

The Canvasback

HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

Vol. 36 No. 4

Fall 2026

Tangier Island

*... a tiny island with an
enormous history*

Featuring the photography of
Cameron Evans



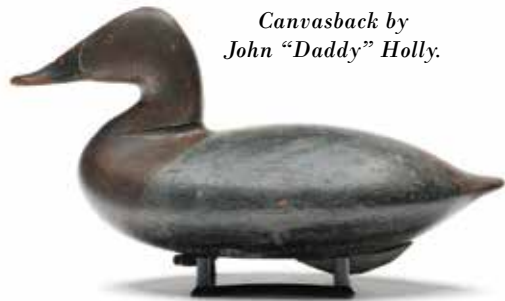
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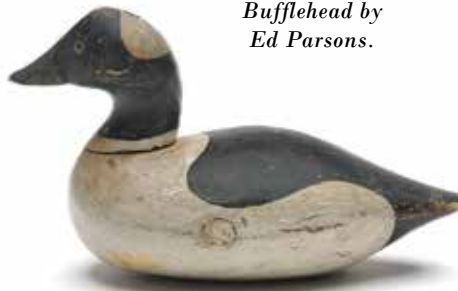
Decoys | Art | Fine Sporting Arms

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November 14 & 15 | Easton, Maryland
Held in Partnership with the Easton Waterfowl Festival*



*Canvasback by
John "Daddy" Holly.*



*Bufflehead by
Ed Parsons.*



*Black duck by
Robert McGaw.*



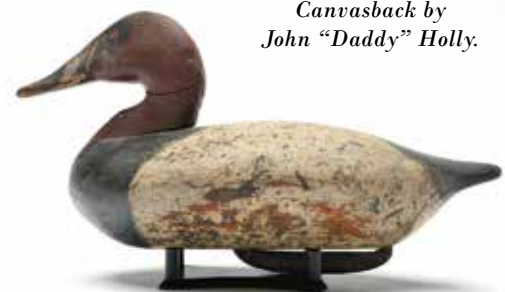
*Ruddy duck by
John Graham.*



*Redhead by
John "Daddy" Holly.*



*Pair of redheads by
Sam Barnes.*



*Canvasback by
John "Daddy" Holly.*



*Fresh to the market bufflehead
from the Schick rig.*



*Oil on canvas by
William Henry Machen*

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

FUNDED IN PART BY



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



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.

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ON THE COVER

The sun sets on an abandoned crab house in Tangier Island Harbor.
Above: Pintail drake taking a stroll on the beach.
Photos by Cameron Evans.



Tickets & Sponsorships
are now available at decoymuseum.com

Saturday, December 5, 2026

2nd Annual

& Decoy Carvers
& Collectors Banquet

at the historic Wellwood Club Charlestown, MD

*Celebrating the
40th Anniversary*

of the opening of the
Havre de Grace Decoy Museum
1986 - 2026



John "Daddy" Holly Canvasback Drake from the "Reckless" rig (circa 1860s-1870s)

PRESERVING OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE OF WATERFOWLING & DECOY MAKING

All proceeds directly benefit operational expenses at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

HAVRE DE GRACE • MARYLAND

45TH ANNUAL

DECOY & WILDLIFE

Art Festival

May 1 & 2, 2027

STAR Centre

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Havre de Grace, Maryland 21078

Saturday, May 1

9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Sunday, May 2

9:00 am - 3:00 pm



HONORARY CHAIRMAN
Gilmore "Butch" Wagoner



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Harford
County MD



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All correspondence should be sent as above.

From the President...

The President would like to dedicate this section to recognize the losses of three friends and members of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum family.

June MacDonald Daley, 74, passed away on February 20, 2026. As a young woman, June was artistic and athletic. She played golf and tennis as a member of the Baltimore Country Club. Mrs. Daley was a 1969 graduate of Delany High School, and she promptly attended the Woodstock Art and Music Festival that summer. Her love for live music never diminished.



June moved to Cape Cod during early 1977. She eventually spent over 40 years caring for both wild and domestic animals and our fragile coastal environment. June met her husband Michael on Cape Cod shortly after arriving. They married in December of 1978.

Once fully retired, June pursued her photography, shell fishing and decoy collecting hobbies. The pinnacle of her photography work is on full display within the 2021 historical reference book, "Waterfowling on the Susquehanna Flats - Decoys, Decoy Makers and Duck Hunters of the Upper Chesapeake Bay" authored by her husband. A Celebration of Life was hosted at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum on September 13, 2026 with approximately 80 friends in attendance..

George Robert Williams, 83, of Camden, DE, passed away peacefully on Monday, August 10. He had a deep desire to both teach and share his knowledge that George became a public-school teacher. During his career George taught both P.E., as well as art in the Appoquinimink School District (Newcastle County, DE), where his career fully blossomed. He went on to become a much beloved and valued art teacher for the duration of his career. He was a maker of traditional gunning decoys. Used as lures in the hunting of wildfowl, George's work captured the essence of life. In 2006, George Williams served as the Honorary Chairman of the 25th Annual Decoy & Wildlife Festival in Havre de Grace, MD.+



Robert H. "Bobby" Richardson, 90, of Cambridge, MD passed away on September 1, 2026. As a young boy Bobby grew up on the Choptank River, of which he enjoyed crabbing, hunting and sailing. Bobby graduated from Cambridge High School in 1954. He was also so proud of the fact that he won the Admiral Richard E. Byrd trophy for sailing at the Cambridge Yacht Club. The trophy was presented by Admiral Byrd himself.



In the 1970's, his love of decoys and hunting collectibles drove Bobby to become one of the top decoy dealers in the country. He also wrote a book in 1973: "Chesapeake Bay Decoys, The Men Who Made and Used Them." Hunting and collecting decoys were his passion in life, at which he made so many lifelong friends.

The Collector's Bond

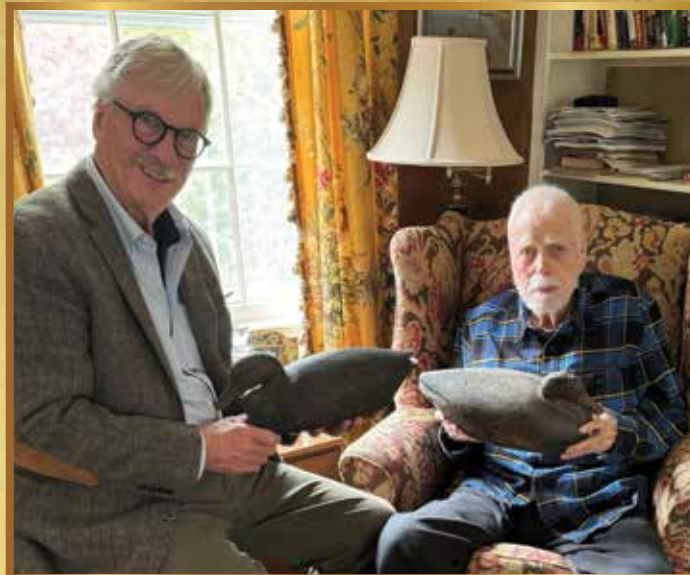
By C. John Sullivan, Jr.



*Ed Coudon &
C. John Sullivan, Jr.*



Paul Gibson & C. John Sullivan III



Bill Purnell & C. John Sullivan, Jr.



Pat Vincenti & C. John Sullivan, Jr.



John Collier, Bill Cordrey & C. John Sullivan, Jr.

Who do you trust? An unwritten code exists within our community. The sharing of not just the objects we collect but the stories that are forever tied to these objects. In the opening segment of the Maryland Public Television special “Chesapeake Decoys: The Nature of Waterfowl Art,” I said “here I am in my home surrounded by the things that I love and cherish. “ Over time, I have heard many collectors say “I love this decoy!” What I love about these sculptures carved in wood is not just their beauty as a waterfowl effigy but also the story that travels with them. Who made this decoy, where was it used, whose rig was it a part of, and how did it come to rest upon my shelf. The very first decoy in my collection was a gift to me. It had resided in my maternal grandparents’ home and was presented to me in an effort to preserve my parents’ few decoys. It has been

with me for many decades, and it never rests very far from me. I can look at others on my shelves, pick them up, and tell the story: what it is, who carved it, where it was used, and how it came to join others on those shelves. There are a few collectors who are actually older than I am, and they feel the same about these objects that surround them. When I visit Bill Purnell in Ocean City, after just a very few minutes of our visit, he will say something like “hand me that black duck on the top shelf and let me tell you about it.” Such visits are a joy to both of us. I share his sense of appreciation for the object and his enthusiasm as he tells the story of how the decoy came to be his. Each visit is the same: we discuss the shape, the subtle differences in the carving style, why the artist added this detail or that, and why the paint is different on this decoy. The stories ultimately conclude with detailed facts of how the



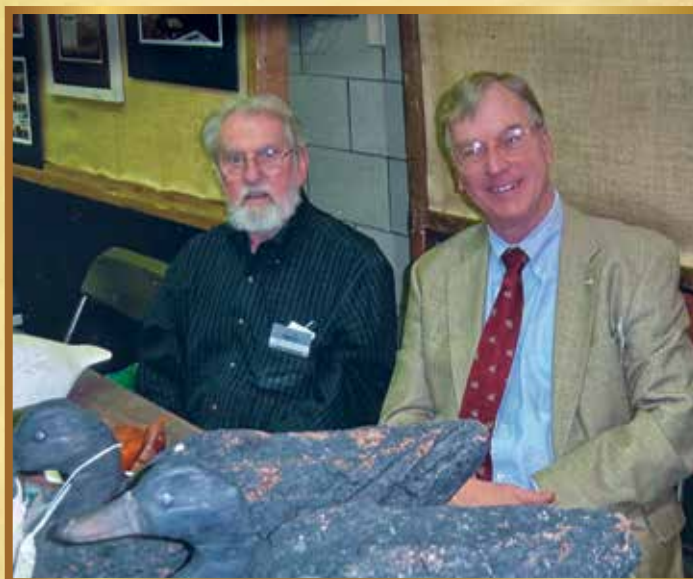
Chad Tragakis & Kevin Peel.



C. John Sullivan, Jr. & Bobby Richardson



C. John Sullivan, Jr. & Ronnie Newcomb



Henry Fleckenstein & C. John Sullivan, Jr.

decoy was acquired and how it became a part of the collection. I have never heard from a collector that he obtained a favored decoy by some unscrupulous means. I cannot imagine a collector enjoying the view of such a piece as it stares back at him from a shelf. Imagine if you can looking at a prized decoy and describing to a visitor how you tricked someone or, even worse, how you left a collector's room with something not rightfully yours. How would you live with yourself? How would you ever avoid telling an untruthful story?

The days of finding a decoy from a gunner's rig are quickly disappearing. I have been so incredibly fortunate to have been presented with wonderful collecting opportunities. I had wonderful associations with all of the local carvers. I enjoyed visiting with them as they carved and painted decoys. The element of trust existed in all of those associations. When I was

low on cash, the carver would send me out the door carrying his decoys and say "we'll catch up on your next visit." In my dealings with John M. M. Pusey, I often left his farm with a dozen or more decoys with the understanding that we would settle up when I next returned. There were times in the early 1980s when I would visit him a couple of times each month. It was always about trust. John would say "take these along with you and see if they suit you." They always did, and I would return with a handful of cash and for another group of decoys. In today's world, most decoys are sold in an auction setting. Potential buyers can visit the auction house and handle any decoy that appeals to them. Prospective buyers may examine a \$200 decoy or one worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. It is all about trust. Many of the decoy collecting clubs have decoy contests or show-and-tell events. Participants pick up and examine fellow collectors' prize decoys. Those who engage



C. John Sullivan, Jr. & Pete Pappas



“Gunner” Alvin Meekins & C. John Sullivan III



C. John Sullivan III & Arthur Patterson

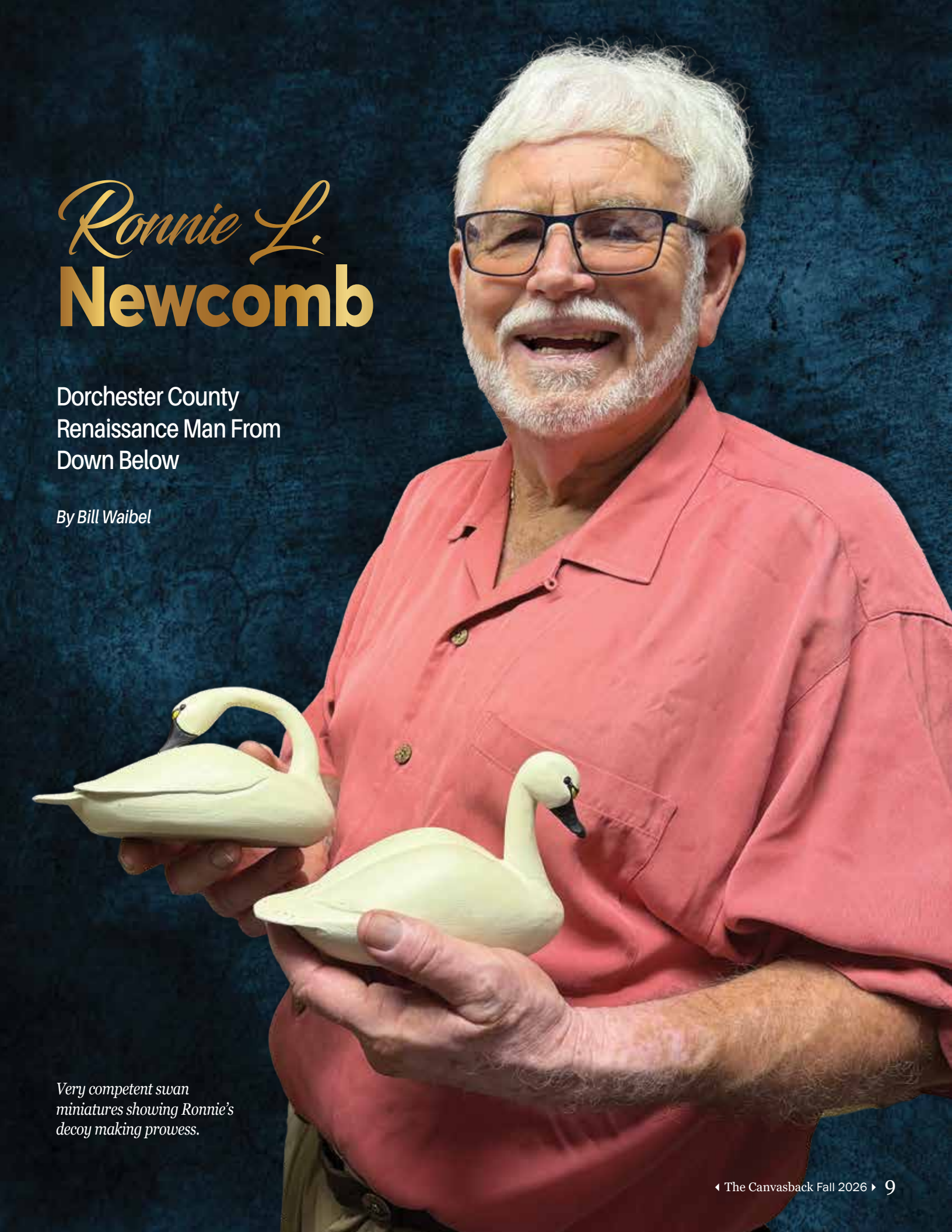


R. Madison Mitchell & C. John Sullivan, Jr.

never question that anyone would mishandle or disrespect another collector’s decoy. Collectors provide portions of their collections to several museums. Once the decoys are delivered, it is understood that they are in safe hands. Collectors never question the fact that their favorite decoys will be exhibited for months or in some cases years. Although they are missed by the collector, their care and safe keeping are never questioned. Museum displays allow hundreds of visitors to view fabulous works of art. Recent loans to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum by the decoy auction company of Guyette and Deeter have provided museum guests with the opportunity to view million dollar collections that have never been exhibited. Some of these extremely rare decoys have been viewed only by a handful of people since they left the carver’s workshop.

As collectors, many of us participate in and enjoy decoy roundtables. Over 40 years ago, Henry Fleckenstein would visit me or I would visit him with seafood boxes packed with some of our favorite birds. We would gather our decoys on a kitchen table or across the floor and discuss paint, carving details, and form. I continue this exercise today with other collector friends. The elements of trust and friendship over our shared enthusiasm are always present. Roundtables with a group of collectors are always welcomed.

We share a wonderful hobby. Our passion has led to lifelong friendships. I encourage each of you to engage with fellow enthusiasts, share your dedication, and remember that it’s all about trust.

A full-page photograph of an older man with white hair, a beard, and glasses, wearing a red short-sleeved button-down shirt. He is smiling and holding two white swan decoys, one in each hand. The background is a dark, textured blue.

Ronnie L. Newcomb

Dorchester County
Renaissance Man From
Down Below

By Bill Waibel

*Very competent swan
miniatures showing Ronnie's
decoy making prowess.*



Ronnie and Kim Newcomb with their 1939 Studebaker State President.

Over one hundred years ago, Lee LeCompte, head game warden for the state of Maryland, lauded Dorchester as the most bountiful county in the state with regards to wild game, fish, and sporting opportunities. The natural beauty and nearly one thousand square miles of land and water, boasting forest, fields, marshes, swamps, creeks, rivers, and bays, make LeCompte's sentiment most comprehensible. For thousands of years, families have relied on Dorchester's bounty for sustenance and revenue. Originally settled by the Nanticoke and Choptank tribes over 10,000 years ago, these Algonquian speaking people were masters of hunting and gathering this most fertile land. In the early 1600s, after Captain John Smith's initial exploration, English settlers slowly moved into the area.

Fast forward four hundred years and meet one of Dorchester County's favorite sons: Ronald Lee Newcomb. Ronnie, as he is known to his many friends, was born October 23, 1949, to J. Russell (1921-2006) and Martha (McGlaughlin) (1929-2020) Newcomb.

Russell was born in Madison to Lee A and Naomi Willey Newcomb and lived out his entire life within a few miles of his birthplace. Russell, his father, and several generations prior actively engaged in farming the once-fertile farmland of South Dorchester. Martha was born on Wesley Road, Lakes, about ten miles south of Russell's homeplace. Her parents, Wilbur and Pauline McGlaughlin were a waterman family, tonging oysters mostly, like many of their neighbors, but were also engaged in canning as tomatoes were the big crop back then.

Ronnie's parents, married in 1948, were a hardworking, industrious couple. In addition to the arduous life of farming, Russell also worked for Spicer Lumber and was also employed by Cambridge Wire Cloth as a skilled machinist and even spent some time as a longshoreman. Martha worked many years as a presser in a shirt factory. Moreover, Russell and Martha were school bus contractors, safely delivering Dorchester's best and brightest to school for 50 years, following in the footsteps of Lee, who started contracting school buses in 1936. While "Miss" Martha, as she was referred to by generations of Dorchester children, ran a tight ship, she is best remembered as a caring lady who many children looked to as a second mother. Martha drove the children until the age of eighty. These folks were always grinding to make a better life for their family. The obvious by-product of their vocational marathon was the strong work ethic they instilled in their sons.

Ronnie is the oldest of four boys and he and his brothers, Wayne, Gary, and Jay, grew up in a loving, close knit family. With hard work and guidance from their parents, each son found success in his chosen career. In the ultimate gesture of love and respect, the brothers served as pallbearers, carrying their dad, Russell, to his final resting place.

South Dorchester has been referred to as, "Down Below" by locals since anyone can remember. With that moniker comes a high level of pride and independence amongst the local folks, who knew, due to their geographical isolation, they had to depend on themselves, with occasional help from family and friends, to make a go of it. Unfortunately, most of the once fertile farms around the towns

Joe Travers mallard and redhead, along with a rare Travers miniature mallard.





Basket of mergansers and a bufflehead made by Ronnie over 50 years ago.

of Andrews, Lakes, Crapo, Toddville, and Crocheron, have been abandoned due to salt water incursion. The neighborhoods that were once thriving with agriculture, seafood and tomato canning are just mere ghosts of what they once were.

Growing up on Hip Roof Road in the Golden Hill area was interesting for a young lad with sporting ambitions. The area is at the center of the headwaters of the Blackwater and Honga rivers and Slaughter Creek. While these headwaters were in very close proximity, each was independent of the other and provided access to both fresh and brackish water. Of course, nowadays, this has changed with rising sea levels, drastically increasing the salinity level in the Blackwater River. The back part of the Newcomb farm was Gum Swamp, which drained into the Blackwater River. This swamp was filled with all manner of birds, mammals, fish, amphibians, and insects. Ronnie recalls always seeing wood ducks and many other species there during his formative years.

Grandfather Lee had a profound effect on Ronnie's life, cultivating the same appreciation for hunting, fishing, wildlife, and history upon his young grandson. Ronnie tagged along with Lee everywhere he went and by the mid 1950's Lee took Ronnie on his first hunt. The quarry was the Delmarva fox squirrel. This large squirrel, endemic to the Delmarva Peninsula, was placed on the endangered species list in 1967, but due to conservation efforts has recovered nicely and now inhabits a large portion of its historic range.

Fine longtail duck drake made by Ronnie.

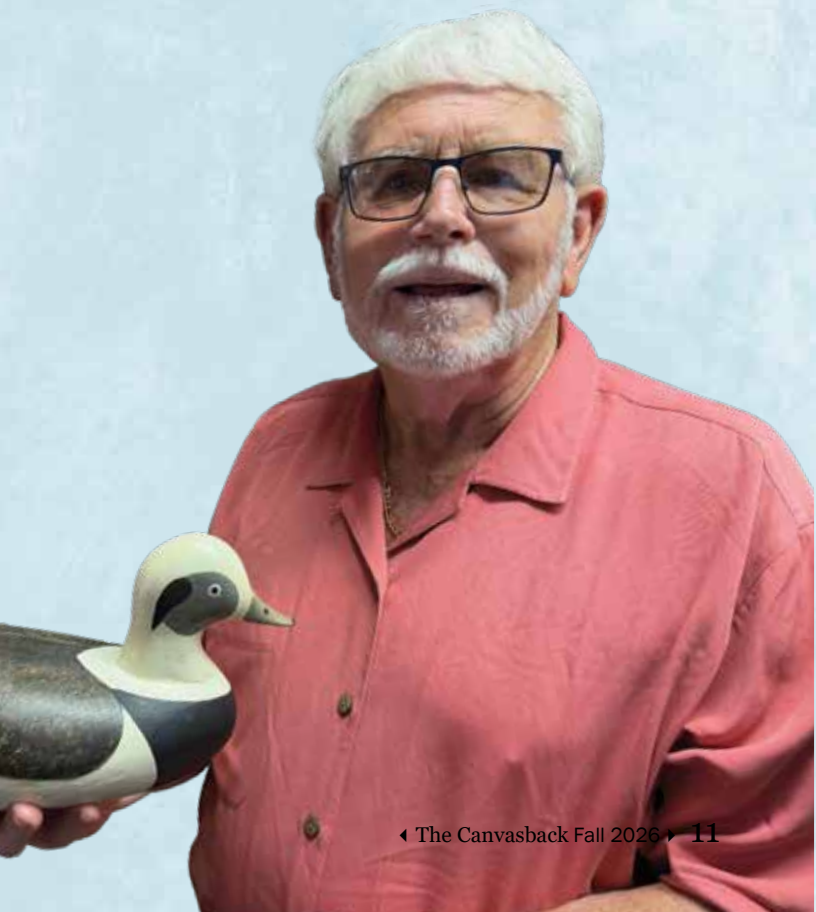


Newcomb stated, "I grew up with wildlife and waterfowl and everything from day one and it was a wonderful time to grow up... you could do whatever you wanted to...there was very little law or technology." People today have a hard time conceptualizing the way things were when Ronnie was a boy. Most folks hunted as they always had, killing all sorts of things for sustenance that modern sportsman would never consider as "game." In fact, his grandfather had been shooting "Scots," or Green Heron, since before 1900 and he and Ronnie hunted them and ate them for dinner. These birds were late migrators and didn't show up until May, providing another food source in a lean time for game.

Market hunting took place in Dorchester County starting in the mid1800s. Many waterman shot ducks, geese and brant for sale to commercial buyers or local families. This practice

became illegal in 1918 with the passing of The Migratory Bird Act, which prohibited the sale of wildfowl. Of course, many men continued the practice of shooting for the market, albeit, using clandestine methods. There were still active market gunners selling ducks in Ronnie's time, well into the sixties and probably beyond. Illegal ducks were not the only contraband peddled in South Dorchester, as Golden Hill was the center of an extensive moonshine operation. In the book, Chesapeake Rumrunners of the Roaring Twenties, written by Eric Mills, many of the names mentioned were people Ronnie knew.

Newcomb has always been a waterfowler from his early days gunning black ducks in Gum Swamp and the surrounding branches. As he got older, he expanded his range to all South Dorchester, gunning for mallards, teal, wigeon, redheads, blackheads and many more species. Ronnie has always had an appreciation for the beauty of waterfowl as well as an intimate knowledge of their habits and haunts.



*Outstanding Leonard Pryor
miniature canvasback pair.*



Armed with strong recall, Ronnie related the story of Canada geese on the Eastern Shore and particularly Dorchester County. When he was coming up, geese were “overboard,” meaning they fed, loafed, and roosted on the water and were rarely seen on land. With the advent of the mechanical picker, corn harvest became so much faster and easier for the farmers that they did not mind slightly lower yields due to the machinery of the day leaving some grain in the field. The geese eventually found the corn in the fields and changed their habits drastically. Some local friends set up a blind in a field and killed some geese that day and field hunting for geese became a thing. With so much available food and plentiful roosting areas nearby, the Canada geese stopped flying to Eastern North Carolina and became winter residents of the Eastern Shore, which became “The Goose Hunting Capital of the World.”

Deer hunting is very popular in Dorchester County, but that wasn’t always the case. Ronnie remembers when the state of Maryland procured some of the over populated whitetail deer herd from Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Harford County. Over two thousand deer were trapped, transported, and released across Maryland, and particularly, the Eastern Shore. The deer flourished and deer hunting became a financial boon for the Lower Shore as hunters from Baltimore and surrounding areas leased farms, rented rooms, and spent their money in local stores, bars, and restaurants in pursuit of the whitetail.

Not too long after the whitetail population flourished, Ronnie started seeing small deer in unusual places like the middle of a salt marsh. He soon learned that these were sika deer. The sika, which is technically a small elk native to Japan, were released on James Island by wealthy sportsman, Clement Henry, in 1916. The deer thrived but after a devastating fire and erosion wiped out much of the island’s habitat in 1957, the sika herd swam to Taylor’s Island and eventually spread throughout the marsh country.

While there was some overlap between the sika and whitetail regarding habitat and range, the two species managed to coexist and generally stayed out of each other’s way. Newcomb recalls early sentiment was to eradicate the sika deer as they did frequently come out of the marsh and eat crops. Fortunately, many landowners realized that sportsman wanted to hunt the sika and they could reap more money from renting their ground than they lost with crop damage. In present day, Ronnie explained that so many out of state hunters are buying up sika farms at exorbitant prices, making sika hunting cost prohibitive for many locals.

Ronnie attended Crapo Elementary School and South Dorchester High School. In the small, sparsely populated area, things were a bit different than most places today. At that time, each little hamlet had a general store or two that were owned by local folks. Food, drinks, hardware, shotshells, clothing and just about anything else were

*Unknown miniature unknown
blackhead pair.*



*Exceedingly rare John "Daddy"
Holly canvasback drake
miniature. One of the finest
miniatures ever made.*



available for purchase. More importantly, these stores served as gathering places for people to talk about the day's events, weather, politics, or regular gossip. Newcomb went there frequently with his grandfather, Lee. There were many older folks, born in the 1880s or 90s, who spoke of the old days and the youngster listened intently. The storytelling prowess of these folks was passed on to Ronnie who speaks of the past with great recall and accurate descriptors, making the listener feel as if they were present so many years before.

In South Dorchester, another community unifier were the schools. Teachers, students, and parents were all friends and socialized together. Ronnie frequently hung around his grandfather and his contemporaries, teachers, and custodians always soaking up knowledge. His love of woodworking and decoy making came from these relationships as most men of this era were accomplished woodworkers, making almost anything they needed. He spent any spare time at school down in the wood shop, sponging knowledge from his favorite teacher, Jerry McCulley.

Newcomb's grandmother moved to Race street in Cambridge when he was around nine years old. Ronnie stayed with her frequently during weekends and during the summer. He soon discovered, less than a block away, a fellow by the name of Harold Hall. Little did he know at the time that this gentleman would greatly affect the trajectory of his life.

Hall was an Eastern Shore renaissance man. He was the son of store keeper and famous market gunner, Elmer Hall. As a young man, Hall was an exceptional semi-professional baseball player who once tried out for the Cincinnati Reds and was offered a minor league contract. With the prospect of long, hot bus rides through the nation's heartland and an uncertain future, Harold declined the offer and worked as a skilled carpenter. Being an affable fellow, Harold eventually took a job as a salesman for Coca Cola and did very well. Being a highly skilled athlete makes it understandable that Harold was one of the best wing shooters in the country. Just one example of this man's ability was told to the writer recently by Ronnie. On the 4th of July, at age 85, Harold decided to go and shoot some pigeons. He went

to a farm between Hurlock and Federalsburg, found a shady spot, and started going to work. When the smoke cleared, Hall had fired 400 rounds from his Remington Model 11 and killed 360 birds.

Hall accepted Ronnie as a friend and mentee and started off teaching him to mount deer feet, which were very popular at the time for gun racks, lamps and stand-up ashtrays. He went on from there learning to mount bullfrogs and turtles which were plentiful in the summer. Eventually he learned how to make forms using plaster of Paris and started mounting ducks. Newcomb emphasized the need to fully understand the anatomy of birds, and how his lifetime of studying nature has helped a great deal.

By the time he was a teenager, Ronnie had become a skilled taxidermist, being fully licensed by age thirteen. His love of nature and particularly waterfowl contributed to this most successful and enjoyable vocation/avocation. Ronnie started doing taxidermy for the various clubs around Dorchester County, including Bishop's Head, Hoopers Island Gun Club and Crab Point Club over in Wingate, along with Blackwater Gun Club and Dollar Gunning Club around Toddville and finally, the

*Preening bufflehead was a member of
Ronnie's first rig, made over 50 years ago.*





*Super pair of John B. Graham
miniature cans from about 150
years ago.*

only club still operating, Montchester Gun Club, where Ronnie has done taxidermy work for three generations of members. Birds were mounted for both the clubhouses and for individual members to take home for display in dens and club basements.

With the formation of the Ward Foundation and the World Championship Carving Competition in the 1960s, Ronnie did taxidermy work for most of the local decoy makers, including the Wards, Tuts Lawson, Paul Nock, Davison Hawthorn, Charlie Berry, and even Bob Kerr from Canada. He explained that prior to 1970 or so none of the makers were burning or texturing the surface of their birds. They produced what were and still today called, “Slicks”, named because of the smooth surface. Because there was no internet or even quality photos to use as reference, mounted birds were studied so that the carver could build up layers of paint and achieve a more realistic surface. Of course, this led to close relationships with these men and opportunities to acquire many decoys from them.

To this day, Newcomb continues to produce high-quality taxidermy mounts, albeit far fewer than in his heyday. He proudly, almost stubbornly, emphasizes doing his work using the same techniques taught to him by Harold Hall seventy years ago, foregoing the “modern advances” used by younger taxidermists today. Recently, Ronnie took the writer to a little spot for lunch, and a bright, young, college-aged girl approached to take our order. She was very polite but nervous, something akin to a fan seeking the courage to ask Willie Nelson for his autograph. She finally mustered up the nerve to ask Ronnie if he was “the taxidermist” and when he affirmed, she gushed a bit about a beautiful oldsquaw he had mounted for her boyfriend. Ronnie just smiled in the humblest way.

To further illustrate his skill, on a recent visit the writer noticed a beautiful drake wood duck mounted in a standing position. Ronnie had been to a meeting of the Delmarva Decoy Collectors Club the previous evening and wood ducks were the theme bird. This woodie was extremely good and when asked when he had finished it, the writer was shocked when Newcomb replied, “fifty years ago.”

While he loves all species of waterfowl, like most of us, Ronnie has a favorite. It was not hard to figure after seeing so many beautiful redheads in all positions hanging in his display areas. He explained that South Dorchester had more redheads than any other area of the bay and has mounted hundreds for local gunners for well over sixty years.

Most men of that era in South Dorchester were woodworkers and made at least a few decoys, mostly out of necessity, and Ronnie is no exception. His first decoys, buffleheads made in the early sixties, were very competent and folky, and improved his shooting. He has made some very nice red breasted mergansers, a rig of cans influenced by Taylor Boyd, very cool flying merganser and bufflehead, and many outstanding miniatures. Unfortunately, time constraints with a very busy life have kept his output very small.

Newcomb was employed at his school doing maintenance work inside the building, cutting grass and keeping the grounds shipshape. Along with his expanding taxidermy business, Ronnie was self-sufficient with regards to money. He bought his own car and a Remington Model 11, after his great grandfather’s 16-gauge, hammer double started acting up. Like his parents and grandparents, he was always hustling to make a better life.

After graduation from high school, Ronnie started working for the state of Maryland Forestry department. He then moved to Delmarva Power, going through many apprenticeships and worked as a lineman for twenty years. With his experience and hard work, he was promoted to supervisor of field services, overseeing all jobs and mentoring young employees. Ronnie held that job for nearly twenty years until he retired from the company with nearly forty years of service.

In addition to making a good living, Ronnie’s job had the fortuitous byproduct of putting him, as he says, “in so many places, meeting so many people, and finding so many decoys.” Initially working in



Fine miniatures made by Ronnie over the years.

Dorchester, Talbot, and Caroline counties, Ronnie met folks while working on power outages, putting in new lines or doing general maintenance.

Conversations would eventually get around to gunning and eventually decoys and many times the fellow he was talking with would leave, duck into a shed or barn, and emerge with a decoy or two for Ronnie to inspect and, possibly buy. These encounters were the start of long relationships, and many more decoys were acquired over the years from these men who were gunners, guides, caretakers and what not.

Kim, Ronnie's wife of twenty-five years, is an interesting and fun person, sharing that Ronnie never brought her flowers before the got married, but would instead bring a decoy, oyster can or mounted duck instead. They even did a lot of trading before tying the knot.

Born and raised in St. Michaels, Kim grew up hunting and fishing with her Dad. Her first job was at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, appropriately working in the decoy building where among others, she met Dr. Harry M. Walsh and C. John Sullivan, Jr., sowing the seeds of a lifetime interest and expertise in waterfowling history. Of course, this allowed her to meet a great many decoy makers, including the Ward Brothers and Oliver Lawson, among others.

In addition to early work at CBMM, Kim had a successful career in the hunting industry, including stints at the venerable Tideland Sporting Goods in Easton and a leadership position for Tink Nathan, a celebrity hunter who revolutionized using scent for deer hunting, after he located his entire wholesale operation in Talbot County.

Kim was also involved in the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, serving on the board for about 10 years. With her love of history, it was natural for Kim to get involved in the Dorchester County Historical Society where she is currently serving her second stint as vice president. With all the involvement in these fine organizations, Kim still finds time to run her own successful business doing real estate appraisals.

The Newcomb's work with the Waterfowl Festival is well documented and started when Kim reached out and offered her help. The committee, recognizing her strong background, put her in the artifacts

Ben Dye miniature canvasback pair from well before 1900.



section and this evolved into her chairing that committee for 30 years straight. She got Ronnie involved in the artifacts displays and the displays the couple have produced are nothing short of amazing. This led to an appointment with the board of directors, a position Kim has held since 2010. The Newcomb's were honored for all their hard work being inducted into the Waterfowl Festival Hall of Fame in 2016.

While decoys are a large piece of the Newcomb's collecting pie, they are certainly not the only slice. They have a remarkable collective eye for folk art and advertising pieces, vintage and rare taxidermy and almost anything you could think of. Vintage cars are a real passion for the couple and they own nine, with each being more impressive than the next. The writer's favorite is the 1939 Studebaker State President, with only forty-eight thousand miles in gorgeous, original condition, followed by a beautiful 1956 Chevy Bel Air, a Hudson Terraplane and a Chevy Apache 10 panel truck.

And then, there are the decoys. Ronnie tells vivid stories of collecting in the late 1960s through the entire 1970s, when decoys were everywhere and could be purchased for a modest sum. It makes a modern collector want to go back in time for just a day...with a pocketful of cash.

Newcomb had at one time an extremely fine collection of Upper Bay decoys. He knew all the greats through his travels with Delmarva Power, crossing paths and becoming fast friends with Bob Litzenberg, Evans McKinney, and Clarence Webb among many others. He was able to acquire many decoys from these gentlemen over the years.

It's understandable that Ronnie has many decoys from his native Dorchester, including the finest and most comprehensive collection of Hoopers Island mergansers the writer has ever seen. Then there are those great Ed Phillips decoys, along with some of the finest Josiah Travers birds ever found, including a rare redhead drake. Big Hoopers Island and Talbot County geese compete for real estate in the Newcomb's' showrooms and many birds made by Ronnie's old friend, Ron Rue, are found throughout.

Full size gunning canvasback that is a member of a rig Ronnie made showing some Taylor Boyd influence.



As happens with many collectors, Ronnie and Kim have shifted gears a few times. After enjoying their Upper Bay birds for many years, they decided to liquidate most of them and start concentrating on another passion: miniatures! Miniatures of the contemporary persuasion are very common as most post 1930 makers made them on a regular basis. Madison Mitchell, Paul Gibson, Bob McGaw and Jim Currier were the first generation of makers to make minis in abundance, some more than others. Most of these little birds are wonderful additions to collections all over the world.

Far fewer and further between are miniatures made by the old masters from 100 years ago and before. When is the last time you saw a pretty pair of Ben Dye, John B Graham or John “Daddy” Holly miniature decoys while walking around a decoy show? These gems rarely come up for sale, and if they do, it’s usually a pre-arranged, private sale.

The Newcomb’s have the finest selection of miniatures the writer ever has seen regarding volume, variety, and quality. When handling a beautiful pair of 1880s Ben Dye minis, one realizes that these great decoy makers must have really enjoyed making the little birds, as a whimsical exuberance seems to radiate from these treasures. Ronnie and Kim have minis displayed in all parts of their decoy buildings. One never knows when a glance downward and slightly to the left will reveal a 125-year-old Taylor Boyd miniature canvasback. It goes on and on and is impressive to say the least.

The miniature collection is not just limited to waterfowl, as the Newcomb’s have a real propensity for collecting pheasants from all over. There are so many great pheasants, from miniature to full size, including examples by Crowell, Reinbold, Dando, and so many others, both known and unknown. The color, paint and form on the roosters are a sight to see.

If it’s old, folky, pertains to advertising, waterfowling, crabbing, fishing, farming or driving, the Newcomb’s are always on the lookout to add another fine piece to their collection.

Fifty years from now, Ronnie and Kim Newcomb will be remembered, not only for their incredible collection, but more importantly, for uncovering, preserving, and teaching multitudes of interested people about waterfowl-related art and artifacts, and the history and people involved. Their selfless efforts are helping to preserve the rich heritage that is so important to so many of us.

Bill Waibel has made and collected decoys for 40 years. He can be reached at coachbillwaibel@gmail.com



Crabs, woodpeckers, bluejays and just about anything else you could think of adorn the walls of the Newcombs' buildings.



Mounted snapping turtle shares table with several Upper Bay miniature cans and a neat little mallard pair by Delaware River maker, Tom Fitzpatrick.



Ronnie holding a rare, flying merganser he made and used to shoot “pheasants”.

Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

Boston Artistic Carving Company
Boston, MA
Collection of Kevin Peel



Celebrates **America250** with The **Bald Eagle Exhibit**

Nathaniel Heasley & Heather Hollenbeck

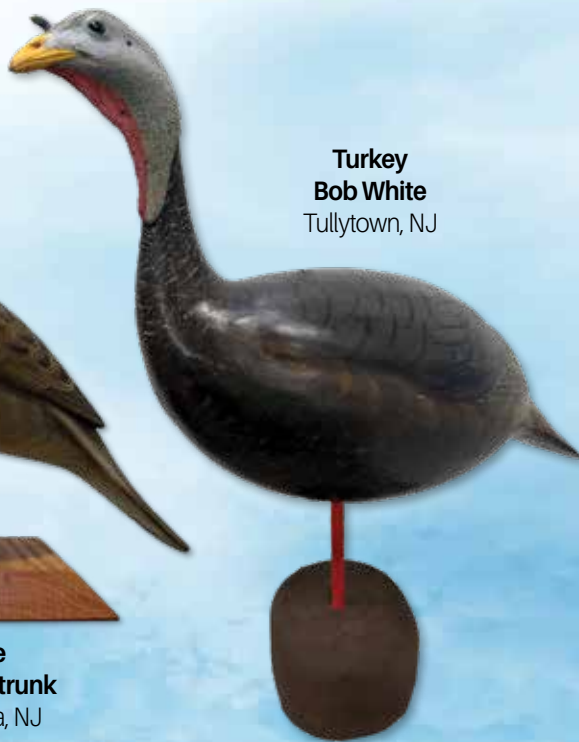
The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum is proud to present a collection of Bald Eagles in celebration of America's 250th anniversary. This exhibit explores how and why the Bald Eagle became a symbol of the United States. Our story begins on July 2nd, 1776, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Second Continental Congress has just voted to approve the Lee Resolution, which states "that, these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States, that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved." Once the Lee Resolution was adopted, the Declaration of Independence was presented to Congress.

Carved by Lem Ward
Crisfield, MD
Painted by Bill Gibian
Cape Charles, VA

John Day
Cecilton, MD



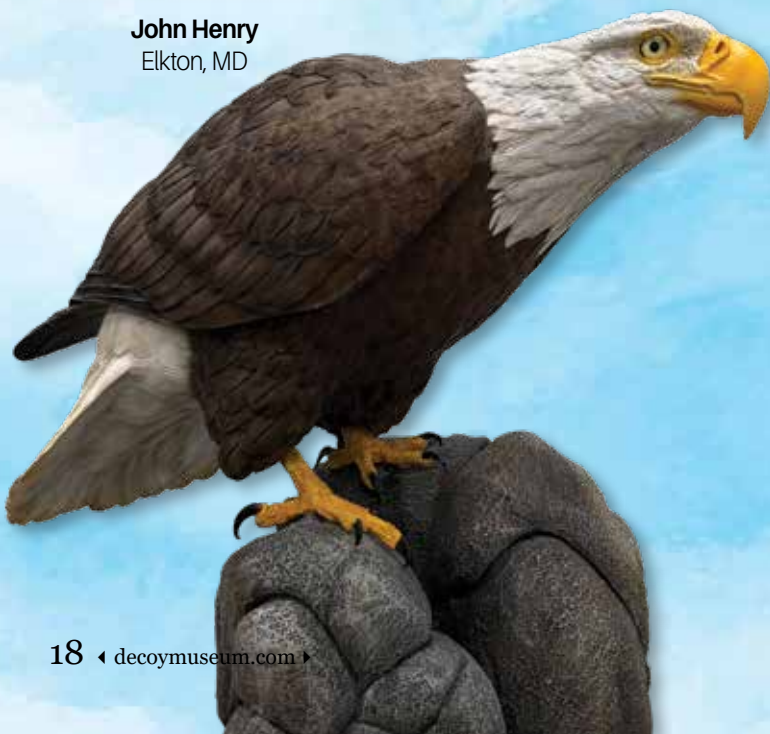
Dove
George Strunk
Glendora, NJ



Turkey
Bob White
Tullytown, NJ



Rich Moretz
Havre de Grace, MD



John Henry
Elkton, MD

Beginning on June 11th Thomas Jefferson spent 24 days writing the Declaration of Independence. The completed document was presented to Congress on June 2nd, 1776. A lengthy revision process, which lasted "all of July 3rd and most of July 4th," resulted in the last and final version of the Declaration of Independence which was adopted in the afternoon of July 4th, 1776. One may think everyone signed the Declaration of Independence at once, but in reality, the document was signed over a series of weeks as delegates traveled to and from the Congress. With the adoptions of The Lee Resolution and the Declaration of Independence, the United States of America came into being, and national symbols were selected to represent the new government under the Articles of Confederation.

It has now been 244 years since the Bald Eagle became a national symbol. Like a game of telephone, how the Bald Eagle became a national symbol has resulted in several American Myths. One prominent myth states that John Adams was the advocate of the Eagle as the national bird, while Benjamin Franklin championed the turkey, and Thomas Jefferson the dove. All of this is flagrantly false.

The truth is that Benjamin Franklin complained in a 1784 letter to his daughter that "the Bald Eagle...is a Bird of bad moral character. He does not get his Living honestly... [he] is too lazy to fish for himself." Franklin preferred the turkey as "a much more respectable Bird, and withal a true original Native of America...He is besides, though a little vain & silly, a Bird of Courage." When referring to the Eagle in the letter to his daughter, Franklin was actually referring to it being the symbol used by the Society of the Cincinnati of America, a fraternal group formed in the aftermath of the Revolutionary War to which many of the Founding Fathers belonged. He was not referring to the Eagle as an emblem of the United States. This initial myth was expanded into the one we know today thanks to the musical 1776, which premiered on Broadway in 1969. The turkey myth expanded to include the idea that Thomas Jefferson preferred the dove in the musical's song "The Egg."

The actual process of selecting the Eagle as a national symbol was not quick. After the Declaration of Independence was adopted, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin were assigned the job of designing the Great Seal of the United States of America. Their initial design was presented to the Congress and bore little resemblance to what would eventually be adopted. The group of three proposed a variety of ideas, including "Moses lifting up his Wand, and dividing the Red Sea," and "Hercules... resting on his Club." Of the original



ideas, only the phrase “E Pluribus Unum” made it to the final seal. A second group convened in 1780, comprised of James Lovell, John Morin Scott, and William Churchill Houston, whose ideas also were not adopted. Finally, in 1782, the Great Seal as we know it was created. The Seal was designed by Charles Thomson, Secretary of the Continental Congress. Thomson’s design was the first to include the Eagle. On June 20th, 1782, the great seal was submitted to and approved by Congress. It formally went into use on September 16th of the same year. The first use of the Great Seal was on a document which authorized General Washington to negotiate an exchange with Great Britain for prisoners of war. In the two hundred and forty-four years since the creation of the Great Seal of the United States, the Bald Eagle has become one of our most prominent national symbols.

Now on display, The Bald Eagle exhibit is a collection of Eagles created by new and old artists. These Eagles are a celebration of the natural beauty and distinct folk art of the United States of America. You do not want to miss the majestic standing eagle carved by Lem Ward in the 1980’s and painted by Bill Gibian in 2012, which stands over four feet in height. Additionally, contemporary carvers John Eichelberger Jr, John Henry, Rich Moretz, and Jeff Moore made pieces specifically for this exhibit which have never been seen before. This celebration of America’s national bird will be on display at the museum through December of 2026.

After viewing this spectacular exhibit, you may be compelled to own one or more of the carvings. Fortunately, the pieces by John Eichelberger Jr and John Henry will be part of the 2nd Annual Decoy Carvers and Collectors Banquet auction, on December 5, 2026. Tickets for the banquet can be purchased through the museum’s website. The piece carved by Rich Moretz will be auctioned through Guyette and Deeter in November at the The Country School in Easton, MD.

Jeff Moore
Rising Sun, MD



John Eichelberger Jr.
Willow Street, PA



Tangier Island



By: Mike Tarquini
Photos by: Cameron Evans

Tangier Island, VA is a tiny island located in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay approximately six miles south of the Maryland/Virginia line. Data from the 2020 census reported that there were 436 residents that lived on the island, but in 2026 the population has dwindled to less than 300 people who live on this 0.54 square-mile, 345-acre land mass. Nearly all Tangiermen subsist by harvesting and selling seafood. A visit to the island reveals that it is a natural paradise for wildlife refuge, but its long range viability is being threatened by significant erosion

Early Settlement

The Pocomoke, an Algonquian-speaking Native American nation from the Delmarva Peninsula, historically inhabited areas along the Pocomoke River, the Chesapeake Bay, and surrounding parts of Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware. For thousands of years, up until the early 17th century, Tangier had been used as a retreat by the local

Pocomoke Indians whose arrowheads and artifacts can still be found across the island. Prior to the arrival of Europeans in the late 1600s, successive groups of indigenous people harvested marine life and other resources on Tangier Island.

Although the English explorer John Smith first visited the island in 1608, it took 170 additional years before there was a permanent settlement on

Tangier Island. In 1670, Ambrose White, a tavern owner from Accomac, VA, received a patent for the island. The next year, it was transferred to Charles Scarborough and John West, two prominent estate owners from Accomack County, VA who used the island to graze livestock.

According to The Virginia Department of Historic Resources, the first recorded permanent settlement occurred in 1778 when a small number of Cornish families moved to Tangier Island and made it their home. It has been said that these original settlers were farmers and fishermen from the Padstow area, a town and fishing port on the north coast of Cornwall, England, United Kingdom. It is believed that Joseph Crockett and his family were among the first settlers.

The early settlers built houses, intermarried, raised children and made a life for themselves far away from the Cornish shores they had left behind. Today it is believed that by and large most, if not all of the current islanders are descendants from those few original families. The community nearly all have the same few surnames Crockett, Pruitt, Thomas, Marshall, Charnock, Dise, Shores and Parks.



The Tangier History Museum features an extensive arrow head exhibit of artifacts collected across the island.

... a tiny island with an enormous history



as the Chesapeake Bay continues to pound its mostly unprotected shoreline. Scientists also contribute Tangier Island's fate to a sinking of its land mass and sea level changes. It has been reported that Tangier Island has lost two-thirds of its land mass since 1850. Despite its uncertain future, Tangier Island remains home for those Tangiermen who are optimistic about its future and dedicated to help preserve it for generations to come.

The War of 1812

In mid-1812, the United States and Great Britain were at war. Approximately two-years later in the spring of 1814, Tangier Island was taken over by the British fleet as it began what was to be known as its Chesapeake Campaign. The island was strategically located in the middle of the lower Chesapeake Bay and was easy for the British to defend. The Brits landed in April, 1814. British forces commanded by Rear Admiral George Cockburn established Fort Albion, which acted as a command post, on the southern tip of Tangier Island. The fort provided the Brits a base of operations with easy access to the strategic larger enemy targets such as Washington, D.C. and Baltimore.

The British invasion of Tangier Island was very near a site occupied by a group of Methodist campers who had settled in a densely shaded area of tall pine trees. These campers farmed and grazed livestock. The islanders' crops and livestock were commandeered by the Brits, and the invaders took water from their wells. However, the British occupation of Tangier Island was somewhat civil thanks to Reverend Joshua Thomas who served as the island's chief negotiator with Admiral Cockburn. Thomas successfully convinced Cockburn to spare the pine trees during the construction of Fort Albion by declaring that these trees were the Lord's trees where many souls have been saved in their shade and promised that many more will be saved in the years to come. The fort included barracks, a hospital, a church, parade grounds, and gardens.



Tangier Island is located in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay about 6 miles south of the Maryland-Virginia state line.

At the end of the summer of 1814, the British made their way to Washington, D.C. with approximately 4,000 red coats. Cockburn's soldiers sacked the Capitol and burned the President's House (White House). After this successful attack, the Brits made their way back to Tangier Island to plan their next conquest. It wasn't long before Baltimore, the nation's 3rd largest city at that time, was identified as the next target for the British fleet.

Before the Brits launched their attack on Baltimore, Joshua Thomas spoke to a very large gathering of red coats reminding them of the great wickedness of war and that God himself said, "Thou shalt not kill." Thomas went on to say that the Almighty himself had sent him

Percy Moran's painting depicting Francis Scott Key the morning after the bombardment of Fort McHenry.



a message saying that the Brits could not take Baltimore and would not succeed. Ignoring Thomas' warning, the Brits sailed off toward Baltimore. After the 110-mile journey north, they approached Baltimore and encountered Fort McHenry which was positioned well to defend the nation's 3rd largest city. After a fierce bombardment, the British suffered heavy casualties and limped back to Tangier Island.

This catastrophic military failure was memorialized by Francis Scott Key who witnessed the nighttime battle and wrote verses of what was to become the "The Star Spangled Banner." Word of Joshua Thomas' bold prediction (based on non-truths) spread and he quickly attained a status unmatched by any Tangierman before or ever since.

The British found Tangier Island to be a place of wretched poverty. Joshua Thomas' appearance was said to be frightful. They found the dialect to be awkward making communication more challenging than they had expected. In March, 1815, the British left the island and destroyed the fort. The former site of Fort Albion is now underwater having been eroded by storms and flooding.

During the War of 1812, it is estimated that 4,000 enslaved people from the Chesapeake region escaped to the British seeking freedom. Some former slaves enlisted as Colonial Marines joining in raids and battles alongside the British. After the war, Britain resettled the former slaves in Nova Scotia and Trinidad as free settlers. The National Park Service recognizes Tangier Island as a site on the National Underground Railroad.

Seafood Harvesting

Starting in the 1840s, harvesting oysters and fish became the islanders' primary economic activity. By the late 19th century, oysters and blue crabs emerged as the primary commercial export to mostly northern markets, especially those in Baltimore and New York City. Tangier Island remained Virginia's only watermen community largely dependent on seafood commerce, with an estimated 140 watermen in 2003 using traditional "Deadrise" boats, the official boat of Virginia, to pursue earning their living. The year 2009 saw that number reduce by over 50%. In 2025, it was estimated that there are only 20-30 watermen remaining on Tangier Island, an 82% reduction from the data collected in 2003. Tangier Island's Comprehensive Plan (2001) mentions that



An example of the numerous crab houses that line the entrance to Tangier Harbor.



Terry Crockett (R) with his son Jason Crockett (L) harvest blue crabs from their crab pots in the Chesapeake Bay.



Tangier Island waterman Andy Parks hauls in his soft-crab scrape through the sea-grass beds in Tangier Sound.



Waterman Stacey Daley hustles crab pots and has a little fun in the waters that surround Tangier Island.



Waterman Jerry Pruitt operates Delvin K transporting harvested oysters to market. Delvin K is the last operating oyster buy boat on the Chesapeake Bay.

The Delvin K Oyster Buy Boat moving oysters caught off Tangier Island to market.



Soft-Crabs!, Soft-Crabs!, Soft-Crabs! ...a wonderful sight to see for Tangier Island watermen

the island is “sometimes referred to as the soft-shell crab capital of the world.” During that year there were 52 crab houses processing soft-shells. Today, only 8 full-time active sloughing houses remain on Tangier Island, an 85% reduction in 25 years.

According to an interview given to Shannon Hecht and published in Virginia Mercury in June, 2026, Tangier Island Mayor and waterman James “Ooker” Eskridge shared that Tangiermen rely on oystering in order to make a living during the winter months. Eskridge reported that the oyster population has rebounded nicely since the practice of crab dredging has been discontinued in Virginia, permitting many Tangiermen to have a profitable winter. It is estimated that currently 12 boats harvest oysters on the island. Despite the overall decline in commercial fishing, particularly blue crabs and oysters, working the water is still Tangier Island’s core work-water economy.

The reconstruction of oyster reefs provides another advantage in that they slow down incoming stormwater and act as natural breakwaters. Aside from the negative effect of dredging on the seafood habitat, the

water quality of the Chesapeake Bay has influenced harvesting. The Bay regularly experiences harmful algal blooms (HABs)—often called mahogany or red tides—fueled by warm summer water temperatures and excessive nutrient runoff. While visiting Tangier Island collecting information for this article, watermen were experiencing a temporary downturn of their crabbing harvest attributed to red tide.

Religion on the Island

Crabbing during the summer, with a switch to harvesting oysters in the fall was the normal schedule for the island’s watermen. Tangiermen took their boats out every single day but Sunday. To a man, they prefer the freedom of the seas to any other life. Those from Tangier Island need only two things, “the water and God.” The largest building on the island is Swain United Methodist Church. The church has served the islanders well. There is also New Testament Congregation, which is an independent/nondenominational congregation that grew out of a 1946 split with the Methodist congregation.



Not every Tangierman goes to church on Sunday, although churchgoing has historically been a very important part of life on Tangier Island. Tangier has traditionally been a strongly Christian,

The Parson of the Islands Landmark honoring Joshua Thomas

Swain United Methodist Church is the largest structure on Tangier Island.



predominantly Methodist community, and Sunday worship has played a major role in the island's social life. The oldest house on the island belonged to Reverend Joshua Thomas who was known as "the parson of the islands." In the early 1830s Thomas became disturbed with the sale of spirits and since that time, its sale has been prohibited on Tangier Island. It is not unlawful to consume alcohol on the island, but don't look to purchase it there.

The Journey Begins

I arrived at the town dock in Crisfield, MD at approximately 11:30 AM. I am a bit early for my ride aboard the Courtney Thomas to Tangier Island.

The vessel is 60-feet in length, has a 1,300-horsepower rating, and is registered at 39 net tons. Captain Rudy Thomas is a native Tangierman who represents the fifth generation of Thomases to run the mail route from Crisfield, MD to Tangier Island, VA. The vessel is named after his daughter, Courtney.

Upon my arrival I witness a Fed Ex truck unloading packages and releasing them to the crew. Once the delivery truck departed, a U.S. Mail truck unloaded the day's mail destined for island residents.

As time drew nearer to the scheduled departure time of 12:30 PM, more and more passengers arrived with packages of every shape and size. The Courtney Thomas is officially referred to as "the mail boat" and serves Tangier Islanders six days/ week delivering mail, packages, provisions and is rated to carry a maximum of 90 passengers. The vessel embarks for Tangier Island right on time.

Aboard the Courtney Thomas, I couldn't help but notice a strong dialect of English being spoken by essentially everyone but me. It is well documented that Tangier Islanders speak a dialect of English very characteristic of those from the island. The island's inhabitants, descendants of early English settlers from Cornwall, England, speak with a unique accent that seems to reflect their Cornish heritage. Many who live on Tangier Island speak a distinctive dialect of Southern American English, which scholars have disputed as being derived from 17th and 18th-century British English lexicon and phonetics. David Shores, an historical linguist, has noted that, while it may sound like a British variety of English, the dialect is a creation of its own time and place off the eastern shore of Virginia, preserving certain features of its British origins in part due to isolation, but not unchanged.

After an enjoyable 75-minute ride south, the Courtney Thomas enters a narrow channel, lined with active and abandoned crab houses built on pilings, leading to the island's tour boat pier located at the foot of Thomas Road. At the dock there were small boats and golf carts waiting to load up the provisions brought by the Courtney Thomas to get them to their final destinations. A sizable gathering of people were also present to assist with the unloading process and greet the passengers.

As I disembarked the Courtney Thomas, I surveyed the crowd looking to find the one and only person that I knew on Tangier Island. After a quick scan of those at the dock area, I locked in on Captain Cameron Evans, an ambitious 26-year-old Tangierman, who offered to assist me with the logistics of my visit. For more about Captain Cameron Evans see the side bar attached to this article.

Exploring Tangier Island

Once the crowd began to disperse, Cameron and I made our way to his golf cart. He gave me a brief tour of the island on our way to the Brigadune Inn (my accommodations for the night) on the West Ridge of the island. Along the way, we encountered a young lad named Layton, age 7, trying his luck at crabbing in "The Ditch" near Hoistin' Bridge. Layton was most proud to show us his catch. After dropping off my bag, we continued our tour of the surroundings.



A young lad (Layton, age 7) proudly shares his catch with Cameron and I as we pass by his crabbing spot in "The Ditch" near Hoistin' Bridge.

Tangier Island currently consists of three distinct areas of higher ground, Canton Ridge, Main Ridge, and West Ridge where homes are built near each other. The three ridges are islands themselves, separated by ditches (sometimes called guts) filled with Chesapeake Bay water. A series of small bridges exist throughout the island that connect the ridges making navigation somewhat easy. Although the three ridges on Tangier Island are considered higher ground, they are only about four feet above sea level at their highest point. No preparation for a trip to the island is complete without packing a pair of ExtraTuf ankle boots just in case Chesapeake Bay imposes its will during your visit.

Tangier Island has its own airfield that is used by smaller aircraft to ferry visitors on and off the island. The air field provides ample space for emergency helicopters to medivac critical patients to the mainland to more advanced medical centers. The airport is located on the West Ridge of the island. The island has its own volunteer fire and EMS service. A brief tour of the fire station revealed three smaller pieces of fire apparatus and a full-sized Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance.



The Riverside David B Nichols Tangier Health Center



A view down Main Ridge Road during spring when the trees are in bloom. Swain United Methodist Church can be seen in the distance.



The Tangier Island History Museum on Main Ridge.

Two youngsters [Weston Pruitt (L), Jase Charnock (R)] take time to pose for a photo as they navigate "The Ditch" in their flat-bottomed skiffs.





A south-facing aerial photo of Tangier Island showing housing density on Canton Ridge (L), Main Ridge (C) and West Ridge (R). Water-filled ditches and marsh separate the three ridges of dry land.

Tangier Island has its own Health Center. The Riverside David B. Nichols Tangier Health Center (often called the Riverside Tangier Medical Center) is the primary healthcare facility on Tangier Island and is staffed daily by a resident nurse and a physician's assistant (Inez Pruitt) with rotating physicians visiting weekly or every other week. The clinic provides routine primary and urgent/emergency medical care appropriate to a small remote island. The facility has exam rooms and digital x-ray capability, allowing images to be transmitted to the mainland. The facility can accommodate visiting medical providers who are unable to leave the island due to weather. During my research on Tangier Island, I learned that one of the visiting physicians that once served the island was none other than Maryland/Maine decoy carver Joshua "Josh" Brewer.

Josh was born and raised in Delmar, a unique bi-state town in Wicomico County, MD. Delmar is known as "The Little Town Too Big for One State" because it straddles the Maryland-Delaware border and is about 7.5 miles north of Salisbury, MD. Josh shadowed David B. Nichols who spent thirty-one years as Tangier Island's visiting physician. Nichols passed away while Josh was finishing medical school. After completing medical school, Brewer agreed to serve with a team of doctors to provide medical coverage to the island and saw patients at the medical clinic named after his mentor. Josh commandeered a golf cart during lunch periods and made house calls to islanders that could not visit the clinic. One of Josh's fondest memories was getting a call on each of the mornings of his visits from Lorraine's Restaurant asking him how many soft crabs he wanted on his sandwich that day. Josh maintained a physician/consultant relationship with P.A. Inez Pruitt until 2020 when his service to the island ended.

As the tour of the island continued, Cameron pointed out restaurants that operate on the island that included: Lorraine's Seafood and Four Brothers Crab House & Ice Cream. We visited Lorraine's Seafood that evening for a tasty crab cake dinner. The famous Chesapeake House, established in 1944 (once operated by Hilda Crockett) was a family-run restaurant and guesthouse that became one of Tangier's best-

known institutions. The Chesapeake House is undergoing renovation by a new owner and expected to reopen soon. Gift Shops included Sandy's Place, Island Treasures, Jim's Souvenir & Gift Shop, and Tangier Island Outfitters.

Waterfowling on Tangier Island

Tangier Island and the surrounding open waters of the Tangier Sound offer premier, classic Chesapeake Bay waterfowl hunting. The expansive tidal marshes and open straits serve as a vital wintering ground for diverse species, most notably sea ducks (scoters and long-tailed ducks), dabbling ducks like black ducks, mallards, gadwalls, diving ducks including redheads, mergansers and buffleheads as well as Canada geese.

Large numbers of scoters and long-tailed ducks concentrate in the choppy waters of Tangier Sound as do the divers. The marsh systems, including nearby uninhabited tracts like the Uppards, hold populations of American black ducks, mallards, gadwall, and some divers. Both Canada and snow geese utilize the island's expansive surrounding wetlands.



A busy day at the office for Chocolate Lab "Riggs."



Red Lab (L) "Gunner" and Yellow Lab (R) "Dixie" pose for a photo after a very successful hunt.

“When Tangier is right it’s the best duck hunting I have seen on the Atlantic Flyway. Two years ago when it was cold, we killed a ton of birds. There were 15,000 to 20,000 redheads in a two-mile area, and a ton of pintail. If it gets bitter cold, Tangier is a sleeping giant. But like every good hunting spot on the Atlantic Flyway it has got to be cold and a lot of ice.”

✂ Unknown hunter posting on Duckhuntingchat.com

During my visit to the island, Cameron introduced me to Donald “Thornie” Thorne a long time waterfowl hunter on Tangier Island. Thornie remarked that redheads, black ducks, and pintails were generally what he sought when waterfowl hunting. Redheads primarily dive to feed on submerged aquatic plants, seeds, roots, and small aquatic insects or snails. Black ducks prefer saltmarshes, estuaries, protected coastal bays, and tidal mudflats. Black ducks’ diet consists of seeds, roots, stems, and seeds of aquatic plants. Pintails winter in shallow lakes, marshes, and flooded fields. The grasses, marshes, and flooded fields that surround Tangier Island provide the perfect habitat for Thornie’s targets. During our conversation, Thornie shared a story about his grandfather who used to market seafood to customers in Washington, D.C. The redhead shooting on Tangier Island was so good at times, that he began to haul redheads with him and sell them to his seafood customers as well. Federal game wardens caught on to Mr. Thorne’s side hustle and put an end to his market hunting caper.

Tangier Island and the surrounding Tangier Sound offer premier Chesapeake Bay waterfowl hunting, specializing in sea ducks, divers and dabblers using layout boat hunting, traditional blind gunning, and specialized rig setups over long-line decoys. Norwood Evans (Cameron’s father) and Cameron Evans are the last licensed hunting guides on the island and take parties out throughout the season.

Wildlife on Tangier Island

Tangier Island is a rich sanctuary for coastal wildlife, famous for its abundant bird populations, tidal marsh creatures, and thriving aquatic life like the iconic blue crab. Large numbers of scoters and long-tailed ducks concentrate at coastal wetlands flooded daily by tide movement, and isolated sand beaches provide vital nesting and feeding grounds.



Pelicans and Cormorants enjoy a day at the beach.



A young blue heron rests on a discarded bushel basket in the marsh.

Birds and waterfowl include American Oyster Catchers, Royal and Forster's Terns, Black Skimmers, and Eastern Willets. Wading birds include Clapper Rails, Glossy Ibis, Snowy Egrets, Great Blue Herons, and Yellow-crowned Night Herons. Raptors comprise Ospreys, Northern Harriers, and Peregrine Falcons. Winter waterfowl consists of black ducks, mallards, buffleheads, brant, scoters, and tundra swans that utilize the marsh fringes.

Marsh and Marine Life include Fiddler crabs, blue crabs, and periwinkle snails that inhabit the muddy tidal ditches (guts) and shallow waters. Stingrays frequent the shallows while schools of small baitfish draw frequent visits from pelicans, gulls, and terns. During my visit to the island, a large vessel harvesting menhaden was in plain sight of the island.

Challenges Facing Tangier Island

Without debate the number one challenge facing Tangiermen is the erosion of the island's dry land and what reasonable measures can be taken to control it. A rock revetment (seawall) placed in 1989 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has successfully halted erosion along the western part of the island and harbor areas for 36 years where rock barriers exist, reducing land loss to zero feet per year in those specific areas. A roughly 5,700-foot rock and cement wall built in sections protects the main town and airport strip on the west side. A stone breakwater installed near the harbor helps buffer incoming wave action. Many residents individually pile broken bricks, old crab pots, and concrete rubble along vulnerable property and garden edges where water meets the land. However, the majority of the sinking island—especially unprotected northern areas like "The Uppards" continue to lose ground rapidly (approximately 16 feet/ year) to erosion and rising sea levels. Since 1850, it is estimated that Tangier Island's land mass has been reduced by 67%.

There are plans in place through the Chesapeake Bay Foundation involving the establishment of additional breakwaters and oyster reefs. Planting of additional marsh grasses will also serve to absorb the wave energy of the incoming sea. Dredge spoils are being considered to fill some of the marsh areas and eroded shoreline. All of these proposed abatement strategies come at an enormous cost. Federal and State monies are stretched thin as many similar projects compete with Tangier Island for funding. Nevertheless, the will of Tangiermen persists and will not lessen until their island is secured.

A Snowy Egret enjoys a stroll in the marsh looking for food.

A secondary challenge facing the island is the removal of the abundance of abandoned and partially collapsed houses that are in such disrepair that demolition is the only real option. Likewise, there are abandoned watercraft of all shapes and sizes that pollute the magnificent natural landscape of the waterways and marshes that the island presents to its residents and visitors alike. Although this secondary challenge is a daunting task, the success of eliminating these eyesores is within reach of those islanders that remain.

Despite the bleak outlook predicted by some for Tangier Island, investment on the island is very noticeable. Tangiermen have remodeled numerous homes throughout the island, built new houses, and infrastructure improvement projects are noticeable as well. A new fuel dock project is currently underway that will replace the aging fuel tanks. Bulkheading of the fuel dock site is part of this effort and when completed will certainly change the appearance of the main harbor area.

The Journey Ends

After spending roughly 27 hours on Tangier Island it was time to return to the mainland (Crisfield, MD). My voyage home from the island was aboard Elizabeth Joy II operated by Captain Allen Parks. Elizabeth Joy Charters runs a passenger ferry and customer charter service aboard Elizabeth Joy II -a beautifully restored Maine lobster boat. The vessel provides transportation between Tangier Island, VA and Crisfield, MD, alongside special eco-tours and regional birding cruises.

Elizabeth Joy II departs each day from a pier just down from the tour boat pier where I arrived a day earlier aboard the Courtney Thomas. The vessel departed promptly as scheduled at 4:00 PM. My return trip was shared with only about 10 passengers. There was, however, another vessel departing Tangier Island for Crisfield (the Steven Thomas) at the same time carrying additional passengers to the mainland.

I experienced some sadness as the Tangier Island water tower and steeple of Swain's Methodist Church sank into the southern sky. A short time later the Crisfield Harbor skyline began to emerge off the bow of Elizabeth Joy II. After a brisk 50 minute ride we entered the channel to Crisfield Harbor and tied up at the City Dock. Our passengers disembarked and some limited freight was unloaded. My short stay on Tangier Island was not only enjoyable but very educational. A very special thanks to Captain Cameron Evans who took the time away from his many ambitious businesses to ensure that my visit was a success.





Cameron operates Tangier Island Outfitters, a tourist shop adjacent to the pier that greets visiting tour boats, offering kayak rentals, nautical souvenirs, and matted photos of wildlife, working the water, and landmarks on Tangier Island. Cameron's photography is remarkable and will certainly class up anyone's wall. His work is showcased at www.cameronevansphotography.com. Cameron is an active member of Tangier Island Volunteer Fire Department. In his spare time, he and his dad are making remarkable progress remodeling a house on the island that will be Cameron's home once completed.



Cameron takes time out for a photo with his mom (Hope) and his dad (Norwood) inside his shop at Mail Boat Harbor

Cameron Evans, age 26, is a native of Tangier Island. He was born to Norwood Evans and Hope Crockett Evans on June 21, 2000. You might say that Cameron's roots are extremely deep in Island lore given that the Evans surname is one of the foundational family names on Smith Island, MD dating back to the late 1600s. Likewise, Hope's maiden name, Crockett, descended from Tangier Island's earliest permanent settlers, dating back to the late 1700s. Once married, his parents made Tangier Island their permanent home in 1994.

Cameron attended the Combined School on Tangier Island where he had a total of six classmates in his 2018 high school graduation class. He went on to attend and is a graduate of Virginia Wesleyan University (now called Batten University), a private institution in Virginia Beach, VA. The university is nonsectarian but historically affiliated with the United Methodist Church. This is not surprising given the rich tradition of Methodism on Tangier Island. Cameron graduated from Virginia Wesleyan in 2022 with a major in business and minors in political science and art.

After college, the ambitious Cameron returned to Tangier Island where he is involved with a variety of businesses, some volunteerism, and has even tried his hand at island politics. He holds a U.S. Coast Guard mariner credential as a Captain, commercial licenses in fishing, crabbing, and hunting where he serves as a guide. He and his father Norwood are the only two licensed hunting guides on the island. He operates a soft-shell crab sloughing house located at a crab house in Tangier Island's harbor, furnishing soft-crabs to customers on and off of the island.

Tangier Island Outfitters offering kayak rentals, nautical souvenirs and matted photos of Cameron's photography.



Cameron leads a tour for students from Christchurch School, Christchurch, VA and educates them about the process of crab sloughing while on a visit to his soft-crab sloughing house.



Workshop Window

By Cindy Currier

Bryon Bodt
Churchville, MD

In this installment of Workshop Window, we peek into the workshop of carver Bryon Bodt.

Bryon's workshop sits behind his home in a large building. Stacks of wood for carving are in the front section, and the workshop area is in the back. The workshop area measures approximately 48' x 15' and is divided into three rooms, each having a specific purpose.

Bryon began carving in 1977 and in the early 1980s, he apprenticed under Jim Pierce. He carves about twenty species of ducks in addition to Canada geese, snow geese, blue geese, herons and swans.

Bryon is active with the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, the Upper Bay Museum and the Isaak Walton League of America.

Please enjoy this visual tour!







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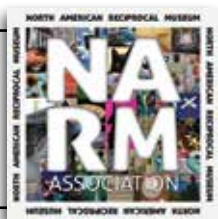
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Northern Pintail



“ Nature is the art of God”

Dante Alighieri

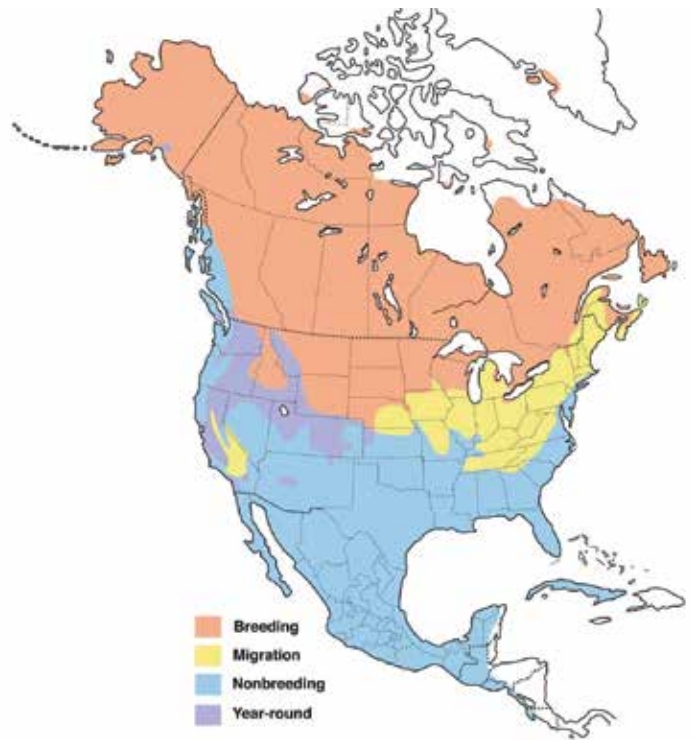
*By John Edward Hughes, Jr.
Photos by Scott Moody*

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.

I remember it was on a Saturday morning in early November, sometime in the late 1970s. I had heard about a festival of all things waterfowl down in Easton in Talbot County, Maryland on the Eastern Shore. I had driven up and around the northern bay to get to route 50 and then south to get to the show. After about two hours of driving, I arrived, found a parking space and registered. I entered the main hall for exhibitions and saw a great number of aisles containing decoys, art, and memorabilia all associated with the traditions of waterfowl and waterfowl hunting. Being a non-hunter, I was most impressed with the decoys, both working and fancy, and the amazing art work in the form of original paintings, prints, and sculptures. I had always enjoyed wildlife art in my past, but here I was almost overwhelmed by its diversity and incredible representation of the natural beauty of all forms of plants and animals, in particular ducks, geese, and swans. Some of the paintings, carvings and sculptures were so exquisite and/or life-like as to give me a sense of being in the field with live birds rather than indoors with the artists' renderings. I, myself, greatly enjoy this type of art work, especially since I can't even draw a stick figure with any success. Strolling by the many exhibits, I realized just how much I would enjoy possessing some of this art for my home. Unfortunately, being a fairly young teacher, there were so many other critical needs in our household to be addressed, and on such a limited income at that time, I would have to hold off on any purchases. I should be satisfied witnessing it all at the festival.

There were, however, several items that caught my eye which I considered worthy of an investment. One waterfowl print of pintails, which I was sure my wife would love, became my purchase. Yes, it really challenged my budget, but for \$50, I got out my checkbook and it became mine. Of course, eventually, after triple matting and framing the overall cost would be 4 times that amount. To me, it truly was worth the cost but it took some convincing to get my wife on board and sympathetic to my need to have it. (Note: this would become a pattern of "needed" purchases of waterfowl art over the years, needing spousal approval, but knowing she really does enjoy the prints nearly as much as I do. At least this is what she tells me and I'm sure she would let me know otherwise.) This first print was of a pair of northern pintails vaulting from a shallow ephemeral pond on the edge of a harvested cornfield on an overcast day with low gray clouds. The beautiful drake was on full alert, with an outstretched wing revealing his green speculum bordered by cinnamon-gold on one side and white on the other. His handsome mate behind him looks much like a sleek mallard hen. The male's elongated "sprig" tail feathers have water droplets falling off, back into the pond. Somehow the artist has recruited an almost spiritual reaction from me as I witness this scene. It brings back a "field" memory of an event that happened in the past, which I had forgotten. On a flat piece of paper, I'm brought to a living, 3-dimensional occurrence where I can sense the cold, and the gray of a morning long gone, existing only as a historical vignette in my mind. This is why I can look at it over and over again and still enjoy it. The words of a Neil Young song "in my mind, I need a place to go" is suggestive of my feelings focusing on the paper scene in front of me making it seem real (Note: I had this print for about 30 years, until I gave it to one of my soccer players.)



Later that afternoon, after a quick sandwich at the Tidewater Inn, I headed down to Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge just southwest of Cambridge in Dorchester County, Maryland for some birding. Blackwater is famous for its wintering waterfowl and year round bald eagles. It is also one of the most scenic areas with miles and miles of brackish water marsh edged by loblolly pine forest. Its flatness helps to create a big sky effect and the Little Blackwater and Big Blackwater Rivers converge within its boundary. The wildlife drive meanders through forest, marsh, and agricultural fields. The usual suspects of birds such as herons, cormorants, white pelicans, Canada and snow geese, puddle ducks, tundra swans, harriers, bald eagles, etc. can be spotted there. On this cool, gray day I'm impressed by my sightings and their numbers. There are many pintails about, grazing in the corn and soy bean stubble. As I leave the refuge and head west for Goode's Marina and Hooper's Islands, I pass a small plot of corn with a few puddle ducks present. Scanning with my scope, I see a small wet depression with a pintail pair feeding. I have them centered in my scope when for no apparent reason they jump skyward. This can't be, for in front of my eyes is the very image I bought on flat paper this morning at the show, but in live 3-dimensional wild. Could this be where the artist first conceptualized his eventual print? Is it possible? This "déjà vu" scene was real enough even though I also now had it in a captured moment of art. This kind of specialness of sensation, both in the wild and through art is that which thrills me to the core.

Over the years, I have seen many pintails and enjoy each sighting. The northern pintail is a surface feeding duck with a linear body and a long neck. The drake is easily recognized by its long tailfeathers (Note: the only other duck with such feathers is the drake long-tailed duck.) The genus of the bird "acuta" is Latin for long sharp tail. (Richard Crossley. *The Crossley ID Guide-Waterfowl*. 2017.) However, the hen has to be studied more carefully for accurate identification.



Although the males are beautifully colored, especially their brown heads with a large white arrow, the females are somewhat drab with a very mottled dark brown and black plumage as are many other hen puddle ducks. The ladies' speculum is dark gray-brown with a trailing white edge unlike other speculums. Pintail ducks are found throughout North America, the Northern Hemisphere, and even worldwide to an extent due to their introduction. They are abundant throughout their range in the northern hemisphere. Typical of most puddle ducks they are dabblers having a diet made up of mostly plant material. Unlike most puddle ducks, they are noted on occasion to dive for underwater food. (Paul Johnsgard. The North American Perching and Dabbling Ducks. 2017.) They are also field foragers for corn and soybean stubble. Pintails are long distance migrators, sometimes travelling as much as 1800 miles without stopping. (Michael Harrell. Ducks of North America. 2023.) Like most waterfowl, pintails are wetland dependent especially in relation to fresh water marshes and prairie potholes. Pintails are heavily hunted resulting in abundant harvesting.



Northern Pintail (Scientific Name: *Anas acuta*)

Length: Males 25-30 inches Females 21.4-25.2 inches

Wingspan: 34-37 inches

Weight: Males 2.26 lbs. Females 1.81 lbs.

Bill Size: Males 51.7 mm. Females 36.7 mm.

Eye Color: Black

Bill Color: Male Light blue sides, Black top and side edges
Female Gray

Legs &

Feet Color: Gray

Sounds: Male Noted for its whistle
Female Quacking like hen mallards

Description: See photos. During moltage, pintail drakes look much like a hen bird in color but they still possess the "sprig" tail. Immatures are very hen-like in appearance and take about a year to develop adult patterns. Ducklings are precocial, born and ready to go, with a grayish down coloring. Pintails readily hybridize and plumage can be quite variable depending on mate and they also exhibit geographic variation. There are also several separate species of pintail duck. (E.G. Bahamian pintail.)



Range: See Range map. Pintails are one of the most widely distributed ducks in the world, especially in the northern hemisphere. Northern nesting grounds occur throughout the coastal areas, above the treeline in Canada and Alaska wherever fresh or slightly brackish marsh can be found. The prairie pothole region of the U.S. and Canada is also an important breeding ground. Wintering grounds can be almost anywhere the duck can find open water and food supply. All major North American flyways are used, especially the Pacific flyway. In Mexico, the concentration of birds is mostly along the west coast, but they can also be found in the interior and Gulf coast in diminished numbers. (Crossley. P. 140.) They are a common duck in the Chesapeake Bay region. Small numbers of pintail also migrate regularly to Hawaii. (Frank Bellrose. Ducks, Geese, and Swans of North America. 1976.)



Habitat and Nesting: Pintail habitat is greatly associated with fresh and slightly brackish water, although they can be found on occasion in salt water. They nest in grassland fields, marshes, shallow sloughs, ponds, and ephemeral ponds in agricultural areas. The nest is always close to water, generally as close as 40 yards and rarely as far as 100 yards. They may nest in fairly high densities. Unusually, pintails will only nest in areas where the plants are not over 12 inches high providing little or no concealment to potential predators. (Note: This can be as high as 70 %.) One biologist stated that " the pintail has a psychological dependence on open landscape and thrives best in wide, open terrain with shallow waters..." (Hilden. 1964. Cited in Johnsgard. P. 140.) Pintails will not be found in wooded areas whether bordering a pond or a forest. I have never sighted a pintail in any of the numerous swamps I have paddled.

Nest sites are usually chosen by the pair, but built by the female. They are made of plant material with a central scrape sometimes coming close to bare ground. The material is usually last year's marsh growth because pintails are one of the earliest of nesters.

Reproduction: Pair bonding occurs on the wintering grounds with the male exhibiting a variety of courtship displays. Head-pumping behavior leads to copulation. Eggs are laid at the rate of one per day with clutch size averaging 7 and a range of 3-12 eggs. Egg parasitism may occur by ruddy and redhead ducks. Second clutches are very common because of predation by avian predators such as crows, ravens, juncos, and gulls and terrestrial predators such as skunks, ground squirrels, coyotes, foxes, and badgers. (Bellrose. P. 272.) Incubation begins with the laying of the last egg and will last 22 to 23 days. At final hatching, the hen leads the offspring to water as soon as possible. Rarely does a drake revisit a nest or defend a brood. Developmental rates vary but they have usually fledged within 46 to 57 days. Mortality is high amongst the young.

Diet: The diet of the pintail duck is closely associated to where the duck is located geographically. The vegetation that is predominant usually becomes the dietary choice of the bird. They are herbivores in



general, but the female will consume animal material when nesting and/or moulting. The same is true of the young chicks. This material includes insects, crayfish, mollusks, minnows, etc. Most of the year, pintails are consuming marsh plants such as bulrushes, smartweeds, salt grasses, etc. More than any other duck they feed on waste grains such as corn, rice, wheat, barley, oats, and other cereal types of plants. They also will feed on SAVs such as pondweeds and widgeon grass. They relish seeds but will feed on any of the plant material. Feeding on SAVs is possible because of their long necks reaching deeper than other ducks and their willingness to dive. Pintails require water to be present in field-feeding habitats. Because of their early migration patterns, pintails can do much damage to farmers' crops. (Bellrose. P. 274.)

Population Status/Challenges: As of 1924, the population of breeding northern pintails in North America is 2,219,000. (US Fish and Wildlife Service.) This is an 11 % decline since 2023 and a 42 % decline below the historical long range average of 3,840,000. The following factors help to explain this decline: 1. Low reproductive success on breeding ground. Idiosyncrasies associated with the duck's nesting habits include its nest location choices which lead to increased predation potential and its early nesting which lead to as much as



half the nests being tilled under and lost in the spring. 2. Agricultural intensification leading to loss of habitat, especially prairie potholes. 3. Climate change leading to dryer conditions and increased drought. 4. Declining food supply on wintering grounds. 5. Too liberal hunting bag limits for species. 6. Also, pintails are often impacted by avian diseases.

Personal Reflections: You may have reached the point in your quarterly readings of the “Canvasback” magazine where you wonder if there is any duck that this author doesn’t consider as his favorite, most beautiful, most interesting, etc. duck. When you love all waterfowl this does become problematic, particularly when you write a column on them each edition. (Note: There have been some tangents to other birds over the years – e.g., the belted kingfisher and the great blue heron.) However, there can be no doubt that the northern pintail is a handsome duck, very interesting to study, and consequently one of my favorites. Whether represented in art on the wall or vaulting out of a shallow pond in a corn field in the managed wild, the pintail seems to possess those intrinsic values of color, style, behavior, or habitat choice that brings a smile to my face and a soulful thrill to my spirit. They are also a great teaching species for students.

It’s a blue sky day, after an intense period of rain the previous afternoon. The air is cool for late summer and a slight breeze comes out of the north. That ugly, stagnant atmosphere of last week is no more. The breeze keeps the bugs down and eliminates the need for air conditioning – ideal conditions for birding from the car. The day has already been exciting with the spotting of a little egret and a white-faced ibis. As we turn onto the second major pond at Bombay Hook NWR, a huge group of puddle ducks swim toward the road. The large raft is made up exclusively of northern pintails and greenwing teal. The sun is in the perfect juxtaposition to make their colors shine. Hundreds and hundreds of ducks resting and occasionally feeding move towards us making binoculars or spotting scopes unnecessary.



The rookie in our birding band is ecstatic and can’t shut up and enjoy the moment. His frenzy launches the ducks out of the water and over our heads. The speed of the sleek pintails, along with the drakes’ tails set them apart from the smaller but equally fast “tightness” of the teals. It is a sighting of real ducks which could also be captured by an artist in a representation of what he/she has just witnessed. My birding buddy, Tom, has captured it on film to have it as a remembrance of the happening. We, others present in the car, have it seared on the “kodachrome in between our ears.” Does it matter, what catalyst aids in the retrieval of a special memory created on a day in our past historical experience? Be it the art of the waterfowl festival or the field observation of pintail events – just get me there, in my MIND!

“Painting from nature is not copying the object; it is realizing one’s sensations”

Paul Cezanne

Happy Male Northern Pintail
Debbie Blair



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)

Pintails on the move.
Earl Blansfield



Relaxed Pintail hen.
Scott Krieger



Is that a spot?
Scott Krieger



Relaxed Northern Pintail Couple
Debbie Blair



Launching Pintail hen.
Earl Blansfield



Pintail drake coming in for a landing.
Ralph Hockman



Pintail drake taking a stroll.
Rob Bruch

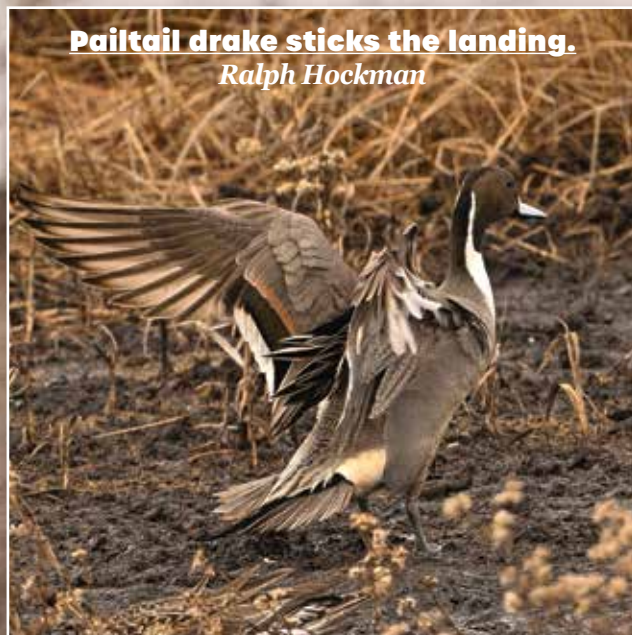


Male Northern Pintail
Debbie Blair





Pintail drake coming in for a landing.
Ralph Hockman



Pailtail drake sticks the landing.
Ralph Hockman



Pintail pair.
Scott Krieger



Pintail Trio
Robert Bruch

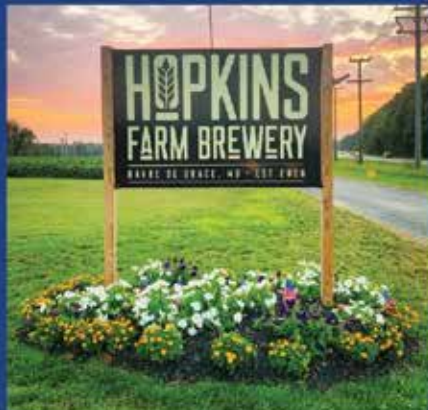


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57th Upper Shore Decoy Show

Minker Banquet Hall

Community Fire Company of Perryville, Perryville, MD

Info: decoyshow@upperbaymuseum.org

November 7, 2026

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Decoy Show**

Mason Avenue, Cape Charles, VA

Info: Andy Dunton deecoys@aol.com

November 13–15, 2026

Easton Waterfowl Festival

Easton, MD

Info: (410) 822-4567

Info: facts@waterfowlfestival.org

November 13–15, 2026

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Preview & Sale**

Outdoor Tailgate

(to benefit HDG Decoy Museum)

The Country School,

716 Goldsborough Street, Easton, MD

Tailgate Info: Butch Wagoner (443) 307-3063

Auction Info: Guyette & Deeter (410) 745-0485

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Pintail Drake by Cameron Evans

Fall 2026

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