

This rare bird house by Minnesota folk artist John Tax was part of this year's new President's Display

Midwest Decoy Collectors Association NEWSLETTER

Summer 2019



The 54th Annual Show: Something for Everyone

The MDCA-sponsored North American Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show at Pheasant Run Resort in St. Charles, IL just keeps getting bigger and better. The show continues to offer collectors and dealers an unparalleled opportunity to rekindle old friendships, share their knowledge, and to add some special items to their shelves. This year we saw many new faces (and signed up over 30 new members) who experienced the show for the first time. We also welcomed back a number of past members who had been absent for several years. Many of these offered items that had been squirreled away in their collections for a long time.

With more displays and exhibits than ever before, there were more opportunities to learn about and just enjoy the great variety of sporting collectibles that came from across North America. This "Post-Show" MDCA Newsletter includes a complete recap of the show featuring lots of photos from all of the week's events, along with plenty of other member-related content. Here's what's inside:

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Discover • Preserve • Celebrate

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** 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 nearly 800 enthusiasts from all over North America and from all walks of life. They write books on collecting, manage auction companies, publish collector 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.

DISPLAY ADVERTISING is now being accepted in select issues of the MDCA newsletter. Contact Jeff Seregny at jseregny@gmail.com or 586-530-6586 for rates and availability.

www.midwestdecoy.org



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Thank you! Liz and I are very grateful for the kind thoughts and the excellent support we were blessed to receive from the membership. Our Mayo team has been the best, and my scan last month showed that the cancer cells are gone.

The health of our organization is excellent. Our membership is adding new collectors each year, the attendance in St. Charles is robust and diverse, the quality of available items was outstanding, our communication tools are receiving excellent feedback, and we are on a solid financial footing.

Decoy collecting and sporting collectibles have performed well.

New and active collectors are experiencing an excellent opportunity to acquire items that have not been on the market for decades. It was pleasing to see many attendees this year who hadn't been active buyers in 10 years.

Our 2019 event set some new levels for depth and quality of experience.

Our goal is to be better each year, and that was clear in 2019. We introduce changes to enrich and refine the event. Your energy and response to these changes are inspiring.

The large number of volunteers bringing noteworthy items to share is terrific.

From the rooms to the seminars and member displays, it was fun to see and absorb the vast selection that made its appearance at this year's event.

The President's Display was fun. It allows us to focus on unique items as they are discovered and share with the St. Charles audience. We already have some terrific finds that will delight you in 2020.

The call maker and collectors activity is noteworthy at St. Charles. The excitement and passion that is displayed for calls is merely infectious and deserves your attention. Don't miss seeing the spectacular creations that emerge at the show.

Make sure that your dues are current, we need your support. Thank you for the active feedback on our new directory. We are delighted by the support that our advertisers and members have expressed for this new package. The post-show directory mailing went to over 200 recent dues receipts. We continue to pursue those whose dues are past due.

Pheasant Run's performance clearly disappointed us. I usually make several pre-show trips to the resort to make sure that our needs are in focus. It should not be necessary, but it is required. I am having serious discussions with the resort ownership about our relationship and obligations. They must improve the property and experience.

A personal thank you to Cameron McIntyre. Your support and spirit are inspiring to me. Time is precious; thank you for sharing.

Please enjoy a wonderful summer, find something exciting for your collection and help us recruit more members.

Happy Collecting!

Rick

Rick Sandstrom



Much to Enjoy at the 2019 Show



Member News

Membership Remains Strong

Your club remains a vibrant one with 740 current and very active members, which is on par with 2018 membership levels. We've enrolled 61 new members since November of last year, an encouraging sign of continuing and younger interest in our hobby. These new members come from all over the US and Canada and bring with them an interest in a broad range of sporting collectibles, from decoys to lures, and sporting art to calls. The complete list of these new members along with their individual collecting interests, where provided, can be found on the next page. Please welcome them to the MDCA, North America's largest decoy and sporting collectibles organization.



Share Your Collecting Stories

We all agree that the "thrill of the hunt" for that next decoy to add to our collection is a big part of the enjoyment we get from collecting. The stories behind those exciting finds are often treasures in themselves, and we'd love to be able to share those stories with our members in future issues of the club newsletter. So please send us your best tales from your years of collecting. They can be about the ones you've successfully added or about the ones that got away. They can be funny or just surprising. Please email your stories along with pictures (if available) to Jeff Seregny at jseregny@gmail.com, or you can mail them to Jeff at: 6699 Ferry Road, East Jordan, MI 49727.

Treasurer's Report



Treasurer Bill Dodge reports that 2018 was a good year financially for the MDCA, and 2019 is continuing that trend. We ended last year with a cash balance increase of \$1,989 over the prior year despite of an increase in disbursements of \$7,412. That was made possible, in part, by an aggressive program to reduce the cost of our newsletters and the Member Directory. Increases in advertising revenues for both publications have further reduced the net cost of these important member benefits. As a result, we have been able to increase the communications to members at a net cost that is 40% below what it was three years earlier.

Of course, our strong financial position would not be possible without the ongoing participation of our membership through dues payments and attendance at the annual show. In addition, we enjoy revenue contributions via the silent auctions at the show, and through the ongoing support from our partner, Guyette & Deeter.

After a few years of declining cash reserves due to additional operating costs, we have been able to increase our reserves for the last two years. This has allowed us to re-implement a program of investing in certificates of deposit to further shore up our position. Our internal auditors, Walt Hallbauer and Bruce Lowe, gave us "two thumbs up" after their recent review of our finances.

MDCA Facebook Group Shows Continued Growth

Over 160 members are now actively participating in our members-only group on Facebook. This has grown to become a great place for members to share their collections, get help with identification, promote upcoming auctions and other events, and to buy, sell and trade all variety of sporting collectibles. If you aren't already participating, joining is easy. Just search for Midwest Decoy Collectors Association on Facebook and ask to join. Once you are approved you can partake in all of the fun in a secure environment where you always know with whom you are dealing. Hope to see you there soon!



Member News

New Members

Michael Arbanas

Crest Hill, IL
Duck calls

Louie Bartolomeo

New Lenox, IL

Katie Burke

Germantown, TN

Todd Burns

Sycamore, IL
*Canvasbacks, redhead,
Delta Marsh, Heron
Lake, WI, MN, IL*

Milt Cobb

Moxee, WA
West coast, Mason

Michael Crouch

Willowick, OH

James Cummins

Henry, IL
Perdew Museum

Bill R Deetz

Eau Claire, WI
*Wisconsin Decoys,
Evans, Leinenkugel's,
Sporting*

Murl D Eley

Olympia, WA
Mason Decoys

J. Bryant Evans

Urbana, IL
*Illinois River decoys,
also fishing lures*

Tom Fritz

Detroit Lake, MN

William H. Froelich

Baraboo, WI

Paul Glaze

Mercer Island, WA
*I make decoys for The
Barrels of Flame Rod &
Gun Club, Moses Lake, WA*

Gerald Gorzelanczyk

Green Bay, WI
*Duck Decoys, Outdoor
Collectibles*

Jeff Herman

Elkhart, IN
Bufflehead decoys

Rich Hogan

Wheaton, IL

Bob Hutchinson

Wheaton, IL
Decoys

David M Jackson

Pekin, IL
PS Olt calls

Gregory W Jager

Elma, NY
*Northeastern US and
Ontario decoys; duck
pull toys, carving decoys*

Pawel Jawr

Excelsior Springs, MO
Decoys, calls

Jeff Johnson

Dorset, OH
Calls

Joe Johnson

Oswego, IL

Randy Johnson

Reedsburg, WI

Paula Kitzi

Belmont, CA
*Wisconsin decoys
and folkart items*

Steve Kleist

Ely, MN
*Gunning decoys with
provenance*

Brian L Lhamon

Pekin, IL
Decoys and calls

Scott A Liebenguth

Willard, MO
*Jitterbug fishing lures
and duck decoys*

Wells Lifka

Warrenville, IL
Fish decoys

Lynette Miller

Naperville, IL

Todd Murphy

North Aurora, IL
Bluebills

Ricky Nelson

Rockford IL

T.J. O'Hara

Marion, IA
All Sporting Items

Gregory W Partin

Roman Forest, TX
*Charlie Joiner, Rick
Brown, Rudy LeCompte*

Jeff Pressman

Rancho Santa Fe, CA
Shorebirds

Robert Price

Little Rock, AR
*Shorebirds, photos,
worn out faded decoys*

Allan Puplis

Kalamazoo, MI
*Duck decoys,
fishing lures*

Robert E Rakey

St Louis, MO
Various

Terry Reeves

Oakley, IL

Trent Reeves

Mahomet, IL
Calls

Barry W Robinson

Bethany, IL
*Illinois river and DU
stamp decoys*

Craig Rosenbaum

Washington, TX
*Decoys, antiques,
collectibles*

John Sawyer

Virginia Beach, VA
Carolina/Virginia decoys

Cecil R Schnelle

New London, MO

Eugene Shoemaker

Waukesha, WI
Bird Carvings

Wendy Siewierski

Cortland, IL

John Sigler

Wheatfield, IN

Jon Sigler

Wheatfield, IN
Decoys

Robert Sipolt

McHenry, IL

Chris Slusar

Evansville, WI
Wisconsin fishing

Joe Szczerbowski

Crown Point, IN

Bing Taege

Rhineland, WI
Hunting decoys

Jeff Taege

Rhineland, WI
Decoys

Niels Tave

Chicago, IL

Steve Tavenner

Findlay, IL
Calls & decoys

Al Train

Deer Park, IL
*Decoys and sporting
collectibles*

Tom Totzke

Ashton, IL
Mason glasseye decoys

Paul Wait

New London, WI
*Winnebago Lakes/
Nelow*

Joe Walsh

Annapolis, MD
*Love decoys with
great form!*

Bryan Wiesner

Lake Forest, IL
Decoys

John Winter

Carbondale, CO
*Decoys, shell boxes,
old lures & reels*

Tom Wright

Omro, WI

Scott Zieske

Rapid City, SD
Mason decoys



2019 Show Report

By all accounts the 2019 version of the North American Vintage Decoy & Sporting Collectibles Show was a great success. Scores of items traded hands and many old friendships were rekindled and new ones formed. All in all, attendees left with a smile on their faces and most had bags with new acquisitions under their arms.

What follows is a complete recap of all of the show activities throughout the week including room-to-room trading, the educational seminar, Guyette & Deeter auction, and the MegaCenter event. If you couldn't join all the fun this year, we hope to see you in 2020!

Room-to-Room Trading Saw Many New Faces



While the "official" start to the week is Tuesday, some members always show up earlier in hopes of finding that special item before someone else does. This year Board member Steve Handevidt came in on

Thursday before the show. He claims it was to watch his grandson compete in a nearby hockey tournament on Easter weekend, but we all know it was really to out-manuever other avid collectors hoping to get in an early buy.

The hallways at Pheasant Run were buzzing with activity throughout the week and there were certainly a great number of folks cradling new found treasures. Many dealers noted that there were a number of new and younger folks searching the rooms this year. Carver Eddie Wozny counted 540 visits to his selling room and most dealers reported strong sales.

As usual the casual atmosphere of room-to-room trading means great comradery and lots of fun. There was no shortage of good things to eat (and drink) along the way as Lee Schultz and Rick Simpson once again ably manned the outdoor grill on their patio. Thanks to the contribution of fellow members, their culinary offering changed each day. Chili in the hallways arranged by the club made it easy for attendees to keep their strength up as they shopped.



Seminar: Tales from the Delta Marsh



As a complement to this year's Member Display, member, decoy maker and historian Pat Gregory teamed with Delta Waterfowl Magazine's editor Paul Wait to chronicle their "traditional" hunts on the famed Delta Marsh. These hunts were unique in that

they celebrated the hunting heritage of the marsh by using vintage decoys made by some of the area's most famous makers including Duncan Ducharme and Torry Ward. In addition, their rigs included decoys that Pat made in the Delta Marsh tradition.

The seminar included Pat and Paul regaling the attentive audience with wonderful stories of their 2014 and 2018 hunts, the fun they had and the sometimes difficult conditions they faced. They also displayed examples of the decoys they hunted over for seminar attendees to handle and enjoy. The seminar was carried live on Facebook for collectors unable to attend the show. This video is available for viewing on the club's website (midwestdecoy.org) in "Videos" within the "Decoy University" area.





MegaCenter Show Featured Something for Everyone

The Friday and Saturday show in the MegaCenter exhibit hall always provides a special crescendo to the week in St. Charles. This year was no exception with so many different exhibits and so many different items for sale. Friday, in particular, was a high energy day with lots of commerce taking place. Saturday's crowd was hampered by the prediction for some heavy, wet snow (in late April!), but it didn't seem to dampen the enthusiasm of those who braved the threatening weather to come out. Several dealers reported significant sales on Saturday, with one claiming that it "made my week!"

The silent auction, held continuously throughout the two days in the MegaCenter, provides a great way for dealers to reduce some inventory and for walk-ins to liquidate items that have perhaps come down through their families. This year, a local woman brought in a group of decoys from her deceased uncle's collection to sell. This group included a very good selection of George "Skippy" Barto and Art Behemetuik full size and miniature decoys. She left with a big pile of cash and with the knowledge that her uncle's decoys were all going to the homes of like-minded collectors. Consignors donate at least 10% of each sale to the club and this year we netted \$595 on gross sales of \$5,400.



G&D Sale Approaches \$3 Million



As usual, on Thursday and Friday Guyette & Deeter held their 2-day auction. This year's sale featured the remaining group of decoys from the collection of early collector and historian William Mackey. These spectacular pieces were last held by Mackey family members and are generally viewed as among the best of the collection. Not surprisingly, the 94 decoys in the group represented nearly half of the auction's gross sale. A pair of Mergansers by New Jersey maker John Dawson was the top lot at \$230,100. Four other lots sold for over \$100,000 including a rare Wood Duck by Tom Chambers at \$135,700. Importantly, the auction house reports that 34 new buyers participated representing 10% of the total gross for the sale. This is certainly a positive sign for the hobby and all of who participate in it. Their next sale takes place July 23-24, 2019 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.



Member Display



A Celebration of Two Historic Waterfowling Areas



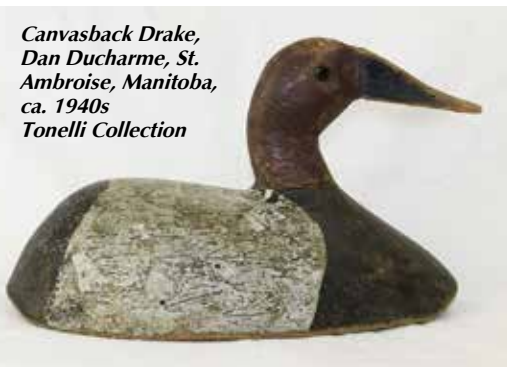
*Canvasbacks
(Gaylord Rig), Torry
Ward, Portage La
Prairie, ca. 1970s
Gregory Collection*

This year's Member Display helped attendees understand the evolution of the traditional Heron Lake decoys in Minnesota to the classic Delta Marsh canvasbacks that Delta Waterfowl founder James Ford Bell brought to the Delta in the 1920s. The display included a wide assortment of decoys made by Joe Marr, and a number of other talented but unknown Heron Lake area makers. This was coupled with the work of Delta Marsh carvers such as the Dan, "Little Joe," and Duncan Ducharme, Torry Ward, and several unknowns. These unique and folksy decoys were really a treat to see.

Canvasback Drake, Little Joe Ducharme, St. Ambroise, Manitoba, ca. 1930s, Tonelli Collection



Canvasback Drake, Dan Ducharme, St. Ambroise, Manitoba, ca. 1940s Tonelli Collection



Immature Canvasback, Joe Marr, Sioux Falls, SD, ca. 1880s, Tonelli Collection



Mallard Hen, Duncan Ducharme, St. Ambroise, Manitoba, ca. 1940s Tonelli Collection



Green Wing Teal Drake, Duncan Ducharme, St. Ambroise, Manitoba, ca. 1950s Cook Collection



Blue Wing Teal Drake, Duncan Ducharme, St. Ambroise, Manitoba, ca. 1950s Cook Collection



Bluebills, Joe Marr, Sioux Falls, SD, ca. 1880s Rigsbee Collection



Mallard Drake, Joe Marr, Sioux Falls, SD, ca. 1880s Tonelli Collection



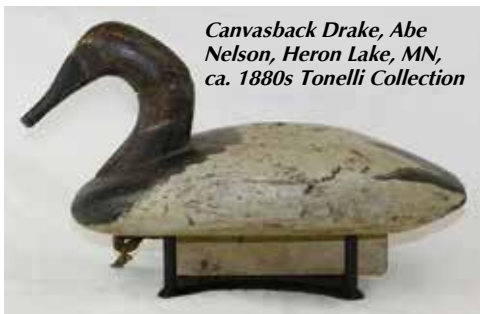
Mallard Drake, Unknown Maker, Heron Lake, MN, ca. 1880s, Tonelli Collection



Canvasback Drake, Unknown maker, Heron Lake, MN, ca. 1880s Tonelli Collection



Canvasback Drake, Abe Nelson, Heron Lake, MN, ca. 1880s Tonelli Collection



Thanks to Pat Gregory for leading the effort to pull this display together and for sharing his deep knowledge about the history of these important waterfowling areas. And a special thanks to all who loaned pieces from their collections for this once in a lifetime display.



Native American Fish Decoys

In prior years our fish displays have focused primarily on the work of makers from individual states — Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and New York. This year our focus turned to decoys made by Native American makers from across the northern Midwest. This first-time display featured a variety of examples of what is certainly a uniquely American folk art. Attendees were able to see the pragmatism with which many early native makers carved as exhibited in the minimalist form and the basic materials they often used.

Many of these pieces were simple, wooden decoys that were charred instead of having painted surfaces. Show goers were also treated to the work of some more contemporary makers whose work has evolved to incorporate more color and a greater variety of forms. Thanks to Jim Wierzba for once again organizing this display and to all of those members who loaned pieces for our enjoyment.

*John Snow, Flambeau Reservation, WI, 1994
McMaster Collection*



*Unknown Maker, Chautauqua, NY,
ca. 1900, McMaster Collection*



*Unknown Maker, Eskimo/Inuit,
15-16 Century, McMaster Collection*



*Chippewa/Ottawa, Torch Lake, MI, Ca. 1910,
Wierzba Collection*



*Duane Sosser, Flambeau Reservation, WI,
ca. 1990, McMaster Collection*



*John "Buckshot" Christianson, Flambeau
Reservation, 1994, McMaster Collection*



*Unknown Maker, Minnesota, ca. 1930,
McMaster Collection*



*Unknown Carver, Minnesota,, ca. 1930,
McMaster Collection*



*"Buddy" Wayman, Flambeau Reservation,
WI, 1994, Guthrie Collection*



*Unknown Maker, Leech Lake Reservation, MN,
ca. 1930, Tonelli Collection*



*Unknown Maker, Leech Lake
reservation, MN, ca. 1930s,
Tonelli Collection*



*Unknown Maker, Wisconsin, ca. 1940,
McMaster Collection*

Chippewa/Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, MI, ca, 1920



*Chippewa.Ottawa, Torch Lake, MI, ca, 1910,
Wierzb Collection*



*Unknown Maker, Minnesota, ca. 1930
McMaster Collection*



Chippewa/Ottawa, Sault Ste. Marie, MI, ca. 1920



*Michael Murphy, Flambeau
Reservation, WI, 1994
McMaster Collection*

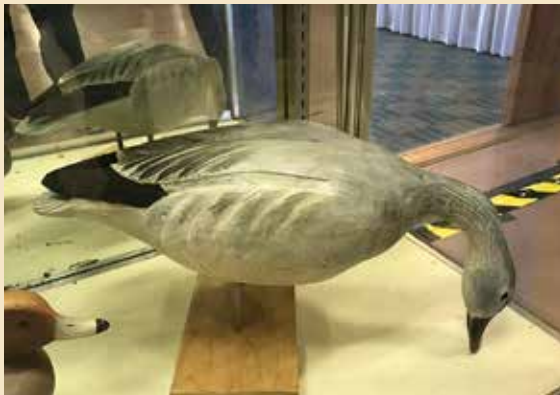




New President's Display is a Winner

For the first time ever, a new display was added to the event to feature special items that merit recognition and exposure to a wide audience. Called the "President's Display," this exhibit featured the excellent work of Jack Musgrove (see cover story in the March/April, 2019 issue of Decoy magazine). This maker's talent is unmistakable and his work was certainly admired by show attendees. Thanks to member John Munson who brought a broad selection of Musgrove decoys to display and to sell.

This new display also included an exceedingly rare birdhouse carving by Minnesota's John Tax, Sr. The maker's granddaughter graciously shared this family treasure at the show. She reported that this sunfish birdhouse was located in her grandfather's yard and that he created it so that his granddaughter could find her way back home when visiting. A wren nest is still inside. This is a terrific piece of folk art by a notable carver and it was a big highlight of the show.



Lake Poygan Gunning Boxes Show Off Their Makers' Ingenuity Again

As a testament to their seemingly boundless creativity, once again another group of Wisconsin gunning or shooting boxes made their way to Pheasant Run. Thanks to Roger Ludwig, attendees were able to see just how ingenious these northern waterfowlers were. Sometimes also referred to as shooting boxes, these boxes served many purposes, from storing the hunters' essentials (shells, gloves, thermos, etc.) to cradling their guns for protection and easy access.



Beautiful Boxes: Crates Make Their Debut

In addition to a marvelous assortment of 1 and 2-piece paper shot shell boxes, this year member Rudy Ronning also treated attendees with a wonderful selection of vintage wooden crates from ammunition makers such as Peters, Remington, Robin Hood, and others. While the paper boxes' colorful graphics were meant to attract attention on the retail shelf, these wooden crates also exhibit a great sense of design in a less colorful, but equally dynamic way. Many thanks to Rudy for sharing these fantastic pieces of waterfowling history.



Exploring Missouri Factory Production

We continue to discover more and more about the decoys from the several factories in Jefferson City, Missouri thanks to the dedication of member Greg Renner and his Missouri Decoy Study Group. As part of their mission to share what they have learned, Greg orchestrated a display called, **“Design Evolution: Gundelfinger through Benz”** which illustrated the transition from Gundelfinger to Benz through their product line changes. Greg is quick to point out that the effort to more clearly understand this is still a work in progress.

Not to be left out, this display also included a look at the output of Jefferson City’s Hays Wood Products Company. This included a fun look at this factory’s decidedly non-decoy “Hickory Hitter,” a wood car bumper that the company marketed in the early 1920s to owners of the Model T. Demonstrating supreme confidence in their product, Hays advertised that they would replace the bumper for free if it was ever to break.



Redheads Rule in “My Favorite Decoy” Member Contest



This year’s species-specific competition brought out a great selection of vintage and contemporary Redhead decoys making the decision a tough one for judges Joe Tonelli, Jim Wierzba and Jeff Seregny. There were decoys from all over north America by makers such as John Wells, Bill Finkle, Marty Hanson, and Jack

Musgrove. In the end it was a hollow-carved, beautifully painted drake attributed to the “Queen’s Hotel” rig in Toronto that carried the day. Congratulations to the proud owner, Bill Rigsbee who took home the “My Favorite Redhead” Best of Show trophy.

Next year’s contest will feature Blue Wing Teal. So be sure to bring your favorite Blue Wing. This promises to be category with many beautiful entries.

Contemporary

CORNER

GEOFF VINE: FEATURED CARVER'S WORK DRAWS RAVE REVIEWS

Geoff Vine of Waunakee, Wisconsin brought a beautiful display that demonstrated his prolific decoy making skills to throngs of eager show attendees. Since beginning his decoy making in 1992, Geoff now makes just a couple dozen decoys each year, some being commission while others go into his personal rig. So show goers were fortunate that Geoff shared many years of his work representing a broad range of styles and forms. Geoff's own unique style was developed by spending decades at the carving bench and endless hours behind the paint brush. Show attendees had the unique opportunity to get an up close and personal look at the results of Geoff's tireless effort to master his craft. Many thanks to Geoff for bringing this wonderful display of his work to Pheasant Run.



GEOFF VINE:



Carvers Demonstrate Their Skills

In addition to the featured exhibit, a number of other of today's best decoy makers were on hand to show off their talent through carving and painting demonstrations, as well as displays of their work. Those participating included R.D. Lewis, Steve Quiram, Ben Heinemann, Marty Hanson, Tom Humberstone, Bill Thumm, Gene Everitt, Pat Gregory, Phil Babe, Tim McEntire, and Pat Meneely. We always appreciate that these talented men so selflessly share their work in St. Charles.



MEMBER PROFILE:

Dean Campbell:

MICHIGANDER ENGINEERS SUCCESSFUL APPROACH TO COLLECTING

Dean Campbell, currently of Fenton, a small town northwest of Detroit, contests that he has tried to utilize a highly disciplined approach to decision making. This includes carefully gathering information and studying any particular subject well in advance of taking any action.

No wonder he gravitated toward a career in engineering and technical sales has applied the discipline required in that field to his pursuit of decoys.

Dean with his D.W. Nichol Hen Ringbill. ca. 1940s



Bill Cooper Black Duck, Verdun, Que., ca. 1940s



Bud Tully Hen Bluebill, Peterborough, Ont., ca. 1950s



Bob Gohl Widgeon Pair, Troy, MI

A Passion for the Outdoors

It wasn't all pocket protectors and calculators growing up, however. Dean grew to love the outdoors as a young boy when his dad and uncles first took him pheasant hunting on a family dairy farm in Michigan's "thumb" area. He recalls these early hunts fondly and in particular a special springer spaniel named "Coco." It was this experience that would lead to an interest in collecting sporting art prints featuring upland birds, mostly by Michigan artists.

But it didn't stop there. In his early 20's Dean added waterfowl hunting to his list of outdoor pursuits and consequently began



Will Smith Redheads, Belleville, Ont., ca. 1900s



Sean Sutton, Old Squaw Pair, Paulsboro, NJ



Addie Nichol, Drake Bluebill, Smiths Falls, Ont., 1930s



Brook Trout by Mike Borrett, Madison, WI, ca. 2016

to collect federal duck stamp prints. He eventually assembled a group that included every print from 1990 through 2000 plus many from the next decade as well.

The Decoy Seed is Planted

Of course, duck hunting exposed Dean to decoying and he eventually assembled his own rig of working Herter's and other cork birds. As he became more deeply involved in the sport, he was exposed to all kinds of related endeavors including decoy carving contests and this spawned an interest in these wood carvings as an art form. He recounts that it was about 20 years ago when his wife, recognizing this interest, bought him a resin reproduction of a vintage Pintail drake for his birthday. Dean was fascinated by the antiqued look and its folk art form. It remained on the mantel for many years, but clearly laid the groundwork for what would eventually grow into a passion for collecting vintage decoys.

Despite this early interest, Dean says that he really didn't get "the decoy bug" until 2014. Career, kids and other priorities occupied his time and his pocketbook. However, this early reproduction decoy eventually started Dean on a path toward learning more about old decoys. True to form, he began by doing the research. He explored decoy related sites on the internet and was surprised to discover that there were magazines and books dedicated to old decoys. He subscribed to Decoy Magazine and Hunting & Fishing Collectibles. After thoroughly researching decoys and makers from numerous areas he began to develop an interest in Canadian birds. As his interest continued to grow and find focus, he bought books by Canadian decoy experts such as Paul Brisco, Jim Stewart and Bernie Gates. In addition, he began exploring the various collecting clubs on line where he thought he could learn more about this burgeoning passion. It was here that he happened upon news of a decoy show in St. Charles, a reasonable drive from his Michigan home.

An Eye-Opening Experience

With many months of research in hand, Dean decided to check this show out. He admits that he had little idea about how the shows like this worked or what would happen there. He discovered that there was room-to-room trading and a large decoy auction, so he planned his trip accordingly.



Bob May Drake Goldeneye, Smiths Falls, Ont., ca. 1930s



D.K. Nichol Drake Ringbill, Smiths Falls, Ont., ca. 1920s



Fish carvings by Marcel Meloche and Sonny Bayshore

Even all of his due diligence didn't prepare him for this first immersion experience which he describes as "like drinking from a firehose." Fortunately, once there he quickly learned just how open and welcoming most collectors are and he took full advantage. He remembers that his first discussion of Canadian decoys was with Walt Hallbauer of upstate New York. He appreciated Walt's great knowledge and willingness to help in any way. In fact, he would eventually buy his first "serious" decoys from Hallbauer – a pair of D.W. "Davey" Nichol Mallards that he still has today. He went on to meet other dealers including Dan Yundt, Gerry Enoksen, and Paul Brisco who all were more than willing to share their expertise and to help further educate this fledgling collector.

With this valuable guidance, Dean looked forward to checking out the Guyette & Deeter auction as a good way to understand the market and what it would take to build his collection. When he watched an exceedingly rare Mason

Wood Duck sell for \$690,000 he thought to himself, "What am I getting myself into?!"

Undaunted, he thirsted for more. He had only learned earlier in the week that there was also a sale in the Pheasant Run exhibit hall on Friday and Saturday. He changed his plans to extend his stay so that he could take in this part of the show as well. There he made many more connections, bought some more books, and left St. Charles much more well-informed about decoy collecting and what he wanted to accomplish.

Accelerating the Learning Curve

After St. Charles Dean reached out to Walt Hallbauer again and had a number of conversations that furthered his education, as Walt suggested other collectors for Dean to contact and other shows he should consider attending. Dean went on to attend shows in Strongsville and Westlake, Ohio, and Monroe, Michigan.

Anxious to home in on his area of primary interest he would soon attend the Canadian Decoy and Outdoor Collectibles Club show in Niagara Falls, Ontario. There he made more great contacts including Canadian collectors John Latreille and his son Kurtis from Cornwall. They helped him acquire his first Will Smith decoys, a pair of early Redheads in original paint. He also met Art Philp, long time Canadian collector from whom he purchased a D. W. Nichol Green Wing Teal pair.

Dean now attends these shows on a regular basis and continues to learn and refine the direction of his collecting.

A Collection Built on Discipline and Focus

Unlike many collectors (this writer included) who start by accumulating a number of lesser quality decoys from a variety of regions, Dean's more disciplined approach has served him well. Before he bought is

his first piece, he explored many options and landed on a preference for better quality Canadian decoys from Ontario and has not varied during his relatively short time collecting. He plans to limit his collection to 50-70 birds, trading up for better quality decoys as the opportunities arise.

Today Dean's vintage collection is a mixture of fine Canadian decoys, primarily from Ontario, although he recently ventured into collecting work by Quebec maker Bill Cooper, but of course not before doing his research and buying the "Quebec Essentials" book.



J. R. Wells Drake Canvasback (repaint), Toronto, Ont., ca. 1920s



D.W. Nichol Green Wing Teal, Smiths Falls, Ont., ca. 1950s

Dean has a sizeable group of Smiths Falls' Nichol family decoys with a good selection of birds by young Davey (D.W.) as well as decoys by his uncles D.W. and Addie. He also holds very good examples by Will Smith, John Wells, Bud Tully, Bob May and Bud Huntley.

While his disciplined approach is remarkable, it does not preclude him from enjoying other collecting pursuits as well. In addition to his sporting art, Dean has a number of carvings by contemporary makers including Sean Sutton, Bob Gohl and Michigan maker Phil Babe.

Dean has also assembled a good group of fish carvings featuring makers such as Marcel Meloche, Mike Maxon, Mike Borrett, and Ernie Peterson. Added to this is a smattering of Owls by Russ Allen, as well as various Woodcock carvings by the likes of David Ward and George Strunk. Most recently, Dean bought his first shot shell

box to spruce up the shelves and he plans to add more of these colorful boxes over time.

It should come as no surprise that Dean keeps a "top 10" list of decoys and/or makers that he is targeting for future acquisition. On this list are additional Will Smith and Bill Cooper decoys. He also hopes to pair up his Tully Bluebill Hen with a drake of equal quality. A John Morris Canvasback, J.R. Wells Teal, and an early D.W. Ringbill are also high on the list. He even has the decoys on this list coded green for top priority, and yellow for desirable but less important.



D.W. Nichol Mallards, Smiths Falls, Ont., ca. 1950s



Original Painting by Jocelyn Beatty, West Middlesex, PA, 2014

Mixing Rigor with Fun

By using a highly disciplined approach to collecting, Dean has successfully avoided the traps that so many new collectors fall into – acquiring a lot of decoys before deciding on what they really want their collection to be. His commitment to thorough research before jumping in has served him well by allowing him to assemble a top-notch group of decoys that make sense together and about which he is passionate.

At the same time, Dean insists that this rigor has brought him tons of enjoyment. It has led to some great friendships and lots of fun along the way. All in all, this sounds like a pretty good formula for a successful and truly rewarding collecting experience. You can reach Dean at DeanCampbell@stoneridge.com.



D.W. Nichol Goldeneyes, Smiths Falls, Ont., ca. 1950s

Peoria Display

Members Flock to Peoria for Once in a Lifetime Exhibit

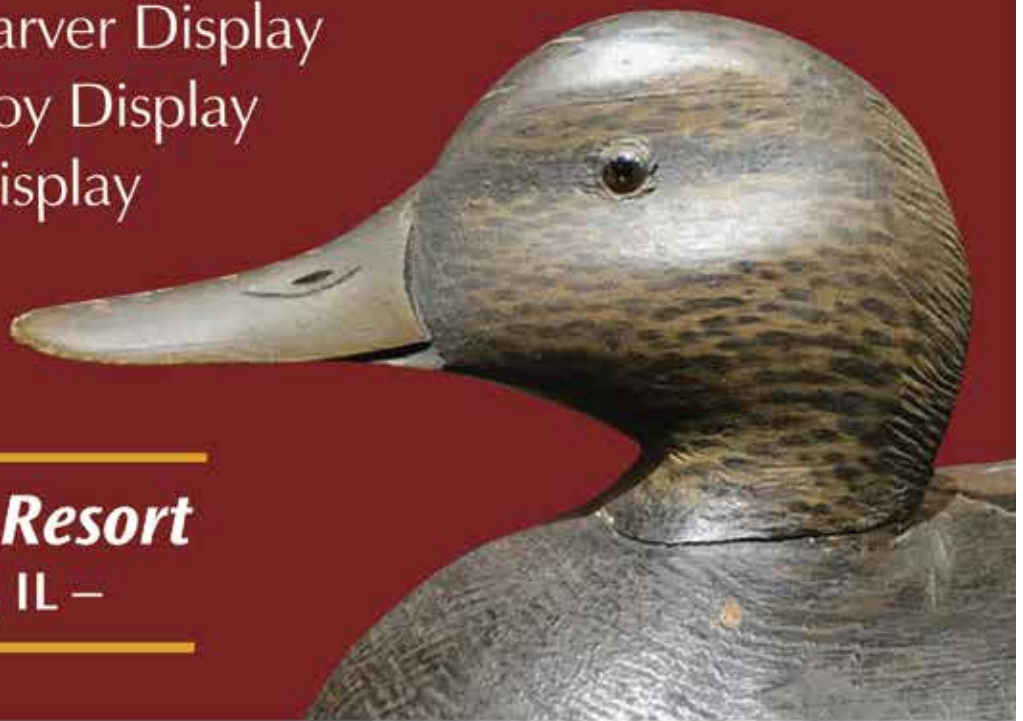
Many of our members made a side trip to the Peoria Riverfront Museum to take in what was arguably the finest group of decoys ever assembled for public display. The exhibit, "American Decoy: The Invention," featuring decoys from private collections across the country including MDCA members Joe and Donna Tonelli, Tom Figge, Ted and Judy Harmon, Randy Root, Mike Cole, and many others. It included iconic examples from the likes of Elmer Crowell, Charles Schoenheider, Charles Perdew, George Warin, Lem Dudley, Steve and Lem Ward, and many more. A special thanks goes out to Joe and Donna Tonelli who were instrumental in making this exhibit a reality. They were even successful in convincing the museum to extend the exhibit beyond its planned end date to allow show attendees to visit during show week. Special thanks to Tom Bosworth for sharing his great his photos.



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