

31st annual Core Sound Decoy Festival Harkers Island, North Carolina December 1-2, 2018

We always close out the year the first weekend in December at the Core Sound Decoy Festival, which is sponsored by the Core Sound Decoy Carvers Guild and held at the Harkers Island Elementary School. That same weekend the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum & Heritage Center holds its own show just a short drive down the road. These weekend festivities have long been a popular destination for both the local community and decoy enthusiasts in the region. It's arguably one of the most successful events on the show circuit.

But this year we didn't know what to expect, as Hurricane Florence had devastated the region just a couple of months earlier. We were almost surprised when we heard it was still on. The school didn't suffer any noticeable damage. The museum, however, which is nearer to the coast of this barrier island, did take the brunt of the storm, thankfully only water damage. They were able to utilize some space in the interior of the building and set up a tent on the grounds for the rest of the exhibitors. So for them, too, the show went on.

We arrived on Friday evening, as do most of the exhibitors, and set up in a room with local historian Jack Dudley, who's now published his 17th book on the region, and the Carolina Decoy Collectors Association, who sponsor a Vintage Decoy Competition on Saturday morning and solicit new members to the club. Once the tables were set and readied for the next morning's show, we partook of the complimentary buffet that the Guild generously provides for the exhibitors.

When we arrived on Saturday morning, there was already a long line of people eagerly waiting to get into the building. Most of the exhibitors, which included a mix of vendors selling old decoys and quite a few contemporary carvers, set up in the gym and in classrooms throughout the building. There were a handful of painters selling sporting art and others selling carving supplies. A carving competition took place in the cafeteria throughout the weekend.

As soon as they open the doors a steady stream of customers pours throughout the building and continues nonstop until early afternoon. While the show commit-



Members of the Carolina Decoy Collectors show us some of the winning birds from the competition (L-R): Blair Boyd, Jesse Sorrell, Howard Johnson, Randy Nance, Kroghie Andresen and Doily Fulcher.

tee reported that traffic was a bit off from last year, the turnout seemed pretty good to us, as we signed up a good handful of new subscribers, sold lots of books and back issues and found new homes for a number of good old decoys. We understand that it was so packed in the gym that it was actually tough to maneuver the aisles.

The Carolina Decoy Collectors Association accepted entries throughout the morning for their Vintage Decoy Competition. All ten of the entries featured North Carolina decoys and most of the categories attracted tough competition. We were asked to be one of the judges, along with Chandler Sawyer and Jimmy Coppedge, who are both knowledgeable collectors. Despite the quality of the entries, eight of the ten winning birds were chosen by unanimous consent. A brant by Ben Fulcher of Ocracoke Island was awarded the "People's Choice" award; interestingly, it was the only winner we didn't pick.

The Guild holds a fundraising auction on Saturday afternoon in a tent behind the school. Unfortunately for the vendors inside, it generally sucks quite a few people out of the building. There seemed to be a better selection of decoys than in recent years. A near-mint pintail by the carving team of Eldon Willis and Elmer Salter, a couple of the better-known Core Sound decoy makers, hammered for \$2600, the high price in the auction. A couple of birds by Ned Burgess, a redhead and wigeon, sold for \$1450 and \$1200.

During this slight lull in traffic, we take

the opportunity to go fetch some lunch in the cafeteria and order our usual three-course meal: clam chowder, shrimp burger and banana pudding. Fortunately, they have a separate lane for vendors, as the waiting line is generally in the dozens; you'd swear this was the most popular part of the show and, for some, it probably is.

After the show ended on Saturday, Phil Harvey invited us to join a group from the Carolina Decoy Collectors for a happy hour drink and dinner afterwards at a restaurant in nearby Beaufort. The group included Kroghie Andresen, Doily Fulcher, Robbie Smith, Howard Johnson, Jesse Sorrell, Randy Nance, Dale Oller and Tom Reed. It certainly made for an enjoyable evening and a few suggested it should become an annual tradition. Save us a seat!

Sunday used to be a throwaway day at this show, as most of the eager beavers had a tendency to show up on Saturday. But last year business was so good that we weren't in any hurry to pack up and leave. And this year might have even been better. While the attendance was a bit off on Saturday, it seemed that Sunday was busier than last year. We signed up more new subscribers, sold more books and back issues and found a home for another pair of decoys. All in all, it was another successful weekend.

The Core Sound Decoy Festival is consistently one of the best-attended shows on the decoy circuit. For more information on next year's show, contact the Core Sound Carvers Guild at (252) 342-8233 or visit www.decoyguild.com.

2018

Vintage Decoy Competition

Sponsored by the Carolina Decoy Collectors Association
in coordination with the Core Sound Decoy Festival



Photos by Brent Hood

People's Choice



Ocracoke or Portsmouth Island Brant

Ben Fulcher brant

DANNY & RE FERRELL COLLECTION



Currituck Puddle Duck Decoy

Ned Burgess pintail

ROBBIE & LESLIE SMITH COLLECTION



Knotts Island Decoy

John Williams ruddy duck

KROGHIE ANDRESEN COLLECTION



North Carolina Canvas Swan

Mannie Haywood swan

ROBBIE & LESLIE SMITH COLLECTION



Mainland Hyde County Decoy

Jodie Williams Canada goose

KROGHIE ANDRESEN COLLECTION



Carteret County Curlew Decoy

Portsmouth Island curlew

KROGHIE ANDRESEN COLLECTION



Back Bay Coot Decoy

George Waterfield coot

ROBBIE & LESLIE SMITH COLLECTION



Dare County Diver Decoy

James Best canvasback

ROBBIE & LESLIE SMITH COLLECTION



Core Sound Club Decoy

Mitchell Fulcher head/John Graham body

KROGHIE ANDRESEN COLLECTION



Core Sound Teal Decoy

Lambert Morris blue-winged teal pair

KROGHIE ANDRESEN COLLECTION

12th annual Susquehanna Flats Vintage Hunting & Fishing Collectibles Show Havre de Grace, Maryland January 26, 2019

After a couple of months off the road, we always start the new year at this vintage hunting and fishing collectibles show held at the Level Fire Hall just west of the town of Havre de Grace, Maryland. It's also the first of a whirlwind tour of shows throughout the country that keeps us on the road through early May. For area collectors, with the holidays now far in the rearview mirror, it's an opportunity to shake off the mid-winter cabin fever blues and seek out a new addition or two to add to the shelf.

In addition to decoys, with most examples originating in the Upper Chesapeake Bay region and a smattering from other mid-Atlantic locales, the vendors manning the roughly 100 exhibitor tables also offer a selection of fishing tackle, duck calls, shotguns, shot shell boxes, oyster cans and other related hunting and fishing memorabilia. Since the emphasis is on "vintage" collectibles, exhibitors are encouraged to leave their contemporary offerings at home.

Most of the vendors, Decoy Magazine included, arrived on Friday afternoon to set up their tables, as the doors to the show open the following morning at 8 a.m. The hosts of this show, Pat and Jeanie Vincenti and Chuck and Lynn Usilton, provide pizza and other miscellaneous snacks during set-up. After checking out the inventory in the room, we checked into our hotel in Havre de Grace and headed across the river to nearby Perryville to have a little sushi at Johnny's.

This show always attracts an early and enthusiastic crowd, as the room filled



Nate Heess (R) checks out the "Shick" rig decoys that John Sullivan had on display.


quickly as soon as the doors were opened. Many of the visitors, as well as the vendors, belong to one or more of the handful of decoy collecting clubs in the area, including the Delmarva Decoy Collectors Association, the Potomac Decoy Collectors Association, the East Coast Decoy Collectors Association and the newly-formed Upper Bay Decoy Collectors Association. So in many ways it almost feels like a reunion of sorts. Auctioneer Zeb Barfield displayed some consignments from his upcoming auction. Phil Stanton and Dan Bruffee drove down from Massachusetts to join in the festivities.

Every year our table sits back-to-back with John Sullivan, one of the more avid Upper Bay collectors and a local decoy historian who has published a handful of books on Chesapeake Bay waterfowling and gunning clubs. In addition to his items for sale, he always brings a few birds to put on display. This year he brought a selection of "Shick rig" decoys, which were made by a talented but as of yet

unidentified maker. They possess that moniker because many of the known examples - but not all - have a "Shick" brand on their bottoms. Known examples include buffleheads, redheads, bluebills, canvasbacks, one goldeneye and two magnificent swans. We're hoping in the future to publish an article on these unique decoys.

Often the energy at this show seems to dissipate not long after noon, as most of the attendees seem to be early birds who have other things to occupy the rest of their day. Some take the opportunity to head over to the nearby Havre de Grace Decoy Museum for a visit while in the area. But this year there were still quite a few people in the room at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, just an hour before the show ended. According to the show committee, over 600 paying customers came through the door. Add that to the roughly 100 vendors, and it's a pretty good turnout for a one-day show.

For the first time in three years, we actually found a new home for a few birds, and may get some additional business after the show. As usual, we signed up a good handful of new subscribers and sold quite a few back issues featuring Upper Bay decoys and their makers, which is the most important reason for us exhibiting at this show. We also heard good reports from a handful of other vendors. So all in all, it was a good day.

The proceeds from the Susquehanna Flats Vintage Hunting & Fishing Collectibles Show benefit the Level Volunteer Fire Department and the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum. For more information on next year's show, contact Pat Vincenti at (410) 734-6238 or Chuck Usilton at (410) 378-3528. 



Exhibitor Lloyd Sheats (R) discusses a possible deal with Jon James.