



**ALBERTA WILDLIFE CARVING ASSOCIATION  
IMAGES OF NATURE  
ANNUAL WILDLIFE CARVING COMPETITION**

**GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR CARVERS-REV. 2024**

\*\*\*\*\*Entries must have been carved in the last year and must NOT have been previously entered in **this** competition. \*\*\*\*\*

**1. LEVELS OF COMPETITION**

**NOVICE**

Open to carvers who have not won Five (5) Best of Shows, in the Novice level in any wildlife competition.

Note: *Best in Show is any of 1st, 2nd, or 3rd, at all carving competitions entered into for a bird. (Winning with the same bird in multiple competitions counts as one (1) of the five (5)).*

**INTERMEDIATE**

Open to carvers who have progressed beyond the Novice level. An individual that has won Five Best of Shows at the Novice level in any wildfowl competition, **MUST** move into this level. A carver who has previously won Five Best of Shows, in the intermediate level at any wildlife competition, **MUST** move to the Open level.

**OPEN**

All carvers may enter and **MUST** include carvers who have won Five Best of Shows, in the Intermediate level from any wildlife carving show.

**JUNIORS**

Are divided into two age groups 12 years and under, 13 to 17 years old. This is based on the age of the carver at registration date. 18 years or older is considered Novice.

**Event 1**

## **2. DIVISIONS**

### **A Life-size Flat bottom**

This division includes waterfowl of actual size within the range of size of the species.

### **B. Champagne Waterfowl**

Entries must fit within a 3 ½ inch circle and must float properly but do not have to self-right. They may or may not have a keel, judges will not give preference to either. Entries must be smooth; but groups of feathers can be defined. No texturing is allowed. There is no restriction on painting. Entries will first be judged in the tank, entries that do not float properly will be removed. The remaining entries will then be judged in hand as per judging criteria. The goal of the division is to produce a miniature floating waterfowl that has superior painting that represents the best essence of the species.

### **C. Super slicks-non-floating**

Any non-detailed birds with superior painting and no texturing. Does not have to be full size.

### **D & E. Life-size full body**

This division includes birds of actual size within the range of size of the species and which form part of an environmental display.

### **F. Miniature**

Entries must meet two criteria,

- 1) textured note: Smoothies are to be entered in Division B or C.
- 2) less than 8 inches (20 cm) when measured from the base of the bill to the end of the longest upper tail covert



### **G. Exotic Non-North American**

Any bird that is not listed in "The Sibley Guide to Birds" reference book. The carver must supply reference material with photos and description of the bird, all birds will be grouped, miniatures and full size together.

## **Event 2**

#### **H. Fish, Amphibians, Reptiles**

Any carving that is mainly of fish, amphibians, or reptiles. Miniatures and full size are judged together.

#### **I. Sculptures/Stylized**

The composition and finish is open to interpretation of the artist.

#### **J. Mammals**

This Division is for any wildlife other than birds and waterfowl.

#### **K. Wildlife Carvings**

Wildlife carvings other than wood. May be made from stone, antler, bronze etc.

#### **L. Bust**

Wildlife bust consisting of head and shoulders or just head.

#### **M. Native**

This covers all types of native style art, does not have to depict wildlife as the main focus.

#### **N. Other Carving**

This category covers other types of carving techniques; however, the main focus must be wildlife.

### **Event 3**

**(There is only one level, and all entries are judged at this Level)**

#### **O. Traditional Decoys**

- Decoys must be made of wood, cork, or stretched canvas; glass eyes are permitted and materials other than wood can be used in fragile tails and crests. Machine duplicated decoys will be disqualified.
- Decoys will be floated and must self-right from any position the entire bird placed underwater and then released, except Geese, Swan and Confidence, which must right only from their side(s). All entries will be judged for stability and proper floatation.
- Carvings must have sturdy tails and all raised wings must be durable. No feather groups are to be carved.
- No burning or fine stoned texture is allowed. However, simulated texture using gesso, modeling paste, or texturing paint in combination with combing, scratching, or

brushing is acceptable. Minimal carving techniques used to simulate feather texture on heads, i.e., Merganser heads are acceptable.

- Painting techniques shall be typical of modern functional decoys. Entries may include some simple blending of feather edges and internal markings, feather splits, highlighting and hand vermiculation. Carvings with fully developed painting should be entered in Division P.
- Any deterioration of the paint or structural integrity at the completion of judging will result in the disqualification of the entry.
- Judging of the decoy construction will be done when the decoys are put in the water. Final judging will be done from a distance of 20 feet (6 meters) or more. Note: a bird that floats better than another with a superior paint job shall be considered superior. The painting should only be considered at the 20-foot distance.

#### **Q. Contemporary Decoys**

- Decoys must be made of wood, cork, or stretched canvas; glass eyes are permitted and materials other than wood can be used in fragile tails and crests. Machine duplicated decoys will be disqualified.
- Decoys will be floated and must self-right from any position the entire bird placed underwater and then released, except Geese, Swan and Confidence, which must right only from their side(s). All entries will be judged for stability and proper floatation.
- Carving detail acceptable includes bill detail, feather groups, mandible separation and nostril holes' tails may be thinner than Traditional but must be durable. Individual feathers are not to be carved.
- No burning or fine stoned texture is allowed. However, simulated texture using gesso, modeling paste, or texturing paint in combination with combing, scratching, or brushing is acceptable. Minimal carving techniques used to simulate feather texture on heads, i.e. Merganser heads are acceptable.
- Detailed Painting and finishing of individual feathers or feather groups is acceptable.
- Any deterioration of the paint or structural integrity at the completion of judging will result in the disqualification of the entry.
- Judging of the decoy construction will be done when the decoys are put in the water. Final judging will be done from a distance of 20 feet or more.

#### **R. Contemporary Antique Decoys**

- Decoys must be made of wood, cork, or stretched canvas; glass eyes are permitted and materials other than wood can be used in fragile tails and crests. Machine duplicated decoys will be disqualified.
- This division covers all decoys and shorebirds carved in the “old decoy tradition” original design or an interpretation of an “old decoy or shore bird” e.g., Rusty nail shorebirds, decoys made to look aged by the manner in which they are carved, painted and finished. These are NOT floated.

### **S. Shorebird Decoys**

- Shorebirds are judged in their category of Traditional and Contemporary they are to be full body without legs, “stick birds”
- No detailing is acceptable.
- Judging will be done at 20 feet (6 meters) or more
- Best of Show Shorebird will be placed near the tank and judged against the Decoys.

- **Technique and Craftsmanship:**

This refers to the technical skills involved in carving, sculpting, painting and finishing techniques and the execution. It covers the bird or animal, any habitat or accessories that may be involved and the base itself, if there is one. Craftsmanship should be consistent throughout the entire piece. Good craftsmanship is basic to wildlife carving, without it, a carving will go no further.

- **Accuracy:**

Involves the correctness of a piece from a scientific perspective. Is there symmetry throughout the carving? Is the bird/animal, or habitat accurate and of the correct size/proportion? Are the anatomical features of the bird/animal the right shape and size and in proportion to the rest of the carving? Is the coloration and pattern correct? Are the eyes properly placed? Do the toes have the right number of joints and are they in the right place? Are beaks and nose straight and in proportion to the rest of the carving. All are questions of accuracy. Anything accompanying the bird or animal must be given the same scrutiny (example leaves, branches, moss, lichen, artificial water, etc.). Accuracy involves the natural history of the whole piece, all of its components and the appropriateness of these components together.

- **Essence of the species:**

Involves taking accuracy one-step further. Birders call it “jizz”. Psychologists use the term “gestalt”. It involves a thorough knowledge of one’s subject and the ability to capture an attitude in wood. You see a bird on your lawn at dusk. You can’t see any details in the

failing light, just a silhouette, and yet the hop and cock of the head immediately identify it as a Robin. The essence of the bird is there without a feather count, a measurement or a check on color. You may have flawlessly crafted your bird with faultless accuracy, but unless you have captured the essence of your subject and given it the spark that brings it alive, it will not achieve its fullest potential.

- **Artistry:**

Artistry of a piece involves its design and composition. This is where presentation, innovation and creativity all come into play. There should be beauty in the concept apart from the beauty of the bird/animal itself. Line, form, content, color, mass and movement should all be working together to create an integrated whole. Of all the concerns in carving, artistry is the most elusive, the most difficult to explain, to teach, to analyze in the work of others, and to instill in one's own work. But the difficulty is an indication of the importance.

- **Overall Presentation:**

What is rare is often what is most valuable. Wildlife carving requires a multitude of technical skills brought together in overall presentation. Additionally, it requires a thorough knowledge and understanding of birds scientifically as well as emotionally. But most importantly, it involves the ability to bring all these elements together artistically. If wildlife carving is to move beyond craft to art, our goals and expectations must be the same.

- **All criteria are important:**

They all overlap and build on each other. In order for a piece to reach its fullest potential it must succeed in all five areas simultaneously. For the sake of clarity, we have dealt with them individually, but in reality, the distinctions are not so clear-cut.

As the competitor moves through the different levels of competition, novice, intermediate, and advanced/open, techniques, craftsmanship and accuracy as criteria, are taken almost for granted. These are the tools expected to have been mastered, allowing the artist to concentrate on the essence of the species and artistry of the competition piece entered.

Some rules are open to individual interpretation, giving an artist as much artistic license as possible; some are very specific. It is up to the judges to interpret the guidelines with guidance from the AWCA.

The judges' decisions are final.