

SHOWSTOPS



22nd annual Ocean County Decoy & Gunning Show

Tuckerton, New Jersey
September 25-26, 2004

Spectacular fall weather greeted the arrival of the annual Ocean County Decoy & Gunning Show bringing a large turnout for the two-day event. The Tuckerton, New Jersey show, held outside at Tip Seaman Park and inside at the local Junior and High Schools, has become a favorite community event.

The majority of exhibitors display in the park, some under the tent and others under a canopy of trees, and the action is well underway by dawn. Along with the old decoy vendors, there are contemporary carvers, waterfowl artists, boat builders and hunting paraphernalia dealers. During the weekend there are carving and calling competitions, skeet shooting and retriever trials at the adjacent pond, and on Sunday they fire a "big gun." There's something for everyone.

Every year on Saturday there is a decoy auction at the Tuckerton Seaport across the street from the park. A couple of years ago a handful of decoy dealers began tailgating under roof on the porch and they returned this year, although we hear the traffic was light there. Yet one dealer insisted it was the "right traffic." The inventory for the auction added little draw.

The show has a shuttle bus that ferries visitors to the park and high school, but it doesn't stop at the Seaport, which might keep some of the "tire kickers" away. However we heard at the end of the weekend that the show committee is going to eliminate the Junior High School location next year and add the Seaport as one of its stops. We also heard a tent will be set up in the Seaport's parking lot next year, allowing for additional vendors there and more visibility from the road. That sounds promising.

As did most vendors we spoke with,



VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Freehold Director James F. Lacey (L) present the Ocean County Decoy and Gunning Show Volunteer of the Year award to John Holloway of Parkertown, New Jersey. Holloway, an award winning carver in both the Barnegat Bay and Delaware River styles, has been involved with the show since its inception 22 years ago. Annually he carves and contributes a decoy for a prize drawing, and serves as a judge for the head whittling contest held during the show. "John Holloway exemplifies the spirit and dedication that help make this event possible, and his contributions to the preservation of the bay heritage are significant and greatly appreciated," Lacey said.

Decoy Magazine had a successful show, selling large numbers of back issues, particularly those featuring New Jersey coastal and Delaware River makers. We didn't see anything exciting surface over weekend, yet one Connecticut collector was particularly pleased with a tiny Lou Barkelow peep that he was taking home. And for many, that's more important than sales.



17TH ANNUAL Duck Fair

September 11-12, 2004
Havre de Grace, Maryland

The 17th annual Duck Fair was held on the grounds of the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum and the adjacent Bayou Hotel on September 11-12, 2004. The view of the famed Susquehanna Flats from this vantage point is majestic, and for this writer's money, no other decoy show offers a more scenic panorama.

The weather both days was sunny, shady and just about perfect. This outdoor show isn't huge, but there were plenty of tables full of old birds among the 40 or so dealers setup, in addition to contemporary carvings and other artworks. Many of those offering old decoys were new to the show, infusing some added excitement into the event.

Saturday afternoon's live auction featured a surprisingly good array of old decoys, a few of which caught the attention of some of the advanced collectors at the show. It was a treat to see the past Decoy Festival chairmen gather together for a head whittling contest, trying hard to out do each other in carving as well as story telling. This display of skill, along with the camaraderie, tall tales and legendary stories, is always a crowd pleaser. The "ugly duck" contest is another annual tradition, and if you think you own an ugly duck, you haven't seen the entrants in this line up.

A highlight this year was the installation of the first Potomac Decoy Collectors Association exhibit in the main gallery. Through an agreement with the museum, the club will maintain a rotating exhibit in a case on the Museum's first floor. Members loaned a total of 16 decoys, which were past PDCA competition winners. Their next exhibit will feature brand-ed decoys.

There was a steady stream of foot traffic on Saturday with things slowing down a bit on Sunday. This annual fair is an important fundraiser for the museum, and reports are that it was a rousing success. Make plans now to attend the 2005 festival.

~ Chad Tragakis

