

ArtDuckO: Waterfowl Culture in North Carolina



*I'm Fred Olds,
founder of this museum.
Find a few of my
favorite things—and see
if you can answer
my questions!*

Fred's Finds

A Swan Decoy #31

Decoy made by Nick Sapone, 2008.

B Dowitcher Decoys #36

Decoys made by Harry Capps, 1890s.

C Interactive: Creating a Working Decoy

Hands-on interactive made by Jerry Talton, 2008.

D Heron Decoy #21

Decoy made by the Guthrie family, 1890s.

E Suit and Overcoat

Charcoal tweed man's suit and overcoat, 1900.

Trunks

Traveling trunks for clothing and other supplies, early 1900s.

F Wigeon Decoy #35 and Pintail Decoy #36

Decoys made by Ellie Saunders, 1940s.

G Sinkbox

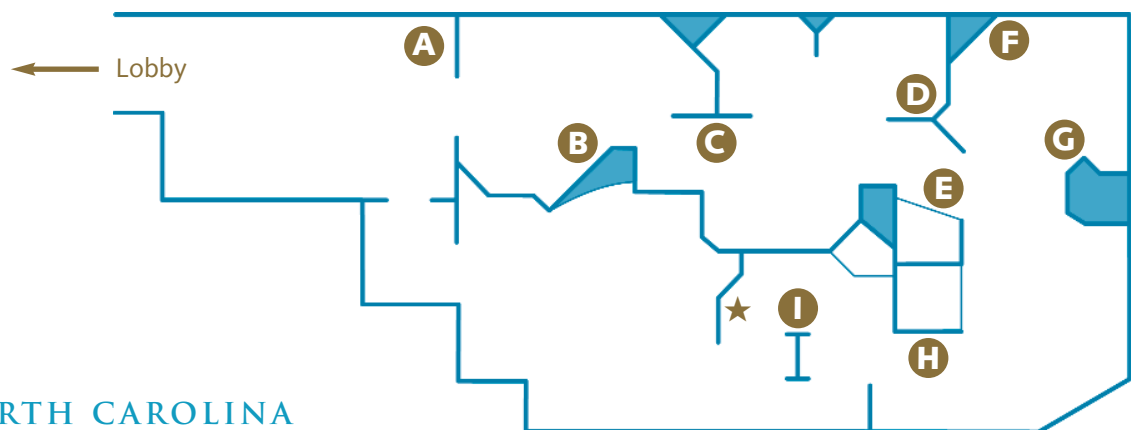
Boat used for duck hunting, late 1800s.

H Seagull Hat

Peach silk taffeta hat with seagull, ca. 1910.

I Wood Duck Decoy #2

Decoy made by Charlotte Totulis, 2006.



**NORTH CAROLINA
MUSEUM OF HISTORY**

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Information & Questions →

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A Swan Decoy #31

Not just a beautiful bird!

Decoys of swans, geese, coots, and other birds are often called “confidence” decoys. Some hunters spread them out with duck decoys, hoping to fool ducks flying overhead into seeing the decoy spread as a safe place to land and feed.

? *What are two things the swan decoy has in common with the swan specimen beside it?*

B Dowitcher Decoys #36

Birds of a feather flock together.

Dowitchers are shorebirds that feed in shallow water, jabbing down with long bills like the needle in a sewing machine. Those bills are full of tiny nerve endings that allow dowitchers to sense their prey without actually seeing it. What do they find so tasty in the sand? The menu includes mollusks, crustaceans, marine worms, and other aquatic invertebrates . . . YUMMY!

? *What are the bills of these dowitcher decoys made of?*

C Interactive: Creating a Working Decoy

Main ingredients

Early North Carolina decoys were made of wood, but large pieces of wood were sometimes hard to find along the coast. Carvers there began to experiment with canvas and other materials that were easier to come by and could be repaired or replaced when they wore out.

? *Name three materials used in making a canvas decoy. What would wear out first? Last?*

D Heron Decoy #21

Feathered fashions

American Indians and European settlers in North Carolina hunted ducks and other birds mainly for food. But by the 1850s hunters wanted not only food but feathers, a must for women’s hats and accessories. Most affected by the feather craze were white egrets, herons, and small terns. Women wore hats decorated with heron or egret feathers and even entire wings of small terns. They also wore heron and egret feathers as hair ornaments.

? *What clothing today uses feathers?*

E Suit and Overcoat, Trunks

Dressed for the hunt

By the late 1800s wealthy sportsmen were traveling to eastern North Carolina to hunt waterfowl. Packed in their large travel trunks were clothes for fancy meals and parties at expensive clubs, as well as gear for hunting. Hunting trips could be elegant and lavish events for those rich enough to belong to a hunt club.

? *What kind of clothing do you wear when you travel?*

F Wigeon Decoy #35 and Pintail Decoy #36

Why canvas?

Large numbers of decoys were needed for duck hunting along our coast. Towing 200 to 300 wooden decoys out to duck blinds on the bay or sound was not an easy task! Canvas decoys, lighter than solid wood, proved much easier to move. They also used less wood, a good thing on the Outer Banks, where trees are mostly live oak or scrub pine.

? *Why not use oak or pine for decoys?*

Both woods are difficult to carve. Oak is a very hard wood, and pine is filled with sticky resin.

G Sinkbox

Hidden danger for ducks!

A sinkbox was a hiding place for a duck hunter. The floating box was weighed down with lead decoys to keep it steady in the water. The hunter, surrounded by hundreds of free-floating decoys, went unnoticed by most approaching ducks. Sinkboxes and constantly improving guns made it possible for just one hunter to kill more than 200 ducks in a day. The federal government banned sinkboxes in 1918.

? *Can you find another kind of hunting blind (hunter's hiding place) in the big drawing over the sinkbox?*

H Seagull Hat

It's a bird! It's a hat! It's . . . a fashion statement?

By the 1890s women were wearing not just feathers but entire birds on hats and clothing. To supply the demand, market hunters were killing millions of birds. Groups of concerned citizens protested the slaughter by boycotting clothing and other items decorated with feathers and bird parts. In 1917 North Carolina became the first state to outlaw market hunting.

? *How many kinds of feathers can you find on the clothes in the exhibit?*

I Wood Duck Decoy #2

It's a wood wood duck!

Charlotte Totulis started making decoys just six years ago. She spent an entire year carving and painting this wood duck decoy! Decorative waterfowl decoys like Charlotte’s are much more detailed than decoys used in hunting. People buy and collect decorative decoys as works of art.

? *How does this wood duck hen (female) decoy differ from the drake (male) in a case nearby? (See ★ on map.)*