

Our April 2016 Show will feature Minnesota decoys such as this bluebill by Ole Gunderson of Ashby



## 50th Anniversary Show a Huge Success!

The last full week in April is always a special time for collectors at the North American Vintage Decoy and Sporting Collectibles Show. In this, the 50th year of this event, few left disappointed. Dealers enthusiastically reported strong sales while buyers left with bags under their arms and smiles on their faces.

Room-to-room trading saw many decoys trade hands with a number of new offerings that had been in collections for years. For example, Rick and Georgia Hill of Redmond, Oregon, made the long drive to St. Charles with an outstanding group of Canadian decoys - great examples by Orel LeBoeuf, Bill Cooper, Geo. Warin, the Nichol family, William Hart, and many more. It didn't take long for the word to spread and they were soon overwhelmed with many interested buyers.

The annual Guyette & Deeter auction did not disappoint with one of the broadest array of good decoys seen in years. Decoys from Illinois, Louisiana, California, Michigan, Wisconsin, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Ontario all

brought strong prices throughout the two-day sale.

The tabled event in the MegaCenter continues to offer a range of "goodies" for every taste. And this year the displays and related educational events were the talk of the weekend. The show featured Ohio Decoys (preceded by a terrific seminar on Ohio decoys and other sporting collectibles), Michigan Fish Decoys, Contemporary Fish Decoys, Wisconsin Gunning Boxes, and 30 years of work by one of today's top contemporary makers, Marty Hanson.

The pages that follow will cover the wonderful pieces that were shared with attendees at the show, many of which have not been seen outside of private collections in many years.

For a video tour of the Show, check out two great pieces online: ***More Than Ducks*** at Tim Speight's "The Decoy Shed" at [thedecoyshed.org](http://thedecoyshed.org); and ***ASO 5-30-15 Decoy Show In St. Charles, IL*** on YouTube, produced by Harry and Cathy Canterbury at Adventure Sports Outdoors.



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# MIDWEST DECOY COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

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## WHO WE ARE

The **Midwest Decoy Collectors Association** is a nonprofit, educational organization incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois. It invites membership to all persons. The purpose of Midwest Decoy Collectors is to foster the hobby of decoy collecting by attracting new collectors, seeking out and preserving old decoys, gathering data about carvers and their methods, and holding an annual show for decoy collectors and carvers.

## OUR HISTORY

The **Midwest Decoy Collectors Association** (MDCA) was started in 1966 by a small group of dedicated decoy collectors as a gathering in Ottawa, Illinois to reconnect, share stories and trade decoys. Since then, the Club has grown to over 1000 enthusiasts from all walks of life. Our members come from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, three Canadian provinces, England, Switzerland, Japan and Mexico. They write books on collecting, manage auction companies, publish magazines, carve world class decoys, calls and collectibles, provide appraisal services, and form a core network of knowledge on sporting collectibles and their history. That humble gathering of collectors in 1966 has grown to become the **North American Vintage Decoy and Sporting Collectibles Show** – the largest show of its kind. The annual show features room-to-room trading, a tabled show and a major decoy auction in addition to a variety of networking events and educational activities including seminars, displays and carving demonstrations. The show is attended by collectors, antique dealers, carvers, sportsmen, nature enthusiasts and others who come from all over the United States and Canada.

## WEBSITE

[www.midwestdecoy.org](http://www.midwestdecoy.org)



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

**Our 2015 show was a tremendous success thanks to the hard work of many.** We accomplished a significant amount this year which culminated in our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary event. We have made significant investment in upgrading everything that we do and it is paying dividends with more member activity and new members.

### **One of our key objectives was to be more inclusive and approachable.**

We have expanded our display areas at the show to include wildfowl and fish decoys, both vintage and contemporary, and this year had another hit with shooting boxes. In 2016 we will feature Minnesota wildfowl and fish, continue with shooting boxes, and add shell boxes with their wonderful graphics to the mix. Don't miss it!

**Our show venue is a challenge.** Most of you are very aware that Pheasant Run has gone through a lengthy bankruptcy process and it has created a number of issues for us. This year was no exception and we appreciate the patience that you have shared during this transition. The new owners have been focused on creating a long term position and plan for the property. That plan is firming up and includes the elimination of a number of wings that have been a big part of our selling areas since 1984. We are in discussion with them about how we can reconfigure and still support your top priorities of room-to-room trading, the exhibit hall event, and the auction in the revised facility. The social part of St. Charles is important to all of us and we are determined not to lose it. We are exploring a number of options to ensure that the 2016 show meets our diverse needs. Suffice to say, there will be significant change next year and we'll

need everyone's support to successfully run the event. We hope to be able to communicate the plan to you very soon.

**It is my pleasure to announce that Joyce Hay, Matt Downs and Larry Osentoski have joined the Association leadership team and have already made important contributions.** Joyce is focused upon our communications, Matt on St. Charles and our facilities, and Larry is handling all of our tech tools and systems. Thanks to them for stepping up to volunteer. It has already made a big difference.

**We have invested a lot of effort to qualify and identify a bigger audience and now have a list of over 5,900 collectors with validated postal addresses.** We are using this for our outreach for new members, and to communicate details about the show and the value of membership. This has already resulted in several collections coming to St. Charles to be sold. Our inquiry rate is up and identification activity from the web and Facebook is increasing.

**The newsletter content and frequency is improving and now includes some ads to help us pay for the outreach for new members.** A special thanks to our supporters. They have made an important contribution to our future.

**I would be remiss if I didn't commend Joyce and Jeff Hay, Marty Hanson, Roger Ludwig, Jim Wierzba and Tom Shumaker for the great work that they contributed to make our 50th show very special. Make sure you thank them, too.**

**Happy Collecting and enjoy a terrific summer!**

*Rick*  
Rick Sandstrom





## THE 2015 SHOW





# Ohio Seminar and Decoy Display

By Joyce Hay

Jeff and I were excited to celebrate the decoys and other sporting collectibles from the state of Ohio at this year's show. In addition to assembling the annual member display, we began with a "standing room only" seminar that included a broad discussion of the great hunt clubs that dotted the Lake Erie shores, accompanied by many examples of the area's best decoys, folk and sporting art. We love our Ohio heritage and enjoyed showcasing the decoys and clubs that define it.

**Frankly, we learned so much more about our collection preparing for the seminar;** diving deeper into the biographies of the decoy owners provided meaningful context to appreciate the birds, the majority of which remain the works of unknown carvers.

**We couldn't have asked for a more supportive turn-out for a morning seminar.** To our great surprise, research phone calls and pre-show press releases prompted several special guests to attend. We were privileged to have the insightful commentary of Robert Meeks, Ph.D Biologist and former Superintendent of the Winous Point Shooting Club from 1966 to 1982. He made the trip in from North Dakota. Chicago-area resident, Kim Klopping, whose ancestor, Conrad, was one of the carvers profiled during the seminar attended with his wife and shared more colorful details about the carver/hunter that will be added to his biography. And we always enjoy the lively conversation with Ron Sharp around the Petersen-Dodge-Mason evolution that is clearly displayed in Lake Erie decoys.

**We take this opportunity again thank the people who brought in some of the key pieces of the display.** Most of the fine art displayed was provided by Bob Burger and one from Greg Mackey. Decoys displayed included those from the Downs, Hanson, Juhasz, Sieger, Staab and Wierzba collections. Dick McIntyre shared an outstanding Ohio turtle confidence decoy.



**The 32-page booklet that was given to attendees is now available online to MDCA members.** If you have any questions, comments, corrections or additions, feel free to contact us through the association or our contact information on the booklet's back page. We know that our presentation was part of an ongoing conversation as the body of research grows. We reiterate our thanks to those who nurtured our decoy collecting interests. Their knowledge and years of experience humble us.

**We encourage fellow members to consider being part of future seminars and displays.** A lot of hard work goes into it, but you will get great support, encouragement and technical assistance from the association.



*Drake Mallard ca. 1880,  
Winous Point Shooting Club*



*Drake Bluewing Teal ca. 1870,  
Ottawa Shooting Club*





*Petersen Mallard ca. 1880,  
Winous Point Shooting Club*



*Black Duck ca. 1880, Winous Point Shooting Club*



*Black Duck, ca. 1870,  
Winous Point Shooting Club*



*Canvasback ca. 1880,  
E.G. Gardiner*



*Coot ca. 1880, Winous Point Shooting Club*



*Petersen Mallard ca. 1880, Philadelphia  
School Paint, Winous Point Shooting Club*



*Black Duck ca. 1860,  
Winous Point Shooting Club*



*Canvasback ca. 1880, Winous Point Shooting Club*



*Canvasback Sink Box Decoy,  
Fred Harris, Winous Point Shooting Club*



*Greenwing Teal Drake ca. 1870,  
Ottawa Shooting Club*



*Mallard Pair "Fat Bills" ca. 1900, Unknown Carver*



*Bluebill Drake ca. 1880,  
Winous Point Shooting Club*





# Fish Decoy Display

## Vintage Michigan Fish Decoys — *Make a Big Splash*

While our first-ever spearing fish decoy in 2014 was national in scope, this year's display featured vintage decoys carved exclusively by Michigan makers including Oscar Peterson, Hans Janner and Al Trombley among many others. The display included nearly 100 examples of the finest fish decoys from collections across the country. Contributing members included Bill McMaster, Dick Walters, Tom Shumaker, Joe Tonelli, Jim Wierzbza, Jeff Hay, Paul Haudrich, and Jack Wilkie.



7" Trout 1930s, Louis Grunda



7" Brook Trout 1930s, Jim Nelson



12" Bass 1930s, Jim Kelson



12" Trout 1940s, Gordon Pecore Fox



6" Sucker, Bud Stewart



9" Herring 1920s, Bert Winnie



5" Trout 1930s, Woodward Viehl



12 & 1/2" Trout 1950s, Harold Rickert



8" Brown Trout 1940s, Oscar Peterson



Perch, Tom Singleton



Joined Trout 1980s, Bud Stewart



7 & 1/4" Dace 1920s, Paw Paw Factory



4 & 1/2" Frog 1940s, John Shaeffer



10" Walleye 1940s, Oscar Peterson



6" Trout 1930s, Jesse Ramey



14" Brook Trout 1980s, AJ Downey



7 & 1/2" Trout 1950s, Kenneth Bruning



12" Walleye 1950s, Hans Janner, Jr.

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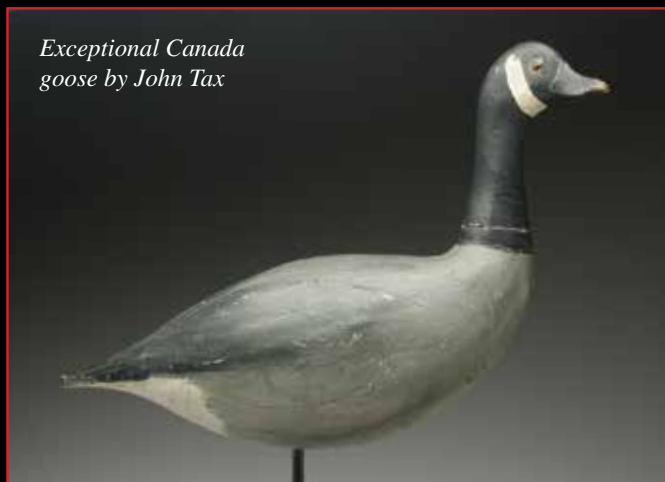
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# Contemporary Fish Decoys

## Exceptional Pieces at Reasonable Prices

On the southern wall of the Mega Center in April a display case held sixty-six of the most amazing contemporary fish decoys, most with strong Michigan connections. This special collection was compiled and organized by MDCA member Thomas E. Shumaker of Sturgis, Michigan. The display consisted primarily of Shumaker's collection but included excellent pieces from MDCA members Jim Szabo and Phil Jones.

Shumaker wanted to draw attention to contemporary fish decoys as a sound way for young collector's to acquire exceptional pieces at reasonable prices. From contemporary ...to vintage ... to antique; carvings fall on a continuum and appealing decoys will appreciate over time. Young collectors will learn to appreciate that fish decoys have a broad range of forms and styles, from those that exhibit painstaking detail and accurately reflect the bait that the prey eats, to those that display bright colors that mesmerize the fish long enough for the fisherman to strike with his spear.

Though difficult to pare it down to just three, Shumaker believes that the work of contemporary carvers Sonny Bashore, A.J. Downey and Carl Christiansen deserve special attention.

World Champion carver Sonny Bashore of Paulding, Ohio brings a level of realism that few other artists can achieve. He is a third generation carver who took the anatomical expertise he gained working at state DNR offices in Ohio and Indiana after he returned home from the Korean War in 1954, and translated that knowledge into works of art. Bashore is also an accomplished duck decoy maker and wildlife artist, having won both fish and duck stamp competitions.

Andrew J (A. J.) Downey Sr. (b. 1944) is from Newberry, Michigan. He has been part of the Newberry area fish carving and spearing community that goes back over 50 years. His son is also carrying on the tradition with his own world-class fish decoys.

Carl R. Christiansen (b. 1958), is the latest of the great Newberry area carvers. His fish decoys (marked with his "CC" brand) and folk art carvings are among the most sought after sporting collectibles available today. In addition to fish decoys, Christiansen creates fish plaques and fish vases that rival the famous work of Oscar Peterson.

Shumaker notes that while Cadillac, Michigan may be best known as the home of Oscar Peterson, his work spawned a robust school of fish decoy making. The best known among these was James "Jim" Nelson (1926-2013), who carved with Oscar and employed some of his unique carving techniques in his own work. Tom included a signed brook trout by Nelson, dated 4/93, and several other examples from this carving school in the display, including one by Nelson's 11 year old grandson.

To learn more about collecting fish decoys, Shumaker has several recommendations: ***Top of the Line Fishing Collectibles*** and ***Fish and Fowl Decoys of the Great Lakes*** by Donna Tonelli; ***Great Lakes Decoy Interpretations*** by Gene & Linda Kangas. Additionally, Dick Walters produced a booklet to accompany a 2012 exhibit in Philadelphia, ***Hooked on Wood: The Allure of the Fish Decoy***. Copies of these publications can be purchased from the authors or by contacting book vendor Dean Dashner, owner of **Hunting Rig Books**, who is a regular at shows throughout the Midwest.



Darter, Sonny Bashore, ca. 1990



Rainbow Trout, Mark Bruning, 1998



Trout, Steve Peltier, 1992



Jointed Frog, Reg Birch, 2014



Panfish, Marcel Meloche, 1995



Panfish, Leonard Nelson, 1998



# Member Profile — A Brief Collecting History

*Editors Note: In the midst of assembling the contemporary fish decoy display, we took a moment to chat with Tom Shumaker about his long collecting experience.*

## The Honorable Thomas E. Shumaker

Judge Shumaker started collecting duck decoys about thirty years ago as a diversion from the rigors of his career as a Probate Judge which included occasional District and Circuit Court assignments. He was, and continues to be, full of energy that needed an outlet. He found it in 1988 when he had just won a tough primary election. Feeling confident going into the general election, he and his wife took off on a classic bed & breakfast fall excursion to New England. While in Bar Harbor, Maine he came across a pair of dove decoys in an antique store. He brought them out to the car and his wife, Judy, looked at them approvingly, saying that they were “cute.” No need for deliberation, the verdict was in and the Shumaker collection began.

Soon a friend, Hal Kemp, invited him to the Midwest show which was held in Oakbrook at the time. There, he met collectors like Ontario’s Paul Brisco and became engrossed by the history and heritage behind that region’s particularly fine decoys. Even today he looks at many Canadian decoys with a feeling akin to a grade school crush.

He quickly took the advice of seasoned collectors and chose to focus his collection. Carver Ben Schmidt (1884-1968) from Centerline, Michigan became the primary object of his decoy

hunt and for nearly a decade he acquired the best examples he could afford. All the while Judge Shumaker did his due diligence, researching and writing all that he could about Schmidt and his decoys, which dated back as early as 1914. All of this culminated in articles in *Decoy Hunter Magazine* and *Wood ‘n Water*.

After a decade, Judge Shumaker “hit a wall” and became open to more diverse collecting possibilities, including spearing fish decoys. Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota have the deepest traditions of fish decoys in North America and Judge Shumaker was quickly hooked. Ohio dealer, Bob Burger knew that the Judge was eager to acquire spearing decoys and came across a gentleman wanting to liquidate a collection of 128 fish. Judge Shumaker bought them all! Another more experienced collector and friend, Art Kimball helped sort through those fish, buying a handful that suited his collection. Shumaker had covered his cost and came away with an impressive array of quality fish decoys.

The legendary Michigan carver, artist, biologist, hunter and fisherman Jim Foote was another mentor who provided the Judge with many decoys, paintings and other one-of-a-kind wildlife carvings. This special relationship continued until Foote’s death in 2004. Since that time, Tom has sought out and accumulated additional pieces done by Foote along with a vast collection of documents. With the help of MDCA member and friend Len Carnaghi, he is working on a biography to help future collectors understand the multi-talented man.



Carl R. Christiansen Cutthroat



AJ Downey Dolphin Nose Sucker



Jim Pulley Brook Trout



Harley Regan Walleye



John Fairfield Brook Trout



Jim Nelson Brook Trout

# Contemporary Corner

## Master Carver Marty Hanson — *Three Decades of Decoys and Folk Art Thrill the Crowd*

With over 150 pieces on exhibit, this year's exhibit of long-time MDCA member and Minnesota native Marty Hanson's work was truly a sight to behold. The display included a wide range of items including decoys from Marty's personal rig, dead mount carvings, standing decoys, duck calls, fish decoys, and other outstanding work. One of our favorites was his patriotic carved eagle with "Live Free Or Die" banner.

First commissioned to carve an entire hunting rig for a friend's hunting club in his teens, 30 years later Marty is considered one of the top contemporary carvers in the business.

Hanson has carved thousands of decoys, all hollow white cedar and painted with oils.

His decoys have also been used as a pattern for commercially made "Final Approach" brand decoys sold in sporting goods stores and catalogs nationally.

For an inside look at the man and this once-in-a-lifetime exhibit, check out the You Tube video "Marty Hanson Interview April 2105." Thanks to Tim Speight of The Decoy Shed for putting together this great piece.







## Contemporary Carvers Demonstrate their Great Talent

The show this year featured both the work of some of the country's best makers and demonstrations of how they are made. Gene Everett and Pat Gregory demonstrated carving techniques and Geoff Vine did a painting demonstration. Exhibitors for the display were: Phil Babe, Dan Bruffee, Gene Everett, Pat Gregory, Gregg Guthrie, Ben Heinemann, Jody Hillman, Tom Humberstone, Preston Lowe, Lenny Maiorano, Pat Meneely, Tim McEntire, Steve Quiram, Bill and Matt Spielman, and Bill Thumm.





# Gunning Box Display

## *Demonstrates Hunter Creativity and Ingenuity*

At this year's show, MDCA Board Member, Roger Ludwig brought together a fantastic grouping of old gunning or shooting boxes from his own and other member collections. These vintage boxes are typically native to Wisconsin (often referred to as "Lake Poygan Shell Boxes").

While each reflects the individual maker's particular needs, they are generally a combination of a shell box that carries shells, gloves, matches, and any other necessary gear PLUS a cradle for protecting the hunter's shotgun. These boxes were often made of re-purposed wooden shell boxes, but were also constructed

of metal. Many had cubbies for thermoses and other specific tools of the trade. Some were also designed to serve as seats. These were truly creative and ingenious solutions to the problem of managing all of the necessary hunting paraphernalia without it ending up in the mud or water.

This display featured mostly boxes by unknown makers, but also included famous Wisconsin decoy maker Gus Moak's personal gunning box, as well as boxes by Aloysius Weygand and A. "Pappy" Rodler.



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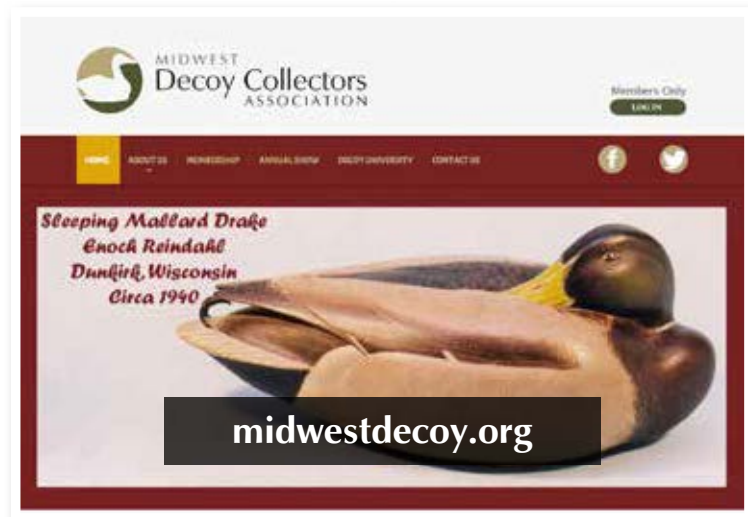
\*Top priced decoy lots sold at auction since 2009 as reported by *Decoy Magazine*



Augustus "Gus" Wilson  
South Portland, ME, c. 1900

## New Website, Online Registrations Off to a Great Start

As you should know by now, the club launched a new website in January to provide a number of tools to enhance your membership experience, attract new members and to help the club to operate more efficiently. Early reaction has been overwhelmingly positive!



### Email Communication Improves Effectiveness and Reduces Club Costs

The new system has already allowed us to communicate more frequently and effectively with those members for whom we have an email address in the club database. During the pre-show period this year we sent a number of timely and important email messages about the show agenda, registering for tables, and dues – all at no cost. So, if you have an email address and haven't provided it to us, please do so that we can continue to communicate important club news to you on a timely basis. Just add it to your online account profile, or send it directly to Jeff Seregny at [jseregny@gmail.com](mailto:jseregny@gmail.com).

### Members Only Facebook Group Offers a Secure Way to Buy / Sell / Trade



Our Members Only Facebook community is growing every day and is proving to be a safe place for our members to share their collections, get help identifying “unknowns,” as well as to buy and sell. If you are on Facebook, be sure to full take advantage of this member benefit. Go to the “Midwest Decoy Collectors Association (Members Only)” Facebook page and request an invitation. (Your dues must be current to participate.)

### New Website Content Added Monthly

One of the important components of the club's mission is to support this great hobby through education and information. We continue to add new information to the site in the form of articles, pictures and videos. So, keep checking back so you don't miss a thing!

### Set Up an Online Account to Take Full Advantage of Your Member Benefits

Over 300 Members have already registered and are enjoying the online tools (Searchable Directory, Dues Payment & more) offered exclusively to members. To join, just follow these simple steps:

- 1 Go to the [midwestdecoy.org](http://midwestdecoy.org)
- 2 Click on the Members Only Login button on the upper right hand side of the Home page. This will take you to the “Member Login” page.
- 3 Click on “Click Here” in the first line that reads, “If you have not already set up an online account “click here” to register.”
- 4 Follow the simple instructions from there to completion.

Annual membership dues are payable January 1 of each year. If you are not paid up through 2015, before gaining access you will be asked to pay using the online payment tool. You can use a credit or debit card, or even PayPal.

**If you have any questions regarding registration or online dues payment, contact Jeff Seregny at [jseregny@gmail.com](mailto:jseregny@gmail.com) or at 586-530-6586.**





## MDCA Membership has its Privileges — *Join Today!*

If you are not currently a member of the Midwest Decoy Collectors Association, you are missing the many benefits that our members enjoy, including:

- Being part of, and having access to, the largest decoy and sporting collectibles community in North America
- Our Member Directory in print form as well as an online searchable version
- Full subscription to our three times per year club newsletter

- Free entry to our annual show with seminars, displays, walk-in auctions, and networking events
- Access to the Members Only Facebook group where you can share decoy stories, get help with ID, and buy, sell and trade with other members in a secure environment



**All this for only \$25 a year (or \$70 for the more efficient three year option)! To join, go to [midwestdecoy.org](http://midwestdecoy.org) or mail in the application form.**

**If you join now, your membership will be good through 2016! That's nearly half a year free! So don't delay — Join today!**

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## Midwest Decoy Collectors Association: 50 Years Young!

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of our organization and of our annual show. Here's a look at where we've been.

### MDCA Annual Show Venues

1966.....Ramada Inn, Ottawa, IL  
1967.....Wagon Wheel, Rockton, IL  
1968.....Holiday Inn, Dekalb, IL  
1969.....Milwaukee Inn, Milwaukee, WI  
1970.....Sheraton O'Hare Motel, Des Plaines, IL  
1971.....Holiday Inn, Aurora, IL  
1972 – 1974.....Drake Oakbrook, Oak Brook, IL  
1975.....Oak Brook Hyatt, Oak Brook, IL  
1976 – 1983.....Drake Oakbrook, Oak Brook, IL  
1984 – 2015.....Pheasant Run Resort, St. Charles, IL



Hal Sorenson, Ralph Loeff, and Will Pennington were the founding members of the MDCA. Here, the "Official Self-Appointed Meeting Committee" discusses the merits of a group of shorebirds at the first show in 1966. (Photo courtesy of Donna Tonelli)

*Discover • Preserve • Celebrate*

**Midwest Decoy Collectors Association**

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