

## Jack Cox Named 2011 Waterfowl Festival Master Carver

For a part-time carver, Jack Cox knows that it is "quite an honor" to have been named the 2011 Waterfowl Festival's Master Carver. The North Carolina native has been a Festival exhibitor for 27 years and will take center stage among the world's best carvers showing at this year's event, November 11-13. The Carving Galleries will be featured at the Academy Art Museum.

In the mid-1970s, a particularly striking carving began to be chosen from among those exhibited, to be put on special display as the Festival's "Centerpiece Carving." Individual carvers soon were being selected a year or two in advance to create what later became known as the year's "Masterpiece Carving."

Cox remembers visiting the Waterfowl Festival in 1980 or '81. "One of the first things I saw was Lynn Forehand's centerpiece at the Tidewater Inn," he recalls. "They had encircled the whole thing in briars. I was just a spectator then. I came two or three years before I tried to get in as an exhibitor."

With a full-time electric motor business, Cox had started carving as a hobby in the late 1970s after attending his first decoy show in Virginia Beach, about an hour north of where he lives along the North Carolina coast. When he began having some success, he knew that the Waterfowl Festival was one of the shows where he had to exhibit.

In the mid-1980s, Cox sent a bird to Bill Perry, then Coordinator of the Carving Galleries, and was invited to show. The two became good friends. "I used to trip over the Perry kids, crawling around on the floor," he laughs. Many of those children are now adult Festival volunteers. Coming back every year is like a family reunion to Cox. "I have a fun time," he added, calling the Waterfowl Festival his favorite show. "I wouldn't give it up."

Cox earned this year's Festival honor through the highly acclaimed quality of his carving. He has won numerous Best of Show awards for his work, at events from New York to Charleston, South Carolina. He is a five-time North Carolina state champion and won Best of Show at the Ward Foundation World Championship in 2006.

Nominated as Masterpiece Carver five or six years ago, he said, "I kind of dreaded it, in a way, mainly because I knew I was going to have to do a larger piece." However, this year, the Waterfowl Festival is departing from the Masterpiece Carving tradition and showcasing the carver rather than one particular work of art.

Still, Cox is working on a special piece to offer for sale at the event. He described it as a decorative carving, a pair of standing wood ducks in full colorful dress in native habitat. "My friends would all have said, 'Where's the Centerpiece Carving?' if I hadn't done something," he explained, falling back on the early name for the showpiece.

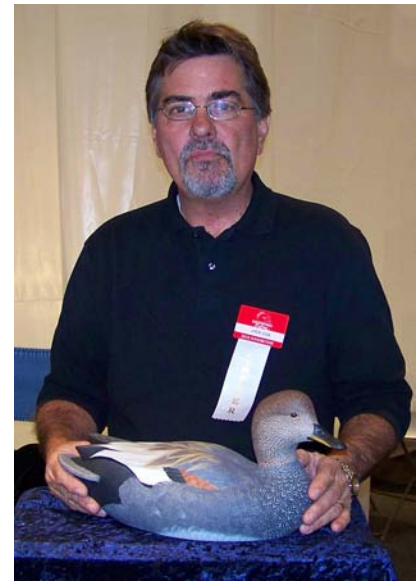
Yet Cox also emphasized that it will not be oversized and will be reasonably priced so it could go into someone's home.

He is putting his best talents into the work, but knows that there surely will be those tiny flaws that only he will notice. "I always see the sore spots," he said, and as long as there is always another piece that can be just a little bit better,

"I still haven't done what I'm satisfied with," he added. "I've still got the fire."

*The 2011 Waterfowl Festival will be held in Easton November 11, 12 & 13. For more information, to volunteer or to make a donation, contact the Waterfowl Festival office at 410-822-4567 or visit its website, [www.waterfowlfestival.org](http://www.waterfowlfestival.org).*

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*Jack Cox at the 2010 Waterfowl Festival*



*One of Jack Cox's award-winning carvings*