

2025 Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest

For new and veteran collectors alike, one of the highlights of the annual Havre de Grace Decoy & Wildlife Art Festival is the **Evans McKinney Old Decoy Contest, sponsored by Decoy Magazine** and named for pioneer Upper Chesapeake Bay collector and author, J. Evans McKinney. Each year, collectors enter their favorite pieces in ten different categories, which are then evaluated by a rotating panel of three judges, tasked with selecting a winner in each category along with a first, second and third best-in-show.

There were **118** decoys entered by **25** different collectors this year, a new record in the 22-year history of the competition. Once again, the contest was coordinated by volunteers from the **Potomac Decoy Collectors Association** in partnership with **Ginny and Lloyd Sanders from the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum**. Judging this year were longtime collectors **Nate Heess, Joe Janssen** and **Rob Knight**. While there is no fee to enter decoys in the contest, this year, donations to the museum were encouraged and accepted at the registration table, and more than \$100 was collected to help defray the cost of the ribbons.

Steve Brown took first place in the confidence decoy category with a coot by Charlestown, Maryland's John Graham. He isn't known to have made coots, so this decoy may have started life as another species or might have been an experiment by Graham or someone in his shop. **David Farrow** won the Kent County category with a sculptural Canada goose in a sleeping or preening position by Rock Hall's John Glenn.

John Henry won the Delaware River category with a swimming bluebill drake by John Blair, Jr. While discussions about the attribution of these fine decoys continue, no one can question their quality, beauty or importance. He also won the Severn Hall paint category with a stellar pair of canvasbacks by Henry Lockard.

Don Kirson won the shorebird category with a beautiful dowitcher in spring plumage by Charles Sumner Bunn of Shinnecock, on Long Island, New York. Kevin Peel won the Ben Dye category with an ancient and diminutive "pancake" style canvasback drake by the earliest known maker from Perryville, Maryland.

C. John Sullivan, Jr. earned first in the unknown category with a stylish and very early redhead drake from the Middle, Back or Bush River area of Baltimore County. This handsome bird, which also took best-in-show honors, is reminiscent of the old Civil War ironclads. It was formerly in the collection of Henry Fleckenstein and is remembered as being his favorite decoy. Sullivan also won the Mason category with a regal swan decoy. Formerly in the Charlie Hunter collection, it is thought to have been used on the Upper Chesapeake.

Chad and Christy Tragakis won the Susquehanna Flats hen category with a sleek pintail by James T. Holly. This decoy, which also won second best-in-show, was originally collected out of a gunning club rig on Assateague Island by Bill Purnell. It was most recently in the collections of Peter Bartlett and Jim Doherty. They also won the Up-the-River category with a pair of canvasbacks once attributed to Joseph Walters, but now believed to have been made by

William Reitz. The pair, which also won third best-in-show, was part of a small rig discovered by Bobby Richardson and Henry Fleckenstein in the early 1970s.