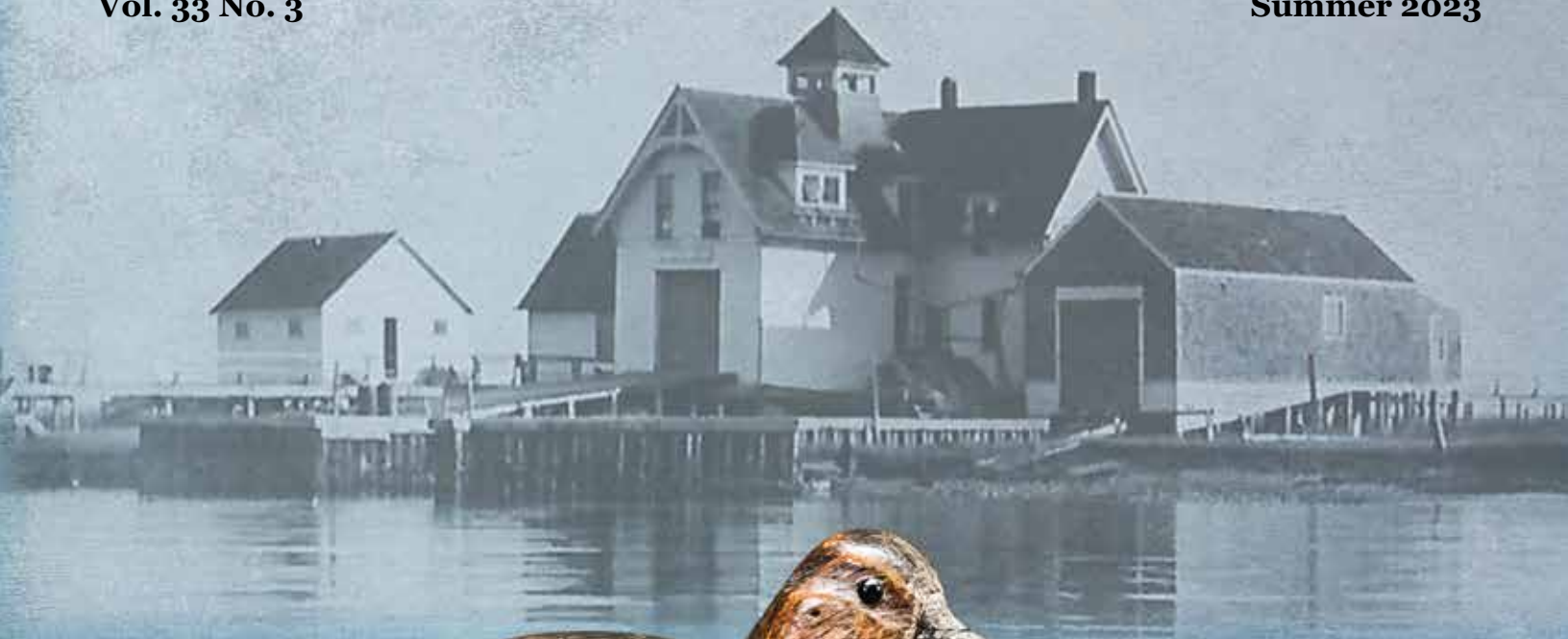


The Canvasback

HAVRE DE GRACE DECOY MUSEUM

Vol. 33 No. 3

Summer 2023



The Saga of Cobb Island





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can•vas•back

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

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

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

FUNDED IN PART BY



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



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ON THE COVER

The Life-Saving Station on Cobb Island built in 1935. The Life-Saving Service later was incorporated under the US Coast Guard. The curlew and brant were created by Nathan Cobb, Jr. Estimated value of the curlew is \$75,000 and the brant, \$100,000. *Images courtesy of Sporting Classics Magazine.*

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From the President...

Summer has begun, another successful Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival under our belt, and another edition of the Canvasback right in front of us. Spring 2023 has been very busy indeed as we were getting ready for the decoy festival, swapping out exhibits, installing a security system, implementing touchscreen monitors throughout the museum, participating in the rebranding of the Aberdeen Ironbirds as the Chesapeake Bay Decoys on June 16, and just keeping up with our day to day business.



The 41st Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival was by any measure a success. Revenues were up over last year; expenses were down allowing the decoy museum to make a few dollars. A complete recap of the Festival appears elsewhere in this magazine. Special thanks to the City of Havre de Grace Mayor Bill Martin, exhibitors, attendees, museum staff, volunteers, and our partner the Susquehanna Flats Chapter of Delta Waterfowl for ensuring our success. The 42nd Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival will be held May 4 & 5, 2024. We are happy to announce that C. John Sullivan, Jr. will serve as Honorary Chairman.

After a six-month run, the Robert Biddle exhibit was replaced with a Charles Jobs exhibit. The Cameron McIntyre exhibit was replaced by a wonderful exhibit of Cobb Island decoys and shore birds. Special thanks to Larry Lambert and Cameron McIntyre for furnishing the McIntyre exhibit. Thanks are also in order for Tommy O'Connor who loaned the museum the Cobb Island birds for display. In the same time frame, the PDCA, spearheaded by Chad Tragakis, Kevin Peel, & C. John Sullivan, Jr., installed a remarkable exhibit of John "Daddy" Holly decoys. Articles appear elsewhere in the pages of this issue that serve to provide some background for the Cobb Island and John "Daddy" Holly exhibits.

In my last message, I reported that we worked diligently collecting testimonials, audios, videos, and information in support of electronic touchscreens that were destined for the galleries of the museum. I was pleased to announce at the carvers reception on May 5 that nine touchscreens were operational throughout the museum and QR coding had been added to many exhibit cases that allows our visitors to download additional information to their electronic devices. Read more about this "game changing" technology at the museum in the coming pages. Better yet, come experience it for yourself. Special thanks to all those who contributed to the success of this effort.

There were two new adventures for the museum in mid-late June as the Aberdeen Ironbirds (High A Affiliate) rebranded themselves as the Chesapeake Bay Decoys for the game on June 16. Museum Board members and staff handed out promotional information and staffed a museum table at the game. The evening was fun for everyone and culminated with a fireworks display. In late June, the museum offered its first Summer Camp program for elementary and middle school aged children. Special Events Coordinator Dena Cardwell put together a host of activities for the children that mixed fun and educational experiences. Special thanks to all the volunteers and sponsors who made the Summer Camp project a success.

Phew! It's already early July and I think it's time to take a break. See you next issue!

New Digital Design Tells Our Story With a Touch of Your Finger

By Mike Tarquini

The time has come for subversive storytelling (Zipes, 2016)

In the words of Antonia Liguori, Storytelling is by its nature rooted in the past, influenced by the present and projected towards the future. It is so in its form and content, and digital technologies exponentially expand its channels of diffusion, broadening its horizon in the spatial dimension and accelerating its impact in the temporal dimension.

✎ (Antonia Liguori Loughborough University, UK)



During the winter of 2021, the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum submitted a written proposal to the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority (MHAA) for support of a project whose goal was to enhance the narratives of the rich cultural heritage of waterfowling and decoy making in the region best known as the Upper Chesapeake Bay and Lower Susquehanna River. The project, titled “Oral Histories -Enhancing the Visitor Experience” was formally submitted in March 2021, reviewed by the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway staff, with a final submission to MHAA in April 2021. The project was approved by MHAA for \$50K in July 2021 for implementation during FY2022-2023. The MHAA grant is a matching grant where the Decoy Museum funds 50% of the total amount.

Phase I of the project was the installation of a 65” monitor in the reception area of the museum. The intent of the monitor is to ensure that all museum guests hear the same welcoming presentation. A three-minute electronic presentation was created that provides an overview of the museum’s mission, defines its four galleries, introduces the presence of multiple touchscreen monitors throughout the galleries, and instructs guests how to access additional information using QR coding provided on many exhibit cases using their own electronic devices. A special thanks is owed to Melissa Kuzma and Allan Michero who donated their time to help create this presentation.

During Phase II, the museum conducted countless hours of research, discussions, photography, writing, and capturing audio and video of the various subject matter that supports 82 narratives that have been programmed onto nine 22-inch touchscreen monitors located throughout the “What is a Decoy” and “Gunning the Flats” galleries. Once the outline for the narratives was developed, the museum engaged a consultant / supplier to help identify the correct hardware and the proper software to achieve our goals and stay within our budget. Through early discussions with Melissa Kuzma, it was learned that a media player from Silicon Valley, CA-based BrightSign could be our best option. BrightSign is the global market leader in digital signage players, with millions of players sold. Their players are known for legendary reliability, rock-solid security, maintainability, ease-of-use, and unsurpassed performance. After speaking to BrightSign, the museum learned that their media players are most compatible



with Cumming, GA-based Bluefin touchscreen monitors. Further research led us to Erie, PA-based MegaMedia Factory who not only is a supplier of BrightSign media players and Bluefin monitors but had access to a Bluefin monitor with a built in BrightSign media player. MegaMedia Factory offered a creative team that included design, audio, and video assistance. The Museum formally engaged with MegaMedia Factory in December 2022.

Phase III took us through a winter of rigorous writing, editing, and proofing of all touchscreen content. Staff members Dena Cardwell and Nathaniel Heasley created QR coding during this time period for many of the exhibit cases throughout the “Carvers” gallery. The QR codes, when read by our visitors using their own electronic devices provide them with additional information in the form of written articles that are downloaded from the museum website by means of our enhanced WiFi connectivity throughout the museum. Once downloaded, the visitor has the option to save the information to their device.

MegaMedia Factory delivered all touchscreen monitors to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum as promised in late April. With the assistance of volunteers John Popowski, Kyle Presnell, and Rodney Swam CAT 6 wire was run and all nine touchscreen monitors were installed in Phase IV of the project in time for a Grand Opening at the Carvers Reception of the 41st Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival the first weekend in May 2023. During the festival weekend, the museum hosted hundreds of visitors from in and outside the region. Initial feedback has been extremely positive and has museum leadership already evaluating ideas for future exhibit enhancements through digital technology.

Operation of the touchscreens is simple and intuitive and provides the visitor with options to learn more about some topics and not so much about others. Most importantly, the topics are presented through audio and video means as well as in a brief written narrative. All museum members are encouraged to visit the museum and experience a deeper dive into the cultural heritage of waterfowling and decoy making in our region -the Upper Chesapeake Bay and Lower Susquehanna River as presented by the masters of the craft.

A special thank you to all participants (too numerous to list here) who gave of their time to contribute to the audios and videos. We tried to include as many viewpoints as practical. We are currently working to gather information, audios, and videos that will highlight “Life inside the R. Madison Mitchell Decoy Shop” that will be compiled on an identical touchscreen monitor as the nine already commissioned throughout the museum. The museum would like to thank the Maryland Heritage Area Authority (MHAA) and the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway (LSHG) for their support of this project -a true team effort with a very positive outcome. We, at the museum feel that our move to digital technology is “a game changer” for us and we look forward to building on it in the not so distant future.

Antonia Liguori concludes that the digital is a channel for access, creation, experience, and communication of the contemporary world, but this does not mean that it can answer the questions of the today; rather, it can create new ones, and, above all, it can offer museum institutions new opportunities and new tools for listening to the stories and questions of contemporary society: those stories of “ordinary people”, which, when they unite and work together, allow us to overcome what we perceive as insurmountable barriers.

Liguori, Antonia (2022). Digital storytelling and the concept of the “modern” museum [Postface]. Loughborough University. Chapter. <https://hdl.handle.net/2134/21621351.v1>



Spring 2023

Raffle Winners



1st Prize:
\$500 Cash
J. Gaydos



2nd Prize:
Mallard Pair by J. Evans McKinney, 1985
G. Mailto



3rd Prize:
R. Madison Mitchell print
Dona Schneider

4th Prize:

Redhead Drake by Charlie Bryan, 2001
Mary Pulket



For tickets call **410.939.3739** or email: information@DecoyMuseum.com
(Additional tickets will be available at the Museum.)

Fall 2023

Raffle

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

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



1st Prize:
\$500 Cash



2nd Prize:
Mallard Pair by
Charlie Bryan (1985)



3rd Prize:
"The Gathering" Eagle Print
by Cynthia Fisher

4th Prize:

Black Duck by Capt.
Bill Collins (1994)



Drawing will be held on Saturday, December 9, 2023 @ 8:00 PM at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum

For tickets call **410.939.3739** or email: information@DecoyMuseum.com
(Additional tickets will be available at the Museum.)



41ST ANNUAL

Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival RECAP...

By: Mike Tarquini

After returning to the site of the inaugural show in 2022, the 41st Annual Havre de Grace Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival was again held at the S.T.A.R. Centre on May 6 & 7, 2023. The site was the previous home of Havre de Grace High School's gymnasium. Now owned and operated by the City of Havre de Grace, the S.T.A.R. Centre hosts entertainment, athletics, fundraising, and civic events of all kinds. Special thanks to Havre de Grace Mayor Bill Martin for making the facility available to the Decoy Museum to host our annual event. By all practical measures, the 2023 Festival was a success.



Charles Jobes presents Joe & Jane Sufczynski with a pair of his commemorative Festival canvasbacks.



Charles Jobes Exhibit at the 2023 Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival.



Unfinished decoys for sale by Flyway Decoys (Green Bank, NJ).

The weekend event kicked off with a carvers reception on Friday evening at Decoy Museum. Approximately one-hundred guests enjoyed fellowship with each other and were treated to a tasty meal of pit beef, pit ham, and pit turkey accompanied by baked beans, mac and cheese and potato salad prepared by long-time festival partner the Susquehanna Flats Chapter of Delta Waterfowl. An informal program featured an announcement that the long awaited touchscreen monitors are now operational throughout the museum and QR codes have been added to many exhibit cases that allow visitors to download additional information using their electronic devices. Allan Schaubert presented the museum with a \$3,600 check from the proceeds earned at the 4th Annual Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show that was held in September 2022. With this gift, Allan Schaubert has presented the museum with a total of \$12,700 from the four Charlie Joiner Shows. The museum was honored to have Cameron and Adele McIntyre (New Church, VA) in attendance. An exquisite exhibit of Cameron's decoys, from the collection of Larry Lambert (Virginia Beach, VA), have been proudly showcased in the museum since October 2022.

According to Chad Tragakis, Collector and President of the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association (PDCA), "the 41st Decoy Festival was fantastic." Chad traveled from Alexandria, VA to participate in this year's event. Collector and Exhibitor Tom Reed (American Sporting Classics) echoed Chad's remarks by saying, "I had a fantastic show and enjoyed going to the museum on Friday evening to attend the carvers reception and spend some quality time with everyone." Tom travels from Isle of Palms, SC to be part of the festivities each year and looks forward to coming again next year.

Charles Jobes, middle son of legendary carver Captain Harry Jobes, proudly served as Honorary Chairman of this year's Festival. Charles and wife Patty have operated Charles Jobes Decoys since 1996. Charles commemorated his chairmanship by offering a special limited edition of full-size keeled canvasback decoys that contained a medallion in the keel with the 41st festival name and 2023 date. The commemorative canvasbacks were well received by festival attendees and Charles and Patty nearly sold out – a true collector's item. On Saturday evening, longtime friend Joe Sufczynski hosted a private party in Charles' honor at the museum.

As in past years, the Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival offered a little something for everyone. Those trying their hand at decoy making but are without the dedicated workshop, had the opportunity to choose from a variety of carved but unpainted decoys from Green Bank, NJ exhibitor Flyway Decoys. Walt and Cindy Jones provide the novice or maker of any skill level a chance to test their painting skills prior to outfitting a complete workshop. A variety of flat art exhibitors such as Wildlife Art Studio (Ron Orlando, Odenton, MD) and Mary Lou Troutman Art gave attendees the chance to take home an original painting depicting that perfect outdoor scene. Mary Lou is from Southern St. Mary's County. According to Mary Lou's husband Jeff, we have been coming to Havre de Grace each and every year since the Festival began in 1982. Paul Shertz

(Bear, DE) was in attendance and offered his classic prints depicting decoys from legendary carvers as well as historic sites such as the R. Madison Mitchell Decoy Shop. Linda Amtmann (Baltimore, MD) exhibited a full array of Chesapeake Bay inspired painted creations.

There were numerous exhibitors offering both vintage and contemporary waterfowl decoys for the most discriminating collectors. Harford County collector and historian C. John Sullivan, Jr. presented an elegant assortment of vintage waterfowl decoys. John Collier (Severna Park, MD) presented some higher end decoys and collectibles from some renowned artists. Vintage decoys were also offered by many other exhibitors including John Henry and Darrell Hagar (H & H Vintage Decoys, Cecil County, MD), Bob Foard (Seven Springs, PA), Gil McMillan (Virginia Beach, VA) and Wings Over the Beach Decoys - Walt Williams (Knotts Island, NC).

An abundance of Upper Bay style contemporary decoys were available from Havre de Grace carvers such as Jim & Charles Pierce, Bobby Jobes, David Walker, Steve Lay, Joey Jobes, and Churchville carvers Bryan Bodt and Pat Vincenti. Vincenti provided a mixture of vintage and contemporary offerings. According to Pat, “the show was done extremely well, the flow of the show went well, the crowd on Saturday was extremely good, Sunday was a bit slower, but that’s expected. Saturday sales were good, not only for me, but for many other exhibitors. I thought that we had a great cross section of people.” Eastern shore carvers Allan Schaubert (Chestertown, MD), Bill Schaubert (Chestertown, MD), John Meredith (Worton, MD) and David Sproates (Kennedyville, MD) offered some Kent County, MD inspired decoys. John Eichelberger (Willow Street, PA) featured many hand-chopped creations that drew the crowd’s attention. John Meredith shared, “sales from my show inventory was slow, but I did take a few orders during the weekend.”

There were exhibitors including Chuck Usilton (C&L Collectibles), Dick and Linda Robinson, Eric Steinlein, and Rich Moretz that offered collectibles as well as waterfowl decoys. Aside from Dick’s waterfowl decoys, Linda Robinson’s eye-catching great blue herons and Rich Moretz’s penguins of all sizes are becoming mainstays at each festival. Collector and author Michael Daley exhibited at the festival promoting his 2021 book “Waterfowling on the Susquehanna Flats.” According to Michael, “the Havre de Grace decoy show is the show to attend.” He likes the two-day format and finds the decoy competitions the best part. He has participated in the festival for years as both an exhibitor and as an attendee. Decoy Magazine’s Joe Engers shared, “I like the venue for it’s brighter and more open.” Joe shared that he had a good show selling a few birds, taking a few new subscriptions, and selling some back issues of Decoy Magazine. Joe even found the time to pick up a pair of Dan Brown miniature pintails for his own collection.

On Saturday, the festival featured decoy competitions that focused on decorative, gunning, and old decoys. The decorative decoy competition featured 29 contestants and 76 entries. John Graf graciously spearheaded this competition with help from his very able volunteers. Special thanks to Jay Polite, Dan Polite, Raymond



Gunning birds afloat at the Gunning Decoy Competition.



John and Susan Eichelberger (Willow Street, PA) exhibit their creations.



John Meredith (Worton, MD) greets potential customers.



Paul Shertz (L) poses with Charles Jobes (R) and the barrel head that he painted for him at the request of long time friend Joe Sufczynski.



PDCA President Chad Tragakis presents carver Jay Polite with the 2023 Ray Whetzel Memorial Award for his outstanding contributions to decoy making.



Joe Engers (L), Bill Waibel (C) & Rob Knight (R) discuss a miniature decoy while at the Festival.

Pauletti, Jeffrey Moore, John Graf, Kevin Peel, Chad Tragakis, and Bill Waibel for acting as judges for the competition. The gunning decoy competition featured working decoys of all types. Museum Board member David Farrow chaired this competition as 26 contestants furnishing 140 entries vied for prize ribbons. The gunning competition took place in water tanks located outside in an area adjacent to the competition pavilion. Johnny Day, Captain Bill Collins, Donnie Satchell, and Ronnie Young served as volunteer judges for the event. Members of the Upper Bay Decoy Collector's Club (UBDCC) assisted David with the logistics of the competition. Museum Curation Coordinator Nathaniel Heasley acted as data recorder for the numerous categories. Chad Tragakis, Ginny Sanders, and Board member Lloyd Sanders along with members from the Potomac Decoy Collectors Club (PDCA) hosted the J. Evans McKinney "Old Decoy" Competition. The PDCA selected ten categories and 15 collectors furnished more than 100 entries. Special thanks to Kevin Peel, Bill Cordrey, and Bruce Eppard who acted as this year's judges. A full list of all competition winners can be found on the museum's website (decoymuseum.com).

The museum staff made a concerted effort to cover the bases throughout the weekend. Staff members Jade Vincenti, Josiah Scott, and Vivian Miller anchored operations at the S.T.A.R. Centre by running a pop-up museum store and attending to other details as they surfaced. Board member Ralph Hockman and wife Pat, along with volunteers staffed the admission area as they arrived on Friday for set up and throughout the event. Board members Rodney Swam, John Hughes, John Currier, and Lou Caputo volunteered for various duties throughout the weekend to ensure our success. Staff members Charlie Lawson and Sandy Poughkeepsie held the fort down at the museum as we hosted several hundred visitors throughout the weekend.

By all measures, the 2023 Havre de Grace Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival was a success. Perhaps local carver Bob Jobes shared the most welcomed comment, "I had the second best show that I have ever had, this year, I sold decoys to new and younger customers that have never purchased one of my decoys in the past, which may indicate that the tide might be changing some for the decoy industry." The museum has set a goal to improve upon the festival each and every year. According to Bob Foard, "the parking is good, the venue is good, the food is good, and this year's timing was better than last year which was held a few days earlier." From the sound of things, the museum has a good deal of things to build upon going forward.

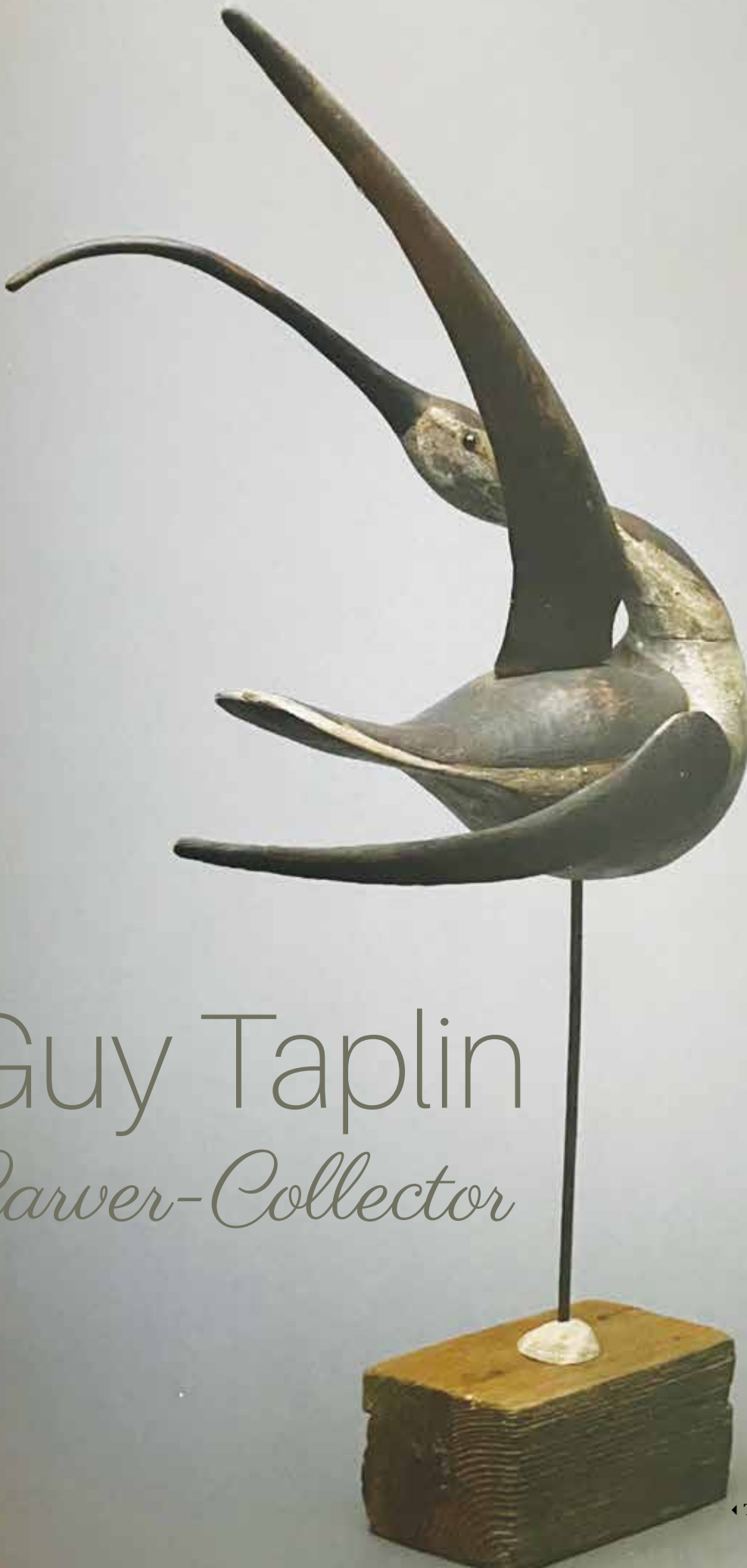
A special thank you to each and every exhibitor, festival attendee, museum staff member, volunteer, and our partner the Susquehanna Flats Chapter of Delta Waterfowl for their part in making the 41st Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival a success.

By: C. John Sullivan, Jr.

*Pictured: Curlew by
Guy Taplin*

Guy Taplin

Carver-Collector





C. John Sullivan, Jr. (L) & Guy Taplin (R) admire the Crisfield, MD goose decoy that has been attributed to Travis Ward, father of legendary decoy makers Lem & Steve Ward.

There are but a few of us who can pick up a pebble along the beach, a shell, a piece of wood and admire it for its uniqueness. We carry it along with us to set it upon a shelf or put in an ancient box to appreciate another day and let it carry us back to that moment when we saw something special in it. I did this with my oldest decoy friend, the late Henry A. Fleckenstein, Jr., and from across the Atlantic in Wivenhoe, Essex, England, I have another friend, Guy Taplin, who shares this same passion with me. Some others might say what is he talking about? A piece of stone, a shell, a worn piece of wood ---those people just don't get it. As Guy and I walked along the shoreline on Mersea Island, we gathered pebbles, shells, bits of wood from a long-forgotten punt or skiff, many times reaching down to pick up the same exact piece to carry home. I have just returned from a journey to the coastal village where Guy Taplin lives in a mariner's cottage. His home, Anglesea Cottage, lies in Wivenhoe in northeastern Essex. The earliest record of Wivenhoe dates back to 1066. It is a port town serving the Colchester district. Close by is the Blackwater Estuary, the site of great waterfowling. The famous waterfowler Walter Linnet lived in a cottage fronting on the Blackwater, and his reputation as a punt gunner is legendary. Guy gets his inspiration from the history of this famous waterfowler's paradise. This was my fifth trip to visit Guy. Guy and I share a passion for many things but, most of all, carved wooden waterfowl. He collects early decoys from the Atlantic flyway, he lives with them, admires them, and picks them up to appreciate their style, their form, paint, and the stories they could tell. He keeps his favorites within easy reach. He can reach over to them from most every place inside his charming abode.



Guy Taplin reading a book among his artifacts.



*Sea-Gunner
Walter Linnet, wildfowler, his cottage, and St. Peter's
Chapel, at Bradwell-juxta-Mare
Photo: Douglas Went*



Eight peeps in flight



Standing solitary shorebird

In addition to his collecting, Guy has created his own carvings of ducks, geese, brant, swan, all varieties of shorebirds, and songbirds. Guy's childhood fascination with birds flourished when he became the head bird keeper at Her Majesty the Queen's Regent's Park. He began carving birds out of bits and pieces of wood he would find about the Park. His first showing of his carvings was in 1978; that show resulted in all of his carvings being sold, and he has never looked back. His birds of creation are well known worldwide; they appear in the collections of bird lovers, fine arts collectors, members of the Royal Family, and celebrities. On this most recent visit, we sat and admired a worn old Canada goose from Crisfield, Maryland. We sat at the Taplins' dining room table surrounded by his carvings, incredible bird art by his artist daughter Nancy, and beautiful ceramic plates created by his wife Robina. Not far away are bird carvings by his late son, Sam. The goose that we studied was carved by Travis Ward, the father of the famous Ward brothers, Lem and Steve. It has wonderful form, it presents itself in a mere suggestion of original paint, and its dry surface and age cracks translate into a wonderful tale of where and how it was used. Some collectors would turn away from this artifact from Maryland's storied Lower Eastern Shore, but it is exactly the type of decoy that bonds us to an earlier time. If this decoy were pristine and untouched, it would appeal to some collectors, but to us it would just be another decoy. The beauty in its worn condition is what dreams and stories are made from.



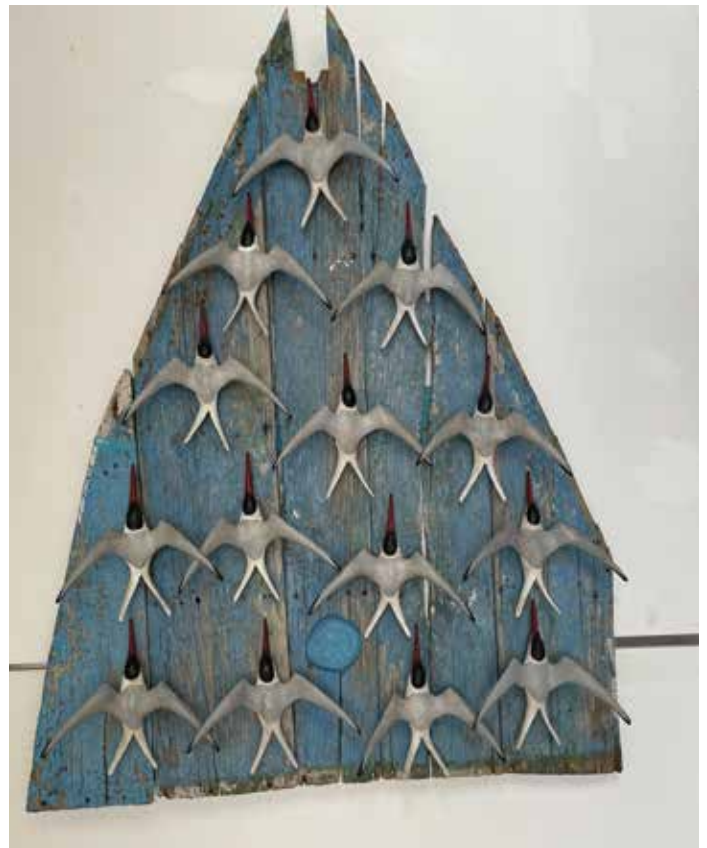
Worn and weathered curlews in various poses



Close up of the curlews showing the weathering

The decoys that Guy creates in his waterside cottage workshop, although new, share characteristics with that worn old Travis Ward goose. Guy designs his creations out of bits and pieces of found wood, flotsam and jetsam he calls it. An oversize exaggerated curlew may have a walnut bill, a discarded block of pine for its body, and a piece of oak fence board to create its base. If a crack appears on the body, it may be repaired with a found piece of copper sheathing. If the long bill is cracked during the creation, an old piece of thin wire will be used, thereby adding character to the bird during its construction. When I have asked Guy as to how he plans his carvings, he states that the overall design is carried in his head and depending on what materials he combines, its style comes together. Some of his most popular works in addition to his stand-alone birds are his multiple birds of the same species, some standing in different poses and others in flight with various wing positions. Guy utilizes fragments of found wood to display his multiple birds, some numbering as high as ten. Although some characteristics are exaggerated, each of his creations demonstrates his true understanding of birds and the gift that nature and Guy Taplin have given us to admire and cherish. I have witnessed Guy Taplin's creativity grow exponentially since our first meeting in the 1980s. His visions of wildlife by way of his imagination and observations have brought forth entirely new dimensions in the feelings his birds invoke. It is doubtful that any artist could duplicate the passion his wooden sculptures generate.

The appreciation for Guy's carvings is best understood by reviewing the results of the annual exhibition and sale of his work. Like his first show and sale in 1978, "SOLD OUT" is the result.



Terns in flight



The Saga of Cobb Island

The Cobb family legacy is accentuated by a treasure trove of waterfowl and shorebird decoys.

By Dr. Lloyd Newberry

This article originally appeared in the 2018 Summer issue of Sporting Classics Magazine.

The wind howled and the temperature plummeted as Martha and I stepped into Captain Rick's skiff at Willis Wharf, Virginia. It was April 2016, and I had hoped for better weather, but light snow flurries the day before had us dressed appropriately. Richard Kellam had promised to fulfill a four-decade-long dream of mine and take us out to explore Cobb Island. No foul weather could dampen my enthusiasm, and there was no one better than Rick to guide us to Virginia's barrier islands.

Captain Rick, who is U.S. Coast Guard licensed, does historic and eco-tours, and has authored and coauthored books and articles on the barrier islands. His home is a treasure trove of antiques and memorabilia representing the past history of Virginia's coastline. Finally, the day arrived. The outboard roared to life just as the sun came out over a cloudbank on the eastern horizon. We were on our way.

I first became interested in Cobb Island decoys when I bought a shorebird made there in the late 1800s. That was 45 years ago, and since then, I have researched everything I could find out about the Cobb family. Fortunately, there is ample information and artifacts available to piece together this wonderful story.

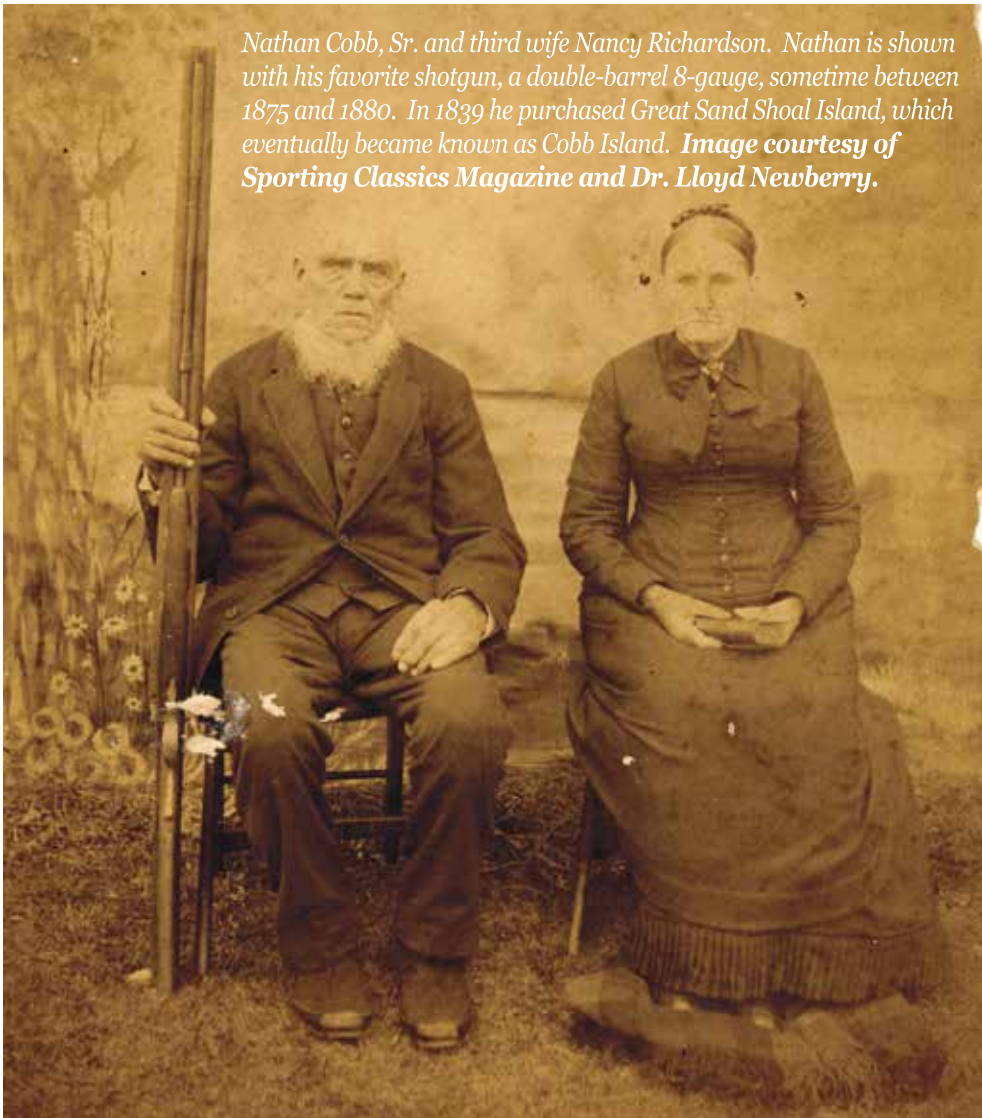
The Cobb family came from a long line of seafaring individuals. Nathan Sr. was born in 1797 in Eastham, Massachusetts. He prospered with his father, Elkanah, in the family shipbuilding and freighting business. In 1820, he married Nancy Doane. She suffered from poor health, probably tuberculosis. In an effort to improve Nancy's longevity, Nathan adhered to her doctor's suggestion and decided to move south to a warmer climate.

From 1940 interviews with Lucius and Arthur Cobb, grandsons of Nathan, we learn that he had discovered the Virginia coast on an earlier freighting trip. He was impressed with the resources the land and sea offered and envisioned a fresh start there.

Nathan sold his share of the business in 1837, bought a schooner, and loaded it with the essentials his family would need, including lumber for a new home. He then sailed south with Nancy and his three young sons: Nathan Jr., Warren, and Albert.

A storm forced them to seek shelter in a small creek near the village of Oyster on the seaside of the Eastern Shore. The local folks were friendly and helpful to them, and Nathan decided to settle there.

Nathan Cobb, Sr. and third wife Nancy Richardson. Nathan is shown with his favorite shotgun, a double-barrel 8-gauge, sometime between 1875 and 1880. In 1839 he purchased Great Sand Shoal Island, which eventually became known as Cobb Island. Image courtesy of Sporting Classics Magazine and Dr. Lloyd Newberry.



He built a modest home and a small store in Oyster, but within two years he became bored with shopkeeping.

Nathan was a seafaring man and wanted to be closer to the open ocean. He had started a salvage business along several barrier islands where ships often ran aground in storms. Nathan also hunted in these waters, particularly the area around Great Sand Shoal Island. Only eight miles by water east of Oyster, the barrier island had a beach several miles in length, an area of dunes down the center, and an apron of salt marsh meadow on the western backside. Not much to hang a hat on, much less a home, but Nathan liked it.

The widely accepted story is that Nathan discovered a brown liquid seeping from the beach sand. He guessed it to be salt, a highly valuable commodity in those times. His hypothesis was proven true when he boiled the liquid and produced salt.

The island was owned by William “Hard Time” Fitchett, who did not regard it highly. In 1839, Nathan purchased Great Sand Shoal Island for \$150, his profits from the ship-salvage business, and a quantity of salt. He decided to move his home and family to the island to be closer to the salvage business that was proving to be quite lucrative.

It was a massive undertaking, and in those times a precarious one. He built his home at the rear of the sand dunes on the edge of the marsh. The man definitely had his share of nerve.

Although Nathan didn’t know it at the time, his gamble would prove fortuitous. The littoral currents and sand-sharing systems of the area—Hog Island on the north and Wreck Island on the south—were expanding Cobb Island, as it was now known, in length, width, and elevation.

Nancy’s health continued to deteriorate and she died in 1840 shortly after the family moved to the island. Nathan remarried Esther Carpenter, who for 22 years was a good wife who fit well with life on the Island. Nathan’s three sons joined their father in the salvage business, which became more and more successful. They became quite adept at reading the tides, currents, and wind, which enabled them to save many ships and countless lives. It was an acutely dangerous business, but they were good at it.

Each of Nathan’s sons married and built homes on the island. Nathan Jr. married Sally Dowty and had one son, Elkanah.

Warren and his wife, Emily Roberts, had three sons: George, Arthur, and Henry, and a daughter, Eva. Albert married Ellen Doughty, and they had two sons: Thomas and Lucius, and a daughter, Addie.

Oysters, clams, and crabs were plentiful in the waters around Cobb Island and the fishing and waterfowl hunting was nonpareil. The Cobbs were excellent shots and Nathan Jr.’s marksmanship became widely known. Brant, geese, black ducks, and scaup were harvested by the thousands in fall and winter followed by shorebirds, mostly curlew and plover, in the spring. They would clean the birds and pack them in barrels to be transported on passing ships to markets in Baltimore and New York.

Cobb Island, with all its salt meadows and eel-grass flats, sat squarely in the migratory route of innumerable shorebirds and waterfowl, especially brant. Stories of the wonderful shooting the Cobbs enjoyed soon spread up the coast. Wealthy sportsmen began contacting the family, and some of them were taken out to experience the fantastic shooting. The Cobbs realized there was money to be made and quickly increased the number of “sports” they were guiding.



*The sailing schooner “Clara Combs of Cobb Island” was used by the Cobb family to ferry waterfowlers to the blinds and guests to the island.
Image courtesy of Sporting Classics Magazine and Dr. Lloyd Newberry.*

Along with the increase in hunting clients came the need for comfortable blinds, additional guides, boats, and good decoys. Several members of the Cobb family carved shorebird and waterfowl decoys, the most notable being Nathan Jr., Elkanah, and Arthur.

Nathan Jr. had a talent for creating lifelike decoys, both shorebirds and waterfowl, especially brant. Most of the decoys made on Cobb Island were probably crafted from just after the Civil War until 1890. These two decades witnessed the peak of sport gunning in America as well as on the island.

All Cobb decoys are highly coveted, and today, with prices reaching six figures for some of the better ones, there is much debate as to who made each bird. We will likely never figure it all out. Nathan Sr. probably made a few, but there is no obvious evidence that he carved.

Many of the brant have solid bodies, some fashioned from ship masts. The carving on these birds is less refined, as is the painting. A few of them with a straight “N” carved in the bottom might have been made by Nathan Sr.; others might have been the earlier work of Nathan Jr.

Most of the later brant, geese, and ducks made by Nathan Jr. were hollow-carved and had glass eyes. The heads on all of his ducks are inletted, exhibiting superior skills and creating a stronger decoy. But his greatest achievements are his hollow-carved brant and geese.

Nathan Jr. would scavenge driftwood, particularly the contorted limbs of maritime holly and myrtle, which were twisted in a variety of shapes. He could visualize the necks and heads of brant in many positions—feeding, fighting, swimming, and resting. A rig of his decoys would resemble real birds better than those of any other decoy maker.

Grayson Chesser, who lives on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, has been making working decoys and guiding hunters most of his life. He is also an avid student of the shore’s fowling history and the decoys that were a part of it.

Regarding Nathan Jr.’s skills, Grayson stated: “He was arguably the greatest decoy maker who ever lived. His carvings have more life than the decoys by any of the other masters. The true test of an artist is not measured by the amount of detail invested in a carving, but rather how little is needed to capture the essence of a bird. Nathan Jr. could make wood live and breathe.”

Several of the guides who worked for the Cobbs also helped to produce decoys. Joe Crumb, John Haff, George Isdell, and Eli Doughty all produced wonderful birds that have become highly prized among collectors.



Cobb Island Hotel was a busy place when this photo was taken in 1885. The photo depicts Tammany Hall, a clubhouse built by the Cobb family on Cobb Island shortly after the Civil War. Image courtesy of Sporting Classics Magazine and Dr. Lloyd Newberry.

The real prize is to find a Cobb decoy with an identifying brand on the bottom. Nathan Jr. carved a serifed “N” on the bottom of most of his birds, and Elkanah carved an “E” on his. Albert carved a “Masonic A” on the bottom of his shorebirds. There is no indication that he made duck decoys. Elkanah and Arthur Cobb both acquired brands around 1900 and used them to mark the bottom of their decoys. No matter who made it, any decoy identified as a Cobb Island creation carries all the history and lore with it and is a piece to be treasured.

As the word spread and more sportsmen came to Cobb Island, Nathan Sr. knew that he needed to expand his accommodations. Shortly after the Civil War, a coffee barque, the Bar Cricket out of Rio, went aground off Cobb Island. Through hazardous and superhuman efforts, the Cobbs salvaged the ship and received enough money in doing so to build their clubhouse. Named Tammany Hall, it was long and rambling, stretching close to 150 feet. The Cobbs also built a chapel, bowling alley, ballroom, and hired a band. They bought a farm on the mainland to grow fruits and vegetables for their guests and built a mill where meal and grain were prepared.

Many families came for sunbathing and fishing in the summer and fall, but gunning waterfowl and shorebirds remained the dominant sport. For two decades following 1870, the Cobbs operated one of the best-known sporting resorts on the East Coast.

The island’s hotel register, which is housed in the Barrier Islands Center on the Eastern Shore, shows that between 1874 and 1882 visitors from every Atlantic seaboard state except New Hampshire had stayed at Cobb Island.

A sailing sloop was purchased by the family to carry guests from the village of Oyster out to the Island. In 1884, a train depot was arranged by the NYP&N Railroad to cater to guests going to the Island. It was named Cobb’s Station. They also purchased a steamer, the NWA Cobb, and used it along with their sailing schooner, the Clara Combs of Cobb Island, to ferry guests back and forth to the resort.

In 1876, a government-issued Life-Saving Station was built on Cobb Island. Three years later it was destroyed by fire, and in 1880 a second, more formidable structure was completed. It was one of 26 built between 1875 and 1881 along the Atlantic coast. The station was manned with full-time crews, including some of the Cobb Island family and guides. A new station was built on the island in 1935, and in 1936 the Life-Saving Stations were officially incorporated under the U.S. Coast Guard. They had been a godsend to many ships, saving many lives. The new Coast Guard Station was decommissioned in 1964 and moved to Oyster on the mainland in 1998. The old 1880 Life-Saving Station still remained on the island, but each storm was slowly taking away another piece of it.

The island had been accreting since Old Man Nathan purchased it in 1839. Through the halcyon days of sport that made Cobb Island famous, only one major hurricane had ravaged the area. It occurred in 1879 and washed away many of the buildings but left the hotel mostly intact. The Cobbs rebuilt and continued with their enterprising business. Sometime after Nathan Sr.’s second wife died, he married Nancy Richardson, and purchased a farm on the mainland south of Oyster.

By 1890, environmental conditions had changed, causing erosion problems around Cobb Island. The hotel, which was once 500 yards from the beach, was now only 50 yards away. As the island continued to shrink, the die was cast for disaster, and in 1896 it happened. A terrible hurricane struck the Virginia coast, decimating Cobb Island. It washed over the land, taking everything with it but the Life-Saving Station. After the storm, Nathan Jr. and son Elkanah constructed a smaller clubhouse on the marsh behind the beach, but the glory days of gunning on Cobb Island were over. In 1903, Warren passed away, and two years later Nathan Jr. died.

In the late 1920s, Elkanah's clubhouse burned and he left the island to settle on a farm in Oyster. His cousin, George, Warren's son, continued to take out hunters for another decade, but the end was near. In 1933, another major storm swept up the Virginia coast. Before the storm hit, the Coast Guard offered to take George off the island, but he refused, primarily because he had nurtured a long grievance with the organization since he and his brother, Arthur, had worked at the station. George's body was never found.

The devastating storm washed sand over most of the eel-grass flats, killing off this favorite food of the brant, and with the exception of a few scattered flights, they ceased coming. Thus ended nearly a century of the saga of Cobb Island. Alexander Hunter, in his 1908 book *The Huntsman in the South*, encapsulated it well.

"What romancer has ever told of a speck of land in mid-ocean that grew day-by-day, until it became a broad domain, and produced more wealth than any pirate's hoard ever contained? Furthermore, when this lone isle in the sea passed from the possession of the sons of Neptune, the ocean recalled its gift, the island sank from whence it rose, and now the heaving billows sweep unchecked over the place where but a few years ago there flourished a large village, with its hotel and sportsmen's lodges."

The era of Cobb Island resort is gone forever, but the dynamics of land and water continue to produce change. The sea has once again given back some of the island, and it must now somewhat resemble what Old Man Cobb first witnessed when he walked that beach in 1836.

Now, I was finally on the way to complete my dream of walking on this storied bit of sand in the footsteps of Nathan Cobb. It was about an hour's run out, stopping several times for Rick to point out the locations of other famous waterfowling clubs. He gave us brief histories of the Barron, Broadwater, and Fowling Point clubs as we paused at the location of each. When we passed through Hog Island Bay, a long string of brant took flight—a living reminder of the past. Though but a remnant of the multitudes of yesteryear, it was heartwarming to see them in those waters.



Author, Dr. Lloyd Newberry (right) and eco-tour guide Rick Kellam (left) visit the remains of the Life-Saving Station built on Cobb Island in 1880. Image courtesy of Sporting Classics Magazine and Dr. Lloyd Newberry.



Nathan Cobb, Jr. carved this brant decoy around 1875. It was used by his son, Elkanah, who branded the bird with the initial “E” and later his E.B. COBB brand. Image courtesy of Sporting Classics Magazine and Dr. Lloyd Newberry.

And then we were there. Rick eased the skiff up to the beach on the southern end of the island about 50 yards from the remains of the old 1880 Life-Saving Station. Two of the gables on the roof were still struggling to remain upright, but the chimney had given up in the last storm. The original cedar-shake shingles were still in place on the remaining sections of roof. Amazing to witness, since 1880, and how many raging tempests?

As I stood in the dunes and stared seaward, I was somewhat mesmerized by the howling winds and roaring surf. My thoughts raced back to what this family had created here on this long stretch of beach, dunes, and marsh. Men whose tireless efforts had saved more than three dozen ships and many lives. Men who created one of the finest sporting organizations the country has ever witnessed . . . all gone with the wind and tide. Three generations lived and died here, yet it seems but a moment in time.

But we can go back to experience this great story in several ways. The Nature Conservancy now owns the island, and you can walk the beach as we did. The Barrier Islands Center on the Eastern Shore of Virginia displays many artifacts and documents that present and preserve the Cobb legacy. It's a must visit. And then there are those wonderful decoys created on the island. They can be found in the collections of private individuals, museums, and on display at public auctions such as Guyette & Deeter and Copley Fine Arts.

Knowing the story of Cobb Island makes just holding one of these decoys a special experience.

Postscript: Fortunately, I was able to find ample information available for piecing together this story. I am indebted to several historians who shared information and photographs. They include Captain Richard Kellam, Grayson Chesser, Ron Kagawa, Curtis Badger, Tommy O'Connor, the Barrier Islands Center, Guyette and Deeter Auctions, Copley Fine Art Auctions, and Collectible Old Decoys. My thanks also to Bobby Richardson and Henry Fleckenstein.

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After the article appeared the author spent three years researching the Cobb family for a comprehensive book on their three generations that lived on Cobb's Island. It's an interesting and compelling read that folk-art collectors and historians will find both educational and enjoyable.

The book “Wings of Wonder: The Remarkable Story of the Cobb Family & the Priceless Decoys They Created on Their Island Paradise”, may be ordered from the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum or from Sporting Classics Magazine.

Come to the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum to witness this fascinating exhibit and see one of the most complete collections of Cobb Island decoys courtesy of Tommy O'Connor.



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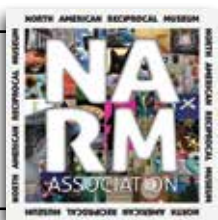
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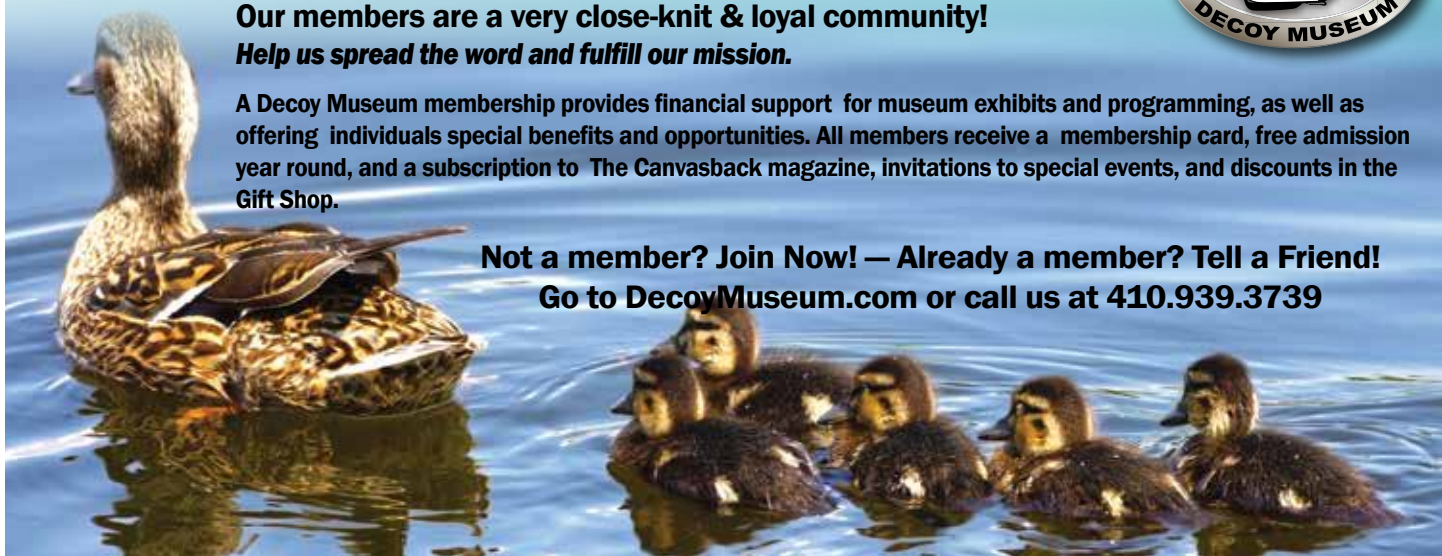
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Innovation, Industry and Influence

John "Daddy" Holly Makes History Once Again

By: Chad Tragakis



Kevin Peel and Chad Tragakis stand in front of the new John "Daddy" Holly exhibit case.

On March 18, 2023, history was made yet again on the banks of the Susquehanna Flats. For probably the first time since the huge rigs of his decoys floated together on the Upper Chesapeake Bay, more than 100 birds made by John "Daddy" Holly have been reunited in the single greatest group of his work that has ever been assembled and exhibited. And, you can see it now at the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum in a new exhibit titled, Innovation, Industry and Influence: The Decoys of John "Daddy" Holly – Pioneer of the Havre de Grace Style.

For 20 years, the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association has curated a series of guest exhibits with the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. These special displays, featuring decoys, photographs and artifacts from club member collections, provide an insightful and valuable supplement to the museum's outstanding permanent collection. 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.

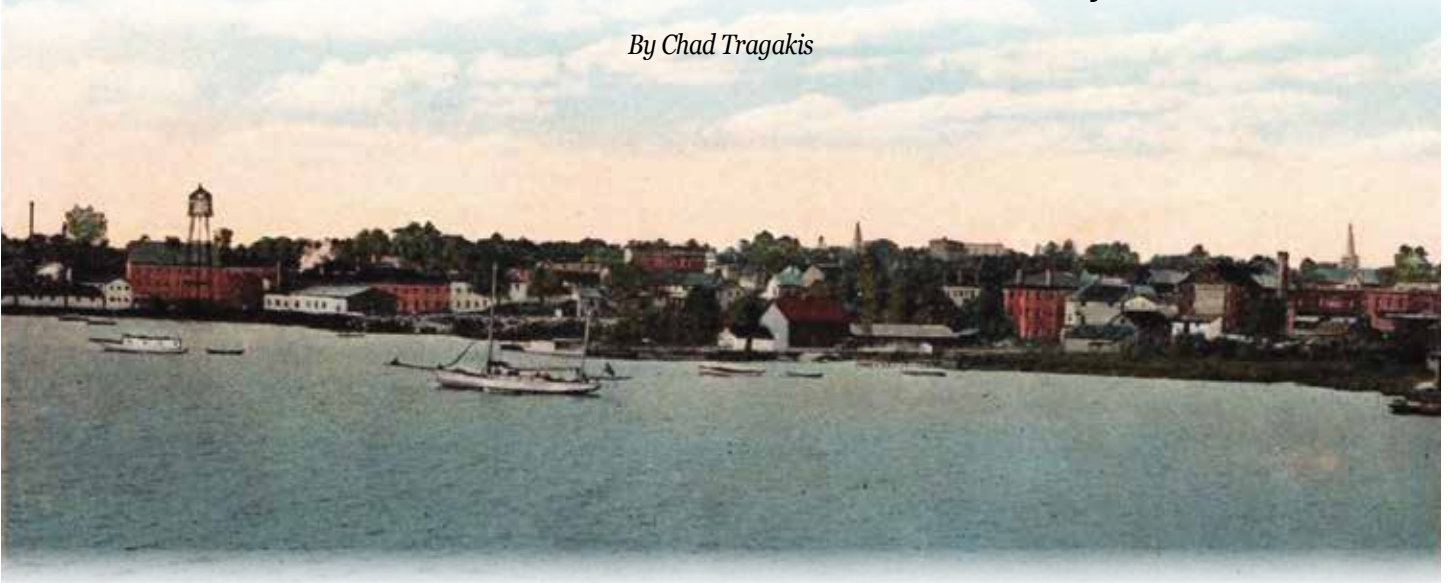
The exhibit explores the evolution of different styles and construction methods Holly employed over his long decoy-making career, considers the possibilities of collaboration with family members and others, and celebrates the influence and inspiration his work had on both his contemporaries and on later generations. A variety of different species are featured, along with a range of decoy types including high-heads, miniatures, keeled models, wooden wing-ducks and cast iron sinkbox decoys. An outstanding selection of historic branded examples underscores how prolific and hardworking Holly was, and the dominance his decoys enjoyed during the "golden age" of waterfowling – both on the storied Susquehanna Flats and far beyond.

PDCA members Kevin Peel, C. John Sullivan, Jr. and Chad Tragakis worked with over a dozen collectors to select and showcase more than 100 outstanding examples, spanning five decades and representing every phase in Holly's long and influential career. And there is much more to come, including discussions and roundtables, sharing of additional research and insights, and articles that will shed still more light on the life, work and influence of John "Daddy" Holly, father of the Havre de Grace school of decoy making.

John “Daddy” Holly

Pioneer of the Havre de Grace Style

By Chad Tragakis



The Havre de Grace shoreline circa. 1890

Havre de Grace is one of the great waterfowling centers in the history of our nation. From time immemorial, the waters of the Susquehanna Flats, lush with aquatic vegetation, have played host to millions of migrating waterfowl. It's likely that the first duck decoys made for use off the shores of what would become Havre de Grace were crafted by a hungry and enterprising Susquehannock Indian, hoping to lure his next meal just a bit closer to his waiting arrow, net or trap. Fast forward a few hundred years and by the early 19th century, this great waterfowl resort gave rise to a cottage industry that would earn Havre de Grace the nickname of the decoy capital of the world.

If Havre de Grace, Maryland is indeed the “Decoy Capital of the World,” then its “First Family” would have to be the Hollys. For over a century, the Holly name has been synonymous with Upper Chesapeake Bay decoy making and waterfowling. John W. Holly, Sr. (1813-1892), best known to his family and the decoy collecting community as “Daddy” Holly, is arguably the earliest documented decoy maker from Havre de Grace.

Beginning with Daddy and continuing with his three sons: William Watson (1847-1925), James Thomas (1849-1935) and John W., Jr. (1851-1927), the four men were a decoy making dynasty of sorts. This dominance stretched from before the Civil War up into the early years of the Twentieth Century. Because of this extraordinary time-span, and the amazing output produced during it (in terms of both quantity and quality), Holly family decoys remain among the most historically and artistically important to collectors and historians today. Indeed, the Havre de Grace style decoy and the “school” of R. Madison Mitchell (1901-1993) owe everything to the Holly family and their legacy.

Family legend suggests that the Havre de Grace Hollys were of English and Welsh ancestry. According to historical records, Bernard Holly, possibly the first member of the family to arrive in Maryland, settled on the Eastern Shore in 1658. Some eighty years later, a William Holly appears on the 1740 roll of the Cecil County Militia. By the early 19th century, Daddy's family was settled in rural Harford County, in a small community south of Havre de Grace, where his parents owned a farm. He was born there on March 24, 1818.

Bill Mackey was among the first to mention Daddy Holly in the chapter on Maryland in his landmark 1965 book *American Bird Decoys*. Mackey writes: “A bayman about whom the older members of the Havre de Grace ducking fraternity always speak with reverence was “Daddy” Holly, who passed away when they were youngsters. Holly was an old man by the year 1900. He knew as much about the Flats and gunning as any man. His first rig could have been the decoys that set the traditional local style for the next century.”

Local historian and collector Evans McKinney was the first to provide detailed background on Daddy and his decoys, in his 1978 book, *Decoys of the Susquehanna Flats and Their Makers*. This was followed with additional insights a year later by Henry Fleckenstein in *Decoys of the Mid-Atlantic Region*. But it was C. John Sullivan Jr. and his extensive research published in a 1992 *Decoy Magazine* article that provided the best glimpse into Daddy's life and work. Since then, additional research has yielded still more about John Holly's life and times, his family, and his prowess with both shotgun and drawknife.



Little is known about Daddy's immediate family, but we know that he had an older sister, Susan, who married into the Mitchell family, and whose husband, Henry, was also related to decoy maker Richard "Dick" Howlett. He had another sister about four years younger, Hannah Holly, who married into the local Boyd family, another notable waterfowling clan. Born to a rural, working-class family in the early 19th century meant Daddy would have grown up fast. While it is unclear as to exactly when he settled in Havre de Grace, he was living there by the time he was a young man and he would spend the rest of his life in the small but bustling town. He likely had little formal education, but the waterfront was his classroom and the men he encountered there his teachers. He became quickly and intimately familiar with the Susquehanna Flats, its bounty and how it could provide a livelihood for him and the family he would soon have. Daddy married his sweetheart, Amanda Parsons, on April 20, 1846. Amanda was born in Cuba in about 1814, possibly to English parents living there at the time. We don't know for certain when she arrived in Havre de Grace or the circumstances that led her to meeting Daddy Holly. They had their first child, son William, a year later in 1847.

Daddy worked as a carpenter in the 1840s and 1850s and during this same period was actively working the water. He fished commercially in the spring and in the fall and winter, he gunned for the market and served as a guide for the wealthy visiting hunters, or "sports," who flocked to Havre de Grace from up and down the east coast. Undoubtedly, many of the ducks that fell to his gun ended up on his growing family's dinner table. It was around this time that John Holly earned the esteemed title of Captain, and was from then on known by and referred to by many in his circle as Capt. Holly.

Between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Susquehanna Flats was the place to be for American waterfowling – and there were, arguably, more decoys used there during this period than anywhere else in the country. Market gunners, "sports," and casual hunters all took full advantage of the abundance of waterfowl attracted to the wild celery, sago pondweed and redhead grass native

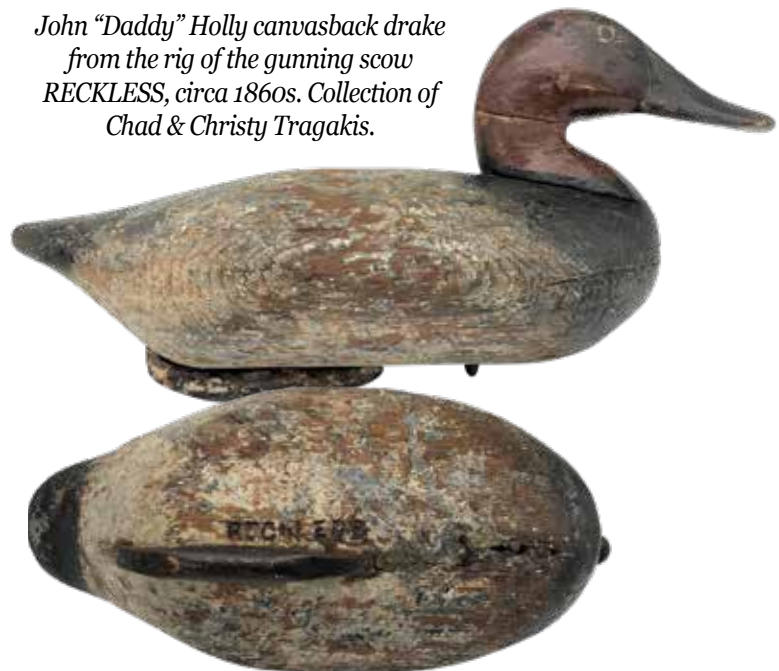
to the area. This ongoing and concentrated endeavor resulted in the deployment of approximately 75 sinkbox rigs (each using between 300 and 500 or more decoys) and over 50 bushwhack rigs (each using between 75 and 125 decoys). Still more decoys were used in conjunction with the area's many shore blinds. This amounts to a total of between 30,000 and 40,000 plus decoys – a fantastic demand by any calculation, but particularly great when one considers the hand-crafted nature of their production.

Familiar with their use and skilled of hand, John "Daddy" Holly stood ready to fill a large part of that demand. He probably made his first decoys in the 1830s or early 1840s for his own use and for sale to local gunners and guides. A wide variety of early brands have been found on the decoys he made, helping us further document and date their production and use. Over the years, his birds were rigged off of some of the Flats' most famous gunning scows including the Reckless, Widgeon, Canvasback, Susquehanna, North Carolina, Helen and Whistler; they were popular with renowned gunners from both sides of the Flats including Perry K. Barnes, Joseph H. Heisler and Robert M. Vandiver; and they were a particular favorite of many notable Upper Bay gunning clubs including the Carroll's Island Club, the Philadelphia Ducking Club and the Spesutia Island Rod and Gun Club.

By 1853, Daddy had already earned a reputation as one of the premiere gunners at the Head of the Bay. In Krider's *Sporting Anecdotes*, published in Philadelphia that same year, sporting goods purveyor John Krider recounts that: "Passing Havre de Grace, we found the duck shooters of that place already on the stir, and were successively hailed by Baird, Holly and other famous shots, who were preparing to drop down to their respective anchoring grounds."

Later in the same chapter, Krider writes: "Below Havre de Grace, on the western side of the swash, near Donahue's battery, is good canvass-back and red-head ground. About half a mile from the battery, to the eastward, Mr. Charles Boyd of Havre de Grace, killed one hundred and sixty-three canvass-backs, on the tenth day of November last,

*John "Daddy" Holly canvasback drake
from the rig of the gunning scow
RECKLESS, circa 1860s. Collection of
Chad & Christy Tragakis.*



and we have been assured that in the spring of eighteen hundred and fifty, the same famous duck-shooter killed two hundred and seventy-one canvass-back, and red-heads off the mouth of North-East river, three or four miles from the battery. On the same day on which Boyd killed his canvass-backs, near Donahue's battery, Mr. John Holly, another expert duck-shot, belonging to the same place, killed one hundred and nineteen of the same species on Devil's Island ; and it is said that several thousand ducks were brought into the town that day, by the different parties engaged in shooting on the flats."

The decoys that Krider writes about in this chapter of his book could well have been fashioned by Daddy's own hands. The widespread acclaim that came courtesy of Krider's book provided instant, nationwide celebrity for Daddy, and must have improved his guiding business. It didn't hurt his decoy business either. In fact, Daddy's decoys have turned up in early gunning rigs in some far-flung places – from New York and New England in the northeast to the Carolinas in the south, and in several mid-west states – all a testament to the seemingly national reputation that he and his decoys enjoyed.

Three more children were born to Daddy and Amanda – the aforementioned James and John, Jr. and a daughter in 1853, Amanda, named for her mother. Sadly, in the midst of so many things going so well for Daddy, he lost his wife in 1856, leaving him to raise four young children all on his own. Indeed, it was this tragic occurrence that may well be the genesis of John Holly's memorable and long-lasting nickname. Family and close friends are said to have referred to him as Daddy from that point on, though this moniker may also have been used as a means to distinguish John Sr. from John Jr.

It's not clear where Daddy and the children were living at the time of Amanda's death. Records indicate Daddy may have owned a home on Alliance Street by this time, but they may have been staying with relatives or renting an apartment in town. As C. John Sullivan theorizes, since many professional watermen lived on their boats year-round, this may have been the case with Daddy's family as well. Harford County Court records indicate that Daddy owned two boats around this period (the William W. Hopkins, and a sloop aptly named Jumbo), both spacious enough to provide comfortable accommodations for his growing family.

In 1866, Daddy moved his family into a large two-story house he purchased at 452 Alliance Street, where he would live for the rest of his life. At some point soon after, daughter Amanda was sent to live with Daddy's older sister Susan and her family, providing a more suitable and nurturing environment for a young lady than Daddy could give her. Though William was briefly married and had several children when he was a very young man, he and John, Jr., were essentially life-long bachelors. They lived with Daddy until 1881, when John, Jr. moved into the house next door. Notably, the Holly brothers' houses were immediately adjacent to the home of Sam Barnes, who lived just across Lodge Alley.

The demand for quality decoys continued as Daddy's sons reached adulthood, and naturally, Jim, William, and John, Jr. saw good reason to follow in his footsteps. The boys each pursued specialized



In 1866, Daddy moved his family into a large two-story house he purchased at 452 Alliance Street, Havre de Grace, MD where he would live for the rest of his life. The house, shown here in a recent photo, still stands.

vocations – for Jim, boatbuilding, for William and John, Jr., painting, wall-papering and wood-graining – but like so many men in Havre de Grace, it was hard to resist the pull of the water and the seasonal opportunities it afforded. This meant fishing, gunning, guiding and decoy-making. It's probable that the four worked together over the years (either regularly or at least occasionally), and it is therefore not surprising that many clearly Upper Chesapeake Bay decoys exhibit a mixture of accepted Holly "styles." Because of this, firmly differentiating the work of individual family members has been and remains to be problematic. McKinney, Fleckenstein and others agree that after Daddy passed, John, Jr. and William filled his remaining orders and effectively took over his decoy-making business. Experts disagree, however, as to whether or not William's and John, Jr.'s "styles" can be earnestly identified.

Daddy Holly applied for a Harford County waterfowl gunning license in 1872, the first year they were issued, and again up through at least 1883. Even as he was pushing 70, Daddy was as robust and active as any man working the Flats. His occupation in the 1880 Census is listed as "Gun and Fishing," reflecting his multi-season role as a waterman. Daddy Holly died on the afternoon of Monday, May 9, 1892 after a long illness. He was 74 years old, just five days away from his 75th birthday. He continued making decoys right up until the end of his life, though the older and infirm craftsman was ably assisted by his sons and most likely, by others who were hired to help out in his shop. His obituary in the Havre de Grace Republican notes that "his life was quiet and uneventful" and described Daddy as "an honest and upright man" who "enjoyed the confidence and respect of all." While his life may well have been "quiet," at least toward the end, for those of us who value and treasure his incredible decoys, we would argue that it was anything but uneventful.

A look through the major decoy reference books and old auction catalogs reveals that many different styles have been attributed to John “Daddy” Holly over the years. Daddy was making decoys by the 1830s or 1840s and he is thought to have made them well into the 1880s, so it’s natural that his style would change and evolve over those five decades.

Some decoys, those believed to be among his earliest, have short, relatively fat bodies of varying thicknesses, ranging in length from ten to eleven inches. Some of these ancient birds look almost blocky, with more pronounced chine lines and considerable angular sloping from the bottom up to the tail. A number of these early models exhibit shelf carving where the head is placed, a trait common on decoys from Cecil County on the other side of the Susquehanna Flats. The vast majority have no shelf carving, but simply a flat plane, often sloping slightly forwards, on which the heads are affixed to the body. Other decoys, believed to have been made a bit later, have slightly larger bodies but with the same basic dimensions – sturdy and squat, some exhibiting a downward slope to the back. Later decoys attributed to Daddy exhibit a longer and more streamlined style, with smooth rolling, rounder and less angular bodies. It is these decoys that come closest to what remains the traditional Havre de Grace or Harford County style, and are clearly the inspiration for the birds that Madison Mitchell would one day make famous.

There is an equal amount of variety found in the tail carving of decoys attributed to Daddy. Some of the early examples exhibit almost a paddle style tail, another carving characteristic most associated with the Cecil County school. Many feature tails that extend straight downward, with varying degrees of fluidity – from just the slightest hint of a downward curve, to a moderate, rounded sweep upwards, and then, on what are thought to be his latest decoys, a clearly pronounced upsweep to the tail.

There is still more variety when it comes to Daddy’s heads. Some feature a reared-back, “snaky” look that is very popular with collectors. Some have a meatier, compressed and hurried look to them while others, more carefully finished with precise carving and rounded bills look almost life-like. The most common style encountered has a shorter but nicely curved neck, a rounded, and from the side, somewhat rectangular head, and a relatively thick bill. Some have more of a pronounced bulge under the lower jaw than others and they exhibit varying degrees of slope at the back of the head.

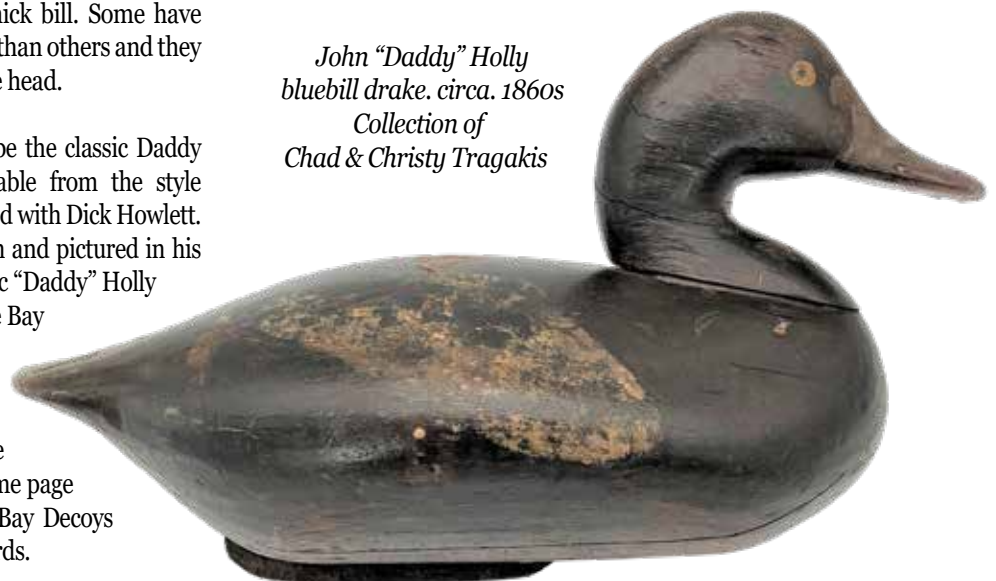
Interestingly, what many collectors consider to be the classic Daddy Holly style is, in most respects, indistinguishable from the style Mackey, McKinney and others have long associated with Dick Howlett. The Howlett canvasback in McKinney’s collection and pictured in his book, is virtually indistinguishable from the classic “Daddy” Holly can illustrated in Bobby Richardson’s *Chesapeake Bay Decoys: The Men Who Made and Used Them*, formerly in the collections of Art Patterson and Vance Strausburg. And a close look, for example, at the Holly and Howlett decoys from the Howard Foreaker collection – pictured on the same page of David and Joan Hagan’s *Upper Chesapeake Bay Decoys and Their Makers* – shows two nearly identical birds.

All of these decoys are completely handmade; chopped out with a hatchet and finished with drawknife, spoke-shave, wood rasp and carving knife. They are almost all on the smaller size, with well sculpted, squat bodies ranging in length from about eleven to twelve inches long, five and a half to six and a half inches wide, and three and a half to four and a half inches thick. Heads are about three inches tall, attached on a slightly downward angle with one long nail through the top and two smaller nails through the front of the neck. Additionally, Daddy is one of a handful of Upper Bay makers who are known, at least on occasion, to have driven a nail up into the head from the bottom before it was attached to provide additional stability in the event of neck cracking or breakage.

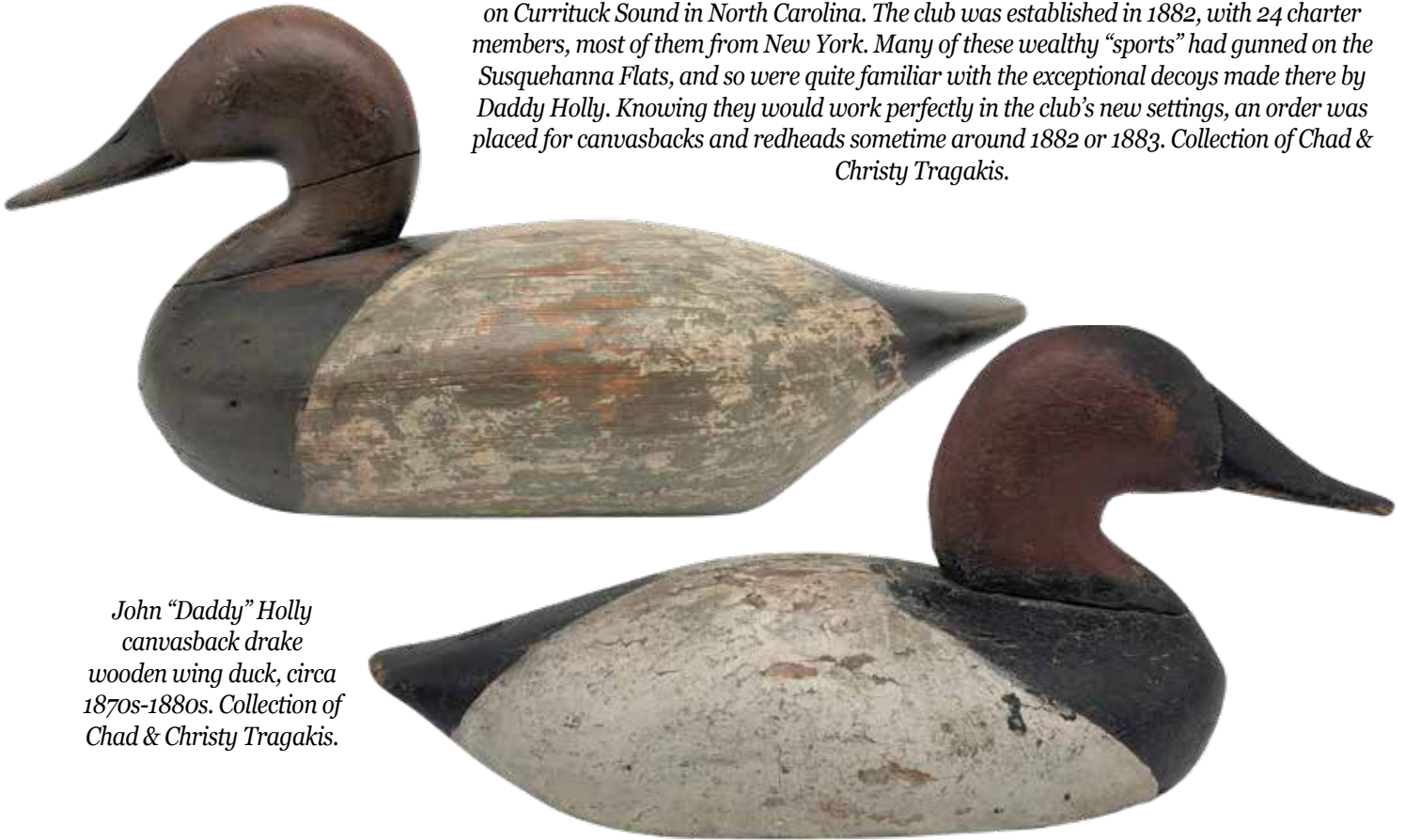
Both men made canvasbacks, redheads and bluebills. Additionally, Daddy made a small number of teal decoys. The mallards, black ducks, goldeneye and swan decoys that have been attributed to Daddy are more likely the work of one of his sons. Both Daddy and Dick are known to have made wooden wing-ducks, and iron wing-ducks cast on their patterns are found in collections today. Both Holly and Howlett decoys originally had rawhide leather line ties affixed with a nail and iron ballast weights. Some Daddy Holly decoys have been found with a variety of thin wooden keels running the length of the bottom. These may be original, but more likely were added later by hunters in response to local gunning conditions.

Both Daddy and Dick primed their decoys with a basecoat of white or gray lead paint and used simple paint patterns, typical of the period. Some very late original paint examples attributed to Daddy do feature full wing detail and feather patterns on both hens and drakes. Some of these, however, appear to be too late to have been made by either Daddy or Dick and are likely the work of one of Daddy’s sons. Most birds by Daddy and Dick have painted eyes. Some have no eyes and others have been found with tack eyes or impressed eyes that appear to be original. And while neither man is thought to have carved nostrils or lower mandibles into his bills, at least not routinely, examples featuring one or both are found from time to time.

*John “Daddy” Holly
bluebill drake. circa. 1860s
Collection of
Chad & Christy Tragakis*



John “Daddy” Holly canvasback drake from the rig of the Narrows Island Club, based on Currituck Sound in North Carolina. The club was established in 1882, with 24 charter members, most of them from New York. Many of these wealthy “sports” had gunned on the Susquehanna Flats, and so were quite familiar with the exceptional decoys made there by Daddy Holly. Knowing they would work perfectly in the club’s new settings, an order was placed for canvasbacks and redheads sometime around 1882 or 1883. Collection of Chad & Christy Tragakis.



*John “Daddy” Holly
canvasback drake
wooden wing duck, circa
1870s-1880s. Collection of
Chad & Christy Tragakis.*

Aside from the similarity in their decoys, it is easy to understand why McKinney’s supposition about Daddy’s influence on Dick may well be true. Dick was about 17 years younger than Daddy, but they ran in exactly the same circles and worked at precisely the same occupations—fishing, gunning, guiding and decoy-making. Distantly related through marriage (Daddy’s sister was Dick’s aunt), they were both life-long residents of the same small town, they lived fairly close to one another, both had sons in the boat-building business, and they died within 3 years of each other (Daddy in 1892, Dick in 1895). Both were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Havre de Grace, and both are buried at Angel Hill Cemetery – appropriately, overlooking their beloved Susquehanna Flats.

Given what we know about the frequent collaboration between and tight knit relationships among many early Susquehanna Flats decoy makers, it’s quite possible, perhaps even probable, that they worked together at some point. And as one of the earliest known makers in Havre de Grace, it’s not at all surprising that Howlett would have emulated Daddy Holly’s effective and pioneering style. McKinney goes on to note that “Some variations in the shape of the head is the only appreciable difference in their decoys and doubtlessly, many Holly decoys have been mistaken for Howlett’s and vice versa.” This observation by one of the foremost authorities on the subtle differences between the outputs of the Susquehanna Flats’ notable decoy makers is telling. For, if it was difficult for the learned McKinney to assign attribution with any certainty 50 years closer to the period when these decoys were made and used, it is even more difficult today.

Just as it is sometimes safest to ascribe certain birds as being made by “the Holly Family” instead of by a particular member, it may also be most accurate to attribute many of the birds we previously called Daddy Hollys to “Holly/Howlett.” There are still far more questions than answers, but through comparison, analysis and open-minded research, the careful study, supposition and discussion among collectors will most assuredly continue.

The lasting and unrivaled influence of the Holly Family, particularly of John “Daddy” Holly, on the development and design of the “Havre de Grace” or “Harford County” style decoy, has been, and remains to be, tremendous. Indeed, Madison Mitchell claimed to his biographers that his handsome birds were inspired not by the work of Sam Barnes, with whom he apprenticed in the mid-1920s, but by Daddy’s innovative style. And thus, through Mitchell, Daddy has influenced nearly every Havre de Grace decoy-maker in the generations since. His prowess with shot and shell are also the stuff of legend. Without question, John “Daddy” Holly will forever be remembered in the annals of American waterfowling lore.

Portions of this article were adapted from material previously published in Decoy Magazine and The Canvasback. The author wishes to thank the members of the Holly, Drennen and Howlett families he interviewed who were so generous with their time and information. Special thanks also to Henry Peden, C. John Sullivan Jr., Chris Nelson, Bill Cordrey, Kevin Peel, and the Historical Society of Harford County.



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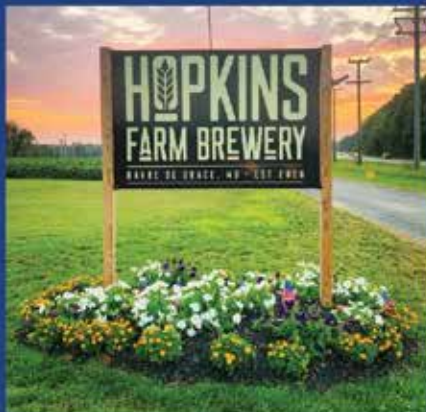
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Decoy Summer Camp

By: Mike Tarquini

Twenty-one elementary school children descended on the grounds of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum to attend a week's schedule of educational, public safety, and fun-filled events. The event was organized by Special Events Coordinator Dena Cardwell. Museum staff and volunteers entertained and educated our enthusiastic decoy campers for five days.

Aside from arts and crafts planned by the staff, Havre de Grace Police and Susquehanna Hose Company presented the campers with a safety message and spoke to them about staying safe. Volunteer John Popowski, a woodworker, demonstrated workshop safety. Harford Council President and Board member Pat Vincenti discussed the cultural heritage of waterfowling and decoy making on the famed "Susquehanna Flats". Willow Street, PA carver John Eichelberger demonstrated the art of painting decoys. Board

member John Hughes and Tom Trafton treated the campers to a session of bird watching along the waterfront. Lenny Burcham, a local decoy maker, demonstrated whittling. Havre de Grace Bee City / Pollinator Team provided insight on pollination. A museum scavenger hunt, always a favorite of visitors, was conducted inside the Decoy Museum when skies became threatening. A visit to Bomboy's Ice Cream brought smiles to everyone's face. Each of the campers received a camp bag that contained a camp shirt, water bottle, and other assorted goodies.

The Museum would like to thank Cabela's / Bass Pro Shops, Acer, APGFCU, PBI Restoration, Franks' Pizza, 7-11, Lloyd & Virginia Sanders, Herr's, Dr. David Jaffe, Vincenti Decoys, and Charles Jobes for their financial support of this event. Breakfasts and lunches were provided by Harford County Public Schools.

CHESAPEAKE BAY DECOYS

EXCITE THE CROWD IN THEIR DEBUT

By: Mike Tarquini



Several months ago, the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum was approached by Jack Graham, General Manager of the Aberdeen Ironbirds (Minor League High-A Affiliate) about having a theme night during the 2023 season where the team would be rebranded as the Chesapeake Bay Decoys, affording an opportunity to promote the museum and raise some money.

On June 16, 2023, the Chesapeake Bay Decoys took the field, as duck calls quacked loudly, against the Brooklyn Cyclones at Ripken Stadium in their new rebranded hats and uniforms at Leidos Field, Ripken Stadium.

Museum Board and Staff members handed out promotional literature and staffed a museum exhibit table at the main entrance where youngsters had a chance to spin a wheel for prizes. The game was competitive, remaining tied 1 - 1 throughout most innings. Brooklyn scored a run in the top of ninth inning threatening to steal the home team's thunder. However, the Chesapeake Bay Decoys answered the bell in the bottom of the ninth with a walk off win (3 - 2) exciting the crowd of nearly 4,000 on hand. All fans were treated to a fireworks show following the game.

A great experience for the Decoy Museum to partner with the Aberdeen Ironbirds for a fun-filled evening for all. A sincere thank you to the Aberdeen Ironbirds and Major League Baseball for this opportunity.



Mascott



Big Screen



Front Gate Promotion



Kids Try Their Luck at the Prize Wheel



Museum Table



Fireworks

Workshop Window

By Cindy Currier

In this installment of Workshop Window, we feature the workshop of carver, John Meredith and take a visual tour of his creative space. John's shop is located next to his home in Worton, Maryland on the eastern shore. He is self-taught and he has been carving since the age of 12 for 64 years. John's carving career started when he asked to go hunting with a group of men, and they told him that he had to make his own decoys!

John built his own shop, even the benches, which includes a contained, temperature-regulated paint room, complete with shelves. He makes many types of ducks and songbirds, for hunting, display and urns.

Please enjoy this photographic glimpse into John's workshop!





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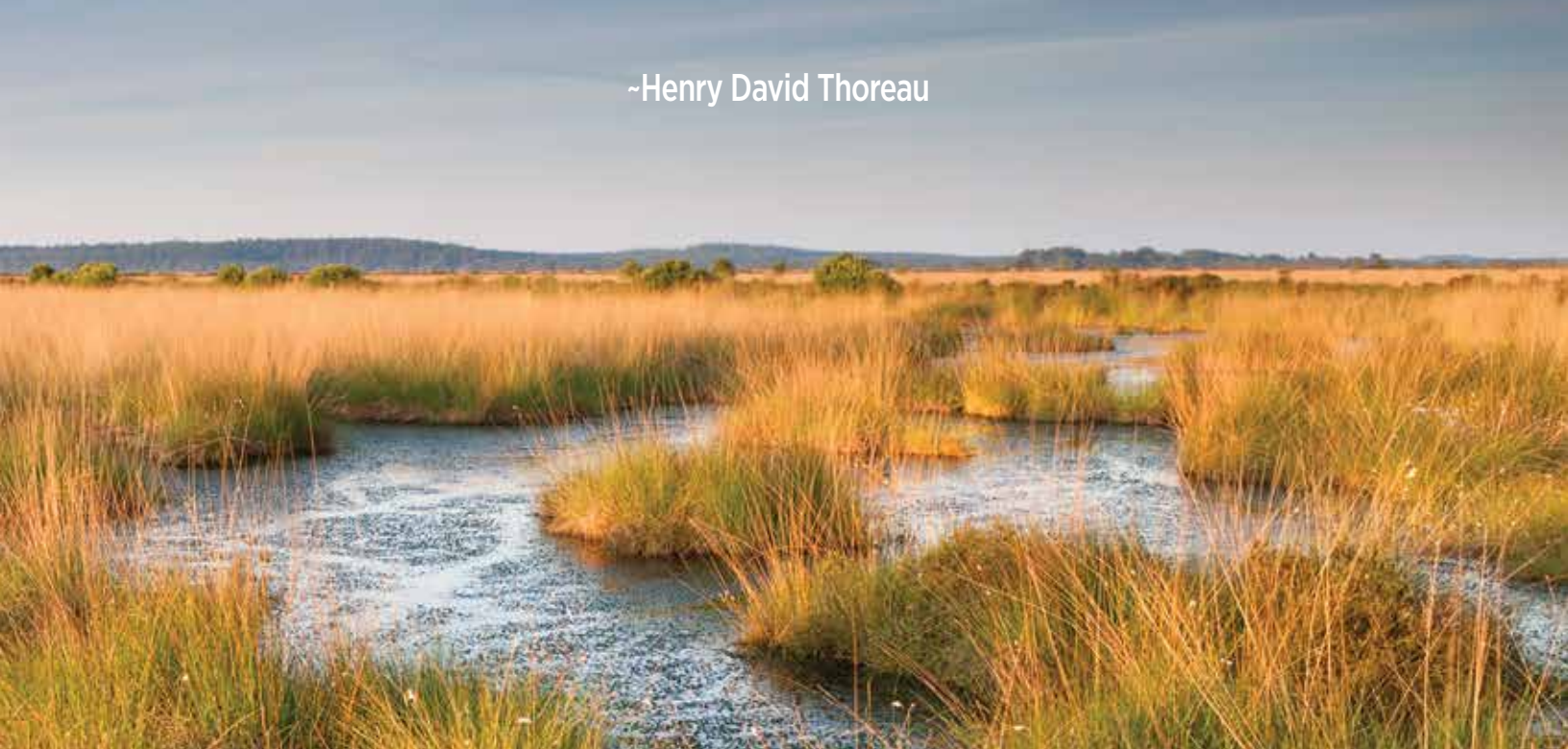
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Wetlands Reflections

By John E. Hughes, Jr.

“My temple is the swamp... When I would recreate myself, seek the darkest wood, the thickest and most impenetrable and to the citizen, most dismal swamp. I enter a swamp as a sacred place, a sanctum sanctorum... I seemed to have reached a new world, so wild a place, far away from human society. What’s the need of visiting far off mountains and bogs if a half hour walk will carry me into such wildness and novelty”.

~Henry David Thoreau



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.



Mangrove Tunnel

The air temperature is in the upper 60s, maybe low 70s. A northwest breeze of about 10-15 mph is blowing white cumulus cotton ball-like clouds across a background of cerulean blue sky. A vibrant green field of *Spartina patens* (salt marsh meadow grass) surrounds me in all directions as I lie prostrate on my back with my life jacket as a pillow for my head. A warm June sun is releasing solar energy which is being absorbed by me, the salt marsh, and nearby Chincoteague Bay's water. The meadow grass mat that I am laying on is relatively dry and very comfortable and is located only meters away from the shallow marsh gut I paddled up to get here. It was lined with *Spartina alterniflora* (salt marsh cordgrass) and very wet and muddy. My Worcester County topographical map reveals I have paddled from Chincoteague Bay, up Pikes Creek, across a large tidal pond, and I have rejoined Pikes Creek. The setting is hardly above 2-3 feet of sea level. If I were to stand at my present position, I could see Assateague Island to the east and looking to the west I would see loblolly pine forests on the upland of the bay's western shore. I'm in a transition zone between land and water, an ecotone, greatly impacted by the rise and fall of the tides. This is a wetland habitat known as a salt marsh and it is a critical habitat of natural value.

Lying quietly in the marsh, I can hear the breeze blowing through the grasses. I can also feel the grass brush the skin of my arms and legs, as well as my face. Fortunately, the breeze also keeps most of the greenheads and mosquitoes from offering to me their invitation to the marsh. I can hear the surf out in the bay as waves crash onto the shoreline and overhead a cacophony of birds call. I experience an organic smell of peat-like aroma as I breathe in. My eyelids respond to the brightness of the sun, by attempting to seal it off and allowing my mind to reflect on this small portion of wildness in the marsh. To me, marshes in particular and wetlands in general are just as majestic and beautiful to witness as are mountains for many. I can experience the "Rocky Mountain High" of others in this wet, tidal grassland and I am certainly sure it is not because of my great fear of heights. This wetland's wilderness I am now a part of lets me experience nature in a first-hand way just as hiking a mountain trail can do for others.

Paddling up the creek, I experienced the life found within it as well as in the adjacent marsh. Fiddler and purple mud crabs scurried up the detrital mud banks exposed by a dropping tide. Tidewater silversides and killifish exploded away from the bow of my canoe. Least terns and osprey plunged into the open water of the salt pond attempting to catch a meal. Snowy and great egrets speared passing fish, and glossy ibis probed the marsh substrate for invertebrates. Gulls cried overhead, willets rendered their famous p-willet, p-willet call, and marsh wrens trilled from the saltbush as my canoe passed. No, these were not observations of bighorn sheep, grizzly bear, or mountain lion, but they were exciting none-the-less. The wetland was the cradle that brought this diversity of life together into such a unique and dynamic habitat. As a naturalist, I was in awe.

My final thoughts during this wetland reverie were reflections on the very values of these habitats – the wildness they exhibit, their productivity, and their critical need for preservation. Unfortunately, these transitional habitats between water and land were historically considered as wastelands. They were drained, filled, and developed before their true wealth was revealed through contemporary ecological science. Over 50% of the wetlands that existed in America are gone and although challenges still exist, these critical habitats today have greater protection. My short communion with the salt marsh that day allowed me to re-reflect on their significance to me and our country and world as a whole. Awakening from my mental slumber, I realized it was time to return back to the canoe launch site and the realities of the "real" world. As I paddled, I openly sang Joni Mitchell's famous song "Both Sides Now" and agreed with her "I really don't know life at all." I'm still learning.

I'm paddling in a solo kayak through a twisted, interwoven gnarl of vegetation which forms a shaded tunnel on the East River, located south of Marcos Island and Everglades City in southwestern Florida during the winter of 1984. The dropping tide sends the boats through the forests toward Fakahatchee Bay and Island. The first night camping is on Fakahatchee Island and next day after a relatively short paddle, camping

will be done on Panther Key on the Gulf's coast. These two areas were made famous in Peter Mathiesen's trilogy "Killing Mr. Watson." The air temperature is in the upper 70s, the water temperature even warmer in the low 80s. The water is almost hypersaline and rarely deep. Wildlife abounds with bromeliads and fluttering perching birds throughout the vegetation, wading birds such as green herons, egrets, roseate spoonbills, and some wood storks feeding in the shallows and at the base of vegetation, fleeing fish, especially a large snook escaping downriver from the boat, and eventually dolphins and manatees in the bay's waters. Outside of the shade of the tunnels, full direct semi-tropical sun seems to drain energy and a constant squawking of all kinds of gulls, terns, osprey, is ever present. Paddling becomes more difficult as the bay's waters continue to fall and a southwest breeze blows in our faces. My fellow paddlers and I begin to sweat. Although a still closed horizon is in front, the large bay is very shallow and small waves begin to build. Fortunately, the weather remains good and the island destination is not too far off. By late afternoon all have arrived, the campsite has been cleared above possible high tide on a sandy berm, and a well deserved dinner has been started. There is a short time for exploration, and a Key Lime grove is discovered, which bears witness to historic efforts at agriculture. After a hardy dinner, the campfire is lit and reflections on the day begin. Focus is on how different this area is compared to Chesapeake habitats, how much wildlife is present, and how strenuous the paddle was. Before bed, under a starlit sky, telescopes are set-up and reveal the heavens as well as the only sighting most of the group and I will ever have of Haley's Comet. After I remove a scorpion from my shoes, I enter my tent, zip the insect netting, and sleep like a baby.

Next day, morning breakfast is followed by a much shorter jaunt through the open mangroves to Panther Key on the Gulf coast. Panther Key is not much more than a sand spit and swamp. A beautiful day with the campsite established just above high tide line, leads to relaxation and water recreation, canoe exploration and fishing, and self-inspection. A welcomed

supper is enhanced by beach-hopping amphipods which seem to love to swim in the butter of my baked potato and sprinkle onto and season my flamed-cooked steak.

The environment which has provided this remarkable trip setting is a critical type of wetland habitat known as the mangrove forest or swamp. This critical tropical wetland zone is very comparable to the salt marshes of the temperate zone. It performs almost all the same ecological services and has the same values as marshes, especially salt marshes. It is noted for building land and islands by capturing silt and detritus and building upward. It is also noted for the huge amount of detrital vegetation it generates. Just as when a human consumes a crab or shrimp, indirectly they are consuming marsh grass; the same can be said of mangrove leaves in this swamp. Chesapeake Bay bounty has a direct and indirect link to its wetlands. Florida's coastal and key bounty has the same linkage. Unfortunately for me, leading this group has left me little time for slumber reflection as my previous salt marsh reverie had enabled. I will, however, always remember the wake created by a large passing manta ray nearly capsizing the boats, a close inspection by passing bottle-nosed dolphins of my wife, Ann, and me and the manatees playing with my stern line as I paddled away from them. These are the types of memories experiential education can provide.

These two "vignettes," one of a near nap in a salt marsh and the other of a mangrove swamp canoe experience, occurred through close personal encounters with the wonderful and valuable habitats called wetlands. Although different upon first observation, the systems are really the same, just different in form.

A wetland can be considered a soft tract of wet land. In reality it is a transitional zone between land and water environments. It is an ecotone (*see Chart A*) between terrestrial and aquatic systems, building on silt

Okefinokee Swamp



deposition and declining on erosion. As such it is a dynamic system never the same and always becoming something else, never reaching permanence or a climax. An example of this flux are tidal wetlands that are either wet or dry depending on the rise or fall of the tide. Originally considered worthless, these areas today are recognized as one of the most biodiverse and highly productive natural environments on Earth (**see Chart B**).

Wetlands exhibit a variety of forms, but all wetlands reveal the presence of water at least part of the time, specific types of hygroscopic soils, and the presence of specific types of vegetation (**see Chart C**). The delineation of an area as a wetland must clearly reveal the presence of all three characteristics. Diversity of wetland types is a function of a wide variety of considerations such as tidal/non-tidal, saline/fresh, tropical/temperate, substrate type, land profile, water pH, trees/grasses, etc. Specific characteristics or combinations of those characteristics determine what type of wetland is present. The geographic location of a wetland area is also very significant in determining the type of wetland present. In the Chesapeake Bay area, for example, wetlands can vary from non-tidal freshwater marsh and swamp, to tidal freshwater marsh, to tidal salt marsh. In the bay region wetlands form in two particular areas; 1) the inside of meanders on coastal plain rivers and streams and 2) the river or stream mouths. At both areas, deposition of eroded materials occurs forming the substrate for the growth of wetland plants. Wetland types include:

- Swamps** - a flooded area of trees and/or shrubs (**see Photo 1**)
- Marshes** - a flooded tidal or non-tidal grassland and adjacent shrub community (**see Photo 2**)
- Bogs and Fens** - a sphagnum moss dominated, low oxygen, high pH “pond” (**see Photo 3**)
- Vernal ponds** - an ephemeral pond of spring lasting only a few weeks (**see Photo 4**)
- Prairie potholes** - a glaciated pond of the prairie region (**see Photo 5**)
- Mangrove swamps** - a tropical to semitropical flooded forest, usually tidal (**see Photo 6**)

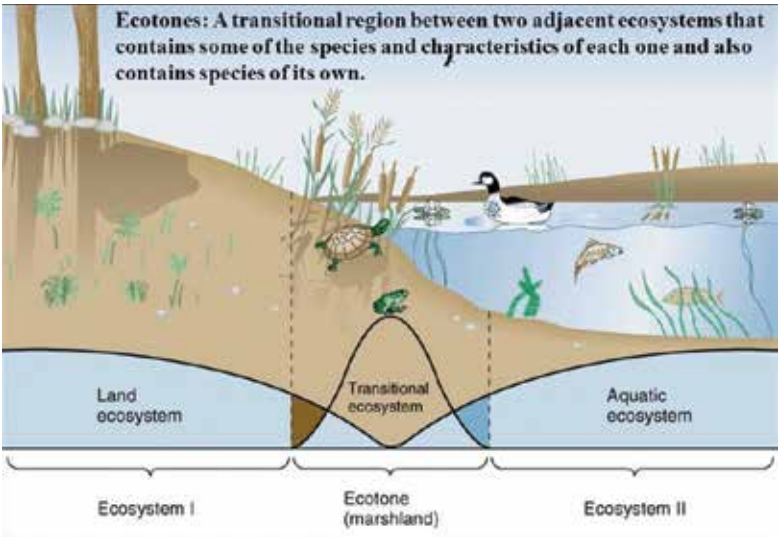


Chart A

Producer	Biomass productivity (gC/m ² /yr)	Total area (million km ²)	Total production (billion tonnes C/yr)
Swamps and marshes	2,500	5.7	14.25
Algal beds	2,000		
Coral reefs	2,000	0.28	0.56
Tropical rainforests	2,000	8	16
River estuaries	1,800		
Temperate forests	1,250	19	24
Cultivated lands	650	17	11
Tundras	140	11.5-29.8	1.61-4.17
Open ocean	125	311	39
Deserts	3	50	0.15

Chart B

Wetland Hydrology:	The presence of water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support wetland vegetation or aquatic life.
Hydric Soils:	Soils that form under conditions of saturation, flooding, or ponding long enough during the growing season to develop anaerobic conditions (no oxygen)
Wetland Vegetation:	Plants that are adapted for life in wet soils

Chart C



Photo 1: Swamp

Wetlands are found throughout the world and form critical habitats to the well-being of both natural and human communities. Wetlands perform a variety of ecological services. They also provide food, recreational, educational, and cultural developmental opportunities for man. Wetlands are:

- A direct food resource for wildlife and man
- An indirect food resource through detritus and the development of detrital food chains
- A habitat for cover, roosting, and nesting wildlife
- A nutrient and silt trap
- An erosion inhibitor and storm buffer
- A flood inhibitor
- A water purifier and sewage treatment plant
- A groundwater replenisher
- A climate change regulator through carbon storage
- A source of energy (e.g., peat)
- An area providing recreational (and sometimes commercial) opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping, birding, etc.
- An area which possesses unique intrinsic value and provides for educational and philosophical reflection.

Sadly, as significant as wetlands are, many are still lost to human development and “progress.” Historic loss has been well over 50% and even though a “no net loss” goal exists, wetland’s survival is challenged by agricultural expansion, resource exploitation (especially oil and natural gas), road and bridge construction, marina and resort development, etc. Through mitigation, some control of loss is possible, but protection must be strengthened. Today climate change is a great threat to coastal wetlands through rising sea levels which erode and submerge their presence.

The significance of wetlands cannot be understated. To fully appreciate their value, consider becoming more aware and appreciative of them. All of us in this area are but a short drive or in many cases, an even shorter walk to them. Try to reflect on your connection to them and our need to preserve them. For example, consider that there would be no need for a decoy museum anywhere without wetlands providing food and habitat to the world’s waterfowl. For me, a large part of my life’s most rewarding experiences would not have occurred without my interaction with wetlands.

“The swamp isn’t a useless piece of land. A swamp is a kind of wetland. Wetlands are important to humans.”

~Dae-Seung Yang; “The Salamanders Trial: A Wetland Story”



Photo 2: Marsh



Photo 3: Bogs and Fens



Photo 4: Vernal Ponds



Photo 5: Prairie Potholes



Photo 6: Mangrove Swamp

Wetlands



Tri-Color Herons
Deborah Blair

SHOTS From the Wild

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

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

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

American Bittern
Earl Blansfield



Wood Duck Family
Earl Blansfield



Clapper Rail
Deborah Moelhlmann



Glossy Ibis
Ralph Hockman



Greater/Lesser Yellow Legs
Marc Butt

Otter Family
Earl Blansfield



Great Blue Heron
Robert Bruch



Turtles
Robin Bell



Avocet
Scott Krieger

Green Heron
Patricia Hockman



Raccoon
Robert Bruch



Snapping Turtle
Ralph Hockman

Great Egret Family
Deborah Blair



Black-Necked Stilt
Scott Krieger

Decoy Club News

7th Annual Annapolis Decoy Show

By: Chad Tragakis



PDCA members David Farrow & Steve Dudley staff the club exhibit and stand ready to provide decoy identifications and appraisals.

The 7th annual Annapolis Decoy Show, sponsored by the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association was held on June 4. This year's attendance exceeded that of any previous show and those present estimate a crowd of well over 400 people. From the show's opening, it was difficult to navigate through the aisles.

One of the hallmarks of the Annapolis show is the focus on public education. PDCA continues to make the show completely free for attendees, and makes a point to provide free tables for institutions committed to preserving decoys and their history, including the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum and the Upper Bay Museum exhibited. PDCA also features special educational exhibits, and this year, Drew Hawkins prepared a display of decoys, decoy makers and gunning clubs of the Potomac River.

Since the show's inception, PDCA and Decoy Magazine have offered free, informal decoy identification and valuation and there was a steady stream of pieces brought in throughout the day. While the event was jam packed until about noon, dealers and attendees had a chance to catch up with friends, meet people they had previously only known online, and share news and collecting updates with each other. The social aspect and networking opportunities are popular parts of this show.

The 50 exhibitors offered a great assortment of decoys and related items including flat art, books, licenses, shell boxes, fishing lures, knives, advertising, and ephemera. There were outstanding options for every decoy collector and nice examples available in all price ranges. For more information on the PDCA or next year's Annapolis Decoy Show, contact chad.tragakis@gmail.com.

ECDC Hosts Another Successful Event

By: Mike Tarquini



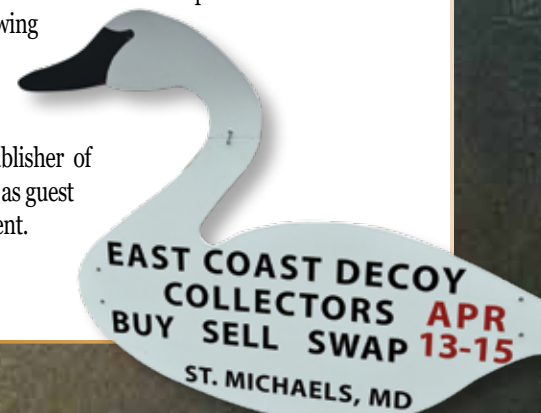
Chuck Usilton displays items for sale in his hotel room during the event.

It's the spring of the year, and along with the coming of flowers comes the East Coast Decoy Collectors Club (ECDC) event in St. Michaels, MD. Hosted at the St. Michael's Motor Inn on April 13-15, the ECDC event is best described as a club of clubs with memberships from the Delaware Valley Decoy Collectors Association, Delmarva Decoy Collectors Association, Upper Bay Decoy Collectors Club, Potomac Decoy Collectors Association, New Jersey Decoy Collectors Association, Long Island Decoy Collectors Association, Thousand Islands Decoy Collectors Association, and Palmetto State Decoy Collectors Association. The annual event is put on by ECDC President Kevin Peel.

Event attendees are treated to a variety of decoys and collectibles contained in each hotel room along the ground floor of the hotel. The ECDC event has become such a tradition that the club has had to implement a hierarchy system to assign rooms for each year's gathering. Although decoy talk and sales is the main objective, this event provides a great opportunity to catch up with most east coast members of the decoy industry.

The ECDC provides a fantastic hospitality effort for all club members. There is an informal dinner event on Saturday evening which gets most exhibitors in the same room for fellowship. The PDCA conducts a meeting following dinner and invites all attendees to show off their old decoys.

This year, Joe Engers, Publisher of *Decoy Magazine*, served as guest speaker for the PDCA event.



UPCOMING DECOY SHOW INFORMATION

September 9, 2023

5th Annual Charlie Joiner Memorial Decoy Show

Galena Volunteer Fire Company
Galena, MD
Allan Schaubert (410) 708-7011

September 16, 2023

Delmarva Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show

East New Market Volunteer Fire Hall
East New Market, MD
Burt Campbell (302) 750-0248
Joe Engers (302) 644-9001

September 23-24, 2023

Old Time Barnegat Bay Decoy & Gunning Show

Tip Seaman County Park, Tuckerton Seaport
Tuckerton, NJ • Info: Call (609) 971-3085

October 21, 2023

Upper Shore Decoy Show

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

November 10-12, 2023

Easton Waterfowl Festival

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

February 24, 2023

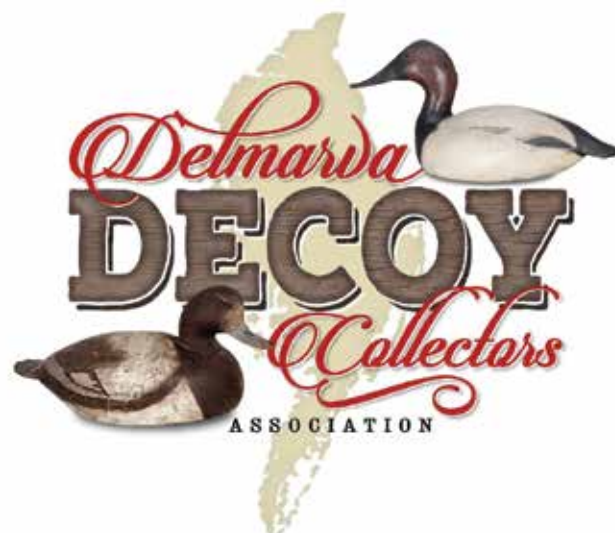
3rd Annual Jim Pierce Sportsman & Decoy Show

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

May 4 & 5, 2023

42nd Annual Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival

S.T.A.R. Centre • Havre de Grace, MD
Info: Mike Tarquini (410) 459-8487



4th Annual Delmarva Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show

SAT., SEPT. 16, 2023
8 A.M. - 3 P.M.

Vintage & Contemporary Decoys

Guns • Ammunition • Fishing Lures
Rods & Reels • Books • Shell Boxes • Oyster Cans
Powder Tins • Hunting & Fishing Liscences
Knives • Folk Art • Flat Art
Advertising and More!

East New Market Volunteer Fire Hall

4020 East New Market Bypass
East New Market, MD 21631

For information, call:

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or Joe Engers • 302-644-9001

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Many Thanks

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