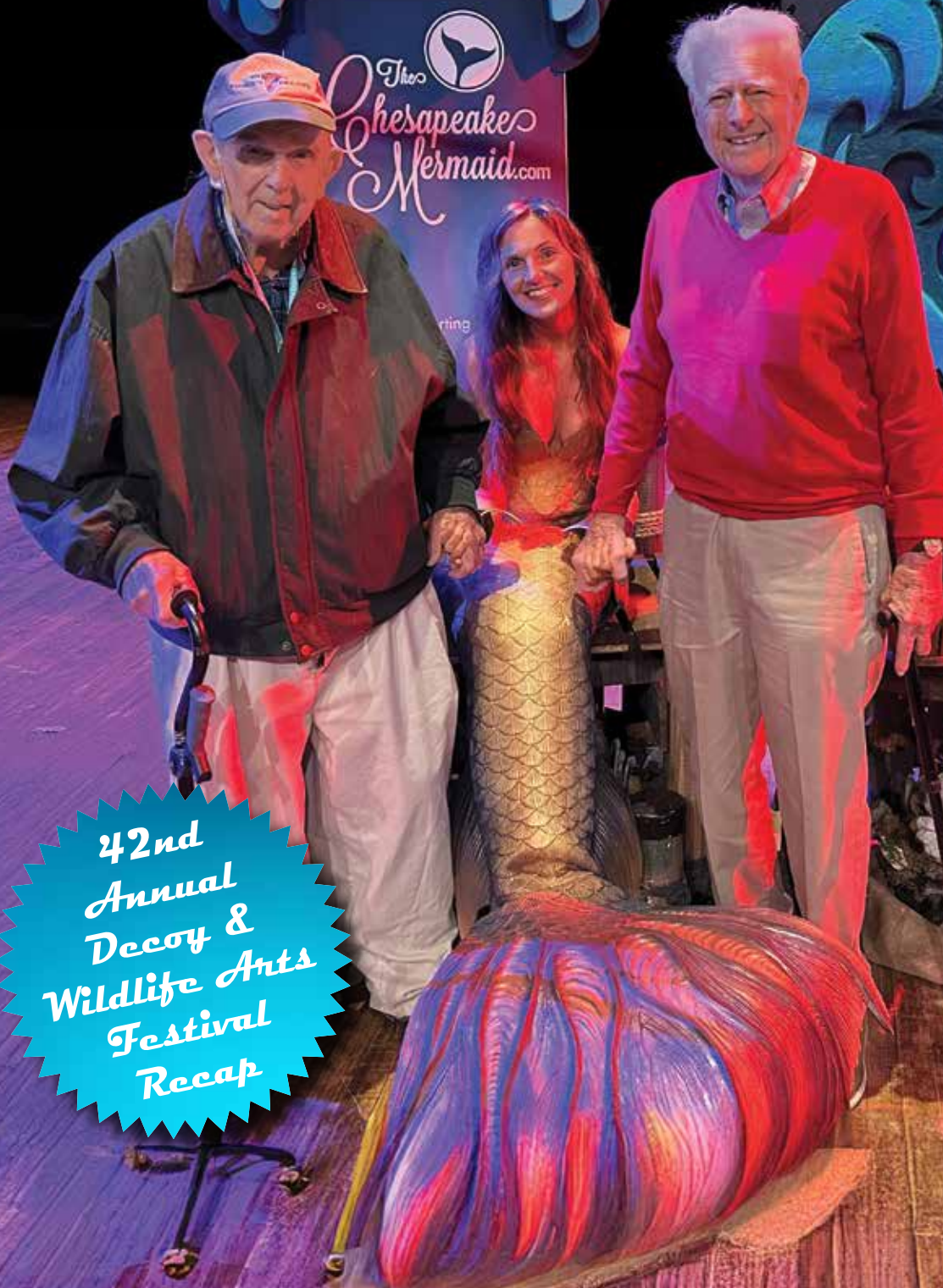


The Canvasback

HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

Vol. 34 No. 3

Summer 2024



42nd
Annual
Decoy &
Wildlife Arts
Festival
Recap

Naked Goby



- small, stocky fish
- dark greenish-brown with 6-10 light bars on its sides
- it is "naked" as it has no scales, only skin
- hides among oyster reefs and buries itself during winter

The Chesapeake Mermaid.com



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can•vas•back

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

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

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

FUNDED IN PART BY



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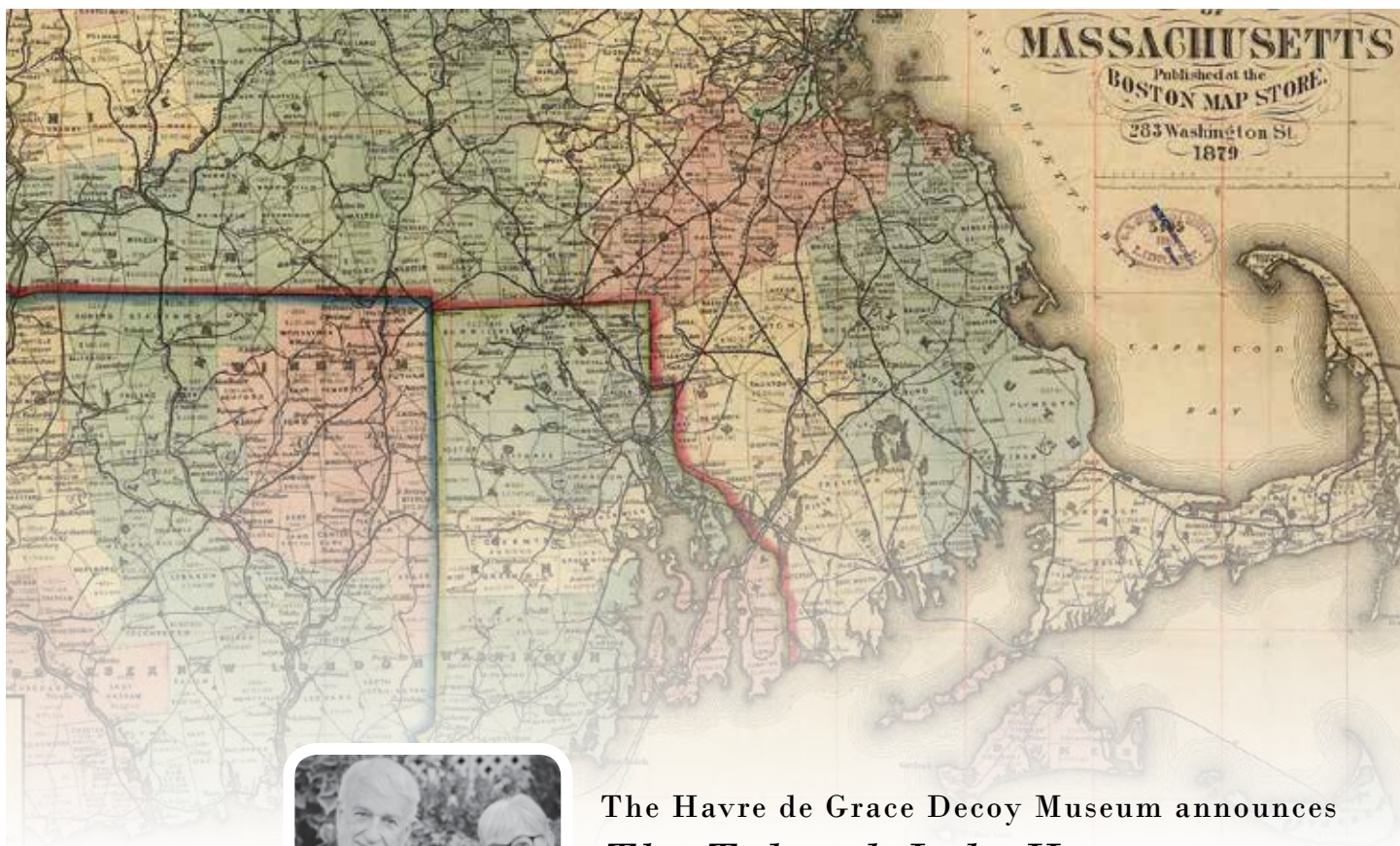
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ON THE COVER

Two founders of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, Jim Pierce (L) and Allen Fair (R) take time out to visit the Chesapeake Mermaid while attending the 42nd Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival. Both Jim and Allen celebrate their 90th birthday in 2024: Jim in May, and Allen in July. We, at the Decoy Museum wish both Jim and Allen a happy 90th birthday with hopes for many more.

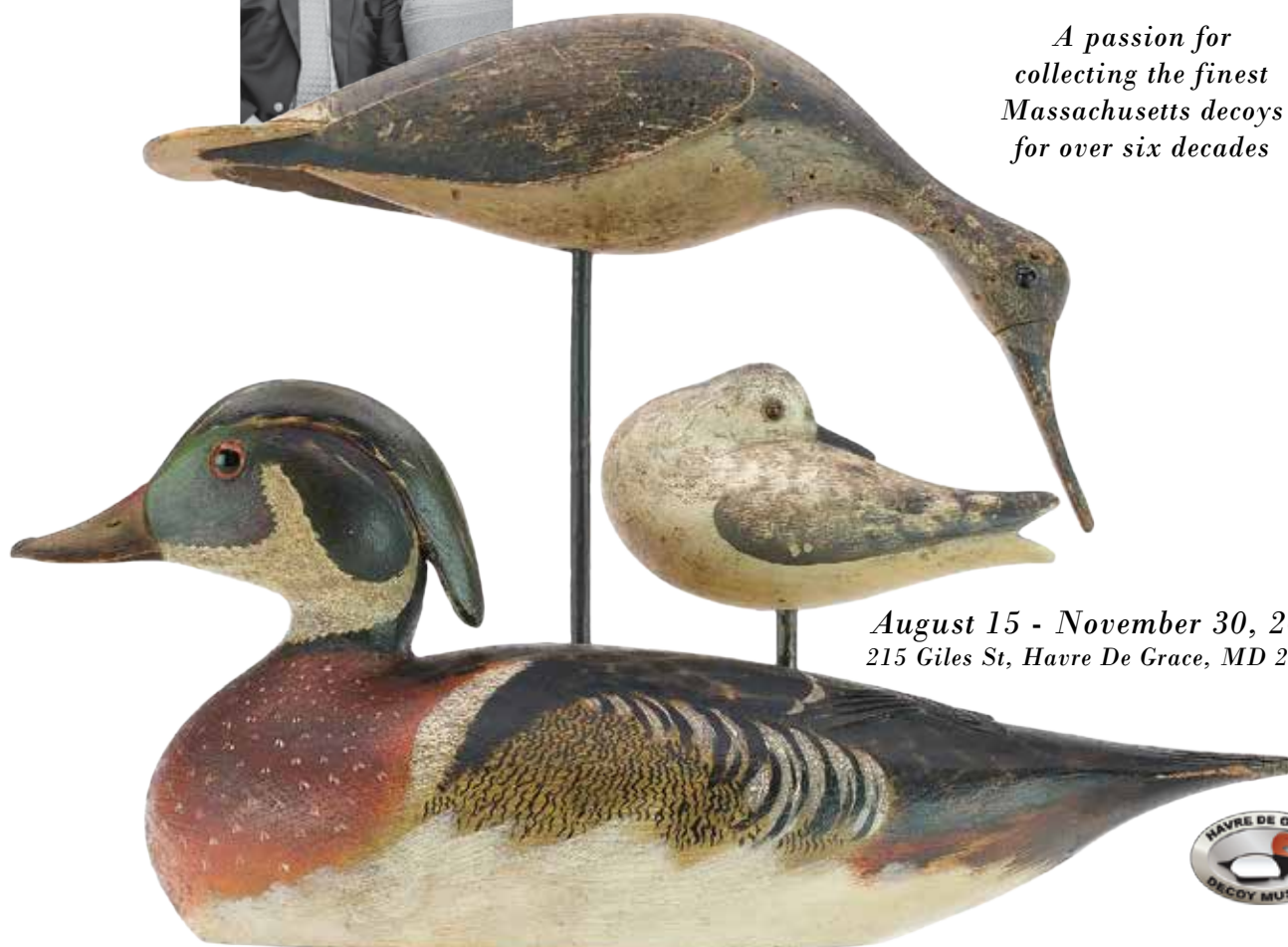
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The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum announces
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Collection Exhibit*

*A passion for
collecting the finest
Massachusetts decoys
for over six decades*



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From the President...

The 42nd Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival is behind us. By all measures, the event was a success. Elsewhere within this edition there is a festival in Review article that summarizes this year's event, so I will not take up valuable space discussing it any further in this message. I do want to extend my congratulations and gratitude on behalf of the Museum and its Board to C. John Sullivan, Jr., who acted as Honorary Chairperson for this year's festival. As a tribute to C. John Sullivan, Jr., there is a wonderful exhibit of decoys and collectibles on display at the Museum from his extensive private collection of these items.



Speaking of exhibits, I would like to discuss how fortunate the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum is to have so many rotating temporary exhibits that serve to add to the numerous magnificent permanent collections that adorn our facility. These exhibits have largely been made possible through the kindness of many of our peers in the decoy collecting community. All of the exhibits have been coordinated through our very active Collections Committee, Chaired by Board Member David Farrow. Joining David are committee members C. John Sullivan, Jr., Kevin Peel, Bill Waibel, Pat Vincenti, John Henry, Ginny Sanders, and Nathaniel Heasley.

After seven months of residence, the Cobb Island exhibit was taken down in early June. The exhibit contained forty-eight exquisite pieces owned by Tommy O'Connor (Cape Charles, VA). Special thanks to Tommy for the opportunity to showcase this magnificent exhibit. In mid-June, the Delmarva Decoy Collectors Association opened a new exhibit called "The Wonderful Variety of Delmarva Decoys" This exhibit showcases the many different decoys styles found on the Delmarva peninsula.

The Museum has been granted a long term loan from the family of John Blair containing an assortment of Blair family decoys. John Blair Sr. is renowned as one of the elders of the Delaware River school of carving. Blair Sr.'s two sons, John Jr. and Walter, would go on to become carvers. Blair Jr. was an architectural engineer working at Lockwood Green with none other than Joel Barber, author of the seminal work on decoy carving "*Wild Fowl Decoys*". Walter Blair likely began carving after the family's move to Elkton, MD. While Blair Jr's style is more reflective of his father's work, Walter Blair's carvings reflect an Upper Chesapeake Bay influence, bearing some similarities to decoys carved in Havre de Grace.

The John "Daddy" Holly exhibit, sponsored by our good friends at the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association (PDCA) remains on display at the Museum. PDCA's new exhibit travels back to the very beginnings of Upper Chesapeake Bay decoy making, with an in-depth look at the work of pioneer carver and innovator of the Harford County or Havre de Grace style, John W. Holly, Sr. (1818-1892), best known to his family and the decoy collecting community as "Daddy" Holly.

The Collections Committee remains very busy planning for future exhibits at the Museum that include a glimpse of the fabulous collection of Ted Harmon (in partnership with Guyette & Deeter), Sellers Family Decoys, Decoys of the Upper Susquehanna River (both in partnership with Jeff Von Brookhoven), an exhibit of New Jersey style decoys (to be presented by the New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association), and the creation of a new permanent exhibit: Influences of African Americans on Decoy Making. Visit soon and visit often to take in all that the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum has to offer.

42ND ANNUAL Decoy & Wildlife Arts Festival

IN REVIEW

By Mike Tarquini

For forty-one of the last forty-two years, the first weekend in May has served as the time when all decoy and wildlife art enthusiasts descend upon Havre de Grace, MD to celebrate the Decoy Festival in support of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. The annual festival has taken place every year since 1982 except for 2020 when we all stayed at home dodging the pandemic. There were no signs of a pandemic at this year's event as an estimated one-thousand visitors graced the front doors of the STAR Centre to attend the 42nd Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival.





This year's event was supported by Harford County Government with funds awarded through the FY2024 Tourism Grant Program. Harford County Office of Economic Development administers the grant process which is open to qualified nonprofits. The program supports events and activities that draw overnight visitors and is funded by revenue from the county's 6% hotel tax. The Decoy Museum extends our sincere appreciation to County Executive Bob Cassilly for his continued support of our programs and the overall mission of the Museum. This year's event saw three-hundred seventy five exhibitors and attendees (33%) venture to Havre de Grace from outside our geographic area potentially staying in Harford County hotels and contributing to the hotel tax revenue. Many exhibitors and attendees were seen at the Carvers Reception (Friday evening), the exhibition (Saturday), and the private event for C. John Sullivan (Saturday evening) conservatively suggesting at least a single night's stay within the area.



Delta Waterfowl members Jeff Addicks and Ronnie Thomas working the meat slicer and preparing sandwiches.



Honorary Chairman C. John Sullivan, Jr. and his life's partner Peg Reel.

C. John Sullivan, Jr. served as the Honorary Chairperson for the 2024 festival. C. John is a native of Bel Air, MD is regarded as an avid waterfowl decoy collector and a noted historian who is quite knowledgeable on our rich cultural heritage of waterfowling and decoy making in the Lower Susquehanna River and Chesapeake Bay. C. John has made numerous contributions to the exhibits that have been presented over the years at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. His selection as the 2024 Honorary Chairperson was quite deserving.

The Susquehanna Flats Chapter of Delta Waterfowl served as an official partner for this year's festival. Through the guidance of Chapter President Randy McElyea, the volunteers from the Susquehanna Flats Chapter prepared delicious food throughout the weekend. In addition, Delta Waterfowl prepared and served food at the traditional Carvers Reception

held on Friday evening. Hats off to all Delta Waterfowl members for a job well done.

The Honorary Chairpersons from all forty-two festivals were honored with 4' x 8' banners which hung from the rafters of the Main Gym. This tribute was well received by exhibitors and attendees alike who could be seen looking up to the banners throughout the weekend. The forty-two years of Decoy Festivals have been responsible for many memories and the tribute banners were a way to bring them all front and center at this year's event.

Exhibitors loaded into the STAR Centre on Friday afternoon in preparation for the weekend's festival. Following the exhibitor set up process, the Museum hosted a Carvers Reception in the Carvers Gallery of the Decoy Museum. The reception encourages fellowship among the various carvers, exhibitors, and other guests. During the program, Allan Schauber presented Decoy Museum President Mike Tarquini with \$3,700 raised at the 5th Annual Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show held in September 2023. After five years of dedicated effort to put on the Galena, MD-based decoy show, Allan Schauber has raised \$16,000 for the Museum. Special thanks to Allan and Susan Schauber who work countless hours preparing for and executing the show.

This year's festival consisted of fifty-two exhibitors from nine different states who showcased their offerings in eighty-seven exhibit spaces (tables). Sixty-seven percent of our exhibitors were from Maryland, but a surprising thirty-three percent were from outside our state. Don Weaver (New Orleans, LA) traveled approximately 1,200 miles to exhibit. There were seventeen exhibitors that traveled from other areas outside of the Maryland area. Tom Reed (Isle of Palms, SC) traveled approximately 660 miles to join us. Other exhibitors such as Michael Daily (Marston Mills, MA), Walt Jones (Knotts Island, NC), and Ron Fleiser (Sarver, PA) each traveled 300-400 miles

to participate in this year's event. There were also exhibitors that ventured to Havre de Grace from neighboring states such as Delaware, Virginia, and New Jersey. First time exhibitor Cameron Evans ventured to the festival from Tangier Island, VA. His travel entailed a 45 minute boat ride from the island to Crisfield, MD followed by a nearly one-hundred seventy-five mile drive to Havre de Grace.

The festival featured a smaller group of non-profit organizations that used the event to promote their organizations or mission. A group traveled to the festival from Lake Koshkonong, WI (approximately nine-hundred miles) where they exhibited a collection of decoys from that region. Jack Manning and Rick Bouchelle represented the Upper Bay Museum (North East, MD). Gary Armour, President of the Upper Bay Decoy Collectors Club (UBDCC) and Chad Tragakis, President of the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association (PDCA) promoted their respective organizations to festival attendees. Members from the Community Fire Company (Perryville, MD) offered tickets for sale to their annual gun bash fundraiser to be held later this year. Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) showcased hunter safety as well as boater safety at their exhibit. Of course, festival partners Havre de Grace Decoy Museum and Delta Waterfowl presented exhibits promoting their respective organizations.

This year's Festival included two new offerings that were aimed at providing activities for boating enthusiasts as well as children that accompanied their parents to the event. Despite getting local marine dealers, service providers, marinas, a navigation provider, and a sailing school, the inaugural Susquehanna Flats Marine Exhibition fell well short of expectations as the weather failed to cooperate. Chilly temperatures and steady rain made



Decorative Decoy Competition - Chaired by John Graf (R) and volunteers from Ducks Unlimited.



Gunning Decoy Competition - Chaired by John Day (R).



Old Decoy Contest - Lloyd Sanders and Tommy O'Connor catch up during the judging portion of the contest.



Vivian Miller showing off her new face paint



Old Decoy Competition Judging was conducted by veteran collectors Bill Waibel (L), Jim Van Ness (C), and Steve Brown (R).



Reception to celebrate our Honorary Chairperson, C. John Sullivan, Jr.

an outdoor marine event non-inviting to potential visitors. A special thank you to Chessie Marine, Anchor Boats, Argentino Marine, Argo Navigation, The Butler Did It, Bruce Jamison Brokerage, Flying Point and McDaniel Marinas, and Bay Sail Sailing School for braving the elements and attempting to make things work, but mother nature was not having it. The effort provided by volunteers Butch Wagoner and Bill Weyant to get the marine exhibition off the ground was greatly appreciated.

The children were treated a series of presentations by the Chesapeake Mermaid, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that creates unforgettable environmental education programs, books, and activities. The organization has a unique outreach that focuses on Chesapeake Bay wildlife and habitats, promoting daily environmental stewardship. The Chesapeake Mermaid appealed to festival goers young and old. Face Painting and crafts were also made available to our younger visitors. By the look of the many painted faces walking throughout the festival, many children and some adults took advantage of the opportunity.

The festival had events for decoy makers and collectors of all ages in the form of three different competitions. A Decorative decoy competition, chaired by Museum Board Member John Graf featured many detailed creations from a variety of craftsmen. Notable carver and carving educator Johnnie Day chaired a Gunning decoy competition. Judges for the Decorative competition included: Jay Polite, Dan Polite, Raymond Paoletti, Chad Tragakis, Kevin Peel, Bill Waibel, Jeff Moore, Kevin Siple, and John Graf. The Gunning decoy competition was limited to decoys created to hunt over. All of the decoys were floated in water tanks and were judged by a panel of judges that included Scott Green, Mike Braun, and Allen Humes who judged flat bottoms, and Charlie Pierce, Jason Superczynski, and Bill Collins (round bottoms), all from a distance of twenty feet. Chad Tragakis, President of the PDCA, chaired the J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy competition. This year saw more old decoys entered than ever before at 115. Judges Jim Van Ness, Museum Board Member Bill Waibel, and Steve Brown had quite a challenge

picking the winners in the ten competition categories. Although available space precludes listing all competition winners in this article, please visit our website for a full list of winners. Special thanks to Board Member David Farrow, Gary Armour, Hugh Mentz, and the many other volunteers for helping with the competition logistics.

This year's festival saw the return of a silent decoy auction where attendees had the opportunity to bid on approximately fifty offerings. Museum Curatorial Coordinator Nathaniel Heasley and volunteer John Popowski organized and oversaw the event. Special thanks to Jon Deeter and Cooper Rosner from renowned auction house Guyette & Deeter for assisting us in obtaining items for the silent auction. The event raised about \$1,000 for the Decoy Museum.

No event of the magnitude of the Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival would be successful without the contributions of our staff and volunteers. The entire museum staff under the direction of Membership & Special Events Coordinator Dena Cardwell managed the preparation, set-up, and execution details at both the STAR Centre and the Decoy Museum.

For the third consecutive year, the STAR Centre has provided the Annual Decoy & Wildlife Festival with a venue that allows for the future growth of our annual event. Special thanks to Havre de Grace Mayor, Bill Martin and his staff for their efforts to enable our success.

In 2025, we will celebrate the 43rd Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival. The Honorary Chairperson will be renown carver John Eichelberger, Jr. from Willow Street, PA. John and his wife Susan have been staunch supporters of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum over the years. Next year's event will be held Friday, May 2 (exhibitor move in & Carvers Reception), followed by two days of exhibitions on Saturday, May 3 and Sunday, May 4. Please mark your calendars and join us on the first weekend in May for all things decoy in historic Havre de Grace, MD.

2024 Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest

By Chad Tragakis

For longtime and newer collectors alike, one of the highlights of the annual Havre de Grace Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival is the Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest, sponsored by Decoy Magazine and named for the beloved pioneer Susquehanna Flats collector and author, J. Evans McKinney. Each year, collectors enter their favorite pieces in ten different categories, which are then carefully evaluated by a rotating panel of three judges, tasked with selecting a winner in each category along with a first, second and third best-in-show. There were 115 decoys entered this year, a record in the 21-year history of the competition. Once again, the contest was coordinated by volunteers from the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association in partnership with Ginny and Lloyd Sanders from the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. Judging this year were veteran collectors Steve Brown, Jim Van Ness and Bill Waibel.



J. Evans McKinney Old Decoy Competition Judges. (L to R: Bill Waibel, Steve Brown, and Jim Van Ness)

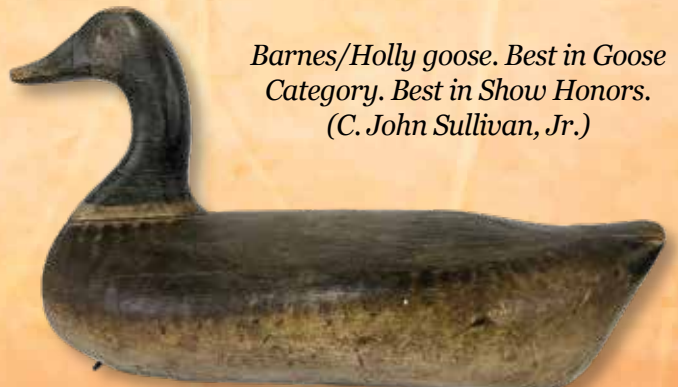
C. John Sullivan, Jr. earned first place in the Canada Goose category with a Barnes/Holly goose, which also took Best-in-Show honors. Sullivan's handsome honker is one of about a dozen or so known examples, which feature characteristics of both Sam Barnes and Jim Holly, early makers from Havre de Grace, Maryland. Thus, these decoys have been dubbed Barnes/Holly, and may be the result of collaboration between the two. A sculptural pair of Scott Jackson canvasbacks from the rig of Lew Pennock, and so branded, earned first place in the Cecil County Canvasback category for S.R. Smith, and they also earned second best-in show. John Henry won the Harford County Bluebill category with a blackhead by Jim Holly, also taking third best-in-show.



Chad Tragakis presents C. John Sullivan, Jr. with Best in Show Honors

David Farrow won the Rock Hall Puddle Duck category with a sleek pair of pintails by John Glenn. Chad and Christy Tragakis won the Hoopers Island Merganser category with a pair of high-head red-breasted mergansers by Capt. Gene Travers, formerly in the collection of Bobby Richardson and one of his favorite pairs of "fence-post pheasants." They also won the Jim Pierce Decoy category with an early working coot in sleeping position, formerly in the collection of Henry Fleckenstein. John Graf won the Balsa Wood Decoy category with a classic 1948 style canvasback drake by the Ward brothers.

Jamie Bowden won the Chincoteague category with an early bluebill drake by Ira Hudson, which he recently acquired from the collection of Dr. Jack Marsh. John Henry won the Unknown category with a finely carved redhead drake, which some collectors have ascribed to Long Island, others to the Potomac River, and still others to locations in between. Ron Lewicki won the Root Head category with another unknown, this one an early gunning brant made and used on Long Island, New York.



*Barnes/Holly goose. Best in Goose Category. Best in Show Honors.
(C. John Sullivan, Jr.)*



A sculptural pair of Scott Jackson canvasbacks. Best Cecil County Canvasback Category. Second Best in Show Honors. (S.R. Smith)

Blackhead by Jim Holly. Best Harford County Bluebill Category. Third Best in Show Honors. (John Henry)



John Glenn pintail pair. Best Rock Hall Category. (David Farrow)

Pair of Capt. Gene Travers high-head red breasted mergansers. Best Hooper's Island Category. (Chad & Christy Tragakis)



Early working sleeping coot by Jim Pierce. Best Jim Pierce Category. (Chad & Christy Tragakis)

1948 Ward brothers canvasback. Best Balsa Wood Category. (John Graf)



Early bluebill drake by Ira Hudson. Best Chincoteague Category. (Jamie Bowden)

Finely carved redhead drake (Long Island/Potomac River). Best Unknown Category. (John Henry)



Early gunning brant. Maker unknown. Best Root Head Category. (Ron Lewicki)

C. John Sullivan, Jr.,

Honorary Chairman Exhibit

By C. John Sullivan, Jr.

I live surrounded by objects that I have collected throughout my lifetime. I enjoy looking at them, handling them, admiring them, and speculating where they were used, who used them, and where they have spent their days. What appeals to me about them may be foreign to others. Years ago, a visitor to my home, a museum director, commented to me that each of these pieces holds a story, stories that I relive as I handle them. I recently visited an old decoy friend, soon to be 88 years old. As I viewed the decoys on his shelves, he said "Pick up that piece and let me tell you about it." As I held the decoy and admired it, he recited the history of that decoy. I do the same each day. Each of the pieces that I have chosen for my Honorary Chairman display holds a story to be shared. When I selected the various decoys, I picked pieces that speak the loudest to me, each of them holding a special significance. Among these favorites are some decoys that came to me from my late friend John M. M. Pusey: the high-neck Charles Nelson Barnard canvasback, the "Daddy" Holly Canada goose, the mint Robert M. McGaw canvasback pair, and the

McGaw teal. Each of these decoys tells a story. Those Barnards were used with the Pusey family sinkbox rig. The unused decoys were quite simply too nice to throw overboard, so they were stored away for safekeeping.

My dear friend the late Henry A. Fleckenstein, Jr., was the source of some wonderful stories and decoys: the James T. Holly bluebill drake wingduck, the extremely rare John B. Graham preening canvasback hen, the Charles T. Wilson hen bluebill, the James T. Holly black duck pair, the "Daddy" Holly redhead drake used in North Carolina, a John B. Graham canvasback wingduck, the John B. Graham blackducks, the Joseph Dye bluebill drakes, the extremely rare Robert McGaw goldeneye drake, the two John "Daddy" Holly canvasback drake wingducks, the highly desirable Charles Nelson Barnard redhead pair, a pair of Charles Barnard bluebills which I watched Henry purchase at the historic Gabler auction, and finally, a Harry Emmords hollow-carved swan decoy. These decoys were cherished pieces to Henry. We discussed these decoys for years in what we called our "decoy roundtables."



Robert N. Hockaday, Jr., a friend for many years, made some wonderful discoveries for me: the cast iron Newfoundland/Chesapeake Bay retriever, the solid cast iron Canada goose pair, a rare confidence decoy—the snowy egret, and finally, the John Graham canvasback drake in original paint. Bob has a great eye for form and surface. I am grateful that he sent these great pieces my way.

In 1974, I discovered a group of decoys in a basement in the City of Havre de Grace. I have included from that rig two Barnard Canada geese; one of them is the only known example of a high-head goose decoy. These birds were part of the Boyd family rig. I remember well that the Barnard ducks that I didn't buy were six dollars each and the goose decoys fifteen dollars.

I have included in this display some contemporary pieces: a diorama of the Cedar Point Ducking Club by C. A. Porter Hopkins, a black-bellied plover by Ian McNair, and dove decoys by Frank Finney, Jimmy Wright, Cameron McIntyre, and the late Jack Ullrich. Each of these pieces are special to me, and the carvers are all good friends.

A couple of great decoys have come to me from Ronnie Newcomb: a very rare, perhaps unique John B. Graham bufflehead, a "pocket" model canvasback drake, and a mint John Graham canvasback drake wingduck. My trades and deals with Ronnie go back over a period of 40 years, and each piece holds a special memory of what I gave up and what came home with me.

A few of the decoys in this collection were added from auctions. Some of these pieces were mine earlier for a short period of time and have rejoined this flock.

I returned from England in 1994 with a James T. Holly bluewing teal in original paint. It came to me as the result of a complicated trade with my British friend Guy Taplin. Early trades with Guy were the beginning of a wonderful across-the-ocean friendship.

The Sam Smith pintail hen and canvasback drake came to this collection as I was writing the history of the Swan Island Ducking Club in North Carolina.

Resting on the "Preserving Our Waterfowling Heritage" bench, I have placed three decoys by Al Bell of Baltimore: a full-size swan, a Canada goose, and a canvasback drake. I wrote the history of Bell's decoys for Decoy Magazine. That article corrected long misunderstood attributions for the humble Baltimore carver.

Discovered at the Havre de Grace Decoy Show is a James T. Holly Canada goose wearing the paint of a swan and the rarest of the rare, a preening hollow-carved Canada goose decoy disguised as a swan and wearing the brand "The Whistler." This preener I called the Holy Grail, although out there somewhere is another Holy Grail just waiting to be discovered.

My long-time association with Charles Nelson Barnard's family allowed me to be the caretaker of the hollow-carved blackduck pair and the one-of-a-kind ruddy duck.



The pair of canvasbacks carved by John "Daddy" Holly and gunned over at the historic Currituck Club came to me through my long friendship with Dick McIntyre.

One of the more recent acquisitions is the most diminutive of all of the John Graham ruddy ducks. This decoy came to me after years of pleading with my good friend Henry H. Stansbury. Henry purchased this little decoy from the late John Delph years ago. I know that it was difficult for Henry to let it go.

I selected three shotguns to include in this exhibit as examples of the waterfowling history of the region. Displayed along with the Blair exhibit is a Colt double-barrel breech-loading 10-gauge shotgun. This gun was Charles N. Barnard's gun and came to me from my long-time friendship with the Barnard family. In the Honorary Chairman case, I have displayed two 4-gauge guns. One is a 4-gauge under-lever breechloader made in Baltimore by the firm of Clark & Sneider. It was owned by DeLancey Floyd Jones of South Oyster Bay, New York. Jones was a member of the Carroll's Island Ducking Club. Accompanying the gun is Jones' personalized leather gunning box, filled with 4-gauge shells. The 4-gauge muzzleloader is an English gun made by the firm of Hollis and Company. It was manufactured in London in 1840 and used at General George Cadwalader's Maxwell Point. I am honored to have acquired this gun through my friendship with the late Mary Helen Cadwalader.



C. John Sullivan, Jr. in front of his exhibit

Finally, included in this group is my very first decoy, a Benjamin Dye redhead drake. It was a gift from my maternal grandmother, Sarah Blair Robinson. It was this decoy which started me on this journey.



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DELMARVA DECoy EXHIBIT NOW ON DISPLAY AT HAVRE DE GRACE DECoy MUSEUM

By Joe Engers

The Delmarva Peninsula, which encompasses parts of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, hence the name, is bordered by the Chesapeake Bay to the west and the Atlantic Ocean and Delaware River and Bay to the east. Roughly 180 miles long and with over 5500 square miles of land mass, it is crisscrossed by numerous rivers, creeks and streams and includes some of the richest marshland in America. During the Golden Age of Waterfowling, it was a duck hunter's paradise.

From its early days of market hunting to its later pursuit of sport, this harvest of waterfowl required thousands of decoys, which were produced by myriads of cottage industries, each fashioned in unique regional styles. In fact, there may have been a greater variety of decoys fashioned on the Delmarva Peninsula than in any other geographic region in North America.

To celebrate this variety, the Delmarva Decoy Collectors Association has recently installed a temporary exhibit at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum, "The Wonderful Variety of Delmarva Decoys," which includes terrific examples of some of the region's finest decoys by its most talented makers. It will remain on public display through December 4, 2024.

Smith Island is located at the most Southern point along Virginia's barrier islands. Alma Fitchett, Robert Andrews and John Henry Downes, who worked together at the lighthouse on the island, made a small number of decoys to hunt ducks and shorebirds during their downtimes. The exhibit includes a Fitchett running curlew, a rare pair of Andrews buffleheads and a Downes black duck.



Up the coast in Northampton County, some of the most desirable decoys were made and used on Cobb and Hog Islands. Three generations of the Cobb family, along with guides who worked on the island, made duck, goose and shorebird decoys for their own use and the sports they entertained on their island resort. A petite Nathan Cobb Jr. bufflehead and a Cobb Island Eskimo curlew are included in the display.

The Doughty family produced most of the decoys used on Hog Island; an Eli Doughty bluebill is one of the featured items. For years, a distinct style of decoys used on Hog



*Running curlew by Alma Fitchett
of Smith Island, Virginia.
(Joe Engers Collection)*



*Brant by Dave "Umbrella" Watson of Willis
Wharf, Virginia. (Burt Campbell Collection)*



*Pair of buffleheads by Ed Parsons of Oxford,
Maryland. (Burt Campbell Collection)*



*Pair of buffleheads by Charles Jester of
Chincoteague, Virginia. (Burt Campbell
Collection)*



*Goldeneye by Noah B. Sterling of Crisfield,
Maryland. (William H. Purnell Jr. Collection)*

Island was attributed to Walter Brady; some collectors now believe they were made by a member of the Doughty family. A Canada goose in the exhibit is an excellent example of his work.

Chincoteague Island lies further north in Accomack County, Virginia. Ira Hudson is the most well-known maker from the island and an early red-breasted merganser, a well-painted pintail and a yellowlegs are included in the exhibit. Doug Jester was another prolific maker; a folky red-breasted merganser pair and a curlew with a raised “shark fin” are included in the display. Jester’s cousin Charles carved a small number of hollow decoys for his personal use that were painted by one of those neighbors. A rare pair of buffleheads, the hen with a tucked head, is arguably his finest accomplishment.

Dave “Umbrella” Watson lived most of his adult life in Willis Wharf before moving to Chincoteague as an old man, so his decoys have more of a Northampton County influence and are noted for their relief-carved tail and the raised brow that give them an angry look. A brant in practically mint condition displays his finest paint patterns. Miles Hancock was a prolific maker who fashioned decoys on the island for over 50 years, and his red-breasted mergansers are among his most desirable species. Will Mason was a little-known maker from the bayside in Parksley, Virginia, whose work for years was attributed to “Lou Birch;” he crafted a small number of sculpturally appealing divers, including a bluebill in the exhibit.

Somerset County, the southernmost portion of Maryland’s Eastern Shore, is home to Crisfield, the birthplace of the Ward brothers, two of the most iconic decoy makers in America. Bordering the Chesapeake Bay and encompassing nearly 30% of all of Maryland’s tidal marsh area, this area provided a vast harvest for market hunters and quickly attracted wealthy sports, both of which required a vast number of decoys.

Travis Ward, the father of Lem and Steve, and Noah B. Sterling, two of the earliest documented decoy makers from Crisfield, fashioned decoys with flat bottoms, a narrow breast, wide hips and an overhanging paddle tail, which is the quintessential Crisfield decoy. A powerful Sterling goldeneye, one of the finest surviving early Crisfield decoys, is included in the exhibit, as is a Travis Ward canvasback.

The Ward brothers, Lem and Steve, were two of the most prolific decoy makers whose styles continually evolved over time. Without a doubt, an exhibit could be entirely dedicated to their work alone. An early “knot head” canvasback, a Bishops Head style Canada goose and a 1936 model mallard hen display the variety in their decoys. Lloyd Sterling was a contemporary of the Ward brothers and his decoys are sometimes confused with their work; a rare pair of his blue-winged teal showcase the quality of his work.

Lloyd Tyler often referred to himself as “the poor man’s decoy maker,” as his birds were priced at a discount when compared to the cost for Ward brothers’ decoys. While they’re not as polished – many consider them folky – he is one of the only Delmarva decoy makers to have actually gone to art school. There’s a rare pair of buffleheads and a wigeon by his hand in the exhibit.

Ed Phillips of Cambridge, Maryland was the most prolific maker from Dorchester County, although many of his round-bodied decoys were made while living in Baltimore. Hens by his hand of any species are hard to acquire, so a rare pair of pintails are a welcome addition to the exhibit. Joe Travers of Vienna made a large rig of cork-bodied black ducks, but he did make a handful of wooden decoys, including a turned-head mallard included in the display.



Preening pintail by Capt. John Smith of Ocean City, MD. (Henry Stansbury Collection)



Pair of buffleheads by Lloyd Tyler of Crisfield, Maryland. (Henry Stansbury Collection)



Pair of buffleheads by Robert Andrews of Smith Island, Virginia. (David Nolan Collection)



Bufflehead by Nathan Cobb of Cobb Island, Virginia. (David Nolan Collection)



Wigeon by John Glenn of Rock Hall, Maryland (David Farrow Collection)



Pair of blue-winged teal by Lloyd Sterling of Crisfield, Maryland. (Griff Evans Collection)



Mallard by Joe Travers of Vienna, Maryland. (Ronnie Newcomb Collection)



Curlew by Doug Jester of Chincoteague, Virginia. (Joe Engers Collection)



Canada goose by Walter Brady of Hog Island, Virginia. (Joe Engers Collection)



Canada goose by the Ward brothers of Chrisfield, Maryland. (John Collier Collection)

Slater Robinson is a little-known decoy maker from Bishops Head, Maryland, but his birds are very desirable. A pair of his goldeneyes are part of the collection. Hoopers Island is well-known for its merganser decoys, or fence post pheasants, as they were referred to on the island. A wonderful example by a talented unknown maker is on display.

The Parsons family of Oxford, Maryland made the most desirable decoys from Talbot County. A diminutive pair of buffleheads by Ed Parsons, his most sought-after species, are on exhibit. The Cockey family of Kent Island, Maryland were the most prolific decoy makers from Queen Anne's County and a bluebill by Jim Cockey is included in the exhibit.

Capt. John Smith of Ocean City was one of the few makers from Maryland's beach area. A preening pintail, arguably his finest decoy, is included in the exhibit. Edson Gray of Ocean View was undoubtedly the most talented decoy maker from Delaware, and a red-breasted merganser hen by his hand can also be seen.

Rock Hall, Maryland in Kent County had a regional style all its own, and it was developed by John Glenn, whose decoys were painted by his wife Tillie. A well-painted wigeon by him is part of the exhibit. His neighbor, August Heinefield, was known to make decoys for Glenn, as well as examples for himself, all painted by Tillie Glenn; one of his canvasbacks is featured. Glenn was a mentor to Jess Urie, who went on to be a prolific decoy maker in his own right. A rare pair of Urie high-head pintails is included in the display.

Decoys from Cecil County, Maryland have a Susquehanna Flats design, with solid bodies and round bottoms. The great majority of decoys made and used there were canvasbacks. One of the earliest makers was John Graham of Charlestown, who made decoys prior to the Civil War. One of his crusty old canvasbacks on exhibit is among his earliest decoys. Some of the most desirable sculptural forms were made by George "Wash" Barnes, including a possibly one-of-a-kind canvasback hen with a reared-back head and hard chine, both noted features of his work, that's on display. His cousin, Will Heverin, was noted for the "angel wing" paint patterns he applied to his decoys; a bluebill is included in the exhibit.

It's extremely rare to find a hollow Upper Bay decoy much less one with a sleeping posture. The exhibit includes a rare hollow-carved sleeping mallard by Leonard Pryor of Chesapeake City, Maryland that was among his personal rig. One of the rarest decoys in the exhibit is a canvasback by Taylor Boyd of Perryville, Maryland, which is painted as a drake on one side and a hen on the other.

It's often been offered in jest that if the Delmarva Peninsula snapped off the continent and floated offshore, it could still host a good decoy show, because of the number of avid collectors who live there and the great variety of hunting decoys that were made and used there. This exhibit showcases some of its finest examples.

The Delmarva Decoy Collectors Association was founded in 2017 and has a membership of roughly 150 decoy enthusiasts. They meet the second Tuesday of every month at Adams Taphouse Grille in Fruitland, Maryland and sponsor the Delmarva Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show on Saturday, September 14, 2024 at the East New Market Volunteer Fire Hall in East New Market, Maryland. All decoy collectors are welcome to join. For information, contact Burt Campbell at (302) 750-0248 or Joe Engers at (302) 644-9001 or visit their website at www.delmarvadecoycollectors.com.



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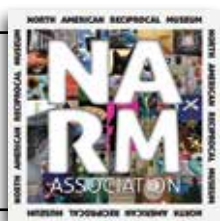
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A Note on Chauncey Reynolds, for Sam Dyke:

Too Little, Too Late

By Darrell Hagar

Sam Dyke



It has been 10 years this month that Sam Dyke passed, taking with him a vast horde of information about forests, birds, and decoys. During his life, Sam took every opportunity to share his knowledge. It was to preserve and spread information about the art of decoy making that Sam joined a group of business men, carvers, and collectors to form the Ward Foundation. To honor the legacy of the Ward Brothers and other carvers, the foundation organized carving contests (leading to the World Championships) and established The Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art. Sam was involved in all aspects of the museum's activities and was chairman of the board for the museum when he passed. Sam was known by many collectors as a major source of information about decoys—their history, their use, and their place in the art world; and he was

also known as someone who readily shared the information that he had gained over many years of studying decoys.

A person as complex as Sam Dyke was couldn't help but be many things to many people; but in the midst of that complexity, there was one constant. If you listen to people reminisce about Sam, you will hear them early in the conversation begin to talk about what they learned from him. From management to ornithology, from forestry to scouting, from the history of decoys to the challenges of curating a museum exhibit—Sam had a wealth of knowledge; and he had a genuine desire to learn even more and to share it all with those around him. When Geoffrey Chaucer summed up the character of the young clerk from Oxford, he was describing Sam Dyke: "And gladly would he learn and gladly teach."

During the twenty-something years that I knew Sam, he taught me many things about decoys and the men who made them. So, when the unexpected day came that I thought I had some information that would be new to him, I wanted to share it with him as a kind of thank-offering. In the spring of 2014, I was completing some research on the Lockard brothers, two decoy makers from the area of Elk Neck in northern Maryland. I had learned that—contrary to popular opinion—the Lockard brothers had indeed painted their decoys themselves; and Harry Reynolds, a grandson of George Lockard, had given me a canvasback hen decoy made by his grandfather, George, and repainted by him. So, although the decoy world still did not have a Lockard decoy in true original paint, it



Canvasback Drake preener in second coat of paint by Chauncey Reynolds.
(Collection of Dick McIntyre)

at least had one that displayed George's paint pattern. I took that decoy to the Ward Museum to show Sam. As we talked about it, he pointed to a thin ochre line on each side of the decoy's breast (a line that suggested the forward edge of a folded wing) and remarked that he had a Bill Heverin canvasback hen in original paint with an identical marking. Gladly learning and gladly teaching.

Sharing that information about the Lockards was a wonderful moment. Then it went south for me. Sam asked me what I was going to be working on now that I had completed that project. I didn't want to admit that I wasn't going to be working on anything; and I was frankly apprehensive about Sam's assumption that I would be doing something. As I was mumbling about the uncertainty of my plans in general, Sam observed that I was spending quite a bit of time in the town of North East, Maryland; and he would appreciate it if I undertook a study of an obscure decoy maker from that area, Chauncey Reynolds. While my mind was warning me that there was the smell of a homework assignment in the air,

Sam went on to tell me that he had acquired some decoys made by Reynolds, that he regretted never having had the time to go back to the area to learn more about the man, and that he thought I would enjoy pursuing the project. He had not convinced me at all that I would "enjoy" another research project, but he had certainly caught my interest because I had seen one of those decoys by Chauncey Reynolds when Sam placed it in an exhibit in the Ward Museum—a striking Canvasback drake in the highly unusual preening pose, one of the best examples of artistry by an Upper Chesapeake Bay decoy maker that I have ever seen.

During the next few months Sam and I began another project for the museum, and occasionally he would ask me if I was still thinking about the research on Reynolds, and I would say that I did think of it from time to time. One Friday evening in June, I called Sam to tell him that I would be able to finish a section of our project, but couldn't get it to him until the following week, to which he replied, "Don't worry about it, Darrell; we have all the time in

the world." That was our last conversation, as he died the following Tuesday. We all know—in the abstract—that we don't have all the time in the world; but leave it to Sam to exit as the teacher, once again making the abstract all too sadly real.

Here, then, is my homework—too little, too late.

George Chauncey Reynolds ***June 28, 1891–November 18, 1953***

If Sam ever told me specifically when and where he purchased his Reynolds decoys, I have forgotten that information; but I did remember that he said he had been contacted by a woman from Cecil County who had some decoys for sale that had been made by her grandfather, Chauncey Reynolds, a name that Sam had never encountered before. After he met her and bought the decoys, he took them to his friend (and the friend of almost everyone who collected decoys at the time) Henry A. Fleckenstein, Jr. Henry assured him that he had heard of Reynolds and, in fact, had one of his decoys; but he told Sam that he knew nothing about the carver. As I began trying to learn more about this decoy maker, I retraced Sam's path to Henry's house, hoping that information about Reynolds had surfaced in the intervening years. Henry remembered the day that Sam arrived with four Reynolds decoys, and he talked about the Reynolds decoys that he himself had found. But during all the years since Sam first asked about Reynolds, Henry still had not located any information about the mysterious decoy maker.



Canvasback Hen in old worn re-paint.
(Collection of Art Boxleitner)



Chauncey Reynolds,
ca. 20 years old



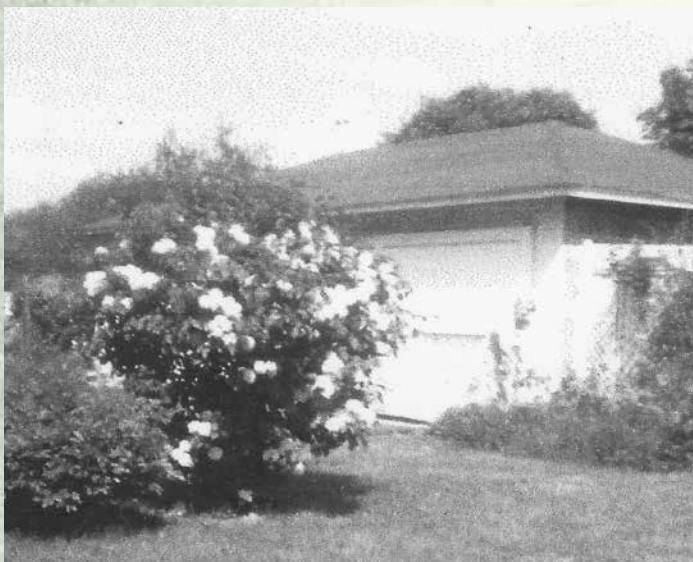
Chauncey & Pauline
Reynolds



Chauncey & Pauline Reynolds (left) with friends Bill and Martha Logan, at Carpenter's Point, Chesapeake Bay, 1920



Pauline Reynolds (R) with sons George Chauncey Jr. (C) and Arthur (L) on the creek behind their property in North East, Maryland (1939). George believed that this picture was taken by his father, Chauncey Reynolds.



The Reynolds home in North East, Maryland



Chauncey Reynolds (on the right) and friend during World War I

As I attended decoy shows, I began to ask just about everyone that I talked to if they had ever heard of Chauncey Reynolds; and one day I asked Jim Trimble, a friend who has written many informative articles about Upper Bay decoy makers and about the history of the Susquehanna Flats. Jim told me that he had once thought of writing an article on Reynolds and had located a surviving son. But after talking with the son and exchanging some letters, Jim had put the project aside to complete others that he had underway. He very generously offered to put me in touch with the son and—even more generously—offered to give me his notes and correspondence with George Chauncey Reynolds, Jr.

After reading the material that Jim had given me, I called the younger Mr. Reynolds (who was approaching 90 at the time). During the telephone conversation, he invited me to his home in Fallston, MD, to talk more and to look at the pictures and records he had gathered in a family notebook. So, in 2015, I spent several hours with him, looking at photographs and listening to his recollections. He warned me early on that he had very little information about his father's decoys. He remembered seeing a pile of them in the basement of the house that they lived in; but no one ever used them in his lifetime (that is, in Mr. Reynolds, Jr.'s



Chauncey Reynolds in front of his home, 1945

Canvasback Drake,
branded N.P.W. for
Nelson Price Whitaker.
(Collection of Jack Manning)



Underside of Canvasback Drake showing the
N.P.W. brand. (Collection of Jack Manning)



lifetime); and no one ever talked about them. He remembered his father taking him and his older brother, Arthur, skeet shooting on a few Saturdays; but he never knew his father to go gunning for waterfowl. Mr. Reynolds, Jr., thought that the pile of decoys remained unused in their basement simply because his father was too busy with the family, his regular job, and those tasks that he took on to earn extra money, such as building bushwhack boats for some of his friends and neighbors. But in general, George was not able to provide much information about his father's activities; and in one of his letters to Jim Trimble (May 28, 2001) he poignantly explained why that was so: "I am sorry I cannot provide any more information. I guess I was a typical person when young, not really gathering too much information on my parents. I went into the service in 1943, discharged in 1946, and shortly thereafter he had a health problem and could not speak so I was not able to get information from him at that time about his personal life."

Because it has been over sixty-three years since Chauncey Reynolds died, there are no surviving friends or neighbors to provide glimpses into that personal life that his son mentioned. But there are public records that provide some information about important stages in the life of Chauncey Reynolds.

Except for a very brief stint in the army, Chauncey Reynolds lived his entire life in Cecil County, Maryland, at the northern extremity of Chesapeake Bay. He was born in Perryville, MD; and the 1900 United States Federal Census lists him as the eight-year-old son of William and Mary Reynolds, the fourth of nine children born to the

couple. The 1910 Census describes him as an eighteen-year-old forgerman (a general laborer in an iron works), still living with his parents. According to his family, this early job was with the Whitaker Iron Works, presumably at Principio Furnace.

Mr. Reynolds was inducted into the United States Army in April of 1918. He was never stationed abroad; and he received an honorable discharge in September of 1918 for unspecified medical reasons. He apparently returned to live with his parents, who had moved to Port Deposit, Maryland; the 1920 Census—completed when he was 28, lists him living with them there and again working in the iron works, this time as a "shingler," an iron worker who takes bulk iron product and shapes it with power hammers and mechanical jaws.

Shortly after that census was recorded, Mr. Reynolds married Pauline Craig on February 1, 1922. And by the time of the 1930 Census, his circumstances had changed significantly. In that year, the Reynolds lived in a home that they owned on Jethro Street in the town of North East, Maryland, with their three children—Elizabeth (7), Arthur (6), and George (5). Chauncey Reynolds assembled the home himself from a kit that he purchased from Sears and Roebuck Company. And by 1930, he had left the iron works to become a carpenter; the census recorder indicated that Mr. Reynolds was working independently as a contractor. He apparently worked in that capacity until he retired. The 1940 Census (the last available) lists him as carpenter/contractor. On April 25, 1942, at the age of 50, Mr. Reynolds completed a military draft registration card on which he recorded his place of work as the Engineering Department at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Aberdeen, Maryland. Finally, Mr. Jim Pierce, the noted decoy carver and historian, remembers Mr. Reynolds commuting to Havre de Grace to work as a carpenter/contractor after World War II. His time working in that city must have been relatively brief because when he died on November 18, 1953, his obituary included the statement that, "Mr. Reynolds was a Veteran of World War I, and a carpenter, retired for the past seven years."

So, the public records of Chauncey Reynolds' life give us those mile-markers—birth, military service, marriage, migrations, vocations, death—but they tell us nothing about that pile of decoys in the basement of the house on Jethro Street in North East, Maryland, not even a hint of when they were made. Chad Tragakis has written many informative and meticulously researched articles on decoy carvers of the Chesapeake Bay; and when writing on Dick Howlett of Havre de Grace, Chad discovered that on one of the Federal Census forms Howlett had very helpfully described his occupation as "Decoy Maker." Had Reynolds so described himself, we would be able to place his work in time easily; but without such a statement we must depend on circumstantial evidence.

Canvasback Drake with a
swimming posture
(Collection of David Farrow)

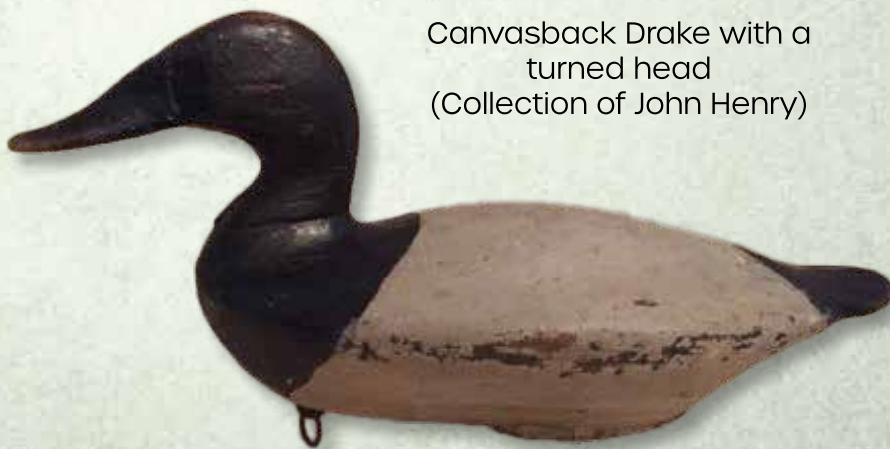


In a letter that George Chauncey Reynolds, Jr., wrote to Jim Trimble on May 28, 2001, he said about his father: "I have searched through my file and have found nothing about his early years, those prior to marriage and after. My father was 30 years of age when he married my mother...I believe he carved his decoys prior to that time." When I visited with him in his home, I asked him what caused him to have that belief and his answer was logical and very pragmatic. About one and a half years after their marriage Chauncey and Pauline started their family and had three children in three years. Very quickly Chauncey was responsible for housing and feeding five people. The son said that as he was growing up, his father never took the time to use the decoys, and he doubted very much that his father would have had time to carve them after his marriage. When I asked how many decoys were in that pile in the basement, he estimated "50, maybe 75, but certainly less than 100."

I think George's estimate about when his father's decoys were made is accurate, not only because of the sensible reasoning about family obligations, but because of a Chauncey Reynolds decoy that has the brand N.P.W. for Nelson Price Whitaker, a very wealthy gunner in the area (and, coincidentally, the owner of the iron works that employed Reynolds). Whitaker died in 1922, so that decoy had to have been made prior to Reynolds' marriage. I do not think that Reynolds made any decoys for Whitaker or for anyone else; I think that decoy drifted away from Reynolds' rig, was found by Whitaker's caretaker, and was then added to Whitaker's rig, a common practice. I also believe that those 50-75 decoys in that pile were the only decoys that Chauncey Reynolds ever made. That assumption is based not on any fact but on a general idea of a ratio—the ratio of the total number of decoys produced by any given Upper Bay maker (between 1850 and 1930) and the number of those decoys that still exist and form what we think of as that maker's body of work. Of the thousands of decoys made by a John Graham or a William Heverin, how many survive? 10 percent? 20 percent? Adding the number of Chauncey Reynolds decoys that I have held and the number of pictures that I have seen of other Reynolds decoys, I still come up with only a total of sixteen. I'm sure that there are others around that I don't know about. But even if we suppose that twice that number remain private in collections, that is a relatively small number. But it

represents a high survival rate for that total number of 50-75, which is attributable, I think, to the fact that they were kept together for so long in that basement until Chauncey or someone else either sold them or gave them away.

Reynolds decoys have characteristics that most Cecil County (Maryland) decoys have: a shelf carved into the front of the body for the neck/head to sit on, a distinct chine line in a hand-chopped body that has a tortoise-like shape to the back, and a straight (not flipped up) paddle tail that extends from the body at the chine line. The underside of his decoys slope down and in from the chine line to form a V-like hull; and the mid-line (from breast to tail) is a flat surface, about an inch wide, for the weight and ring and staple. The sight-line of his decoys seems to have a smoother flow than do the profiles of decoys by most of the other carvers from the region. The observer's eye can begin at the tip of the bill and proceed up the curve to the head, down the curve of the neck to the body, and from there to the tip of the tail in a smooth motion. One unusual feature of Reynolds' head carving is the area where the bill meets the head. Most carvers from the Upper Bay removed wood from the cheeks, leaving the sides of the bill protruding a bit on either side of the head. On Reynolds' decoys the side of the bill is flush with the cheek; he simply gouged a line to indicate the separation of cheek and bill. He carved mandibles in the bills, but not nostrils (with one exception noted below).



Canvasback Drake with a
turned head
(Collection of John Henry)

Canvasback Drake with turned head.
(Collection of Kathy Hagar)



Although Reynolds decoys are scarce, that alone does not account for the attention that they draw from collectors. What really sets Reynolds apart as an artist is his creation of animation—both in an individual decoy and in his sense of what a raft of canvasbacks would look and act like on the water. When one thinks of the thousands of decoys made by prominent Upper Bay carvers, how many of them had any variation at all from the standard decoy with the head at a “normal” height and looking straight ahead? True, most of the carvers made a few high-heads, but that seems in many cases to be the extent of their “artistic interpretation.” How many decoys in an attitude of preening, sleeping, swimming, or looking to the side has anyone ever seen that were made by William Heverin? By the entire Holly family? By all the major makers from the area? Some—John Graham, Henry Lockard, Leonard Pryor and a few others—made preeners, but very few. For example, I have seen or heard of fewer than ten by John Graham who made thousands of decoys.

All those men made good, durable decoys that were successful. But they were primarily functional. On the other hand, we have very few remaining examples of Chauncey Reynolds decoys from a much smaller total body of work, 50-75 decoys. But among those sixteen or so decoys of his that I have seen, there are two decoys with the heads turned to the right, one decoy with the head looking left, one (very) high head decoy, one swimmer, and one preening canvasback drake that Reynolds himself obviously considered his masterpiece. The striking arch of the neck of that decoy draws the viewer’s attention to the focal point of the piece, where the bill touches the back; and there the eyes discover more details than Reynolds ever carved on any other decoy. Not only are there mandibles, but nostrils and a finely carved, shield-shaped nail on the bill. And whereas all of Reynolds other decoys have flat foreheads with only the slightest suggestion of an incised “V” where the top of the bill meets the head, he took the time on



Canvasback Hen
(Collection of Kathy Hagar)



Canvasback Drake
with a turned head
(Collection of John
Henry)

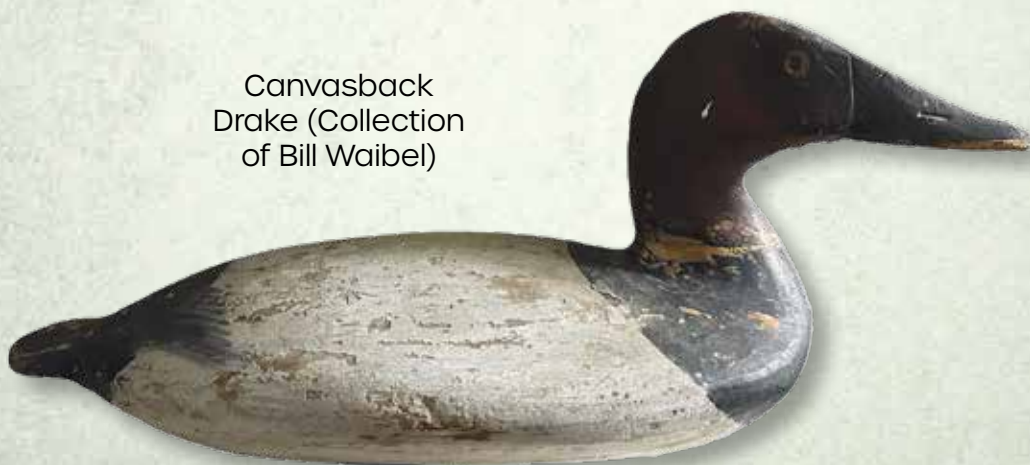
this carving to shape a somewhat exaggerated “V”—much deeper and more elongated than usual. This preener, which is now in the collection of Dick McIntyre, was one of the decoys that Sam Dyke bought; I remember his holding it as he showed it to me and explaining that—because of Reynolds’ attention to detail—we can see in this decoy the maker’s impetus change from wanting to make a functional tool to wanting to produce a work of art.

We have all seen period photographs of sink box rigs with hundreds of functional decoys that stare dutifully into whichever direction the wind is coming from. What sense of life—or animation—those decoys achieve comes to them through the motion of the water. But just thinking about seeing even this small group of sixteen Reynolds decoys floating together, makes me wonder what the full rig would have looked like. Obviously, the artist in young Chauncey Reynolds made him want to create animation in individual decoys in order to recreate the hustle-bustle of ducks gathering in a flock on the water. Floating sculpture, indeed.

One final observation. Sometime around 1920, young Chauncey Reynolds, created (probably for his own use) a rig of decoys that had an amazing degree of diversity and animation among the individual carvings. The small remnant of that rig which we have today illustrates his keen observation of his subject matter and his enormous talent in carving its imitation. Then, for whatever reason, Reynolds put his work aside and apparently never carved a decoy again. It is not a criticism of his choice to say that the decoy-collecting world lost a significant artist at that point. Mr. Reynolds went down the path that he needed to walk.

At that same time—around 1920, but at the southern end of the state—Lem and Steve Ward were beginning their illustrious career as the preeminent creators of life-like waterfowl carvings, famous for the animated representation of their subjects. I think Chauncey Reynolds had the same artistic sensibilities; and his early (and only) carvings indicate that his abilities might, over time, have progressed in a similar vein if he had chosen to stay in that path.

Canvasback
Drake (Collection
of Bill Waibel)



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Taking Time to Thank the *Blair Family*

By Michael Daley



The Havre de Grace Decoy Museum is now celebrating the decoys of former Cecil County resident John Blair, Jr. (1881-1953) with an exhibit.

The display located in the Carvers Gallery includes over 20 examples of the younger John I Blair's carvings. Most of the decoys are from a family rig of bluebills.



*John Blair, Sr. at Henderson Point Farm
(Havre de Grace Decoy Museum Collection)*



*Various Blair family
decoys on display at
the Havre de Grace
Decoy Museum.*

John Blair, Jr. was an engineer. His carvings are very similar to the work of his father; John Blair, Sr. Junior's decoys are very neat and very, very precise. The younger Blair spent most of his life in Philadelphia and New Jersey. However, as a young man, John, Jr. spent some time at the family's farm in Cecil County, Maryland.

The great grandson of John Blair, Jr. is David Blair Riley. His mom, Merrill Blair (1951-2023) was the daughter of Oakley Belmont Blair (1917-1981). Oakley was the youngest son of John Blair, Jr. David Riley through an agreement with us has enabled the museum to display his family's prized decoys for a term of ten years.

In addition to a substantial rig of bluebills, the exhibit includes puddle ducks such as a pintail, a black duck and mallards. There are a couple of family-made ducks within the collection. The maker is unknown to David. Perhaps these decoys are his grandfather Oakley Blair's work.

The decoy community is very grateful to several generations of the Blair Family. As such, this is our time to say thank you. We want to broadcast our gratitude for many reasons to multiple Blair family generations.

Most importantly, we thank John Isaac Blair, Sr. (1845-1929). This United Kingdom immigrant has a colorful and storied history that we do not have space to tell. It is sufficient to say, that he was a carvers' carver. From decoy makers to collectors to historians, the extent of the senior Blair's influence on the decoy world is undeniable.

Decoy maker and author Geoffrey Vine succinctly captures this master carver's story in a *Waterfowl Carving Magazine* article "The Blair School, Part One". Vine writes of Blair as follows:

"One of the more prominent and often emulated historical styles is the one attributed to John Blair, Sr. of Philadelphia. Blair carved decoys in the late 1800s



John Blair, Jr. (Photo Courtesy of John Henry)

along the Delaware River. He was an avid outdoorsman and may have been a wheelwright and carriage maker. When you think about the talent a woodworker needed to craft well-balanced wood-spoke wheels and the parts of a finely crafted carriage, you can imagine the caliber of craftsman Blair must have been. Such a background would explain Blair's ability to craft some of the best-constructed decoys ever made. Whatever the source of his talent, the beautiful shapes, flowing lines, and tight construction joints of his decoys make them wooden works of art."

Our gratitude also extends to the sons of John Blair Sr. These men, John Blair, Jr. and Walter Blair (1887-1966); both continued the family tradition of constructing decoys. My own research has confirmed Walter made his decoys in the style of Harford County. Harford County decoy historian Ronnie Adams has deeply documented the lives of both sons within his profile of the senior Blair. Here is an example of his findings.

"By 1910, John Jr. had rejoined the family at the Elkton farm. They were very sociable and active members in the community during this time and the decade was eventful for the Blair Family. In 1912, a cyclone came through and demolished several of John's farm buildings, which he soon repaired. During this time son, Walter was very active hunting, fishing and boating and in 1915, he had a notable run in with some young hooligans who were poaching from his fishing nets at Blair Shores. When he attempted to intervene, they fired shots upon him and he had to take cover and was unable to pursue them."

In addition to the two sons, Mr. and Mrs. John Blair, Sr. raised a daughter. The couple's last child was Maude Blair (1890-1968). From the three Blair children came more Blair family members such as David Riley. The Riley family hopes you will enjoy seeing their collection of Blair decoys. We thank the entire Blair family very much.

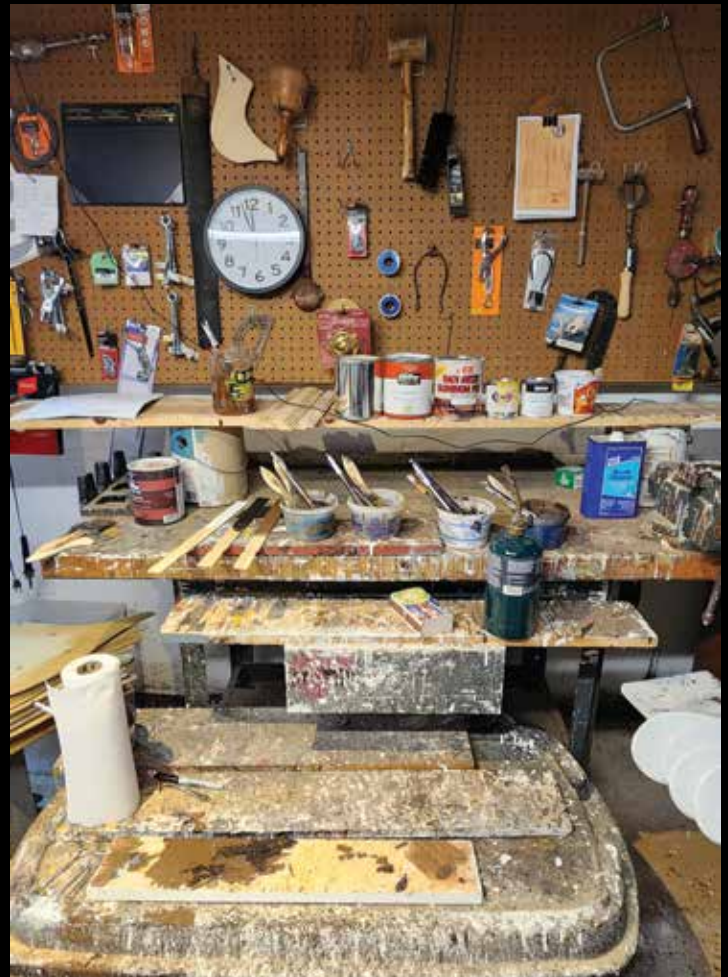
Workshop Window

By Cindy Currier

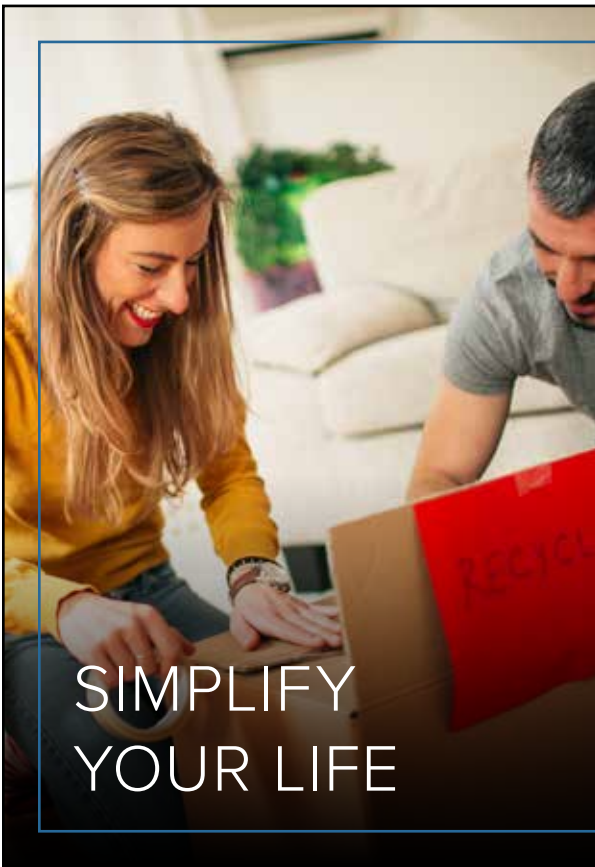
Chuck Housman

(Bel Air, MD)

In this installment of Workshop Window, we feature the workshop of carver, Chuck Housman. Chuck started carving at the age of 16 working for and learning from decoy carver, Paul Gibson. The majority of Chuck's work involves V-Boards (flat silhouette decoys on a three-legged floating frame) and Stick-Ups (flat silhouette decoys on tall sticks), both of which are used primarily for body booting. He creates silhouettes in his 12x24 workshop and paints and stores them in a dedicated space of his home's basement. Chuck produces hundreds of V-Boards and Stick-Ups each year for hunters. Please enjoy this visual tour!







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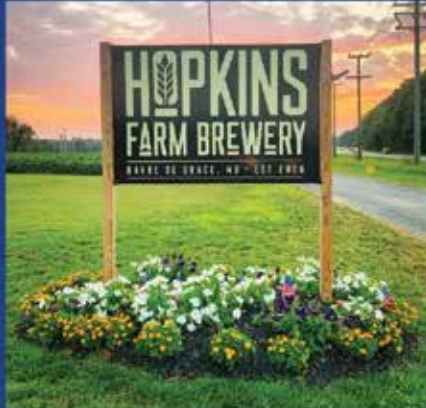
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American Beaver

(*Castor canadensis*)

A Keystone Species



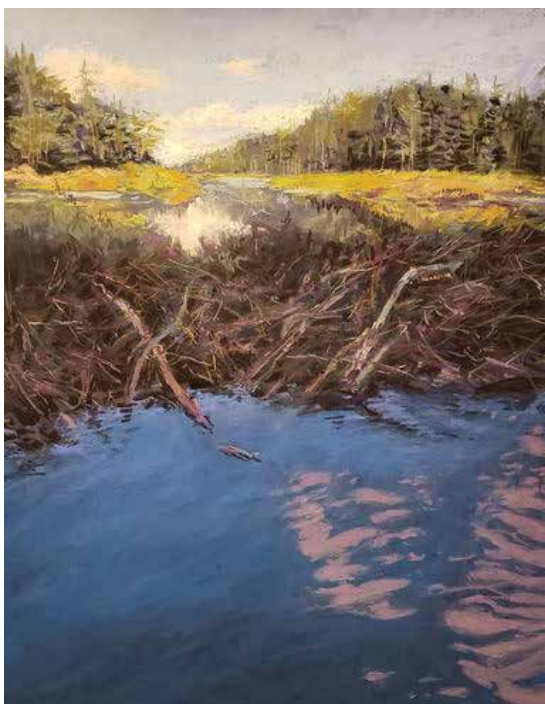
"A beaver is one of several missing animals that have been described as a keystone species. A keystone species is one that has a larger impact on its environment than its numbers alone would suggest. This creates the conditions which allow other species to live there."

- George Mombiot (Writer, Environmental Activist)

By John Hughes

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.



Adirondacks Beaver Dam: painting by Mike Gaudreau



Beaver dam and succeeding wetlands and pond.



Portage: "What do we do now?!"

During my last several years of teaching Advanced Placement (AP) Environmental Science at the John Carroll School, I would bring my students over to my house for a day of field studies. We would study stream ecology in Mill Creek, a small stream on the edge of my property in Churchville. Throughout the day students would collect physical and chemical data about the stream through measuring such factors as stream width, flow, depth, profile, etc., as well as testing water for chemical analysis of dissolved oxygen, CO₂, pH, and salinity.

The more exciting portion of the day for the students was in the biological sampling of the life found in the stream. Using a "Save Our Streams" protocol, the group was able to access the stream's water quality based on the number and diversity of stream macroinvertebrate lifeforms they were able to collect. Other factors considered in the study of Mill Creek were the human history of its watershed and the overall riverscape conditions and the geography of the creek. By far the collection, identification, and counting of the myriad organisms proved to be the highlight of the day for the students.

Then based on the total count and differentiation of life forms, the stream was determined to be of Good, Fair, or Poor quality. Mill Creek on that day proved to be Fair+. This type of "hip-wader science" was ideal for ultimately developing student concern for their local and regional environment as well as hope for potential citizen activism on their part down the road as adults. Finding and being bitten by your first Hellgrammite (Dobsonfly larvae) is an event, probably not soon forgotten. In general, this type of experiential education produced a fun day for all, with the exception of the one young lady who flooded her waders and eventually submerged herself. Fortunately, we all brought a change of clothes and a towel!

Next class, back in the four-walled classroom, we reviewed our field day at Mill Creek. Our outdoor study led to deeper and more holistic considerations of streams, water quality, drainage, and watershed issues. Mill Creek was a one-day snapshot of a flowing microcosm.

What were its impacts on Deer Creek into which it flowed, on the Susquehanna into which Deer Creek flowed, and into the Chesapeake Bay which the Susquehanna largely formed? How did the changes over a temporal cycle, first impact the stream, the creek, the river, and then the Bay? Students could now begin thinking in terms of micro and macro regional systems and their interrelationships. The whole bay community is downstream of Mill Creek. How can you "Save the Bay" if thousands of Mill Creeks don't have good water quality? Why were the bay's waters so clean and clear before European settlement arrived in 1607? What factors changed? These types of questions helped to create a dynamic new way of thinking (cause and effect, interrelationships) which is what ecology and environmental science should be all about. As a teacher, I was really impressed to see the students put the pieces together and have a new appreciation of the whole.

About a year later, I went back down to Mill Creek to prepare for this year's stream studies. Immediately upon arrival at the creek, I began to notice major changes in the overall characteristic of the stream. The current seemed significantly slower, the stream was wider and interestingly deeper, and around the downstream meander a pond seemed to be forming. Hiking down the creek about 50 yards, it was obvious that a pond was present and that it had been created by a 3-4' high dam that beavers had designed and engineered at a tight meander point. Enough willow vegetation and other tree saplings were present to allow the beavers to feed, build the dam, and allow their innate skills to create a new aquatic habitat – the pond.

Amazingly, this had all occurred in a matter of months. There was even a bank hut of materials on the far edge of the creek that the beavers were using for habitation. Sitting on top of the lodge was a great blue heron and swimming on the pond was a pair of wood ducks. I did not witness the beaver that first day, but on future visits I saw them. How interesting that the beavers had created a new ecosystem and I wouldn't need the John Carroll ponds for lentic (non-flowing water) studies, but instead could use Mill Creek in the future.

A whole series of new questions now crossed my mind. Where did the beaver come from? What would be the impact of the dam on Mill Creek and its overall water quality? How would the farmer react to having a portion of his meadow flooded? What would the impact be on Deer Creek? Potentially the Susquehanna? The Chesapeake Bay? A new scenario now confronted Mill Creek, but unfortunately its potential was short lived because later that spring the dam and beavers were gone before we could do our study. Whether through human intervention or extreme storm runoff, the dam and its builders disappeared and to this day have not returned. Good or bad, first hand study and/or discussion of the beaver's impact on Mill Creek was lost.

I guess I could say at that time, I possessed a superficial general knowledge about beavers, but not a deep understanding of either the animal or its impacts. Having led canoe trips throughout the eastern portion of our country and especially the Chesapeake Bay watershed, I had had my encounters with the creature and its construction possibilities. During canoe trips through the Adirondacks' lakes, I had come to see the beaver as less an educational consideration and more a problematic issue to downstream canoe progress.

One year, in paddling a short connector stream between Jones Pond and Osgood Lake in the central Adirondacks, I had prepared the group for their first beaver dam portage. Climbing the 3' dam didn't seem that great a challenge until my front leg tore through the dam debris taking much of my shin's flesh with it. Applying first aid, I was able to stop the bleeding and help the other boats get over the dam. I thought we were now free to flow to Osgood.

Unfortunately, the beavers had different plans for us as they had constructed at least three more new dams downstream, each requiring portage. In addition, they had also clogged a road culvert, which we normally paddled through, and this led to one more portage over the road, only to add to my (our) frustration. We did make Osgood Pond's campsite, only two hours later than usual, setting up camp in the dark. Sitting in a pool of cool Adirondack stream water later that night, I forgave the beavers for my frustrations and regained my perspective to the adventure. Now, at home in Churchville, I began thinking about beavers in a different way as I sought a deeper understanding of them and their role in the ecosystem, especially without the responsibility of leading a group over, through, and around their engineering feats.

The Beaver

Beavers are the second largest rodent in the world after the capybara of South America. There are two species of modern beavers: the North American (*Castor canadensis*) and the Eurasian (*Castor fiber*). The species differ in skull shape, tail shape, fur coloring, and range. A difference in chromosome numbers (*canadensis* 40, *fiber* 46) makes cross breeding impossible. The ancestors of modern beavers can be traced back to nearly 36 million years ago. During the early Miocene epoch (24 million years ago) they became semi-aquatic animals. Castorids (beaver ancestors) took many forms ranging from a small pocket gopher size beaver which created underground spiraling burrows to more recent "giant" beaver weighing well over a hundred pounds and standing 6-8 feet high. The North American and Eurasian beavers have been independently evolving for about the last 5 million years and their modern forms were set in the last 1-2 million years. (Micheal Runtz. *Dam Builders*. Pp. XXI-XXII.)

Beavers have very streamlined bodies comparable to many marine mammals. They are between 31-47 inches in length and have a 10-20 inch tail. They weigh about 24-66 pounds and some may reach a weight of over 100 pounds. Beavers are a heavily-furred animal and their color ranges from reddish, to yellow brown, to black. Beavers constantly prune their fur with castoreum produced by the castor glands to keep their fur "water-proofed". Beavers have four large incisors used for gnawing vegetation. These teeth are a bright yellow to red in color and grow for much of the animal's life. Their other teeth are molars used for grinding vegetation.

They have a total of 20 teeth. The tail is paddle shaped, scaly, and flat and used for upright posture support and acts a rudder while swimming, a storage area for fats, a warning sounding device, and a thermoregulator of body heat. Beavers are extremely dexterous with large front feet quite capable of manipulating materials. Their rear feet are also large and webbed to enhance their strong swimming abilities. Beavers swim with their nose, eyes, and ears above the water surface. They have strong senses of smell, hearing, and touch. Eyesight is rather poor. Beavers are able to stay submerged for up to 15 minutes and incredibly they can exchange 75% of their lung's capacity in their first breath at the surface. Beavers are inactive during the day, usually resting in their lodges, but during dusk and dawn and especially at night they become "busy as beavers" pursuing their livelihoods.

Beavers are able to digest and gain nutrition from cellulose as a result of their intestinal anatomy. Beavers are herbivores and are considered "choosy generalists". (Francis Backhouse. *Once They Were Hats: In Search of the Mighty Beaver*. p93.) They will feed on the leaves, stems, roots, tubers of most freshwater vegetation such as sedges, water lilies (especially Nuphar), water shields, rushes, and cattails over summer and into the fall. In fall and winter, they eat the bark of shrubs and trees. Species include but are not limited to aspen, birch, oak, dogwood, willows, and alders. Geography and vegetative diversity largely impact their choices. Beavers also create an underwater cache of food supply for winter under-ice feeding.



*The beaver has dexterous hands.
(Photo by Frank Marsden)*



*The amazing and multifunctional beaver tail.
(Photo by Frank Marsden)*



*The beaver's ever-growing incisors; perfectly adapted for gnawing wood.
(Photo by Frank Marsden)*



*Beavers swim with their noses, eyes, and ears above water at all times.
(Photo by Frank Marsden)*

Beavers are monogamous and mate for life. Pair bonding may occur in the first year and although females are capable of breeding in their first year, breeding doesn't usually start until their second or third year. Beavers build either a riverbank lodge or an independently standing lodge in the pond itself. The lodge is built of mud, shrubs, and woody material collected by the beavers. It has a number of entrance/exit holes below water and usually has two internal chambers. Beavers produce about 4 kits per litter, but litters can be as high as 9 kits. Family size overall is around 10 with breeding male and female, several yearlings from the previous season, and the kits. Male beavers are extremely territorial and build scent mounds on which they secrete anal fluids and/or the human-prized castoreum which act as chemical scent signs to other beavers as to their limits of penetration in the area. Dispersal of young usually occurs after a season and is dependent on spacing and density considerations and food source availability. The young almost always move downstream. Kits are precocial and cared for by the whole family. Adult beaver communication is through a series of whines, while the young cry and mew. Intense territorial communication occurs between resident male and immigrant invaders which sometimes results in physical sparring between the individuals.

Beavers in the wild live to about 10 years of age. They are preyed upon by minks, weasels, martins, bobcats, foxes, wolves, black bears, and humans. The young can fall victim to snapping turtles and predaceous fish. Parasites and disease also have impacts on beaver numbers. By far, the greatest impact on the beaver population was the fur trapping industry. It has been estimated that original North American beaver numbers were between 60-400 million individuals. Beavers were obviously abundant and also ubiquitous throughout North America prior to European discovery and settlement. By the late 1800s, beavers were headed toward extirpation. Through protective efforts, present beaver numbers are between 6-12 million. (Leila Philip. Beaver Land. pp.261-262.)

Keystone Species



As keystone creatures, beavers produce habitat for many other organisms.

In 1969, zoologist Robert T. Paine introduced the concept of "keystone species" to ecological thinking. He stated that these are species which have a much greater impact on the environment than its relative abundance would suggest. They are the "key" to the integrity and structure of the ecological community by helping to determine which

species will be present and how diverse the system will be. Without the presence of the keystone species the entire system collapses.

Keystone species are comparable to the keystone in an arch which in itself is under the least amount of stress or pressure but when removed leads to the breaking down of the entire arch. Although only one link in the community, they are the glue which holds the whole together. The keystone species provides a top-down effect relative to the overall biodiversity of the system.

Certain keystone species are considered ecosystem engineers which through their presence and activities are able to create entirely new habitats. Beavers are classic examples of an animal which can transform and modify a system from a stream or river to a pond and wetland such as a marsh or swamp and ultimately in time, a wet meadow. Through their innate acumen of designing and constructing a dam they are able to change a free-flowing aquatic system (Lotic) into a still or stagnant (Lentic) system. The changes brought by the dam lead to major physical, chemical, and biological

modifications which determine water quality and riverscape conditions. As long as the beaver is present and maintains the dam, the new system stabilizes and will perpetuate itself. Remove the beaver and the system will revert to its almost former habitat. The overall history of a beaver-impacted system is called beaver dam succession.

Please note that in the hierarchy of organisms capable of modifying their habitats, beavers are ranked second only to our species (*Homo sapiens*).

Beaver Dams and Ponds



Creation of a dam begins aquatic transformation from flowing to still water and a new habitat.

Beavers' lifestyles are dependent on water and therefore they will almost never be far from it. The creation of a dam which the beaver engineers is largely to secure the aquatic habitat for itself. "All of his plans, his architectural renderings and maps, his hydrological calculations, are in his head." (David M. Carroll. Swampwalkers Journal; A Wetlands Year. p. 188.) The largest beaver dam of record is in Canada in Albert's Wood Buffalo National Park and it measures over 2,788 feet in length. It was discovered by Jean Thie while studying Google Earth satellite images and has since been ground truthed. (Micheal Runtz. Dam Builders. p.99)

Beaver dams have all sorts of locations, heights, shapes, and lengths. It is the sound of running water which is the trigger to dam construction and/or repair on the part of the beaver. All dams are made of sticks, mud, and sometimes stone. Dam building begins with beavers placing large branches and limbs across the waterway.



A beaver lodge provides both shelter and a secure platform for family interactions.

They are anchored in place from the shoreline and material is added to build up debris and slow the stream flow. Mud is scooped up by the beavers and used as fill and if available, fairly large stones are put in place to anchor the base. Maintenance of the dam is a dynamic process giving the beaver little rest. Material is added on the upstream side of the dam and as sediment and debris collect there, the dam becomes "solidified".

Beavers usually desire 3-4 feet of water behind the dam, but depth is a factor in relation to their lodge size, their development of canals throughout the pond, and seasonal adjustments to flow amounts. As a hydrologist, beavers make the necessary adjustments on a need basis. The size and shape of the pond is dependent on stream flow, local precipitation patterns, food availability, and geomorphology of the stream profile. Some ponds become huge (several acres) while others remain relatively small. A beaver pond will be of such size and volume to ensure that its volume does not totally freeze all the way through during winter. (Dr. Richard NeSmith. Beavers: Nature's Engineers. p.15.)

Advantages of Beaver Dams and Ponds

1. Beavers create a pond system in place of a riparian system. Moving water becomes stilled.
2. Wetlands evolve along the edges and sometimes throughout the pond. Flooded forests become “ghost forests”.
3. Increased open water areas are formed.
4. Groundwater within the stream’s floodplains becomes recharged and enlarged.
5. Increased riparian hardwood vegetation ultimately increases and diversifies.
6. In fire-prone areas, critical firebreaks are established.
7. Stream erosion becomes lessened and natural stream restoration begins.
8. Downstream flow from the dam becomes clear and clean as the dam filters sediment and acts as a natural sponge. (Sediment trap)
9. Nitrogen, phosphates, carbon, and silicates are filtered from the water and sequestered in pond sediment.
10. Bacteria settle out in still waters and bind to bottom sediment.
11. Flood control occurs for downstream areas.
12. Water storage acts as insurance to drought.
13. They aid in fighting climate change.
14. As a keystone, the environment experiences increased biodiversity. Habitat creation and/or modification impacts the number and variety of wildlife. Increased numbers and diversity of microbes, insects, amphibians, fish, birds, and mammals occur. As an example, the bird populations expand greatly. Woodpeckers, flycatchers, tree swallows, owls, kestrels, harriers, osprey, hawks, eagles, kingfishers, herons, egrets, bitterns, grebes, cormorants and other songbirds such as the prothonotary warbler move into to the new beaver-created habitat.

Of special interest to “*The Canvasback*”, waterfowl find their needs met in this beaver produced wildlife refuge. Swans (especially trumpeters), Canada geese, mallards, blacks, pintails, teal, goldeneye, ruddy, hooded mergansers, and the beautiful wood duck have their food and habitat needs met here. Some studies reveal an increase of as much as 75% in bird numbers after dam construction. (Hilary Cooke, Steve Zack. Influence of beaver dams density on riparian areas and riparian birds in the shrubsteppe of Wyoming. 2008. et al)



Sometimes regarded as destructive, beaver impact is a vital part of a healthy forest and wetland ecosystem. (Photo by Dave Lewis)

to less than 1% of their original numbers and could no longer keep the bay’s waters filtered. As their teacher, I also attempted to have students become more invested in the macro study conditions of environmental problems than the micro. Obviously, both are important approaches for student understanding of their environment, but which level can better initiate a desire and compassion for lifetime concern and environmental stewardship?

Ecology suggests that a better comprehension of the interrelationship between micro and macro considerations is the key. Can you understand the wholeness of anything without a consideration of its parts? Can the Chesapeake Bay be saved without a consideration of the thousands of Mill Creeks found in its 64,000 square mile watershed? What of the aquatic systems all over North America?

As I conclude this article, I now consider even more the significance of having students study and get into the Mill Creeks of our world. I also now have a much greater understanding of the beaver and its role as an incredible keystone species, aquatic engineer, and hydrologist. Its significance, which I had overlooked in the past, is now becoming more and more applied to modern stream restoration and water quality issues throughout the world today. If Mill Creek had beavers, beaver dams, and ponds, its waters would have run cleaner and clearer that day leading to a Good rating rather than the Fair rating determined by our “Save the Streams protocols”. And what of Deer Creek, the Susquehanna River, the Chesapeake Bay?

A small stream, such as Mill Creek, which all of us have close by in our own backyards can teach very important lessons and a unique rodent such as our keystone beaver can be one of the critical parts to the wellbeing of the whole.

“The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant, “What good is it?” If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not. If the biota, in the course of eons, has built something we like but do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts. To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering.”

~Aldo Leopold “*A Sand County Almanac*”

“Beavers can be water superheroes in many respects. They can help to sustain flows of clear, clean water. ... But beavers can only fulfill these vital functions if we collectively recognize the importance of their activities ...”

~Ellen Wohl *Saving the Dammed*

Negative Impacts of Beaver Dams and Ponds

1. They lead to the loss of agrarian and grazing lands for farmers resulting from flooding and creation of ponds.
2. Flooding of suburban and urban privately held properties occurs.
3. Culvert and other infrastructure obstructions are created.
4. Road and highway flooding and destruction have increased.
5. There is a decline of certain tree species in the wild as well as ornamental species of trees in suburban and urban plantings.
6. There is some impact on fish species migration, although more study is needed. Also, the potential of warming pond water impacts on certain fish species.
7. A potential impact of mercury (Hg) accumulation in pond sediment is probable.
8. Human exposure to beaver-associated pathogens such as Giardia can occur.

Reflections

About 500 years ago, North American rivers were wild, clean and clear. The Chesapeake Bay water was so clear that in 1608, John Smith could see the bottom of the bay in 20 feet of water and the water was so clean that he was amazed by the wildlife and potential bounty of the bay.

For years as an environmental science teacher and canoe leader and guide, I taught that the pristine bay of the past declined as its bioregulatory systems such as wetlands and forests disappeared. Keystone species such as oysters were reduced



Earl Blansfield

SHOTS

From the Wild

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



Rob Bruch



Jerry Herman



Ralph Hockman



Ralph Hockman



Earl Blansfield

Ralph Hockman



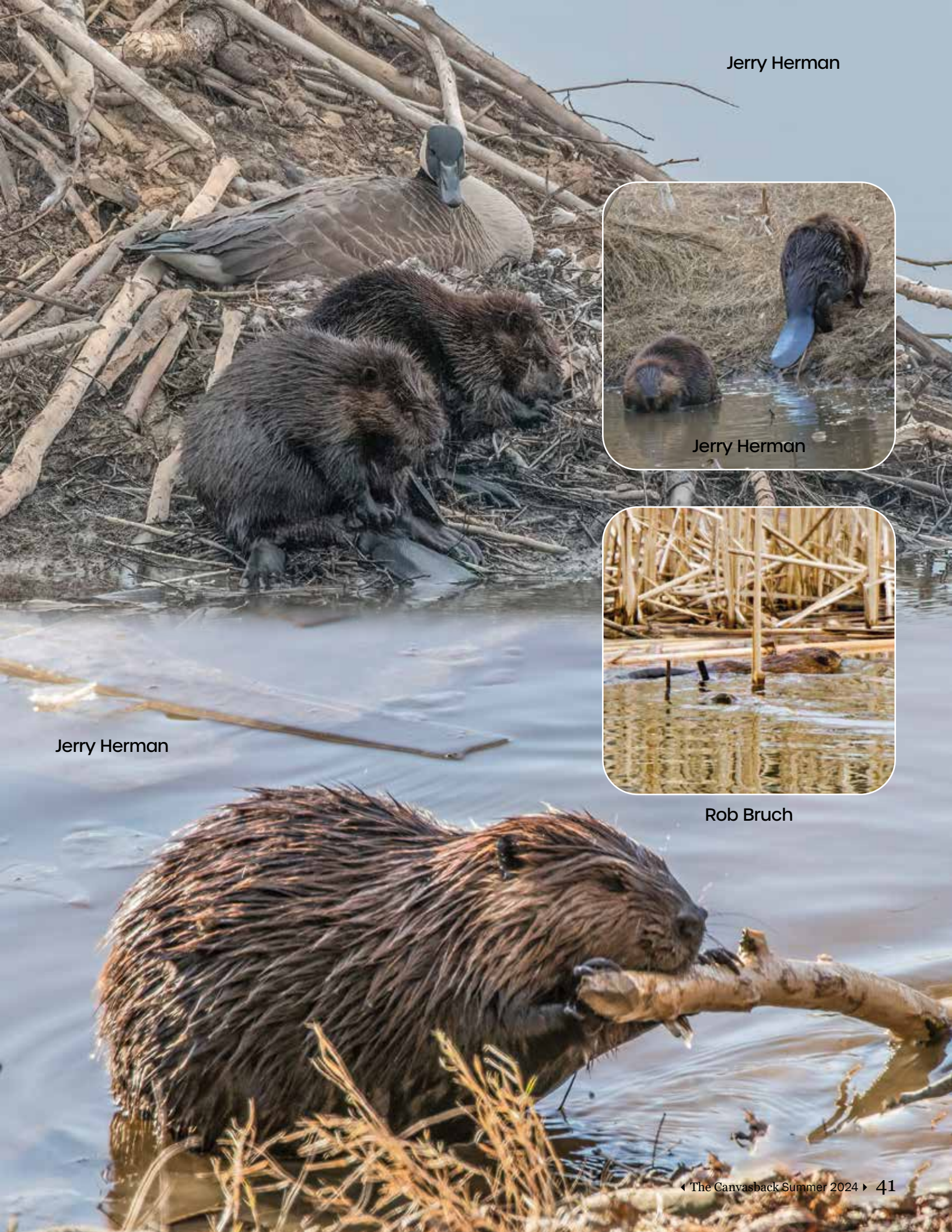
Ralph Hockman

Earl Blansfield



Ralph Hockman

Jerry Herman



Jerry Herman



Rob Bruch

Jerry Herman





Decoy Club News

New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association Hosts 2024 Decoy Show at Stockton University

By Mike Tarquini

After hosting their annual decoy show at Seaview Hotel for the last two years, the New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association moved their 2024 event to the campus of nearby Stockton University. By all measures, the event was a huge success and drew more attendees than the show has drawn in years. The new venue at Stockton University was spacious for both show exhibitors as well as the many patrons that supported the event.

Exhibitor load in and move out was simple given the generous parking and its close proximity to the venue's entrance. All exhibitors were treated to coffee, beverages, and breakfast items prior to the show's opening in a nearby exhibitor's room located a few short steps from the exhibition floor. The downstairs of the venue, which serves as a food court for Stockton University's students, presented numerous options for food and drink throughout the day.

Inside the venue, there were sixty-five exhibitors showcasing their creations as well as resellers of both vintage and contemporary decoys. Many collectibles were available as well. Outside the venue, the New Jersey Waterfowlers presented a variety of hunting rigs on the front lawn. Members engaged visitors educating them on the various formats used for waterfowling. There was a presentation on "The Early Days of Waterfowling" by Jim and Debbie Allen. An exhibition of his fine work was presented by renown New Jersey carver Bob White. Bob spent the entire day greeting visitors at his table and engaging in great conversation.

Show organizers graciously extended an invitation to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum to exhibit and promote our mission. The Museum has recently hosted exhibits by New Jersey carvers J.P. Hand and George Strunk drawing numerous New Jersey visitors into our facility. Discussions are underway with



Bob White (C) exhibits his work at the New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association show. Bob greeted friends and show attendees all day long.



An outdoor display of waterfowl hunting rigs were presented by the New Jersey Waterfowlers.

New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association President, Jaim Lloyd about having the group sponsor temporary exhibits at the Museum on a regular basis.

All in all, the move to Stockton University proved to be the right choice for show organizers. The venue is a great facility that provides room for future growth. Hats off to Show Chairman Clarence Fennimore and Co-Chairman John Shores for planning and hosting such a wonderful event. The 2025 New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association Decoy Show will again be held on the campus of Stockton University on March 29, 2025. Be sure to make plans to attend this event.



East Coast Decoy Collectors Descend upon St. Michaels

It's the spring of the year again where everyone is anxious to get out of their homes and tackle yard projects, plant flowers, and cut the shrink wrap off their watercraft. As the warmer temperatures push out the frigid winter days, it's time once again when all east coast decoy collecting clubs make their way to St. Michaels, MD to enjoy a few days of fellowship and speaking decoys. This year's event was held at the St. Michaels Inn on April 11-13, 2024. As always, the hotel venue was sold out as decoy enthusiasts came from as far north as the New York / Canadian border, as far south as Beaufort, SC, and as far west as New Orleans, LA. President Kevin Peel welcomed the 230 members participating in the event as they made their way to the ECDC Club room and joined fellow members at the hospitality area.

The ECDC event does not follow the format of most other decoy shows. There is no exhibition hall where vendors gather to showcase their items for sale. Each and every day, hotel rooms transform themselves from lodging to showrooms. Each exhibitor carefully arranges decoys and collectibles within and in front of their hotel room, opens their door, and greets the many collectors that visit their space throughout the day. The club uses a priority system to assign rooms each year rewarding those who have attended the ECDC event over its years of existence. The ground floor rooms with exterior doorways are occupied by those members with the most tenure. In all, this year's ECDC event drew an estimated 400 visitors.

An ECDC club banquet was held on Friday, April 12 in the dining hall of the St. Michaels Inn. Over one-hundred guests enjoyed pulled pork and grilled chicken provided by event caterer Grills on Wheels from Preston, MD. Joe Walsh, son of Dr. Harry M. Walsh, author of the legendary "The Outlaw Gunner" shared memorabilia and stories from his father that are contained in his 1971 classic. Following the Walsh presentation, The Potomac Decoy Collectors Association (PDCA) conducted their monthly meeting. As is customary for all PDCA meetings, members were welcomed to showcase their decoys in three categories: Old Working Decoys, Contemporary Decoys, and a Theme Bird Category (Eastern Shore Decoys) during the meeting.

**The 2025 ECDC event is scheduled for April 3-5
at the St. Michaels Inn.**

By Mike Tarquini



Grayson Chesser and Tom Humberstone



Bill Cordrey (L) and John Shores (R) taking a break from a busy day at ECDC. Even during non-peak hours, each room remains open for business.



Pete Peterson (L), Gary Sargable (C), and Kevin Peel (R) share a story during the outdoor oyster and clam reception at ECDC.



An estimated one-hundred people attended the ECDC Banquet on Friday evening.

UPCOMING DECOY SHOW INFORMATION

July 19 - 20, 2024

**54th Annual Clayton Decoy
& Sporting Collectibles Show**

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

September 7, 2024

**6th Annual Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy
Show**

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

September 14, 2024

5th Annual Delmarva Decoy Show

East New Market, MD
Info: Joe Engers (302) 644-9001

October 19, 2024

55th Annual Upper Shore Decoy Show

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

November 8-10, 2024

Easton Waterfowl Festival

Easton, MD
Info: (410) 822-4567



SIXTH ANNUAL **Charlie Joiner** MEMORIAL DECOY SHOW



**Saturday, September 7, 2024
9am - 3pm**

**Galena Volunteer Fire Company
Galena, MD 21653**

ADMISSION: \$5

Featuring:

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

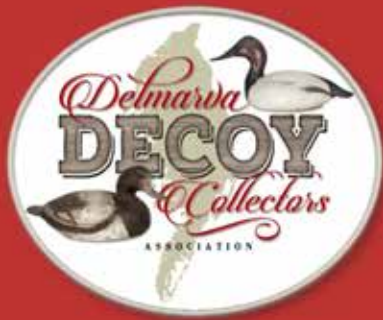
Dealer Tables Available \$50 (before Aug 1)
\$60 After Aug. 1 • Set-up 7am - 9am

PROCEEDS BENEFIT:

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

**Inquiries: 410-708-7011
Allan Schaubert**

FOOD AVAILABLE:
Galena Fire Company & Auxiliary



— ADMISSION \$6.00 —
Exhibitor Tables: \$60.00

For more information, call:

Burt Campbell
302-750-0248

Joe Engers
302-644-9001

Delmarva **Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show**

SAT., SEPT. 14, 2024
8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

East New Market Volunteer Fire Hall

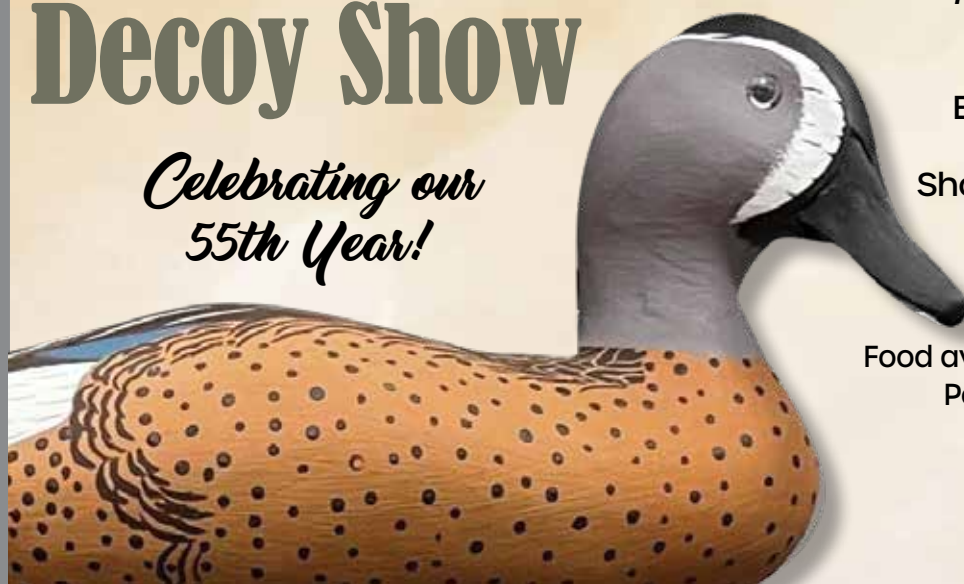
4020 East New Market Bypass East New Market, MD 21631

Vintage & Contemporary Decoys

Guns ♦ Ammunition ♦ Fishing Lures ♦ Rods & Reels ♦ Books
Shell Boxes ♦ Oyster Cans ♦ Powder Tins ♦ Hunting & Fishing Licenses
Knives ♦ Folk Art ♦ Flat Art ♦ Advertising & More

Upper Shore Decoy Show

*Celebrating our
55th Year!*



Perryville, Maryland
Saturday, October 19, 2024

Minker Banquet Hall
Perryville, MD

Early Bird: 8 am • \$10

Show Open: 9 am - 3 pm

ADMISSION: \$5

Food available for purchase from the
Perryville Ladies' Auxiliary

HOSTED BY THE UPPER BAY MUSEUM
www.upperbaymuseum.org

For additional information, find us on Facebook



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Decoy Museum**
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www.decoymuseum.com



Many Thanks

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