

Geoffrey Vine- Bufflehead Decoys

Geoffrey Vine isn't from New Jersey, but he carves duck decoys like he is. A true son of the Midwest, Geoff was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and raised in Kalamazoo, Michigan. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin in 1993, he leveraged his summer construction job into permanent employment with Stevens Construction Corp. of Madison. Fourteen years later he's still with Stevens; only now, instead of swinging a hammer, he's their Vice-President.

A life long hunter, "the whole wood thing with construction" eventually led Geoff into carving decoys for his own rig. When he looked around for inspiration he found that the style that meshed the best with his talents was that of the New Jersey carvers. It's interesting to note that Geoff considers the technique of Jersey great George Strunk as a particular inspiration in his development. George's reputation seems to be generating broad appeal because I can name five other young carvers off the top of my head who also claim him as someone they've learned from. At this rate George is becoming the 'Yoda' of the Delaware River.

When he first started carving, Geoff used Wisconsin white pine



primarily, but as he's refined his technique he's switched to Maine white cedar in an effort to successfully imitate the Jersey style. He paints in acrylics, but by his own admission uses a lot of additives so that the paint looks like an oil based brand when it's laid down on the work, as you can see from the pair of Buffleheads pictured here.

An avid user of the DecoyCarvingForum website, a friendship that started there with fellow carver Jode Hillman (whose Hucks Caines Mallard is featured in the column this month) recently led to some top awards at the Tuckerton Decoy Festival. Geoff asked Jode if he'd enter some of his birds in the

competition if he sent them to him. Being the good guy he is, Jode said 'sure.' Geoff won two first prizes, one for a green-winged teal hen and another for a bluebill hen. He also received a second prize for a green-winged teal drake — not bad for a long distance entry with an assist by Jode Hillman!

Bluebills used to be a prolific species in the fields and marshes of Wisconsin, but sadly, not so much anymore. They're Geoff's favorite bird to carve so if you're looking for a fresh Jersey carver to invest in, by way of Waunakee, Wisconsin, you might want to give him a look. You can reach Geoff via e-mail at geoff@vinedecoys.com.