

Rappahannock Decoy Carvers and Collectors Guild

Contest Rules for 2026 Decoy Contest

Revised 11.25.2025

General Rules Overall:

- Entries may be entered in one class in the competition per year and not in that same class in subsequent competitions.
- The Competition Chairman will be the final authority for questions concerning any rules.

General Rules for Floating Division Decoys:

- Entry must self-right from any position. The decoy will be placed in tank on its back to self-right. Only two attempts will be made for it to self-right. Youth Division entries and Swans do not have to self-right. Geese and Brant will be placed in tank on their sides.
- Each entry must have an anchor attachment.
- No machined turned decoys, or molded bodies or heads will be allowed in any Division.
- All entries must be a North American species.
- All entries must be painted in colors that represent winter plumage.
- No Flocking allowed on decoy surface.
- No hybrid species allowed.
- No "Tip-up", "Butt-up" decoys allowed.
- Judges at their discretion may, or may not, examine each decoy by holding or touching it with their hands.
- Final judging will be done 20 ft. from tank.
- Only species listed on the registration form will be judged in each Division, other species will be placed in Bench Class.

DIVISION RULES

Rappahannock Gunning Decoy Division:

Carving Rules;

- Wood and cork only
- No side pockets
- Primaries may be raised and undercut as long as they are not fragile.
- Lower mandible may be carved.
- No open bills.
- No detailed bills, nostrils or nails are allowed.

Painting Rules;

- No air brushing allowed.
- Major feather groups paint schemes must be simplistic.

- No feather splits or definitions other than outlining may be used.
- Stippling may be used to prevent hard lines.
- Tick marks may be painted on heads.
- Nail and nostril may be painted.
- Vermiculation may only be done with a fan brush, by tapping only.

Chesapeake Bay Style Decoy Division:

Carving Rules;

- Decoys must be made of wood, cork, carved foam, or stretched canvas.
- Undercut areas, wingtips, tails and necks must not be fragile.
- Inserts may be used.
- Feather splits may be carved.
- Detail carving of the bill is allowed.

Painting Rules;

- No restrictions on painting except as previously noted in General Rules

Silhouette Head Buoy Decoy Division:

Carving Rules;

- Simple and life-size as buoy will allow.
- Head width 1 inch maximum.
- Edges of head may be slightly rounded.
- No carved head detail.
- No carved eye channel.
- Eyes are optional.

Painting Rules;

- No air brushing, spray cans, dry brushing, or ragging.
- Major feather groups paint schemes must be simplistic.
- Stippling may be used to prevent hard lines.
- Tick marks may be painted on heads.
- Nail and nostril may be painted.
- Vermiculation may only be done with a fan brush, by tapping only.
- No flocking.

Buoy Full Head Decoy Division:

Carving Rules;

-No restrictions.

Painting Rules;

--No restrictions on painting except as previously noted in General Rules

Canvas Decoy Division:

Carving Rules;

IWCA Canvas Decoy Division (Section 11) rules apply. This competition is not affiliated with IWCA official competitions. See <https://internationalwildfowlcarvers.com/competition> for rules.

Painting Rules;

IWCA rules apply, except as previously noted in General Rules

Youth Floating Decoy Division:

Carving rules;

-Carver must 16 years old or younger

- No restrictions.

-Decoys do not have to self-right but must float evenly on the water without listing.

Painting Rules;

--No restrictions on painting except as previously noted in General Rules

Youth Floating Buoy Decoy Division:

Carving Rules;

-Carver must 16 years old or younger

- Simple and life-size as buoy will allow.

-Head width 1 inch maximum.

-Edges of head may be slightly rounded.

-No carved head detail.

-No carved eye channel.

-Eyes are optional.

-Decoys do not have to self-right but must float evenly on the water without listing.

Painting Rules;

--No restrictions on painting except as previously noted in General Rules

Bench Division

- Bench Division is an open competition.
- Carvings will be judged by the Category entered, not by specie.
- Carving should represent the intended specie as realistic as the carver is capable.
- No machine-turned or molded bodies or heads are allowed. No flocking is allowed.
- No restrictions on stands or habitats.
- No restrictions on painting.
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Gunning Shorebirds Division:

- IWCA Working Shorebird Division (Section 13) rules apply for carving and painting. This competition is not affiliated with IWCA official competitions. See <https://internationalwildfowlcarvers.com/competition> for rules.

Decorative Shorebirds Division:

- IWCA Style Shorebird Division (Section 12) rules apply for carving and painting. This competition is not affiliated with IWCA official competitions. See <https://internationalwildfowlcarvers.com/competition> for rules.

Contemporary Antiques Division:

- Entries can be primitive, classic folk art, or crude. Floating, non-floating, or stick-ups with standard materials (wood, cork, canvas, etc) may be submitted. Entries will not be floated. Reproductions are discouraged.