked into range, Jesse cut loose with the semi-automatic and cut big holes into the flock. The unplugged, extended magazine Remington was far deadlier than the big bore punt gun his father had used decades before.

Most of the time, he targeted diving ducks on the Honga or Tar Bay and usually had a good market for the preferred species, canvasbacks, and redheads. Being an opportunist, Jesse would



Part of Eddie's gunning rig. One of the finest rigs that floats the Chesapeake, in the writer's humble opinion.

gun the ducks wherever they were. He had a harrowing experience while doing a night shoot with his friend, Manford Phillips. Up towards Taylor's Island is Beaverdam Creek which was a bit inland, but widens at a place locally called, "The Broads." The redheads were there, and they had a couple good shots, killing a bunch, along with a few swan. When they loaded the skiff to go home, Manford had his knee on the paddle rope and as Jesse paddled, the overloaded vessel pulled to the starboard and some water came in over the gunwale. Jesse, being a cool customer, figured out what was going on and quickly repositioned Phillips and got them home safely. The writer wonders if Jesse ever thought of his father's tragic death in a similar skiff, so many years before.

After Jesse took over at Swan Island, he used corn to hold birds for Chapell, ensuring a good shoot. He recalled pulling 20,000 ducks with one sack of the yellow. Of course, more would have to be put out to hold the ducks for an extended period. When law enforcement was getting around and writing tickets for baiting, Dean devised an ingenious plan to hold ducks while not exposing the club to the possibility of arrest or citation. The master guide would take a pound net stake and drive it into the bottom along

with a couple hundred pounds of corn. This stake would be a several hundred yards from the blind and Jesse placed a half dozen decoys around it. When the ducks saw the decoys and pitched in, they would dive, find the corn, and continue to feed there, bringing many more along. The stake, decoys and corn were gradually moved towards the blind and the day before the hunt, the baiting was discontinued, and the stake was moved within easy range of the blind. The ducks associated that stake with corn, like so many Pavlov's dogs, providing Chapell and his crew with fine sport and little risk from federal or state game agents. The corn was supplied by another farm that Chapell owned in Ross's Neck and transported to Swan Island in an old milk truck.

One time in 1971, Jesse got a ticket for baiting along with a couple friends. Federal agent Larry Thurman found corn and piled on a wanton waste charge as an unseen duck drifted away. The men carried a young, 12-year-old boy along with them for his first hunt, but Jesse stood tall and talked Thurman out of involving the boy, taking full responsibility himself.

Jesse made decoys, primarily cans, redheads, blackheads, black ducks, brant and geese in the early days for his personal use and for his guiding business. Jesse once said, "They decoy better to their own kind," prompting him to rig out specie-specific decoys to pull in the birds. He used channel marker posts that were made of white cedar. When one of these posts was damaged by wind, wave or ice or periodically replaced as standard maintenance, Jesse got a hold of them. He recalled making a dozen brant from a cedar buoy, as all navigation markers were made of wood in those days. They were typical of birds made on Hoopers Island, with flat bottom, rounded top and some ballast made from scrap metal that he had lying around, with others sported poured lead weights typical of Upper Bay. The ducks and brant wore keels made from one-by-two lumber, with ballast attached to the underside of the keel. Line attachment was typically a staple with or without a swivel attached. Jesse remembered when he and Clinton made a rig of geese from a schooner mast, splitting the sections into two and getting a body from each half. Jesse, Clinton, and several other guides met frequently at Russell Jones' store, a bit down the road from Swan Island Club, chopping bodies, whittling heads, and telling stories.

From the perspective of a collector, Jesse's decoys are outstanding. They combine a level of folksiness with utilitarian simplicity and are most pleasing to the eyes. Many are one hundred years old and wear that great saltwater patina that takes you back in time. The brant are competent and appealing as are the divers, but Jesse made his mark on the decoy world with those geese. Big, wide, deep with a high tail and outrageously good heads in that "Hoopers Island" forward pose and, get this, carved eyes!

Interestingly, Chapell brought many decoys for the club, so Jesse did not have to use his personal rig. Many of his birds were lost in a fire, along with his first gunning light, while others simply "got away" from him over the years, drifting away with tide or ice or given to friends who showed an interest. After retiring from the club, Jesse started making birds again to shoot over and some fine miniatures. Jesse passed away on July 24, 1989.

The Dean family has always had a good sense of humor. Around 1971, Jesse and Roland decided to send their brother, Eddie (John Edward) a "Christmas goose". Eddie lived in Hopewell, Virginia but the brothers remained close. Jesse and Roland took a freshly killed, fully feathered goose to the Hoopers Island post office and affixed a leg tag with address and eighteen, ten cent stamps. The bird arrived in good order the next day and everyone got a good laugh, and the Virginia Deans enjoyed a nice, fat goose for Christmas dinner.

Eddie, born in 1948, grew up around the Swan Island Club, helping wherever needed. His brother, Jesse, Jr., seven years older, took over after his Dad's retirement. Eddie had several friends that he gunned with as a young boy. They would shoot the public marshes up at Taylor's Island and the state marsh over to Robbins, right below Blackwater. As he got older and started feeling his oats, Eddie got a blind site offshore behind what is now Old Salty's restaurant. Eddie and his friends built a "runner" which was simply some large stakes driven into the bottom in a rectangular shape with one end open. Some boards were nailed in between the stakes and pine branches were attached, created a nice hide when the boat was pulled in and tied up.

Being a good father, Jesse watched his son from shore the first time Eddie gunned out of this rig. Eddie had some ducks come in nice and killed a few, feeling right pleased with himself. When he got back to shore, Eddie was beaming with the little bunch of ducks killed on his own. Jesse said, "Boy, you're gonna have to change that half-assed rig, it's nothing!" To this day, Eddie still laughs at the incident, explaining that his Dad was just mentoring him to become a better gunner. Eddie also did quite a bit of sea



Some of the swan decoys Eddie has made through the years. Most are part of his gunning rig and have seen action.



Completed pintail drakes drying as hens have been blocked in, waiting for feathering.

duck gunning behind Barren Island. He made many scoter decoys from crab floats and even some floating silhouettes. He gunned whenever he could as the “fever” ran heavy through his veins.

Eddie enjoyed an active childhood, and loved fishing with friends, whether throwing big bucktails tipped with pork rind for large rockfish or bottom fishing for hardhead, bluefish, spot, and trout with a chunk of peeler crab. One of his favorite pastimes was “propping” the shoreline looking for anything interesting, old decoys, crab buoys, interesting driftwood, among other things. His favorite plunder, however, was the numerous Native American artifacts that were left behind by the Algonquin-speaking, Yaocomico tribe, among others. He has built a fantastic collection of tools and arrowheads through seventy plus years of collecting.

Cars have always been a big part of Eddie’s life. Blessed with natural mechanical ability, he enjoys tinkering with his ’56 Chevy Bel Air and his ’71 Chevelle. Of course, this provided a social activity as his friends, neighbors and brother shared a similar love of engines. Eddie did a little drag racing back in the day. At one of these races, on a dark, remote Dorchester road, a local deputy sheriff showed up and asked the group if they were fixing to race. They admitted it and he told them to wait until he could go home and get his car and join in. The good old days for sure.

Jesse allowed Eddie and his brother to hunt deer at the club as none of the members had any interest in it. Eddie had a friend whose father had a similar job to Jesse up in Meekins Neck, giving them another good spot to hunt sika deer.

Eddie attended Hoopers Island Elementary School, Golden Hill Junior High, and South Dorchester High School. He was a good student and was involved in track and field as a high jumper as well as helping with the basketball program. Eddie had a keen interest in woodworking and hung around the woodshop frequently, sponging up as much knowledge as he could. He also worked in the cafeteria, allowing for free lunch and extra fries. Eddie went to school with Ronnie Newcomb, of taxidermy and decoy collecting fame and the two have been good friends ever since.

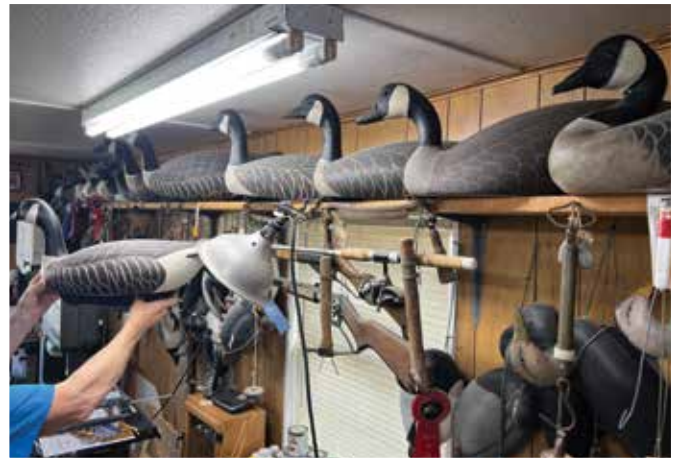
The most important event in Eddie’s high school career was when he started going with Rosemary Parks, president of the junior class, future valedictorian, and the love of his life. They married in 1969 at Hosier UMC and have been together for 55 years of marital bliss.

Their son, Edward Jr. was born in 1971 and continues the family tradition as a duck hunter and decoy maker, when his busy schedule as a paramedic allows. Eddie and Rosemary are blessed with three grandchildren and three great granddaughters whom they properly spoil.

Eddie crabbed with his father from 1960 through the time he started his career around 1970. He was running the 34-foot workboat by the time he was about ten, mastering the stick steering like an old pro. He did crab one year for a friend’s father when his friend was serving in Viet Nam. He also did a stint at the wharfs in Cambridge unloading ships with cargo headed to the Bumble Bee tuna cannery that was located there. In 1968, Eddie started at Western Publishing in Cambridge as an entry level press “feeder”



Outstanding wigeon pair from Eddie's rig.



Geese from Eddie's rig. Ward Brother's influence is quite evident.

and moving his way up to shop supervisor, spending 38 years before the company sold. He also worked nine years at INX, an ink manufacturer in Federalsburg, working on different ink recipes for Solo Cup, retiring there after a total of 48 years of employment.

On my first visit, Eddie took me out back to his well-organized decoy shop outfitted with all the necessary tools and machines. Decoys in various stages of completion were on the work bench, and I noticed one that was ready for paint and told Eddie I believed it was a redhead, according to the form. It was indeed a redhead, and it showed the anatomical accuracy Eddie puts in his birds. Several black duck decoys with beautiful paint were placed near a kerosine heater to help them dry faster. His gunning rig was neatly stacked on the floor and decoys of all kinds set proudly on shelves. Eddie knew the story about every bird in the room, whether it was historical significance, a funny anecdote about how it was acquired or when he made it and the kind of wood used.

Eddie started messing around with decoys in the sixties, making some miniatures, but got serious about full size gunning decoys around 1971. Early influence was provided by Ron Rue, an outstanding maker, and a coworker at Western. Rue talked Eddie into making a bufflehead to put in the World Championships. The bird was decent, but no ribbons did it win. Rue continued to mentor, teach, and encourage, so the next year Eddie entered five birds, earning four ribbons. With that itch scratched, Eddie then focused on creating a top- notch gunning rig, mostly leaving the contests behind.

Eddie favors white pine, but will use white cedar, cottonwood, and bass, all dependent on availability. He made hundreds of decoys from white pine pallet runners that supplies were shipped on to Western, showing his resourcefulness. While he has made some



Eddie and Rosemary with a black duck pair from Eddie's rig.

round bottomed, lathe turned birds, he prefers a flat bottom decoy, keeping with the local style. Dean also mentioned the Ward Brothers and Grayson Chesser as major influences in his work, and it is obvious when one handles his birds. He makes most species that fly Chesapeake Bay.

Like many makers, Eddie enjoys the woodworking aspects more than the painting process, which he finds challenging. He has long ago mastered the band saw, draw knife and spokeshave. He whittles a great head and like most masters, knows how to get and maintain a sharp edge on his knives. Grumbacher tube oils and

Rustoleum white and black are the paints used and Eddie, despite some self-deprecation, has a great eye for color, a steady hand and achieves soft edges as he blends beautifully. Eddie takes a few orders, but do not be in a hurry, as birds this good are worth the wait. In the writer's opinion, Eddie has created one of the finest gunning rigs to float on Chesapeake Bay.

The folk-art pieces Dean makes are off the chart good. Blue crabs, carved by a master woodworker who knows a thing or two about crabs, are incredible as are the oyster shucking boards. Eddie has made several skipjack models from scratch that are around twenty-four inches and accurately executed. He has crafted several old school six guns, completely made of wood, which are hard to differentiate from the real thing. His ability to mimic rust and general patina is uncanny.

Eddie and Rosemary have built an impressive, multifaceted decoy collection. In addition to his father's birds, the collection includes many examples made on Hoopers including birds by Bill Creighton and Clarence "Pap" Creighton, among others. The Deans really enjoy unknown Hoopers Island mergansers and geese. Other Dorchester County decoys are also well represented as one might expect. Eddie and Rosemary have concentrated on collecting fine examples of Ed Phillips decoys, which have special meaning, as his Dad knew and shot with Phillips back in the day. Phillips decoys don't come easy as they are highly desirable to several decoy collecting legends. A smattering of Wards and some quality Upper Bay decoys to include, Ben Dye, Taylor Boyd, Bob McGaw and Jim Currier, have been added over the years. One of the finest groups of older Paul Gibson decoys the writer has seen, has been collected through the years.

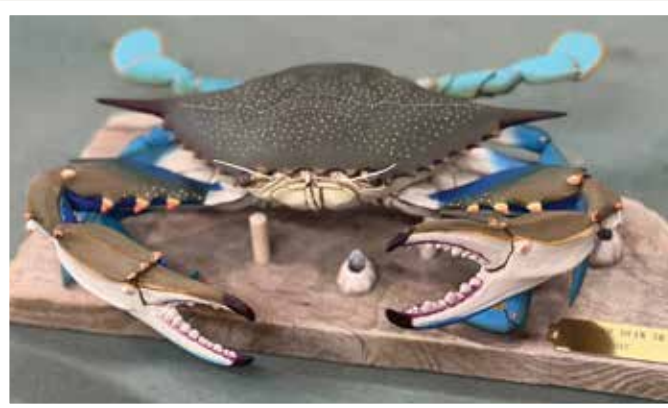
Eddie is a fixture at local auctions and decoy shows, seen frequently with his friend, Bruce Baynard, of Trappe, Maryland. Dean is a member of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum and highly active in the Eastern Shore Decoy Collectors Cub, Potomac Decoy Collectors Association, among others. He loves to discuss decoy and gunning history and is very generous in sharing his vast knowledge. Eddie is proud of his heritage spanning back through his father, Jesse, grandfather, Bain, and beyond, not to mention the pride he has for his son, Eddie Jr.

Eddie and Rosemary enjoy an idyllic life, on their beloved Hoopers Island, surrounded by family and friends. This couple figured it out long ago. They are folks of the finest kind.

The writer would like to thank Eddie & Rosemary Dean for their hospitality and assistance in chronicling their family history. Bill Waibel is a long-time collector and can be reached at: coachbillwaibel@gmail.com



Eddie's favorite duck from the collection: Ed Phillips baldcrown.



Slightly oversized Jimmy crab made by Eddie.



Oyster shucking board with full accoutrements completely carved from wood.

TIME CAPSULES:

Boxes, Drawers, Blanket Chests, Cupboards, & Dusty Shelves

By C. John Sullivan, Jr.





I recently suffered a minor physical setback. I often find myself these days sitting at my kitchen table. The table was my great -grandparents'. I have vivid memories of my grandparents at this table, my parents, and now me. I eat here, I update my daily journal here, I read the news that appears on my cell phone, I open my mail here, pay my bills, and write my stories here, and I manage my life here. In an effort to maintain a certain level of dignity on the top of this table, I have placed a box on the chair next to me. The box holds various sundry pieces of paper that I refer to each day. It holds last year's journal, bills waiting to be paid, and assorted pieces of history. A recent search of this receptacle led me to pull out photographs that had found their way to the bottom of the box, and I realized that this container that I reach into each day has, within a period of a little more than six months, become a time capsule. A time capsule of my life rests here. How does this happen? A visitor could take a glance at my few notes from old friends, notes to myself, and photos and wonder what the heck I was doing or maybe could put the pieces of the puzzle together and see a picture of my life.

I well recall a museum director visiting me over 30 years ago; as we walked about my house, each object that one of us picked up brought a story to mind. Another museum curator stopped by in search of a photograph of a sinkbox, and within a few minutes, I was able to retrieve one from the drawer of a desk. I was asked "How do you keep all of this straight?" I had no answer at the time, but I now recognize that I have become a curator of my personal museum. Not a day goes by that I don't find myself playing the role of curator of my stuff. I am constantly adjusting, rearranging, and taking inventory.



A few months ago, I was preparing for a presentation at a decoy collectors' meeting. I was going to show a few examples of the work of carver Charles Nelson Barnard. I opened up the lid of a blanket chest where a few pieces of Barnard's work reside. As I peered inside, I focused my eyes on a wonderful story or rather many stories. I saw photos of this carver at various stages of his life. I lifted up a folder that was filled with patterns: patterns for his blackducks, canvasbacks, redheads, and bluebills. I picked up the overlay cutout made from the lid of a colorful box. The overlay, when laid over the back of his blackducks, allowed Barnard to find the exact position for the wing speculum. Inside the same folder and neatly placed under the patterns for his full-size decoys were the patterns for his decorative miniature decoys. I lifted up another folder, and there I found a wooden cutout for his high-head canvasback decoys; along with the pattern were several long galvanized nails for attaching the heads. Finally, as I carefully searched through the chest, I arrived at a group of old grain bags, and there hidden away in the bags were the finished examples of his decoys. I pulled from the chest what I needed for the presentation, and as I stood in front of this chest I wondered, did I retrieve enough stories or just enough? As I shut the lid on the chest, I knew there were more stories hidden away, yet to be told.

As a young auction fan, I well remember my very first experience at an auction when I was 9 years old. I purchased two items, a small stoneware crock and a small box. I spent a grand total of eight dollars for the two items. The crock and the box remain with me to this day. Both of these items were to become the first of many. The wonderful thing about boxes is they can house a variety of items. Boxes, baskets, and chests all become places to put stuff. If the places aren't inspected with any regularity, they become "treasure troves." I can say without a doubt that discovery of my paternal grandfather's time books from the Maryland Pennsylvania Railroad neatly tucked away in the attic of the family's springhouse were a treasure to me and truly inspired me to keep and record the days of my life.

I don't collect carved songbirds. OK, maybe a few: some from Crisfield, a few folk art birds. I'm wondering if dove decoys fall into this category, as I have some of



them. But at the Second Havre de Grace Decoy Festival, I was set up with my very best decoy friend, the late Henry A. Fleckenstein, Jr. Henry had brought along two shoeboxes to the show. He said "Take a look in these boxes. I just bought these birds at the Ohio Decoy Show." I opened the boxes, and carefully wrapped in newspapers were a dozen well carved and painted songbirds, each a different species. I knew as I unwrapped them that they were for me. I had the perfect place for them. They became mine, traveled home with me, and quickly replaced the items that rested on a high shelf in my living room. A few months later, I drove to Henry's for our annual trip north to Maine. As I stepped into his garage workshop, resting on top of the old workbench were three more songbirds. One of them, the largest, was a meadowlark with its head turned slightly to one side, enhancing its realism. I told Henry that they should have been with the group I purchased in Havre de Grace. But Henry said "Oh no, this was a separate deal. They were just shipped to me." That was to be the end of the discussion, never to be mentioned again. Over 30 years passed, and I was visiting Henry on a regular basis after his health had declined. On one of those visits, as I walked into his living room, Henry said "Do me a favor and go out to my shed. Walk into the back room, turn to your right, and you'll see a small cupboard alongside the window. Open the cupboard, then open the bottom drawer, and take out what you find there." I followed his instructions and retrieved the contents. It was the three songbirds that I had coveted years before. They came home with me that day and joined the flock. They became the central focal point of that display. Opening that drawer and removing those little birds was a thrill. Henry had tucked away those three pieces to be reunited from that time capsule.

It seems that so many times in various locations, such as John Pusey's warehouse, Henry Fleckenstein's shed, Homer Barnard's shop, Tommy Brooks' garage, most anyplace where I have searched to add to my collections, areas existed out of plain sight where special things were hidden away. It was always exciting to discover these areas. When I return home with treasures from these various locations, many of the items are displayed on my shelves. But for some reason, I too tuck away out of sight special items. By doing this, adventures are created. Where did I place that decoy? Where is that piece of ephemera? And so the search begins. I assure you that finding little or not so little gems is a thrill. Take a look and perhaps display such delights. The excitement of the discovery is as good as the chase was when you first obtained the rediscovered object.



Workshop Window

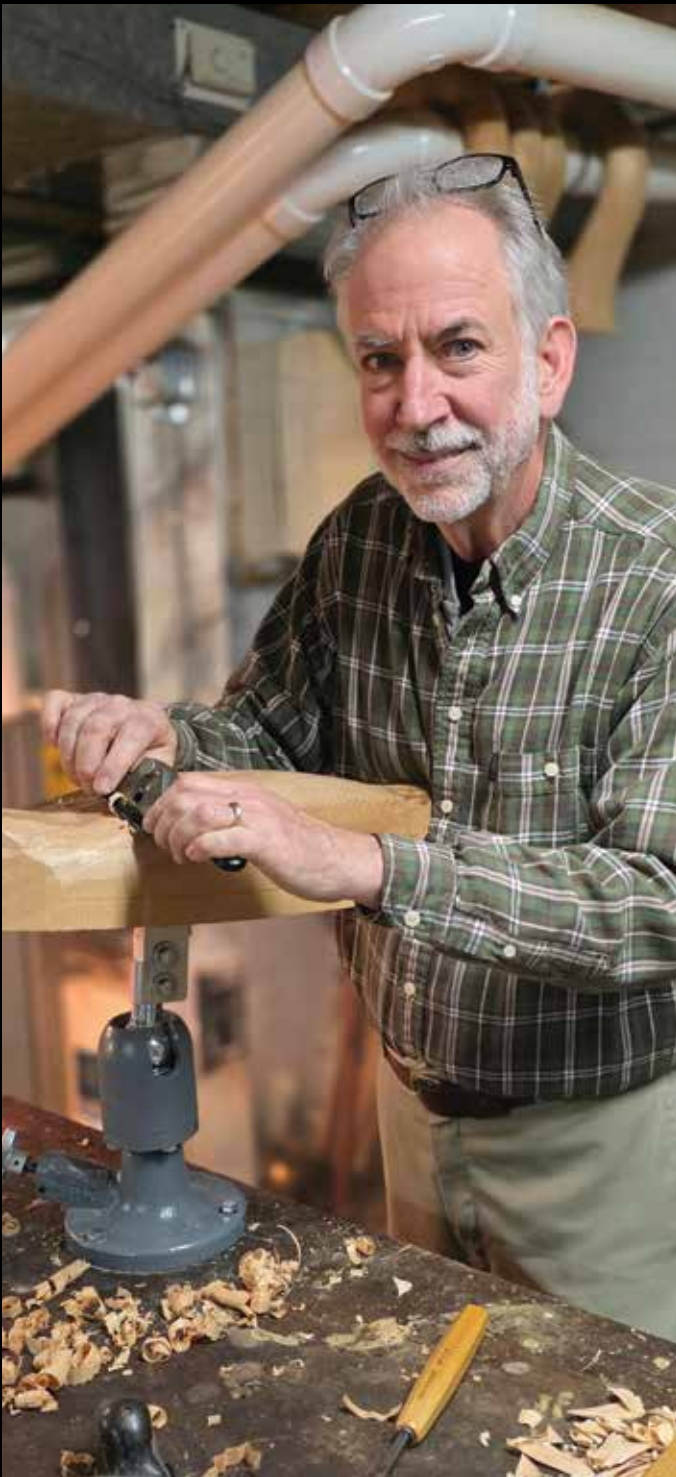
By Cindy Currier

Tom Brogan
Media, Pennsylvania

In this issue of Workshop Window, we peek into the workshop of carver, Tom Brogan. Tom started carving over forty years ago after seeing decoys in Cape May, New Jersey and instantly loving the art form.

Tom's 25x20 shop has been a dedicated space in his basement for 25 years. He generally uses Atlantic White Cedar and oil paints to make his birds. He makes them hollow and is known for placing a couple of kernels of corn inside, so they'll "never go hungry,"

Please enjoy this visual tour.







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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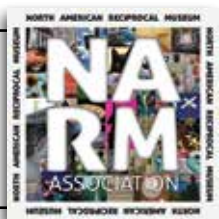
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The Fish Eaters- *Mergansers*

By John Hughes

Hoody vaults - Perfect 10?
Photo by Earl Blansfield



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.



Red Breasted pair enter the marsh • Photo by Robert Bruch

As I have matured and gained a greater understanding of natural history over the years, I am always amazed at how individual species of organisms have evolved and seemingly fit perfectly into an environmental niche that enables them to be successful in the present moment. Of course, if evolution is defined as a “fitting into the environment” then it only makes sense that those organisms that fit in are successful and those that don’t fail and either migrate to a more favorable set of conditions or disappear altogether. The environment is the great challenge and species’ shapes and behaviors are molded by it to form a dynamic interacting community. Considering the changes to an environment because of the circumstances of time, it becomes obvious that each creature modifies both its physical and behavioral characteristics over generations to survive. As a student, I enjoy trying to discover the adaptations that a species employs to be a success in the continual flux of its community. I’ve come to learn that nature is more a kaleidoscope than a photo or painting.

Why would a duck eat fish as its principal food? Has this niche given them more potential to succeed and avoid competition with other waterfowl? Are a serrated bill, linear body, and strong feet and legs for propulsion keys to its success? Are cooperative fishing efforts a behavioral adaptation for success? A closer look at North American mergansers may help to provide the answers.

Piscivores are creatures whose predominant food sources are fish. Amongst North American waterfowl, the mergansers are the major grouping of fish eating consumers. The common, red-breasted, and hooded mergansers all possess special adaptations that allow them to pursue, capture, and eat small fin-fish up to 12 inches in length. Anyone who has spent the least bit of time observing them at work, knows how successful they are in their endeavors. Classified as diving ducks, these birds will swim with their eyes below the surface, completely submerge in shallow areas of about 10-15 feet or less of water and capture their prey by sight. They propel through the water by using their powerful webbed feet to push their projectile-like bodies forward. Clear water is a significant factor in allowing “mergs” to capture and consume the 15-20 fish a day that they require to be nourished. They may spend 4-5 hours a day and dive 200-300 times to meet

their energy needs but a fish is a high energy reward for their efforts. These shaggy-headed birds possess long thin bills with serrated edges for grasping the slippery fish and are sometimes called saw bills. Although in need of long runways to gain lift off the water, they have been clocked at over 100 miles per hour in flight. This is faster than even canvasbacks which reach speeds of over 70 miles per hour and were long considered the fastest flying waterfowl.

Mergansers were thought by some to be a threat to gamefish and in local areas destruction of fish populations can occur. Recent studies, however, reveal those opinions to be exaggerated in regards to the impact of merganser’s consumption. (American Wildlife and Plants: A Guide to Wildlife Food Habits. Martin, Zim, Nelson. p.55) Stomach analysis revealed game fish may constitute close to a third of fish eaten, especially by the common merganser, but the majority of fish consumed were considered low-grade or rough fish. (Ibid.) Almost no plant material is a part of the merganser’s diet. Mergs are opportunistic feeders and depending on species will eat crayfish, frogs, mollusks, crustaceans, aquatic insects such as caddisfly, mayfly, backswimmers, water striders, dragon flies, crane fly, beetles, caterpillars, etc., spiders, and sponges. Examples of fish taken for food include salmon, trout, suckers, sculpin, shad, sunfish, sticklebacks, chub, minnows, and eel. In general, if it is of right size and capable of being caught, it will be consumed. Occasional cooperative behavior such as fish herding by a group of

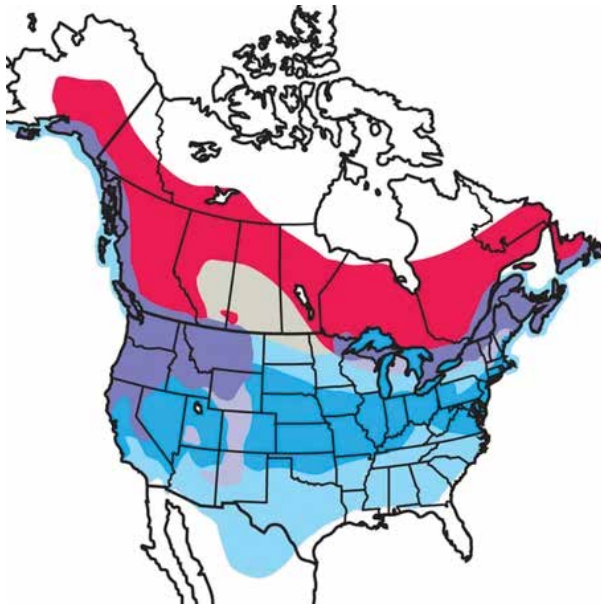
Measurements	Length	Wingspan	Weight	Bill length
Common	24-27 inches	33-35 inches	3.64 lbs.	55 mm.
Red-breasted	23-25 inches	26-30 inches	2.55 lbs	59 mm.
Hooded	17-19 inches	23-26 inches	1.60 lbs.	39 mm.

All sizes are average and related to males. Females are slightly smaller and weigh less.

(Data from *Ducks of North America*. Harrell. 2023 and *The Crossley ID Guide -Waterfowl*. Crossley. 2017.)

mergansers has been observed. Hooded mergansers have the most varied diet and red-breasted the most fish specific but all species are prone to their immediate environmental circumstances.

Common Merganser (*Mergus merganser*)



Common Merganser Range (National Audubon Society)

The common merganser is sometimes called the American merganser or American goosander. These large birds are associated with rivers and lakes during breeding season and winter in coastal areas and protected bays and estuaries. They require mature forest close to the water during breeding season because they are cavity nesters. Nests are usually within a mile of water. They will use artificial nesting boxes with a 6 inch entrance hole. The female is solely responsible for nesting, incubation, and the early days of the young's life. She produces 8-12 eggs on average in her only brood of the season. Incubation is between 28-35 days and the young are fledged between 60-70 days. Nest parasitism occurs by other common mergansers as well as goldeneye ducks. The young are precocial and can swim within minutes of birth. Young birds fall prey to hawks, eagles, owls, loons, northern pike and snapping turtles but overall recruitment is good. Large numbers of ducklings are sometimes cared for by a single female in what is known as a creche. They are considered partial migrants because their movements are to open water away from ice. Sexual maturity is reached in two years.

These birds are extremely clumsy on land because of their feet to body location to the far posterior and they possess an almost penguin-like posture. Common mergansers are wary birds and usually have a sentinel on duty while the group feeds or preens. In the water, they are noted for their long body, a red bill and feet, and a shaggy crest. They swim deep in the water and from a distance can be confused with cormorants. They often float down streams and rivers searching for prey and will swim or fly back upstream or river and start the



Hen Common Merganser scans the water
Photo by Scott Moody

process over again. Common mergansers work shallow as well as deep water and can stay submerged for as much as 2 minutes and pop up far from where they entered the water. They are often seen on rocks in large numbers, preening or drying their wings. They also seem to enjoy fishing in rapids. They require much wing flapping and running on the water to get airborne and they fly in long straight lines just above the water. Clear water is important to many birds, but very significant to common mergansers because they need to see their prey. They are fairly quiet birds except when grunting as an alarm.

Common mergansers are considered low risk in regards to conservation concerns. Problems such as pesticide contamination, heavy metals, acid rain, and climate change are potentially challenging issues to their success. Location at the top of the food chain makes them prone to bioaccumulation and concentration of toxic materials. Their population is presently stable or slightly increasing at well over a million plus birds worldwide.

Red-breasted-merganser (*Mergus serrator*)

Red-breasted mergansers nest further north than common or hooded mergs. Nesting north of the tree line explains the reason that their nests are on the ground in wetland marshes rarely more than 75 feet from water. The marshes may be either fresh or saltwater and the nest is usually built in dense vegetation. The nest may be under the cover of shrubs, driftwood, or any close-by dwarfed trees or their branches and limbs. Red-breasted mergansers are late breeders and females are usually on their own once the eggs are laid. Females lay between 7-12 eggs and incubation is from 30-31 days. Brood parasitism is common by their own species and they will parasitize other nests of birds such as the barrow's



Red Breasted Merganser Range (National Audubon Society)

goldeneye, harlequin duck, mallard, gadwall, and scaup. (Crossley. p.475.) The young are born with eyes open and down covered bodies ready to begin life. Females separate from their young rather early and creches from many broods form. It is thought that the weakened condition of the females after breeding leads to this behavior. Fledging of the young takes anywhere from 60-65 days. Eggs are preyed upon by crows and gulls and the young fall victim to predation by fish and fox as well as extremes of climatic conditions. They are the longest distance migrators among the mergansers and use coastal areas, both Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and the Gulf of Mexico. Flocks of up to 100 birds have been observed. Sexual maturity is at 2 years and during pair bonding males are noted for their elaborate displays.

Red-breasted mergansers are noted for the bright red eyes of both sexes and their orange legs and feet. They have a very slender orangish-red bill with a tab on the end and in the water they are low with a rather thin profile. Red-breasted mergansers on their wintering grounds work salt water which is usually more turbid (less clear) than the fresh waters used by hoodies and common mergs. They have been witnessed to herd fish in large groups and been labelled the "wolves of the water" (Crossley. p. 473) but are oftentimes solitary in their fishing. They work close to the shoreline with their heads submerged to just above eye level. Freshwater feeding yields greater diversity of prey fish for the red-breasted mergansers, while saltwater hunting is partial to herring and herring-like fish. Prey is usually 4-8 inches in length. They will also feed on crustaceans and other small organisms. As with the common, red-breasted require long runways to get airborne but once in flight are extremely fast. As previously noted, they have been clocked at speeds exceeding 100 mph when they were pursued by aircraft. They are noted as very quiet birds except during courtship.



Red Breasted Drake takes flight • Photo by Robert Bruch

These mergansers are confronted by a variety of challenges but their population is considered stable and they are listed by the IUCN as birds of least concern in regards to their survival. Presently, habitat loss and wetlands destruction are major problems for the birds, especially on their breeding grounds. Toxic exposure to lead and pesticides, as well as exposure to oil present further challenges to the bird's survival. In coastal areas, they are often bycatch to commercial fishing and have been persecuted by fishermen for their perceived threat to fisheries. The present population is at 370,000 birds worldwide.

Hooded merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*)

Hooded mergansers exhibit strong monogamous pair bonding until incubation of the eggs begins. These birds are cavity nesters and breed in forested areas of mature trees in a close proximity to freshwater. Swamps are also a prime nesting area as well as beaver ponds. Cavities selected are between 4-50 feet above ground or water level. They also are very successful users of artificial nesting boxes using a 3-5 inch opening. Depending on geographic location, nesting may be from late February through June. Females lay between 7-15 eggs and incubation is a rather long 32-33 days. Synchronous hatching of the precocial ducklings occurs within a 24 hour period and after a short period of mothering the female abandons the only brood of the season. Nest parasitism by wood ducks occurs and hoodies have been known to lay some of their eggs in goldeneye nests. Nest predation occurs by mink, racoons, black bears, rat snakes and pileated woodpeckers. (The North American Sea Ducks. Johnsgard. p.181.) The young will be flying in about 60-70 days. Hooded mergansers are short distant migrators usually wintering over in any ice free pond, lake, or river. They are considered small water ducks and prefer freshwater although they can be found in slightly brackish areas. Sexual maturity is at two years.



Hooded Merganser Range (National Audubon Society)

Male hooded mergansers are an extremely beautiful duck with a stunning fanlike white crest and a bright yellow eye. The crest can be expanded or shrunk in size, and this is especially true during courtship behavior. Females possess a brown eye as well as cinnamon-brown plumage. The bills are black and have been compared to needle-nosed pliers. (Ducks of North America. Harrell.p.103.) Feet and legs are brownish-yellow. Hooded mergansers are a small duck, slightly larger than buffleheads, but very small in relation to the other mergansers. They have a more generalized diet than the common or red-breasted, even including occasional amounts of plant material. Fish are still the predominant food, but crayfish, crabs, insects, insect larvae, snails, and amphibians are also found commonly in their diet. The hooded hunts as do the other mergansers by sight. It generally works in shallow water areas and can occasionally be seen hunting in groups. Hooded mergansers never glide while in flight and also require distance on water to become airborne. They are quiet birds but the male has been called the frog duck because of a call resembling a pickerel frog.

The hooded merganser is only found in North America. Its success as a species is threatened by loss of forested habitat, especially mature forests, accumulation and concentration of toxics and pesticides, trophy-duck status, and climate change. It is however, considered a species of least concern by the IUCN. The present population is approximately 1.1 million worldwide (N.A.).

Personal Observations and Reflections

I greatly enjoy spotting any of the mergansers in the field, especially when they are feeding. They are always a treat to add to our Audubon Christmas Bird Count. We usually find the common merganser in the Susquehanna along the Cecil County shoreline below the I-95 bridge. As they float down river, toward the flats, in a group of about a dozen birds they seem to be constantly diving and often rewarded with a fish.



Water clears the hood's bill • Photo by Scott Moody

It's fun to try to identify the type of fish that they are capturing and consuming. Almost always one of the birds is acting as a sentinel while the others are feeding. It is difficult to get close to these birds, but with a pair of binoculars they can be easily observed. However, get too close and the birds are rapidly swimming away or running on the water to fly away. It is always a challenge to watch them dive underwater and to try and guess how long they will be under and at what spot they will resurface.

Red-breasted mergansers are less often seen in the northern bay, but we have listed them on the bird count. They are usually solitary at this time of year. Back during the time I led canoe trips for CBF and the John Carroll School, many of these experiences took place in the saltier areas of the middle to southern bay and the back bay areas of Assawoman, Sinepuxent, and Chincoteague bays. Here, in the shallow water areas, red-breasted mergansers were commonly sighted. We could never get that close to them in the canoes but were able to witness their persistent efforts at fishing. First on the surface, then diving, then popping up again on the surface usually with a 3-4 inch minnow or perhaps bigger fish in their bill. They're relentless activity, either solo or in small groups gives credence to their label the "wolves of the water". They were a student favorite because of their awkward bushy green crests and near constant activity.

My favorite merganser is the hooded. I relish spotting them because of the beautiful color pattern exhibited by the male bird and its amazing white crest. Its crest can be manipulated to appear quite large at times and barely there at other moments. Swimming low in the water and lunging forward into a dive, these birds complete the mosaic of a swamp environment to my mind. On a beautiful day drifting

Drake Hooded Merganser vocalizes
Photo by Scott Moody



Serrated bill reveals key Merganser adaptations
(International Bird Rescue and Dr. Rebecca Duerr)



Hen Hoody peruses her lunch options
Photo by Earl Blansfield

in my canoe in a swamp; the sky, the forest, the tannin-colored water all become meshed together because of the presence of the hooded mergansers. These birds are quite common during the Christmas Bird Count especially on Furnace Bay and out to the flats. I have a preference for a special location, to sight and study these birds in a swamp in Delaware just on the periphery of the Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge. Here I can sit in my car, binoculars in hand or window mounted spotting scope ready and watch the hoodies go about their life's business. Whether perched on a snag, swimming through marsh reeds, or catching and consuming a fish, my day and my spirit are satiated. If it happens to be pair bonding time, with its enhanced male coloration and behaviors: well it just doesn't get any better!

To conclude, mergansers are the fish eating ducks of the waterfowl world. Their adaptive bill's serrations allow them to feed on fish, almost exclusively, and to be good at it. Other waterfowl may on occasion enhance their diets with a fish,

but none make a living at it as do the mergansers. Those saw- bladed bills evolved and enabled these birds to easily grasp fish and to be able to maintain and perpetuate their population's stability. Team fishing also aided their ability to fish and survive. These birds have proven to be highly successful in their niche fulfillment and have evolved to "fit in". Their study provides a better understanding of the evolution of species and how a community forms.

If you get the opportunity, try to find a merganser in its aquatic environment on stream, river, pond, lake, bay, or coastal waters and witness its very successful fishing efforts. Hopefully, it will afford a glimpse into the bird, its shaping by its environment, and the awe- inspiring wonder of nature in general.

Although this article was written well before the passing of Bob Biddle (Landenberg, PA), I would like to dedicate it to him and his love and memories of mergansers.



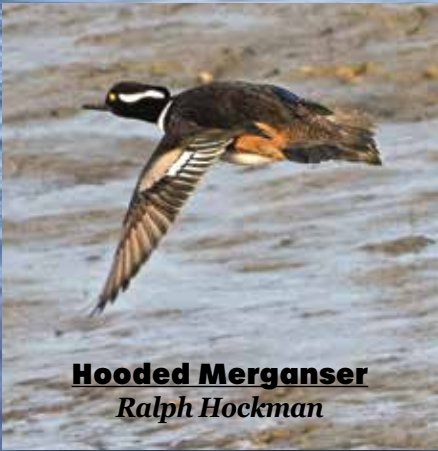
Red Breasted Merganser
Rob Bruch

SHOTS

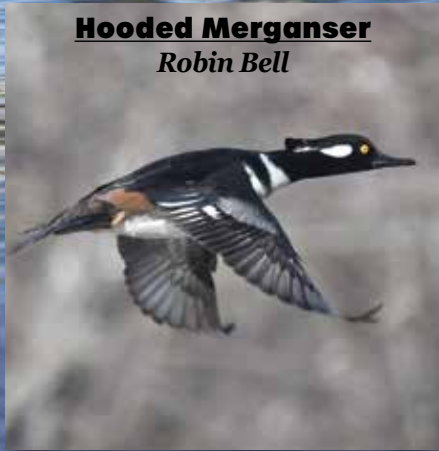
From the Wild

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)

Red Breasted Merganser Pair
Earl Blansfield



Hooded Merganser
Ralph Hockman



Hooded Merganser
Robin Bell



Hooded Merganser
Scott Krieger



Red Breasted Merganser Drake
Earl Blansfield

Male Hooded Mergansers dance for females
Debbie Blair



Hooded Mergansers
Ralph Hockman



Red Breasted Merganser
Rob Bruch

Hooded Mergansers
Rob Bruch



Red Breasted Merganser Hen
Earl Blansfield



Red Breasted Merganser Hen
Ralph Hockman



Red Breasted Merganser
Earl Blansfield



Red Breasted Merganser Pair
Rob Bruch





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Financial Advisor
443.307.8013
jwinner@janney.com

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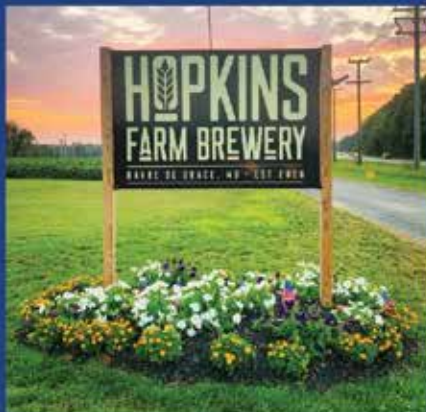
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Potomac Decoy Collectors Association (PDCA)

Up-coming PDCA Meetings

Sunday, August 17

PDCA will meet from 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, 215 Giles Street, Havre De Grace, MD 21078. This will be a joint meeting with our friends from the Upper Bay Club and may also include friends from the Delaware Valley, New Jersey and Delmarva clubs. This meeting will feature a special presentation on the life and decoys of Al Bell by PDCA member Kevin Peel, who will also provide a guided overview of the special temporary exhibit of Bell's work on display at the museum.*

Saturday, September 27

PDCA will meet at member Rob & Pam Knight's home (3007 Lochary Road, Bel Air, Maryland 21015). Club member, author, and historian C. John Sullivan Jr. (assisted by John Sullivan III) will share a special presentation on some of the smallest decoys in his collection (teal and ruddies), and this will be a perfect opportunity to see Rob's incredible (and artfully displayed!) collection up close. Thank you, Rob!!*

* Both the August and September meetings will require RSVPs to attend – please contact chad.tragakis@gmail.com if you would like to join these meetings. Thank you in advance!

President: Chad Tragakis
(2026 Honorary Chairman of the
44th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art
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Havre de Grace, MD 21078
410-734-7709

Decoy Shop - Pat
303 West lane
Churchville, MD 21208
410-734-6238

www.vincentidecoys.com

UPCOMING DECOY SHOW INFORMATION

July 19-20, 2025

**55th Annual Clayton Decoy
& Sporting Collectibles Show**

Cerow Arena • Clayton, NY
Info: Thousand Island Museum
(315) 686-5794 • timuseum.org

September 6, 2025

**7th Annual Charlie Joiner
Memorial Decoy Show**

Galena Volunteer Fire Company
90 East Cross Street • Galena, MD
Info: Allan Schaubert (410) 708-7011

September 13, 2025

6th Annual Delmarva Decoy Show

East New Market Volunteer Fire Hall
East New Market, MD
Info: Burt Campbell (302) 750-0248

October 18, 2025

56th Annual Upper Shore Decoy Show

Minker Banquet Hall, Perryville VFC
Perryville, MD
Info: decoyshow@upperbaymuseum.org

November 14-16, 2025

54th Easton Waterfowl Festival

Easton, MD
Info: (410) 822-4567
Info: facts@waterfowlfestival.org



SEVENTH ANNUAL **Charlie Joiner** MEMORIAL DECOY SHOW



**Saturday, September 6, 2025
9am-3pm**

Galena Volunteer Fire Company
Galena, MD 21635

ADMISSION: \$5

Featuring:

**Decoys | Fishing Lures
Shell Boxes | Oyster Cans
Fishing & Hunting Licenses
& Much More!**

Dealer Tables Available \$50
(before Aug. 1)

\$60 after Aug. 1 | Set-Up 7am-9am

PROCEEDS BENEFIT:

**"Charlie Joiner/Charlie Bryan
Investment Account"
at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum**

INQUIRIES: 410-708-7011 | Allan Schaubert

**FOOD AVAILABLE:
Galena Volunteer Fire Company & Auxiliary**

Celebrating 56 Years

Upper Shore Decoy Show

Saturday,
October 18, 2025

Minker Banquet Hall
Perryville, Maryland

Early Bird: 8am - 3pm

Show Open 9am-3pm

Admission: \$5

Food available for purchase from
the Perryville Ladies' Auxilliary

Hosted by the

**Upper Bay
Museum**



For additional information, find us on
Facebook or check our website:
www.upperbaymuseum.org



6th Annual Delmarva Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show

SAT., SEPT. 13, 2025
8 A.M. - 3 P.M.

Vintage & Contemporary Decoys

Guns • Ammunition • Fishing Lures
Rods & Reels • Books • Shell Boxes • Oyster Cans
Powder Tins • Hunting & Fishing Licenses
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ADMISSION \$6.00

East New Market Volunteer Fire Hall
4020 East New Market Bypass • East New Market, MD 21631

For information, call:

Burt Campbell • 302-750-0248

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Delmarva Decoy Collectors Association

DelmarvaDecoyCollectors.com

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