

Taxidermy In Focus

Quarterly Newsletter



Matt & Chrissy Harris

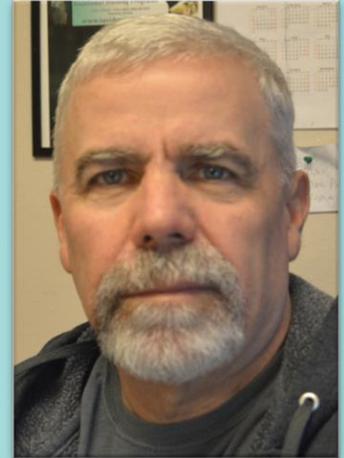


Taxidermy Tech

Vocational Training and Mentorship

Taxidermy In Focus

I recently shared with my local customers my intent to reduce our workload to a manageable level starting this hunting season. We will not be accepting gameheads or any furbearing animals but will continue to accept birds and replica fish. This is a major change for us and perhaps, somewhat of a risk, but I believe it to be necessary for us to be able to focus on Taxidermy Tech training, training support and product development. It also gives me the possibility of having a life outside of work! It has become



Ken Darville

virtually impossible for me to make any plans for travel or anything else because we have so many moving parts and turbulence due to schedule changes and appointments. I truly believe that I would have continued to try and juggle the commercial work with everything else but there were signs telling me to slow it down. I have some health issues that we are finally trying to address which also consumes time...and the most immediate physical limitation is my hands. I have a condition with my hands that is making it harder and harder to use them in ways that I need them to mount deer, small game and larger animals at the volume I have been. Of all of the reasons to lighten the load, this was the straw that broke the camels back. It has been a problem for a while but has not been getting better...in fact it is getting worse so I have no choice but to adapt.

Even simple tasks like turning ears is very painful. I have great help with Sarah and Chloe, especially with birds, but we can not continue to carry the growing load of furbearers and gameheads with me not being able to physically take the lead. My focus will have to be on training and training support as our Taxidermy Tech Program continues to grow each year. I have less and less time to do commercial work so this all comes together at just the right time. I have a couple of close friends locally and up in Alabama that I will continue to do work for but that will be about it. There have been some other issues that I have addressed with the public regarding terms and backlogs but in the end there were just a lot of signs leading me in this direction.

Taxidermy In Focus

We also have another venture that we are pursuing which I can not say much about right now but I have to admit that it is something I am very excited about. The hard decisions have been made and now it is just a matter of following through. We still have about 6 months of hard work left from last season to catch up so no smooth sailing for a while yet.

There will be times in your lives where you will have to make hard decisions. Some of you will one day make the hard decision to leave the security of your “real job” to step off into taxidermy full time. Some of you may decide to take more work or less work or even close your business one day . I have had the occasion to make a lot of hard decisions for myself, for others, for my job and for my businesses and never one time was it without risk. But if you don't test your limits, you will never know where they are and that is what risk is. It can be extremely rewarding or it can bring devastating consequences but you are never going to know until you test it. If you are determined you must fearlessly push it with everything you have...not in a careless way but with careful thought and consideration. That's what motivated many of you to step out there



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If you are forever in fear of pushing your limits, you will never know where they are.

Taxidermy In Focus

and explore Taxidermy by going to a formal training program. It was a risk and it wasn't cheap but you took it on and many of you have continued your journey. As I have grown older, taking risks is not any less risky but putting myself in the right mindset to step out there and do it has become easier. I have more confidence through experience than I did when I was younger. I know that I can do many things. As long as I stay focused and determined, I can do just about anything...and so can you!

As always if you need any technical assistance, another perspective on a hard decision or just have something you would like to bounce of someone else feel free to call me or send me a message. I am probably not the final authority on very much at all but I am available to listen and share my own experiences with you. Ken



"Everything you do in life brings you to where you are."

Tanning Principles

By Matt Harris

Tanning 101

In my last article I failed to mention that if you choose to power wash your capes you need to salt them afterwards, this will pull all the forced water into the hair follicles. Not salting afterwards you are subject to having slippage problems. Ok lets talk how to make a pickle and getting those capes into them. I personally use plastic 55 gallon barrels cut in half and I put no more than 3 capes in them . I want them to have enough space to float without them stacking too much on each other.

The recipe I use for my pickle is

5 gallons of water per WT cape

1lb of salt per gallon of water

(too much salt in pickle shuts down fiber which won't pickle completely causing a rawness finished skin).

1/2 fl. oz. Acid per gallon of water

(avg WT cape will use roughly 3 oz. acid total)

1/2 fl oz. Degreaser

(all capes have some type oils in them)



Matt Harris and his wife Chrissy own and operate Shoal Creek Tannery and Taxidermy in Ashville, Alabama. He is also an Adjunct Instructor for Taxidermy Tech. After a career in the United States Army he spent time as a Pennsylvania Game Warden before making the leap to full time taxidermy. Matts work as a taxidermist has won several State awards, most recently Alabama's Top Choice for Best Mammal. His work as a commercial tanner has proven to be among the best quality products in our industry. He will run a continuing segment on Tanning and contribute on other taxidermy subjects.

Tanning Principles

Mix all this together in your barrel real well. Before placing your cape into the pickle make sure your cape is towel like feel. You may have to soak it in cold water for a bit, or you may just have to rinse off the remaining salt and any blood etc. just depends how dried out it is. Agitate every 30 minutes for the first 2 hours then frequently on Day 1. You should agitate periodically on days 2 and 3. Keep your capes submerged the first 2 overnights by now your PH should be stabilized. PH should not exceed mid 1 range.

Shave your cape on day 3 and put back into pickle for one more day. When shaving your cape you want it to be 1/4" or a bit less when you pinch your cape see pic for reference.

Pull your cape out for the final time and let them drip dry for a bit and or roll them in a towel before you do your final shave. Just follow the same principles as before when doin this shave. Now your ready to neutralize your cape bellow is the process for that.

5 gallon lukewarm water
2 cups salt
1/2 cup baking soda

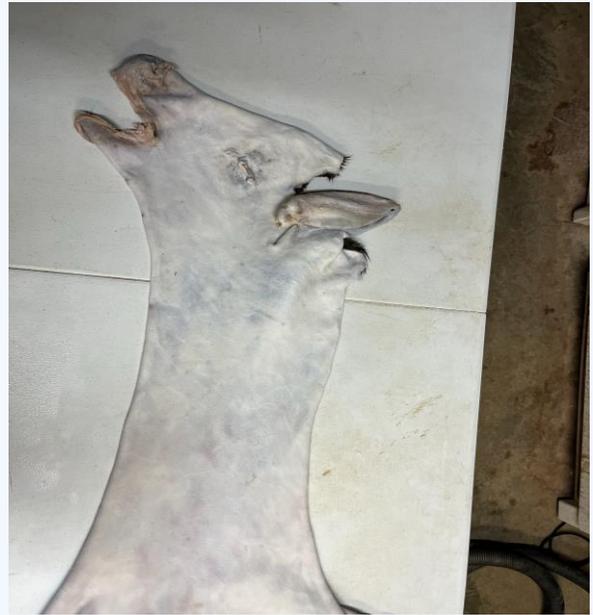


Mix well and add cape. I like to let my capes sit for 20 minutes the agitate it and flip cape and go another 20 minutes. Then pull out rinse both skin and hair sides. Towel dry and proceed to applying your oil, you want your oil to be Luke warm when applying it. Afterwards your going to want to fold your cape hair side out making sure face/ears are in side and leave at room temperature for approximately 18-20 hours. Do not bag to sweat and do not refrigerate.



Tanning Principles

You are now ready to mount or bag and freeze. To mount rinse well in cool water and towel dry. Following this entire process with some practice will give you good commercial tanned capes, I hope this helps some one out. As always if you find you are having troubles or just have a question feel free to reach out to me.



TIP: For a whiter tan and removing blood stain skins you can do a brine soak in replace of normal salting by using this formula after split and turning. Simply soak for 2hrs only, rinse proceed to pickle. 2 1/2 lbs salt 1 gallon of water



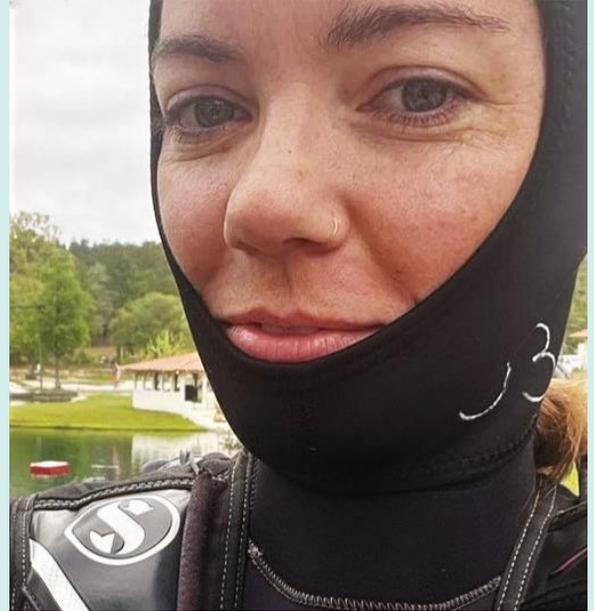
Taxidermy History

By Sarah Darville

The Women of Taxidermy

In the last newsletter, we focused on the life of Martha Maxwell with a detailed account of how she became a taxidermist through her love of nature. This article features the story of another woman that blazed a trail in the taxidermy industry, and was also inspired to do so by her love for the great outdoors.

Born in Louisiana on January 4, 1946, Sallie Dahmes became a two-time world champion taxidermist. She served in many roles while she was involved with the industry and still participates by aiding in research on Chronic Wasting Disease. Her contributions to maintaining this art include (but are not limited to) writing, sculpting, and continued research in the field of conservation. Because she has written and produced so many informational pieces, she is one of the more well-known taxidermists of the 80s. Sallie has always been most interested in helping others to develop their skills through providing quality instruction. Institute.



Sarah Darville is a Taxidermist working at Expressions of Wildlife Taxidermy Inc in Pensacola Florida specializing in Birds. She is also the Taxidermy Tech Operations and Product Development guru, continuously pushing the exploration of new ideas and opportunities. She has a Bachelors degree in Biology with interests in permaculture, middle eastern studies and history. Her inaugural series will explore taxidermy history with an emphasis on the Women of Taxidermy ...Past, Present and Future.

Taxidermy History

Sallie started out as a legal secretary, but because she loved hunting so much, she made the huge leap and switched careers to become a taxidermy apprentice. She had been a long-time customer of Joe Coombs before he took her under his wing. After she expressed interest, Joe graciously offered to teach her what he knew. Before too long, Sallie was proving to be every bit as capable of producing her own quality mounts, so she started herself a separate studio. In 1984, a little less than ten years after her humble

start with Joe Coombs, Sallie won a World Championship with a whitetail deer. In 1985 she won the Carl E Akeley award for a Teal, and Best in World Gamehead for a Mule Deer she mounted. In doing so, Sallie Dahmes sealed her place in history and became the first woman to earn three Gold Akeley Medallions.

From her consistent success, Sallie became a big name in the industry. In 1986, she shifted from the art of taxidermy to producing information and products that could be used as innovative solutions by other taxidermists. She wrote a training manual for mounting whitetail deer and later went on to write another manual for mounting birds. In 1988, she acquired the Polytranspar Airbrush Paint Company and began producing the paints for WASCO (Wildlife Artist Supply Company). Interesting fact...what began as a promotional pamphlet for Polytranspar Paint would evolve into the Breakthrough Magazine we know today. Sallie wrote articles for Breakthrough Magazine and sculpted her own line of whitetail deer forms and duck mannequins. Throughout the 80s, she contributed in many ways to the education side of the industry. Ultimately, Sallie co-owned the entire WASCO operation with her business partner Ken Edwards.



Taxidermy History

In 2007, she was nominated as Conservationist of the Year for her contributions to research on deer populations and the effects of Chronic Wasting Disease. Sallie has been involved with raising deer fawns on her property in Georgia to assist with the project. She feeds them and interacts with them daily. She cleans their pens and helps out in any other way that she can assist with ongoing research. She is deeply committed to this endeavor, and pours her heart and soul into caring for the deer. She's even had to transport these animals herself from Georgia to Colorado. The process apparently involves a lot of paperwork and many stressful hours on the road. She provides care for the animals while trying not to develop a deep emotional attachment to them. As Chronic Wasting Disease continues to infect deer populations each year, Sallie works relentlessly with research teams to find a cure.



In July 2011, McKenzie Supply Company announced it had acquired WASCO. With the sale, Sallie was able to focus exclusively on her greatest passion, which is the conservation of wildlife. In 2017, Sallie was inducted into the Taxidermy Hall of Fame. Even though she discovered her natural ability a little later than most, Sallie excelled in this artform after committing to learning from Joe. She was naturally gifted, and after going 'all-in' and quitting her job as a legal secretary, she put herself in the right places with the right people. She was able to have a lot of influence over the education and distribution of information in the network of taxidermists.

Taxidermy History

She went on to open the industry to new budding taxidermists that read her manuals and watched her tutorials on VHS. We take for granted the free-flowing exchange of information that taxidermists used to withhold from one another. Trade secrets were passed down but not spread about. Sallie shared what had been shared with her and made learning taxidermy accessible to more people. Sallie has contributed immensely to creating community around the taxidermy industry.



Resources

Fotos Vintage 1976 Press Photo Joe Coombs Partner Sally Dahmes en Taxidermist Studio. 10.25 x 8 Pulgadas. - Imágenes históricas. 28 October 1976.

<https://www.amazon.es/Vintage-Partner-Taxidermist-Studio-Pulgadas/dp/B07B884M3Y>

Press Release: WASCO acquired by McKenzie Supply Company. 14 July 2011.

<https://www.vandykestaxidermy.com/WASCO-News-Release-July-14-2011-W188.aspx>

Beginners Video Course. <https://www.taxidermy.net/publications/videos1.html>

Announcement: Sallie's Nomination for Conservationist of the Year. 20 September 2006.

<https://www.taxidermy.net/threads/1880/>

Whitetail-Mule Deer Manual. By Sallie Dahmes for Breakthrough

<https://www.vandykestaxidermy.com/BP1003-P125.aspx>

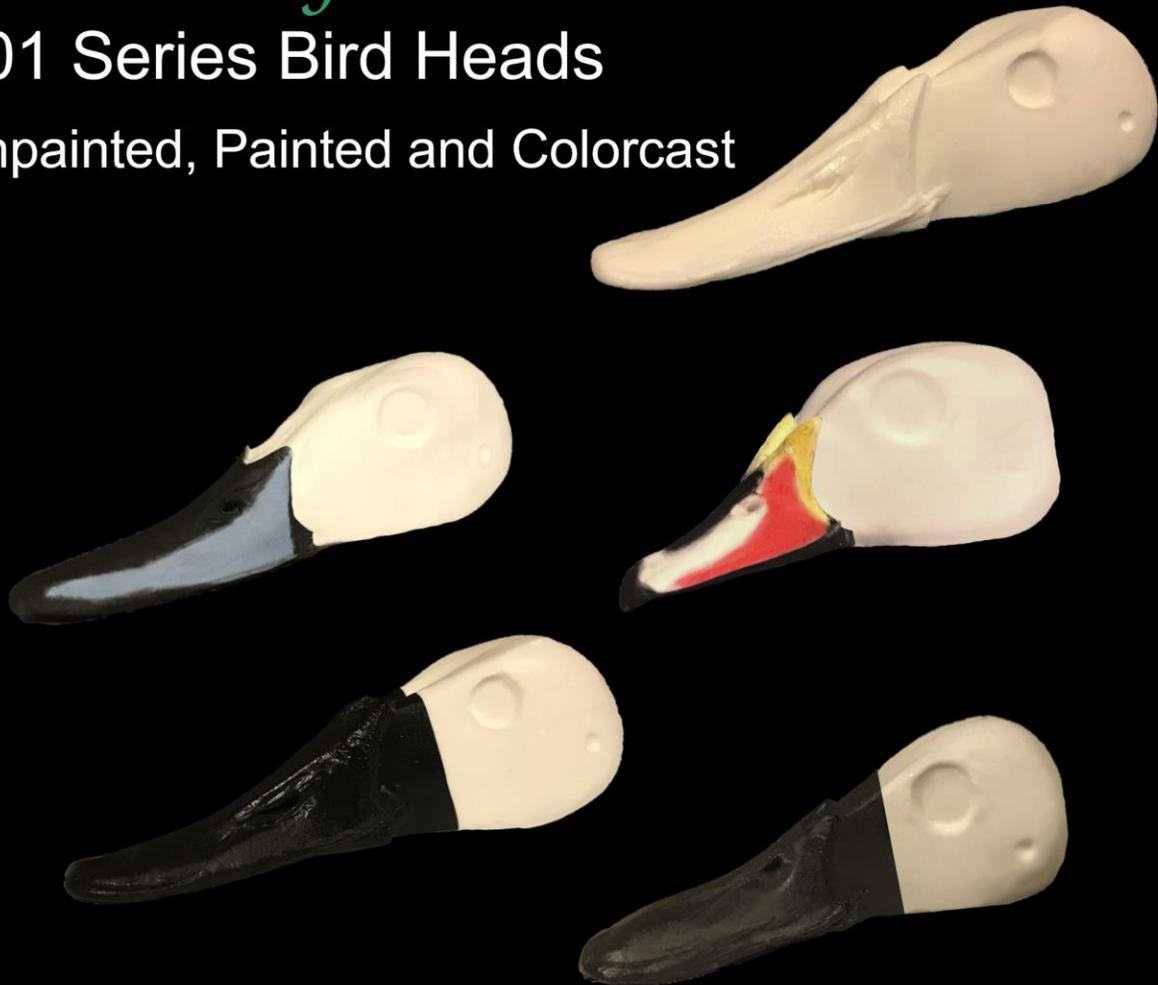
Larry Blomquist (current owner of Breakthrough Magazine)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjEaYe7xmNM>

Taxidermy Tech

101 Series Bird Heads

Unpainted, Painted and Colorcast



Available
Wood Duck Drake
Wood Duck Hen
Pintail Drake
Blue Wing Teal
Canvasback
Mallard

Available 31 July
Mallard Hen
Redhead
Hooded Merganser
Wood Duck (open bill)
Green Wing Teal
Common Eider

Unpainted heads are \$9. All painted heads are \$14.50.

Colorcast heads are \$10.50 and are currently only available in
BW Teal, Hooded Merganser and Canvasback.

Forms produced for sale by Taxidermy Tech are copyrighted .
Any reproduction or copying of the forms or any parts of the forms is strictly prohibited.

We have heard you! For years our students and alumni asked us when we were going to have supplies available for purchase directly from Taxidermy Tech. We have always manufactured certain products that were used in our own commercial work but entering the supply market was never part of the plan. Unfortunately, the current state of the supply industry combined with post-COVID economic conditions left a gap that needed to be filled. We can not fill the gap for the entire taxidermy industry or cover every possible need but we can focus our efforts on the needs of our Taxidermy Tech network, students, alumni and team members.

Starting July 1, 2022, we will offer a growing line of materials and supplies exclusively to the Taxidermy Tech Network. Your inclusion ensures that you are eligible for our discount pricing and specials that we will run periodically. You don't have to do anything! If you are a student, alumni or a team member which includes our trusted vendors, you are already a part of the Taxidermy Tech Network! Our first priority is building out our birds products, reference materials and initial supply kits for incoming students. We are ahead of schedule on our July goal of producing the first 12 waterfowl heads and before the end of September 2022 we will have completed the second phase of 23 artificial heads (both waterfowl and upland birds). Stay tuned for updates on other products and services!



*Mount by Kaylyn Wilkinson on WDDM101
Wood Duck Drake Head*

You can order on the website through a shopping cart function that will be available soon ...or... you can call in your order to 844-945-3278... or purchase at our location in Pensacola. Thank you for being a part of our Team!

Recent Alumni

We will have the completed photos with mounts in the next newsletter

May – July 2022

Tyler Woodard- Basic Whitetail

Steven Howell – Basic Whitetail

Les Hulen – Basic Whitetail

Kaylyn Wilkinson – Basic Waterfowl

Kimberly DuEst – Basic Whitetail

Sydney Jones – Basic Waterfowl

Randy Harper – Basic Whitetail

Joseph Foust – Basic Waterfowl

Sydney Jones – Basic Whitetail

Future Alumni

August - October 2022

Eric Kelly– Basic Whitetail

Ron Williams – Basic Whitetail

Dillon Haley – Basic Whitetail

Matt Taylor – Basic Whitetail

Phoebe Nipper – Predator

Ryan Davis – Basic Waterfowl

Seth Standford -Basic Whitetail

Kristie Whisler – Predator

Ryan Davis – Basic Whitetail

We will have more photos with mounts in the next newsletter



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Vocational Training Programs
CALL TODAY - TOLL FREE (844) 945-3278
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Tyler Woodard
Rayville Louisiana



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Lake Wales, Florida



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Randy Harper
Wewahitchka, Florida



www.taxidermytech.com

Bald Eagle

The American Bald Eagle has been a symbol of the United States since 1782 and is proudly displayed on government buildings, currency, passports, even the official seal of the President. It was chosen for its fierce, strong, and proud appearance.



The Bald Eagle is truly impressive to look at with a wingspan that can reach nearly 7.5 feet. They have bright yellow beaks and talons, both which are extremely sharp. The Eagle's feathers are constantly developing so when a new feather grows in, the old feather is pushed out.

They are known to be a monogamous bird and roughly 90% have one mate for life. The male and female work together to build their nests by stacking and twisting twigs, sticks and branches in the tallest tree they can find. They then line the nest bowl with softer material such as moss, marsh, grass, or corn husks.

Species Profile

By Erin Stephens



Erin Stephens, née Darville, is a contributing writer to the Taxidermy Tech InFocus Newsletter. She is also a sales representative for Expressions of Wildlife Taxidermy Inc. She has an Associates Degree in General Studies/Business. Her interests are in writing and blogging specifically about life in the real world. She has a particularly unique brand of humor that she uses at times to share her story and with respect to the newsletter, brings a sort of Jack Hanna style to her contributions. Erin lives in Jacksonville Florida with her husband Curtis and two children, Nathan and Skyler.

Bald Eagle

They typically lay one to three eggs each year with both parents taking turns incubating the eggs. Baby Eagles are called Eaglets and are born with soft gray feathers to keep warm. Once they can fly, they are called fledglings and are covered with brown feathers. When they are ready to leave the nest which is around 3 months of age, they hop back and forth between near branches to strengthen their wing muscles and once strong enough, they jump from the nest and begin to soar. At around four years of age, they develop the white tail and head for which they are named.

It is no surprise that the birds inhabit North America, the majority of which are in Alaska. Their natural environment consists of lakes, coasts, rivers, cliffs and of course treetops. A lake near a forest with tall trees is idyllic.

Being close to bodies of water is important, because like my husband, they spend most of their time fishing. They are a predatory bird and have excellent eyesight for spotting their prey. Once spotted, they dive reaching speeds of nearly 100 miles per hour from as high as 10,000 feet! Talk about an adrenalin rush!

In addition to fish, they will also eat small mammals and waterfowl. If they see another predatory bird with a meal, they may steal it. The sheer size of the Eagle will overpower any hawk or falcon.

As they fly free in the skies above, unbeknownst to them they have a huge job in symbolism. We are wrapping up July, a month when BBQs, fireworks and red, white, and blue are prominent in most American Backyards, but soaring above us all year long is the proud, the strong, the majestic...the American Bald Eagle.



Bald Eagles are protected under the National Emblem Act of 1940, and it is a crime to own, capture or kill them. You cannot even collect a feather legally.

It was a surprise to see one at the Jacksonville Zoo when I first visited. She had a broken wing that would never heal and the Zoo had to get special permission from the United States Government to home her. *

UPDATE

It is with great sadness we share the passing of Athena, one of our bald eagles at Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens. Athena was humanely euthanized earlier this month due to a worsening condition while being treated for an eye injury. She arrived here in 1988 and has been recorded as being the second oldest bald eagle in an AZA institution. Bald eagles have an average lifespan of 20 years in the wild, while Athena was estimated to be 40 years old! However, she was a fully grown wild bird when rehabbed so her exact age is unknown. Athena had obtained a wing injury while in the wild. It was believed that she was shot by a hunter and had to have a partial wing amputation due to her injury. This rendered her unsuitable for release which is how she made the Zoo her home.

Remembering Athena the Bald Eagle
Press release December 2021



Athena (Bald Eagle)
Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

Few if any of us will never get the opportunity to mount a Bald Eagle. So why is this our species profile for the quarter? Well, glad you asked! There are other options to traditional mounting but they do require an extraordinary amount of patience and a high level of understanding of Eagle anatomy and feather patterns...and maybe a little “outside the box” thinking. World Champion Replica Artist Jim Day of Indiana is the most well known and accomplished of only a handful of people who have the skills to accurately recreate this fabulous creature. For more information go to the next page!

Eastern Diamondback Rattlesnake

Bald Eagle Replicas by Jim Day

Please visit Jim's website at <http://www.wildlifeinteriors.com/>



Replica Bald Eagle by Jim Day



Hands on

Pan Pastels for Duck Bills

We made the switch a while back and I absolutely love the pan pastels for doing our duck bills. We use the actual PanPastel brand which you can purchase relatively inexpensively through Amazon but I am sure any brand of pastels will work. I have experimented a little with pastels in flat art but only recently in my Taxidermy Work. The artificial bills are pretty easy but there are challenges with darker bills and blending some of the mid tones. All in all though, the process for me and those who work here with me is much easier with the Pan Pastels which means much less airbrush work.

Recently Sarah managed to grab some video of me with a student demonstrating the painting of a Wood Duck bill with pan pastels...I have posted links here.

[WD1](#)

[WD2](#)

[WD3](#)

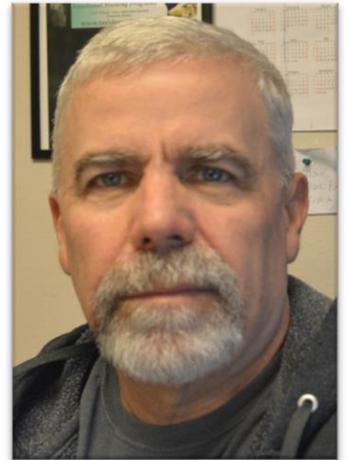
[WD4](#)

[WD5](#)

We will try to have some more video and progressive images in the future of painting various bills using the pastels.

I use soft sponge and the best tool for me is the eyeshadow applicator brushes. You should keep a flat wide paintbrush close to get colors down into the area of the lamellae. After applying color I lightly blow on the surface to remove any loose pastel powder. In between layers of pastel you will have to use a spray fixative to seal the bill. Hold it at a distance and lightly mist...no heavy spray!

The biggest challenge we have experience is painting the feet. This is really not an issue if using artificial feet but if using the natural feet like most it can be quite challenging. I did employ a technique hand painting the base color on the feet with acrylics and then coming back later with the pastels to soften and detail. This worked pretty good and will likely become of preferred method of painting the feet.



Ken Darville



World Taxidermy Championships

It has been 27 years since I attended my first convention and competition...the World Taxidermy Championships, at that time held in Gainesville Georgia. I saw an ad in a Wildlife Artist Supply Company catalog and decided to attend. For me it was my first taste of exposure among my peers in a world I never really knew existed and while I thought I was pretty good with my customer work, I had no idea what I was walking in to in taxidermy competition. I had no concept at that time and in the years leading up to it of State Associations, formal lessons or anything beyond mail order booklets. Most folks learned through books or experimenting on their own or apprenticed to a taxidermist who usually exchanged lessons for labor. I muddled my way through it with what I had.

As we drove up to the convention center I decided that I wanted to scout the place before we brought in my mounts. It was a very sobering experience walking through those doors. I had never seen anything like it or even imagined it. I was blown away...and embarrassed. These folks were World Class in my book. Even the unknown of the time were the best in the industry. I was a flat beginner, even with several years of commercial experience under my belt and a book full of happy customers.

I only entered one piece in that show and it was a novice piece at best in comparison to some of the work I saw but I decided to enter a professional category, hoping to gain something from this experience. By chance I met a many named Joe Rodgers from Abbeville Alabama there.

I had seen his work in the Tom Mann store in Eufaula before and while he was an excellent commercial taxidermist with decades in the industry, he was not there to compete but rather to learn and simply enjoy the fellowship with his peers. I had explained to him what I experienced on arriving at the WTC and he asked to see the pieces I did not enter. I reluctantly took him out to our vehicle and showed him what I saw as absolute failure. I waited nervously as he examined the first of my mounts and to my surprised, he complimented my work and told me how he wished his first competition piece looked like that one. In my own prideful need to be in this elite category it had not even occurred to me that no one is born a World Champion ...everyone starts somewhere. What we do along the way in an effort to develop and cultivate our skills is a reflection of how hungry we are to succeed.

Joe was a huge influence in that respect and while I had come a long way in the previous years, I found the desire to take my work to the next level. Over that summer my skills improved tremendously and through two State Shows in two months I won several ribbons including 2 Blues, a Best of Category and some other awards I never dreamed of.

The moral of the story here is two fold...First, if you have the opportunity to go to your state conventions, do it and if you can, put together your best work with the knowledge you have and compete...and second, leave your pride at home. Go humbly and learn everything you can...and then go home and get ready for the next one! Ken

Whitetail Eye Checks

Remember these???

Checks

1. Alligators
2. Lacrimal Crease
3. Caruncle
4. Pitch
5. Angle
6. Egg
7. Limbal Ring (visible in back)
8. Low Point
9. Flow of lower lid
10. Limbal Ring (not visible center third top or bottom)

Our Preferred Suppliers

[Foster Taxidermy Supply](#)

[Mears Whitetail Forms](#)

[Joe Coombs Taxidermy Supply](#)

[Dixie Classic Panels](#)

[Rocky Mountain Materials](#)

[Reynolds Advanced Materials](#)

[Pro-1 Performance Chemicals](#)

[Havalon \(Blades\)](#)

[Uline](#)

[FleshingMachines.com](#)

[Hobby Lobby](#)

[Breakthrough Magazine](#)

[Taxidermy Today Magazine](#)

[StickerBanners](#)

Matt and Chrissy Harris are two truly wonderful people that we are blessed to have as friends. They have been helping with some of our tanning load over the last couple of years...and a lot of other folks as well. They have built a truly respectable tannery. My feeling is that they have such a great product in their tanning that they could grow into the breakthrough tannery that the industry needs but I know that their hearts are really in the taxidermy and the creative process that goes with it. They collaborated together on this beautiful Red Hartebeest mount and unique habitat display for the Alabama Association Annual Convention. Congratulations Guys! Outstanding job and we thought it was the perfect cover for this quarters newsletter! Oh and...Happy Birthday Matt!



Check out their website at <https://www.shoalcreektaxidermy.com/>

