

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: CHINCOTEAGUE IN TRANSITION: VERNACULAR
ART AND ADAPTATION IN COMMUNITY
HERITAGE

Kristin Marie Sullivan, Doctor of Philosophy, 2014

Dissertation directed by: Professor Erve Chambers
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In addition to serving aesthetic or representational purposes, art can express values related to heritage and identity politics. This dissertation discusses the ways in which the vernacular arts of hunting decoy and decorative wildfowl carving in Chincoteague, Virginia, as well as the closely related tradition of wildfowl hunting, express understandings of various forms of heritage in touristic and community exchange, representing and helping tell the story of the ways in which this locale's rural population has adapted to, resisted, and at times encouraged changes related to tourism development and environmental regulation. In the process this project considers how embodied cultural knowledge is presented through carving and closely related practices such as hunting, how environmental and community values relate to carving and carving-related traditions, and the ways in which community members negotiate identity and maintain the integrity of their communities through the production and appreciation of localized artistic expression.

Research supporting this dissertation consists primarily of systematic participant observation and key informant interviewing with hunting decoy and decorative wildfowl carvers. It was conducted over the course of nearly two years living on Chincoteague Island, developing close relationships with wildfowl carvers and others associated with

this tradition, for example shop owners, arts organizations, local historians, hunters, and museum specialists.

CHINCOTEAGUE IN TRANSITION: VERNACULAR ART AND ADAPTATION IN
COMMUNITY HERITAGE

by

Kristin Marie Sullivan

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DEDICATION

In Memory of the Brackish Water Gang

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PROLOGUE

My husband Ryan and I moved to Chincoteague in May 2012 for my dissertation research, though I became acquainted with and began visiting Chincoteague nearly two years prior to that. We have found it to be a fascinating place filled with unique characters and locations.

When Ryan and I moved into our house we were told the key was in the mudroom; the house was unlocked (as some houses in Chincoteague always are), and we were to help ourselves to the place. It took all of an hour for the neighbor behind us to hang her head out her window and introduce herself. The neighbor across the street walked over to introduce himself and ask about where we work and what we're doing here, to get the lowdown on the newcomers. The property manager, whom we had not met before, came over to make sure everything was okay, and he informed me a decoy carver rented a workshop behind us. The carver is Jay Cherrix, grandson of Ira Hudson; the latter is perhaps Chincoteague's best-known carver. I had no idea how the property manager might know that would be of interest to me. I learned quickly that word travels fast in Chincoteague.

Many of the houses in the middle of Chincoteague have been repurposed as tourist rentals. Houses in town boast brightly-painted shutters and trim, mailboxes featuring ducks or horses, and decorative touches related to the landscape: colorful buoys, painted crab pots, or model lighthouses as decorations. We moved into to a rental house on Ridge Road, away from the majority of these. The neighborhood where we live is known as "Snotty Ridge." Several people have told me that, decades ago, if you looked at a Snotty Ridger and wiped your nose with your hand or sleeve, you were asking for a

fight. Snotty Ridge is not the only neighborhood on the island with its own lore. There is also “Up Neck,” “Wildcat,” “Deep Hole,” “Chicken City,” “Piney Island,” “Mad Calf,” “Tick Town,” “New Road,” “Dodge City,” “Rattlesnake Ridge,” and “Down the Marsh” (or simply, “Down Marsh”). Nearly all of these neighborhoods, I am told, once had its own general store, and operated almost as its own town within the small island. People from the different neighborhoods have different names, for example there are “Up Neckers,” and then there are “Deep Hole Dippers”¹. Many of the neighborhoods have their own reputations, as well. Dodge City, for example, was once the rough part of town likened to the Wild West.

Neighborhoods are not the only things with nicknames on Chincoteague. People all over the island have earned or fallen into colorful monikers and cognomens. Many people, such as Delbert “Cigar” Daisey, have interesting stories about the origins of their nicknames (see Chapter Three). Others seem to have fallen into them. When I asked John “Guinea Bird” Hill how he acquired his less than flattering name, he responded: “Shit happens.” Several people have told me that when someone with a well-known nickname passes away, the funeral parlor will put their nickname on the door:

Russell Fish: If you’ll notice, if you go by the funeral home, a lot of times they’ll have the nickname up there along with the real name.

Kristin Sullivan: Oh really?

Fish: Because if you put the real name you don’t have a clue who it is.
(Laughter)²

¹ “Dipper” is a local name for a bufflehead—a small black or gray and white duck with a large head known for quickly diving in and up out of the water; species *Bucephala albeola*.

² Interview of Russell Fish with the author and Alexis Estomin for the Ethnographic Overview and Assessment for Assateague Island National Seashore (Chambers and Sullivan [2014])

Nicknames I have encountered include Cigar, Cork, Guinea Bird, Umbrella, Sourdough, Dumplin', Popsicle, Fish, Jingles, Big Mel, and Dino. Most people with nicknames are of an older generation. There are also those today who are associated with their occupation by their nicknames, such as decoy carver Roe "Duckman" Terry, and "Captain Barry," a boat tour captain, artist, and self-proclaimed adventurer.

Ryan and I live a little over a mile from Chincoteague's historic Main Street, which is lined with small shops and other tourist attractions: book stores, art stores, souvenir shops, a gourmet pet treat store, a wine and cheese shop, restaurants, and a decoy shop called "Decoys Decoys Decoys." Also on Main Street is the Island Theatre, where the movie *Misty* premiered in 1961. Outside the theatre are the pony Misty's actual hoof prints in cement, and her name is signed by children's book *Misty of Chincoteague*'s author, Marguerite Henry. Across the street from the theatre is a large bronze statue in front of Robert Reed Park. The park was named for a beloved mayor who helped usher in Chincoteague's tourism age. The statue is of the beloved storybook horse, Misty, and she is joined by other animals important in Chincoteague's story: a chicken and a duck. Behind the park is the Chincoteague Channel, where boats offload seafood to the docks there, alongside boat slips for tourists and sightseeing tour companies. Seagulls and ducks flock here, attempting to get scraps from fish boats, or crumbs from picnicking tourists. The ducks here are not the same ducks as elsewhere in town, however. All over Chincoteague there are small flocks of "town ducks," which live on the island year-round and tend to inhabit the same spaces daily. There is a flock in the park, one by the gas station on Main Street, another flock farther north on Main, and others elsewhere in town.

The busiest street in town is Maddox Boulevard, named for Wyle Maddox, who helped build this road that connects the causeway (itself connecting the mainland to Chincoteague) to the Assateague Bridge on the other side of the island. The Maddox, as it is sometimes called, is sort of like a boardwalk off of the beach. Boardwalks are not allowed on nearby Assateague Island's protected beach, and the Maddox makes up for it. There are t-shirt shops, ice cream shops, restaurants, miniature golf and bumper boat facilities, hotels, and the few chain restaurants on the island, all along this one road. Just before the bridge to Assateague is a t-shirt shop that was, until very recently, the Refuge Waterfowl Museum. This museum was lined with sweet-smelling cedar planks inside, and it was dedicated to decoys, decorative waterfowl, and maritime art. "It breaks my heart they turned that into a shirt shop" is a common refrain among long-time visitors and locals alike.

A few doors down from the former waterfowl museum is the Museum of Chincoteague Island, which many locals still refer to by its former name, the Oyster Museum. Museum staff and board members, comprised of both locals and relative newcomers, have constructed displays on the seafood industry, the Assateague lighthouse, waterfowl hunting and decoy carving, the volunteer fire company, tourism, school life, churches, ship wrecks, and what the community looks like today. The collection represents a wide range of Chincoteague history, and a great deal of it has been donated by residents of the island. When I volunteered and worked there I was amazed at how often local people, or people whose family are from the island, would bring in pictures to scan for the museum's collection, as well as objects to donate or loan.

The pièce de résistance at the museum is easily Misty of Chincoteague, along with one of her foals, Stormy. These are not replicas or homages; they are the actual ponies, stuffed (or “artfully preserved,” as a former museum director likes to say) by the Beebe Family, who once owned them in life, and who have now loaned them to the museum. While working at the museum I have seen people—women, usually—break down and cry in nostalgic disbelief that they are actually in front of Misty. Some call their mothers or daughters while in the museum, to tell them about seeing Misty. Most people stop to get their pictures in front of the mare and her foal.

As one crosses the short bridge to Assateague they are going over the Assateague Channel, just before paying to get on to what was once considered another of Chincoteague’s neighborhoods—Assateague Island. Remnants of the old village there remain. If one looks to the left just after crossing the bridge, they might just make out the gravestones along the forest floor, sometimes marked by small American flags.

Depending on the season, one may see any number of species of birds near the bridge: ducks, geese, shorebirds such oystercatchers and willets, clapper rails, terns, herons and egrets, bald eagles, and osprey. Some of these birds feed on the many oyster beds that become exposed in the channel during low tides, or try to get at the seafood trapped in crab pots or aquaculture floats set by watermen. Other fowl perch on the channel markers and duck blinds that dot the waterscape. From the bridge, the Assateague lighthouse³ is clearly visible above a loblolly pine forest. It is still an active

³ The Assateague Lighthouse was first built as a wooden structure in this location in 1833. It was torn down due to insufficient height, and construction began on the existing structure in 1860. Construction halted due to the civil war, and was finished in 1867. At the time of construction the lighthouse was nearly at the edge of the island. Today it is

navigational aid—blinking twice every five seconds in the night, and known by its red and white stripes during the day. The lighthouse is also a popular destination, as tourists can pay to climb the stairs to an observation deck. Prior to the Assateague Bridge’s installation, but after the demise of the Assateague Village, Coast Guard men would take boats from Chincoteague Island over to the lighthouse to maintain the light and lens. Decoy carver, hunter, and waterman Carlton “Cork” McGee, who was born in 1931 (two years before the lighthouse was converted to operate electronically), recalls accompanying some of the Coast Guard men when he was a boy. He told me the men, led by lighthouse keeper Norman Jones, would have to go to the lighthouse by boat and clean the lens from time to time. They would “let” him tag along and help clean, which he thought was the greatest thing. There is a strong affinity for the lighthouse among Chincoteaguers, evidenced in part by red and white lighthouse lawn ornaments and other decorations throughout town. The lighthouse is also featured on the Town seal, along with a pony, a fishing boat, and a large shorebird.

On Assateague there are several paved walking and biking trails, though the biggest draw is the ocean-side beach. Chincoteague natives and long-time residents recall days when there was a restaurant on the beach, and when anyone could go to large island dunes for picnicking, away from the designated areas marked off in recent years. Today much of the island is off-limits to the public, and the restaurant has been repurposed into a National Park Service visitors’ center.

over four miles northeast of the southern tip of Assateague. Land has built up due to ocean currents and drift that occurs during storms.



Figure 1 House sign featuring a red-breasted merganser (locally called a “shell duck”) decoy, 2012.
Author’s own photograph.

One of the vestiges of earlier life on Chincoteague still visible to, and even sometimes welcoming tourists, are hunting decoys and decorative wildfowl. Many homes around the island are marked with signs featuring family names⁴ and decorative wildfowl (see Fig. 1). And then there are shops. Aside from Decoys Decoys Decoys, tourists can find a roadside stand down the road from my house where Herb Daisey sells souvenir decoys and antique fishing rods (see Fig. 2). On Maddox Boulevard Guinea Bird sells decoys out of his garage (see Fig. 3). Cork McGee has a series of handmade signs leading customers from East Side down McGee Lane to his backyard shop (see Fig.s 4 and 5). Mark Daisey swings his large workshop doors open on Circle Drive, next to his house,

⁴ Many of these signs—as well as other signs, such as street names—feature family names common to the island and dating back in some cases hundreds of years. These include: Tarr, Jester, Birch, Beebe, Cherrix, Bowden, Whealton, Clark, Thornton, Daisey, and Savage.

and has chairs set up welcoming passers-by to come and sit with him and decide what they might want to order from him as he carves. Others similarly mark their spaces with decoys and wildfowl. The continued creation, display, and consumption of this wildfowl art will be the focus of the remainder of this dissertation.



Figure 2 Herb Daisey's roadside, front yard decoy store, 2011. Author's own photograph.



Figure 3 John "Guinea Bird" Hill's store on Maddox Boulevard, 2012. Author's own photograph.



Figure 4 Sign pointing the way down McGee Lane to Carlton “Cork” McGee's workshop and store, 2012. Author's own photograph.



Figure 5 Sign at Cork McGee's driveway, 2014. Author's own photograph.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This dissertation examines the ways in which the vernacular arts of hunting decoy and decorative wildfowl carving, and the closely related tradition of wildfowl hunting, in Chincoteague, Virginia, express understandings of private and public heritage (c.f., Chambers 2006), representing the ways in which this locale's rural population has adapted to, resisted, and at times encouraged changes related to tourism development and environmental regulation. Here I use the term "vernacular art" to denote art or craft⁵ that relates directly to the locale from which it comes, including a place's historical situation, as well as its contemporary social and environmental situation. I use the concept of heritage to denote meaningful connections to the past, and something that confers value to, legitimates, or provides meaning for those who claim it. Heritage may be comprised of traditional actions or other ephemera, or objects associated with a people's or place's past, especially as that past is interpreted in the present. In particular I focus on private heritage, which is

composed of those elements of a community's past that are regularly deemed by the members of that community to have relevance to the present. This heritage might on occasion still serve as a celebration of something in the past [as public heritage does], but its vitality resides in its recognized relationship to the present and its bearing upon the future. (Chambers 2005: 7)

⁵ It is worth noting that the problem of defining art versus craft is centuries old and still unsettled. I choose to use the terms almost interchangeably here, with some preference given to "art" for objects created for aesthetic or sensory reasons only, and "craft" for objects that have some obvious utilitarian function or where skilled production is emphasized by the maker or consumer (c.f. Risatti 2007: 13-21). Collectors and tourists use both terms interchangeably to describe carved waterfowl. Carvers usually refer to themselves as such, and not as artists, artisans, or craftsmen, though Chincoteague residents, collectors, and tourists often refer to carvers as one of the latter terms.

Private heritage is a sort of lived and performed, shared community inheritance that is inalienable from the group with which it is associated, whereas public heritage has to do more with the preservation of cultural practices or objects perceived as slipping away or being in need of conservation due to its place in a broader schema (e.g., formation or protection of national identity, ideology).

I have found that decoy and decorative wildfowl carving aid in the expression of primarily private heritage in touristic and community exchange in three major ways: 1) Wildfowl carvers connect with and express their heritage, and negotiate community identity, through the conscious creation and marketing of their vernacular craft, 2) Hunter-carvers⁶ identity and heritage are incorporated and expressed through the performance of work-related embodied cultural knowledge, and 3) Hunting decoy carving is inextricably linked to hunting culture, which is itself a source for understanding important natural and cultural heritage values. Objects, stories, and actions associated with wildfowl carving and hunting practices reveal the ways in which these points might be understood. Here I examine the ways community members negotiate identities and strive to maintain the integrity of their communities, as they understand them, through the production and appreciation of localized artistic expression and related traditional life-ways. The meanings of these actions are more fully understood when considered in the context of Chincoteague as a place that has faced rapid changes related to tourism development, as well as government restrictions on the use of natural

⁶ I use the term “hunter-carver” to denote a person who is both a hunter and decoy carver, and who uses or has used his own decoys in wildfowl hunting.

resources, threatening the continued viability of what local residents of Chincoteague believe to be traditional life-ways⁷.

At the beginning of my fieldwork I was guided by the following research question: To what extent do carvers actively manage their heritage through the creation and selective presentation of their art or craft? Research objectives related to this question included the following:

1. Examine changes in the discourse regarding hunting decoy and decorative wildfowl carving over the last century in archives, as well as how conversations about this art form take place in stores, museums, and workshops in the 21st century.
2. a) Determine the ways in which carvers use their art to represent place and a heritage of work⁸, and b) the ways tourists connect carving with Chincoteague's publicly expressed or interpreted heritage.
3. Determine the social and cultural advantages and disadvantages of claiming membership in given local communities, for example claiming the heritage of work related to carving (e.g., hunting).
4. Identify common themes in verbal and nonverbal performance among carvers indicating adherence or resistance to local social norms as well as projection of heritage values. These may include telling stories in

⁷ These changes have occurred over the last century, with tourist activity increasing exponentially in recent decades.

⁸ I use the word work to denote productive and reproductive activity, usually with the expectation of remuneration or reward, which might be money, cultural capital, or other physical or ephemeral reward such as a sense of accomplishment.

particular ways, carving in known or traditional styles, and
conspicuously displaying valued material culture.

I have conducted fieldwork on Chincoteague for a little over two years in total⁹. The research question and objectives above have led me to explore the ways in which decoy and decorative wildfowl carving, in the context of touristic exchanges, plays an important role in the ways in which “Chincoteaguers” express their heritage and negotiate their identities, for example as independent islanders in a tightknit community reliant in part on their landscape, in the face of rapid cultural and environmental changes to the conditions of their lives. Over the course of my research I have found that wildfowl carving and related traditions serve as an important point of entry into the daily lives and history of Chincoteague’s traditional community, which is the community of people with centuries-old connections to the landscape. Hunting decoys and decorative wildfowl are objects born of close association with place. The skills needed to make them are tied to knowledge transmission, and the end products of carving are thus linked to Chincoteague natives’ identity and heritage as it is understood in the present.

A Brief History of Chincoteague Island

Land east of the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland and Virginia is commonly referred to as the Eastern Shore. The Eastern Shore stretches from the Chesapeake Bay to the Atlantic Ocean from at least as far north as Ocean City, Maryland, south to the tip of the

⁹ See the Methodology section, below, for a detailed timeframe

Delmarva Peninsula¹⁰ (see Fig. 6). This region is filled with farms, tidal marshes, swamps, cedar forests, and an abundance of wildlife. A few cities dot the terrain, but by and large the landscape is evocative of historical rural America, creating a sense of nostalgia for visitors attracted from nearby major cities such as Washington, DC; Baltimore, Maryland; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.



Figure 6 Delmarva Peninsula. Google.com map, edited by the author.

¹⁰ “Delmarva” refers to the peninsula comprised of Delaware and the eastern portions of Maryland and Virginia. “Delmarva” and other place names and vocabulary associated with this research, may be found in the Glossary, beginning on page 199.

Off of Delmarva's coast lies a series of barrier islands, which have historically moved and changed shape with tidal currents and seasonal storms. At times these islands have been long spits of land, and at other times series of smaller islands (Chambers and Sullivan [2014]: 27). Present-day Chincoteague is one such island, off the coast of Virginia, and approximately four miles south of the Maryland and Virginia border. It is approximately seven miles long and a mile and a half at its widest, though adjacent tidal marshes extend beyond this (see Fig. 7). To the west lies mainland Delmarva, connected to Chincoteague by a 4.5 mile-long causeway since 1922 (Mariner 2010b: 104). To Chincoteague's east lies the barrier island Assateague, now under control of the U.S. National Park Service (Assateague Island National Seashore), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge), and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (Assateague State Park). Eastern Shore historian Kirk Mariner (2010a: 42) clarifies some of the associations with each island in this way:

Chincoteague is (1) the name of the smaller of the two island, (2) the name of the community on that island, (3) the name of the breed of ponies that live on Assateague Island, (4) the name of the bay that separates both islands from the mainland, and (5) the name of the National Wildlife Refuge that is located on Assateague Island. It is pronounced *Shink' a-tig*, though if you listen closely you may hear some island natives [Chincoteaguers] pronounce it without the middle syllable.

Assateague is (1) the name of the larger of the two islands, which is [today] uninhabited, (2) the name of the channel that separates the two islands, and (3) the name of the National Seashore Park which is located on Assateague Island.



Figure 7 Chincoteague Island (middle), with Assateague Island and the Atlantic Ocean in the distance, 2013. Photograph by Patrick J. Hendrickson, Highcamera.com, reproduced with permission.

The Chincoteague most visitors would recognize today began to take shape during the Woodland periods, ca. 1000BCE – 1600CE. In the millennia leading to this, significant climate change and glacial melt caused massive changes in the landscape, including the formation of the Chesapeake Bay. Archaeological evidence reveals that Indian groups inhabited the Eastern Shore more than 10,000 years ago and throughout these changes; however, early camps associated with Chincoteague and Assateague are now likely covered with water, and so reports of inhabitation prior to the Woodland periods in this region remain somewhat speculative (Dent 1985; Rountree and Davidson 1997: 20). Early Italian explorers such as Verazzano (Mariner 2010b: 1-4) and English settlers such as Jenkin Price (Rountree and Davidson 1997: 92) provide a record of contact-era Indian habitation, painting a picture of what Late Woodland period (ca.

900CE – 1600CE) life may have been like for those who used, and perhaps seasonally inhabited, Chincoteague and Assateague Islands.

Chincoteague was likely utilized as a seasonal foraging grounds, part of a cycle of places used primarily by the Chincoteague (or Gingotig) and Assateague Indians, and perhaps by the Accohannock, Pocomoke, and other neighboring tribal peoples as well (Mariner 2010b: 4; Rountree and Davidson 1997). Chincoteague and the surrounding waters were likely used as fishing grounds and for the procurement of trade good materials such as shells for beads. Indians of the Eastern Shore are noted for their proficiency in procuring fish and shellfish in a variety of manners (including the use of bow and arrow, and weirs and other traps), as well as in hunting regional game, including wildfowl, muskrats, and deer (Rountree and Davidson 1997, Willoughby 1907).

European contact and colonialism in the 17th and 18th centuries resulted in massive displacement of the Chincoteague and Assateague peoples. There appears to be no clear documentation that accounts for the migration of Chincoteague Indians. The Assateague Indians migrated primarily in two ways. Some moved north to the Indian River area of Delaware and settled near, or became a part of, the Nanticoke Indian tribe there (who also migrated from elsewhere on the Eastern Shore post-contact). Others joined with several neighboring tribes in the Askiminikansen Reservation near present-day Snow Hill, Maryland. The Askiminikansen Reservation, which began in 1678, was inhabited until around 1740, which is over 100 years before the U.S. Census began counting American Indians—and then, for many years, only on reservations (Lujan 1990: 2; Rountree and Davidson 1997: 126). This lack of census data, coupled with sparse archaeological and ethnohistorical data on American Indians of the seaside Eastern

Shore, gives the impression to many on the Eastern Shore today that all Assateague and Chincoteague descendants died out or migrated elsewhere by the mid-19th century. However, today some inhabitants of Chincoteague, including famed decoy carver Delbert “Cigar” Daisey, claim some portion of Indian ancestry. Further, over 20 years ago, Chief Larry “Medicine Cat” Smack—who himself claimed Assateague heritage during his lifetime, and whose family lived in part on Assateague Island through the early 20th century—formed the Assateague People of Delmarva¹¹. This group is comprised primarily of Eastern Shore Indians, many of whom claim a connection to the historical Assateague people. It does seem plausible that some Chincoteague and Assateague Indians remained in the vicinity of Chincoteague Island, and that they were formally assigned to non-Native categories such as “black” and “white” in historical documentation, and subject to grave oppression, resulting in the suppression of traditional cultural practices and lack of extant evidence supporting their existence. On the 2010 census, 66 persons in Chincoteague were listed as “American Indian or Alaska Native¹²” alone or in combination with other racial categories (U.S. Census 2010).

Europeans first settled on Chincoteague in the 1670s or 1680s, when colonists found Chincoteague a hospitable place for grazing livestock (Mariner 2010b: 12; Rew 1982: 2). One source suggests Chincoteague’s first European settlers were convicts (Warren 1913: 776). If this is the case, these individuals were quickly joined by others,

¹¹ This information comes from an interview I conducted with Chief Larry “Medicine Cat” Smack and his wife, Clan Mother Trudy “Star Blanket Woman” Smack, on 12 January 2011. It is part of the Ethnographic Overview and Assessment for Assateague Island National Seashore (Chambers and Sullivan [2014]). Medicine Cat passed away in 2013, after appointing Michael “Quiet Bear” Morabito as the new Chief, who in turn appointed Medicine Cat as Ceremonial Chief.

¹² This report does not indicate tribal affiliation.

most of whom were employed to tend livestock. By the revolutionary war around 20 families lived on the island, though this number increased with the development of the seafood industry in subsequent years (Mariner 2010b: 22). It is said that by 1831 some 510 people lived on the island (Mears 1938). By the late-19th century, seafood became a primary industry on the island, as islanders began “cultivating” oyster crops in 1864, utilizing an early form of aquaculture to increase supply of the already popular, and then-plentiful, shellfish (Mariner 2010b: 44). Chincoteague was famous at this time in ports such as Baltimore, Maryland and New York City, for its “salt oysters,” so named because of the salty flavor of the oysters due to the salinity of the waters surrounding Chincoteague Island.

The historical importance of the seafood industry on Chincoteague is underscored by an historical anecdote: during the Civil War Chincoteague remained with the Union, rather than seceding with Virginia to the Confederacy. As one Chincoteaguer put it to me: “Our hearts were with the south, but our pocketbooks were with the north.” By the end of the 19th century, Chincoteague had become almost wholly dependent on the seafood industry, to the extent that it parted ways with the remainder of its state. More than one Chincoteaguer has commented to me that they suspect animosity that exists today between Chincoteaguers and mainland Virginians has its roots at least as far back as this Civil War-era decision.

By 1876 railroads began connecting cities such as Baltimore, Maryland and Washington, DC to the lower Eastern Shore, with lines extending to Franklin City, Virginia, just across Chincoteague Bay from Chincoteague Island. Ferries operated between Franklin City and Chincoteague, shipping not only seafood off of the island, but

people to the island. The same year the railroad reached Franklin City, Chincoteague's first formal tourist accommodation, The Atlantic Hotel, opened to the public (Mariner 2010b: 68-70). By the late 19th century Chincoteague had developed a reputation as being not only a seafood capital, but also a destination for outdoor recreation. One such form of recreation was wildfowl hunting.

Chincoteague exists along the Atlantic Flyway, a migratory route or "avian superhighway" connecting eastern South America to northeastern Canada (Audubon 2014; see Fig. 8). Hundreds of bird species, and millions of individual birds, use this migration route annually. The forests, wetlands, and beaches provided by Chincoteague and nearby Assateague Island provide excellent grounds for bird habitation, and they have historically provided a bounty of wildfowl for hunting and trapping. Waterfowl have followed these "ancestral travel routes" for millennia, creating predictable hunting seasons (Hawkins 1984: 2).



Figure 8 Map of the Atlantic Flyway in the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 2013. Author's own photograph.

Hunting became big business for many Chincoteaguers in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Hunting parties would come from all over the Northeast and mid-Atlantic to try their hand at wildfowl hunting, providing opportunities for locals to gain employment as hunting guides, boat builders, and decoy carvers. Additionally, hunting, or “gunning,” clubs and lodges cropped up on Assateague Island at this time, providing opportunities not only for guides and carvers, but others as well: “Entire families were often employed; sometimes over several generations. Individuals were needed to guide, carve decoys, pick feathers, cook, clean and do laundry, build boats, provide transportation to and from blinds, and maintain and manage the lodges and clubs” (Eshelman and Russell 2004: vii).

In addition to attending to the needs and operations of gunning clubs, many men on Chincoteague became active in market hunting, or “market gunning.” Market hunting is the harvesting of wildfowl for purposes of sale. From Chincoteague this was usually to cities such as Boston, Massachusetts; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and New York City. Affluent individuals in these cities, and the restaurants and hotels that catered to them, sought out wildfowl, then considered a delicacy, for food. One shipping list from turn-of-the-century Baltimore, Maryland shows the price for ducks and geese ranged from \$0.30 to \$7.00 per pair (Walsh 1971: 66). Portions of wildfowl (e.g., gizzards, livers, and hearts) might be sold for \$0.25 per bucket (Eshelman and Russell 2004: 6). The temptation for the rural poor to harvest large quantities of migrating birds is certainly understandable. Many successful market gunners on Chincoteague made their reputations during this time—either as successful hunters and salesmen, or as builders of specialty boats, decoys, and other necessary accouterment. However, market hunting is often cited as a reason for the steep decline of many species of wildfowl by the early 20th century.

Almost as soon as market gunning became big business on Chincoteague, regulations were put in place to tame it.

The Lacey Act, passed by U.S. Congress in 1900, restricted interstate commerce of wildlife (Hawkins 1984: 3). Then in 1918 the U.S. Government ratified the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which implemented international wildfowl protection legislation and outlawed market hunting (Eshelman and Russell 2004: vii; U.S.D.A. 2009). Market gunning nevertheless continued underground, by so-called “outlaw gunners,” many of whom seemed to feel they were carrying on tradition as much as they were making a living¹³. By the 1930s hunting seasons were severely restricted, however (Hawkins 1984: 5), and in 1937 many of the outlaw gunners’ tools were made illegal: sink boxes¹⁴, wildfowl bait such as corn, live decoys, and unlimited ammunition (Eshelman and Russell 2004: vii). By the mid-20th century market hunting in the form of outlaw gunning was on the decline.

The decline of market hunting was not the only major change on Chincoteague in the 20th century, however. Fires on the island in the early 1900s spurred the creation of the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company, which would eventually support itself through the purchase and auction of some of Assateague’s feral ponies. Though pony penning, and earlier sheep penning, had been carried out on Assateague for decades, the fire company capitalized on the annual round-up, and auctioned off foals to its benefit during an annual carnival dating to 1924 (CVFC3 2014; Rew 1982: 6). Marguerite

¹³ This information comes from personal communication. Many hunting informants relayed something to the effect of “we just kept doing what we’d always done.”

¹⁴ Sinkboxes are boats constructed of what looks like an open coffin with flaps extending from all sides. The flaps are weighted down with iron decoys so that the boat all but disappears into the water, with the hunter hiding in the coffin-like portion.

Henry's (1947) Newberry-honored children's book *Misty of Chincoteague* features this carnival and its ponies, and it is arguably her book that first put Chincoteague on the map as a notable tourist destination.

Other changes for Chincoteague concerned Assateague Village, which was all but abandoned by the 1940s. This small village existed nearby a lighthouse on the southern end of Assateague Island, and it is often considered one of Chincoteague's neighborhoods in the memories of locals. After landowners elsewhere on Assateague cut off access to fishing grounds adjacent to Assateague Village, most villagers left for Chincoteague, many of them moving their houses on barges across the narrow Assateague Channel, which separates the two islands. Then in 1943, for the purposes of saving "a significant portion of coastal wetlands with their unique vegetation and animal life," the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge was created on the Virginia portions of Assateague Island, and this part of the island has remained primarily in the hands of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as such ever since (Bearss 1968: 100).

Compounding the need for adaption brought about by the changes listed above, several tragedies struck the community of Chincoteague in the mid-20th century. By this time and since the Great Depression, chicken farming had become an important industry on the island; but the end of the poultry industry came swiftly, in a major weather event known as the "Ash Wednesday storm" of 1962. Chincoteague waterman Robert H. Mears (1994: 101) remembers it this way:

Chincoteague was devastated by its worst storm ever. The tides had risen until portions of the island were under several feet of water. It appeared as though houses were just sitting out in the ocean. Boats were washed from their moorings and tossed around like plastic models. ... The thousands of chickens raised on the island had drowned and were heaped into large

piles. ... The boats littered Main Street and the adjoining streets. The boats had destroyed most of the storefronts and damaged many homes.

Around the same time, three oyster diseases—MSX, SSO, and Dermo—decimated crops of shellfish surrounding Chincoteague. This came after oysters suffered from changes in water salinity, and new oyster pests flourished, following a major storm in 1933. The 1933 storm created an inlet in Assateague Island, just south of Ocean City, Maryland¹⁵ (Tarnowski 2008). This inlet allowed ocean water to flow into an area just north of the Chincoteague Bay, itself north of Chincoteague Island, which affected water quality and created these devastating conditions.

With market hunting, poultry, and seafood all on the decline, Chincoteague was forced to adapt and saw an opportunity to remake itself. Despite the devastating toll taken on Chincoteague by the Ash Wednesday storm, plans for installing a bridge to Assateague, which had been set in motion years before, continued the same year. In 1962, the Chincoteague-Assateague bridge was installed, a project spurred on largely by Chincoteague mayor Robert Reed, and resident Wyle Maddox¹⁶, who envisioned access to Assateague Island as an opportunity for tourism growth—a possibility made realistic in part with the creation and improvement of a causeway connecting Chincoteague to the mainland four decades earlier (Mariner 2010b: 111, 140, 144).

¹⁵ Prior to 1933 Assateague Island was not technically an island, but a peninsula, or spit of land, attached to Maryland and continuing to Delaware. At other times in its history, Assateague has been a collection of islands. Changes such as these occur due to storms, as well as regular tidal influences. The 1933 Ocean City Inlet has been maintained artificially, with a jetty.

¹⁶ Today a large park, Robert Reed Park on Main Street Chincoteague, is named for the mayor. Maddox Boulevard, one of the main roads through Chincoteague, is named for Wyle Maddox.

Then in 1965 the U.S. National Park Service (NPS) joined the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in managing Assateague Island (Mackintosh 1982). When the Assateague Island National Seashore was created, tourism to the locale was already on the rise. The NPS bought or temporarily leased the last of the hunting clubs on Assateague Island, signaling the decline of traditional activities associated with those places. Further, the NPS began managing not only on the majority of the Maryland side of Assateague Island, but shoreline along the Virginia portions as well. The Assateague Island National Seashore, along with the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, quickly grew in popularity as tourist destinations in the latter half of the 20th century, and Chincoteague's communities by and large adapted to and seized this opportunity for growth as a tourist destination. By 1985 tourism was a \$24 million/year industry on Chincoteague (Mariner 2010b: 146), and at the beginning of the 21st century, Assateague Island National Seashore (Maryland and Virginia) drew approximately two million visitors per year (Bentley 2008), mostly from nearby mid-Atlantic states. Chincoteague was recently named number two in a list of the top 10 islands in the United States by the tourism website Trip Advisor (TripAdvisor.com 2014), and one of *Coastal Living* magazine's 10 happiest seaside towns (Coastal Living 2014).

To be sure, not everyone on Chincoteague has appreciated the presence of the NPS and USFWS on Assateague Island, and the resulting many thousands of visitors. Federal management comes with restricted access to landscapes considered by many to be traditionally associated with Chincoteague Island and its people. Battles between the town of Chincoteague and the USFWS continue even today, especially regarding

maintenance of access to the beaches on Assateague Island¹⁷ (e.g., Fears 2011). This is a testament to the place tourism holds in Chincoteague, and to the completeness with which Chincoteague's people have adapted to changing conditions and remade their community for the purposes of thriving despite and amidst challenging circumstances. There is dependence on the tourism economy, and as a result there is resentment about preferential treatment given, in some locals' estimation, to wildlife¹⁸ and environmental concerns over Chincoteague residents, who are dependent upon Assateague Island and surrounding waters for their livelihoods. These people see themselves as historically and traditionally linked to Assateague; the island, and life-ways associated therewith, is part of their identity.

Today Chincoteague's population numbers just under 3,000 residents¹⁹ (U.S. Census 2010), though locals estimate upwards of 50,000 tourists visit during the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company's pony-penning week. The summer is

¹⁷ In May 2011 the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge presented management alternatives for a revised Comprehensive Management Plan to the public (U.S.F.W.S. 2011). Some of these alternatives would severely restrict access to beaches in the form of diminished parking or not allowing personal vehicles. Some would also limit or eliminate fishing and other recreational activities enjoyed by both tourists and Chincoteague residents. In my time on Chincoteague I have witnessed a great deal of animosity expressed toward the Refuge Manager ultimately responsible for these alternatives. While, in the following years, alternatives have been revised to meet some of the island's concerns, as of the writing of this dissertation there is no resolution.

¹⁸ Especially controversial is protection of the endangered piping plover, a small shorebird. Access to many portions of Assateague is limited to protect plover nesting grounds. Chincoteaguers have reacted with tongue-in-cheek bumper stickers with phrases such as "Plover, the other white meat," "Save a bird kill an island," and the one seen in Figure 9.

¹⁹ Chincoteague's population is somewhat more homogenous, and somewhat older than the national average. The median age of residents is 52 (versus 46 in 2000, and the national average of 37 in 2010), and over 95% of the population identifies as white only (as opposed to the 72% nationally in 2010) (U.S. Census 2010). Many of its newer residents are retirees who have moved to Chincoteague from nearby cities such as Baltimore, Maryland.

significantly busier than the rest of the year, with visitors attracted to the beach, ponies, and other wildlife such as a wide variety of wildfowl. Birders visit during the fall and spring migration seasons, and local hunting guides still take parties of tourists to bag wildfowl in the winter months. Most of these tourists—some of whom have visited annually for their entire lives—come from nearby mid-Atlantic states, although Chincoteague is host to in-state and international visitors as well. There is also Coast Guard and Navy presence on or nearby the island, as well as the NASA Flight Facility on neighboring Wallops Island. All of these groups attract additional residents and visitors to Chincoteague at various times of the year. Since the NASA facility has begun periodically launching rockets easily visible from Chincoteague, several of Chincoteague's tourism entrepreneurs are now looking at the possibility of "space tourism" as a next evolution in their economy. This range of visitors to and residents of Chincoteague creates a variety of types of locals and tourists—not simply monolithic hosts and guests, as posited in much of the early literature on tourism (e.g., Smith 1989)—with varying understandings of Chincoteague's past and how it might best move forward into its future.



Figure 9 A bumper sticker on a truck in Chincoteague, featuring the endangered piping plover, expresses opposition to federal government priorities, 2014. Author's own photograph.

It is arguably necessary for Chincoteague residents to continually consider the possibilities inherent in tourism for economic development. Still, there are many on the island who hold other traditional forms of employment and activity dear, and through those participate in the community's private heritage as it evolves amid the tourism industry. For example, aquaculture and tour boat captaining are two forms of livelihood that allow locals to remain working on the water in a tourism economy; hunting tour guides still take groups out in the winter; and traditional foods and craft are eagerly sought out by visitors in restaurants and shops. It is the last of these activities that has caught my attention.

Decoys and Chincoteague's History

In this dissertation I will primarily deal with a few particular aspects of Chincoteague's history and contemporary culture that throw a spotlight on issues of heritage, as it will be explored further, below. These are: tourism, hunting, and especially decoy carving. The history of the presence, use, evolutions, and marketing of these activities provides insight into the ways in which Chincoteague's residents have adapted to changes on their island, and the ways in which they shape their heritage and identity today. While other traditional occupations and activities, such as working the water (e.g., oystering), are also incredibly important to Chincoteague's identity and heritage, decoy and decorative wildfowl carving has been the focus of my dissertation research, and it is through an examination of decoy carving that I have come to best understand Chincoteague's heritage. As such, it will be helpful here to provide some background on the practice.

On Decoys and Decoratives

Some of the earliest known wildfowl decoys were found in the Lovelock cave in Nevada in 1924. Accelerator mass spectrometric techniques suggest the 11 decoys date to approximately 500BCE to 500CE (Tuohy and Napton 1986). These birds are made of tule, feathers, and string made of indigenous fibers, and many are painted to look like canvasback ducks. While we cannot be sure exactly how they were used, and while we do not have existing decoys from pre-contact American Indian groups on the Eastern Shore to examine and discuss, the presence of decoys in the Lovelock cave suggests that American Indians in the present-day United States have been creating such items, and likely hunting with them, for millennia.

Duck and other bird decoys have been used throughout the world; however, the largest quantity of these has been found in North America, and the majority of decoy research has been focused on North American decoy traditions and production. Art historian Marjolein Efting Dijkstra (2010: 53) suggests that:

The decoy is...an intimate part of North America's history, with roots attributed to Native American culture and pioneer times. Its evolution has been linked to many important changes in North American society, such as the transition from subsistence hunting to leisure hunting, the rise of firearms, the development of mass transportation, population growth, and the mass extinction of birds. ... It is also the leitmotif of countless personal narratives, which express a fascination with the wonders of nature; the mystery and grand spectacle of seasonal bird migration; the natural beauty of birds; the romanticism and adventure of hunting; male camaraderie and friendships; the freedom that is associated with the hunter's...life; the silent joy in whittling; a veneration of the masters of decoy carving; and especially a profound nostalgia to times gone by.

To be sure, Chincoteague's history of carving is part of this tradition of changing uses and meanings of decoys, of creating and developing narratives surrounding the birds and

their makers, and of nostalgia for a past that seems to be slipping away. Yet, Chincoteague's carvers have also adapted and carried on traditional ways to suit their particular needs, for example by adjusting decoy carving methods and styles for participation in the tourism or collectors' markets, or persisting in hunting over their own creations despite the availability of mass-produced decoys. The ways in which they do this, their motivations, and values associated with decoy carving and related hunting practices will be the subject of much of this dissertation.

Decoy Carving on Chincoteague: A Brief Historical Survey

Early examples of Chincoteague decoys were likely burned in wood stoves or lost to the salt marshes surrounding the island. Decoys, once they served their purpose and were no longer functioning or reparable, were usually not considered collectors' items, unlike most pieces today. Extant stools²⁰ associated with Chincoteague date to the mid-19th century, and many of the most famous Chincoteague carvers (e.g., Ira Hudson, Dave "Umbrella" Watson, and Miles Hancock) carved in the early to mid-20th century. Many of the artistic practices associated with carving today date back to that turn-of-the-century generation of carvers, a phenomenon that will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Most waterfowling regions of the country boast carving traditions where regional birds are created in similar styles easily associated with the place (e.g., the upper Chesapeake Bay). Chincoteague decoys, for the most part,

²⁰ "Stools" refers to hunting decoys, a grouping of which for hunting purposes is usually called a "rig."

do not possess equally fundamental similarities indigenous to the Island. A Chincoteague stool is more readily identifiable by the maker's distinction than by its territorial characteristics. Thus [a collector] might be able to identify stools carved by a particular Chincoteaguer, but he would not be expected to glance at a decoy and say, "That's from Chincoteague" the way he could respond, "That's an upper Chesapeake Bay decoy." (Berkey and Berkey 1981: 97)

In the course of my research I have asked many carvers and collectors: "What makes a Chincoteague decoy or decorative distinct?" Yet, I have never received a straight response. Most carvers suggest that there is no such thing as a ubiquitous Chincoteague style. Carver Mark Daisey and I talked about this when I visited him in his shop, adjacent to his house. Daisey is only in his mid-40s but comes across as an old soul in his manner of speech and slowly moving within the space of his workshop, as well as through his use of antiquated, yet highly revered, tools such as a hatchet. He talks slowly and thoughtfully, mixing moral lessons in with his history. He was sitting at his chopping and carving decoy bodies when I met him that day. This wasn't pretense; I arrived unannounced and in hopes of finding his shop doors open. I hoped to introduce myself, since when I called about an interview his wife advised me to "just come by." He kindly invited me in to sit down, and proceeded to tell me about decoys and hunting as he chopped away. Here he talks about decoy styles:

Kristin Sullivan: What sort of style is your style? Do you have a style?

Mark Daisey: I guess it's kind of like my Uncle [Delbert] Cigar [Daisey]'s. I can do decorative work, contemporary decoys, like a working decoy that you can hunt with. And antique styles. That's something I started doing about 12 years ago, it was another market for me; and shorebirds. I try to limit myself. I don't fool with miniatures anymore. I don't fool with songbirds. All I make is ducks and geese and brant and shorebirds.

...

Sullivan: Is there a Chincoteague style?

Daisey: I wouldn't just put it to just Chincoteague. Every individual's got their own style.

Sullivan: Which is so Chincoteague—such an independent, stubborn bunch of people. (Laughter)

Daisey: There are a lot of collectors, dealers that tend to say they like the Chincoteague-style decoys. But I'm talking if you go back to first carvers on Chincoteague like Ira Hudson and Doug Jester, [Dave] Umbrella Watson, Miles Hancock. They all had different styles. You've got to bear in mind where it all started and what was its purpose. Decoys weren't made to look at on a mantle like artwork; they were made to lure ducks in close enough to shoot them so that you had something to eat. (Interview with the author 21 November 2012)

Even the earliest examples of Chincoteague decoys known, as Daisey suggests, possess the markings of individual personalities, though there are some general characteristics that carry through in many specimens. Decoys on the Eastern Shore generally are solid, and most Chincoteague stools were carved without much detail, painted simply or with scratch painting techniques, and possessed a dull finish (Berkey and Berkey 1981; Fleckenstein 1979). Decoys were “simplistically made for easy repair, yet they were quite sturdy. Constructed for many years of hard service, [many] were painted so that anyone could follow the initial outline and dab on another coat of paint for future hunting seasons” (Berkey and Berkey 1981: 97-98). This is not to say that sturdy, utilitarian decoys were not made elsewhere in the country; stools from most other hunting locales in the United States were made similarly. However, there are only a few similarities that exist between all early Chincoteague decoys²¹. This suggests that individuals did not

²¹ Similarities that exist among Chincoteague stools are usually shared between groupings of makers, for example Miles Hancock (1888-1974) and Ira Hudson (1876-1949) often used tacks or nails for eyes, whereas Dave “Umbrella” Watson (1851-1938), James Corbett “Corb” Reed (1897-1984), and others usually used glass eyes.

learn to carve in any formal manner from one-another, that different types of wood were used according to availability, and that individuals' personalities were expressed in early decoys even if they were not then considered "art."

In the mid-20th century we begin to see more stylistic variation with the rise of decorative carvings. *Decoys* (i.e., "hunting," "working," "gunning," or utilitarian decoys) and *decoratives* are two broad categories of carved wildfowl. There is some difference in opinion regarding each of these terms and the use of them is not always consistent. When I asked carver Jimmy Bowden about materials he uses for decoys versus decoratives, he was quick to tell me he does not create decoratives, though he sells his work primarily to collectors and tourists, rather than hunters for hunting purposes:

Kristin Sullivan: Do you use different woods for gunning decoys than you do for decoratives?

Jimmy Bowden: I don't do decoratives. I don't know how to do them.

Sullivan: Oh. (Laughter) Ones that are not intended to—

Bowden: A lot of people will call them a decorative, but they're not. It's like them curlews²² I did to paint them up. They figure them for decorative. I don't because I can make that curly [curlew] quick....

...

Sullivan: What's the difference for you between a gunning decoy and a decorative?

Bowden: Well, a decorative, you would put a lot of time in it and I wouldn't make no money at it. They'd burn feathers in them [decoratives]. I've got some decoratives in the house people have made and stuff like that, but I can't do it. I don't think I could do it. I just make them [decoys]. I used to not sand them. I've got a sander right there and I just usually just take that spoke shave and I can knock that—like that goose body there. I

²² Curlews are wading shorebirds with long, curved-down bills. They are of the genus *Numenius*.

can knock that out with that spoke shave; probably five minutes. ... They're all gunning decoys. I classify all of them gunning decoys.

Sullivan: Because you make them quick and they can be used for hunting?

Bowden: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Some of them might call them a decorative decoy, but I don't. I said they're a gunning decoy.... (Interview with the author 09 October 2012)

Institutions holding carving competitions, such as the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art (Salisbury, Maryland), have created rigid categories for classifying and judging different types of carved wildfowl. These include designations such as variations of "Decorative," "Interpretive Wood Sculpture," "Shootin' Rig," "Gunning Decoy," "Contemporary Antiques," and "Smoothies." Such categories help separate styles for competition's sake and are guided by set standards. On the other hand, Bowden's association with gunning decoys, despite the intention of selling birds for display rather than hunting, maintains for him a connection to the methods with which he crafts his work, and to the traditions with which they are associated.

Chincoteague carver Reggie Birch, though he struggles with definition, suggests that the difference in function (i.e., use in hunting or use in display) separates what a decoy or decorative piece *is*:

Decoys are serviceable and decoratives were never intended on being used. Mine are all decoratives now. Even though they look like a decoy, they're decoratives. "Decoratives" mean it's not going to be—. I guess, really, I'm making decorative decoys because there is no intention on—. "Decoys" means it's actually going to be used, or was used, and a decorative is for the mantle or whatever. (Interview with the author 21 November 2012)

Throughout this dissertation I will refer to both decoys and decorative wildfowl primarily along the lines of Birch's assessment: decoys are for use in hunting; decoratives are made with the intention of display. However, it is not uncommon for people in Chincoteague to

refer to decorative pieces as decoys, or for them to admire and value the decorative qualities of functional gunning decoys and, as such, refer to them as decorative.

The history of decoratives on Chincoteague begins with the gunning decoy carvers. Miles Hancock's journals and ledger books reveal that he was selling miniature decoys²³ for individuals' orders by the mid-1960s²⁴. Ira Hudson was known to make miniatures for his family even earlier than this, and full-sized working decoys became collectors' items by the 1920s, when hunters might take one from a hunting rig used on a trip as a souvenir (Efting Dijkstra 2010: 166). Throughout Chincoteague, as was the case elsewhere on the Eastern Shore and beyond, a major shift in decoy production purpose had occurred by the 1950s and 60s, with mass produced decoys increasingly replacing hand carved decoys in hunters' rigs. At around the same time, artists' techniques and materials associated with decorative carving had improved as well. On Chincoteague, tourism became big business by the late-1960s, increasing the potential for sale to new markets. Adding to this, carver Miles Hancock was featured in the film adaptation of *Misty of Chincoteague*²⁵ released in 1961, bringing additional attention to the craft. In the 1970s a map titled "Decoy Carvers of Chincoteague, Virginia" was made available at visitor information stands, which showed the location of 23 decoy or decorative wildfowl carvers (see Fig. 10). Decoy carving had become a part of the tourist economy.

²³ Miniature decoys, or "miniatures," are created for decoration only, though many retain features found on hunting stools such as keels or weights.

²⁴ This collection of Miles Hancock ledger books is in the Jester Collection presently on loan to the Museum of Chincoteague Island.

²⁵ The film adaptation is simply called *Misty*, and was produced by Twentieth Century Fox. Chincoteague area residents played all parts, with the exception of lead characters. The movie premiered at what is now the Island Theatre on Main Street, Chincoteague.

Elsewhere on Delmarva at this time, and in other locations known for decoy carving, carvers such as the Ward Brothers in Crisfield, Maryland, had developed a reputation among collectors as valuable artists. Folk art scholars took notice and acknowledgement in books such as William F. Mackey's (1968) *American Bird Decoys* added value and brought attention to the craft. A major collector's market, consisting primarily of wealthy hunters on one end of the spectrum and curious tourists on the other emerged. Tourists, on the one hand, might buy smaller decoys such as quickly-made miniatures as souvenirs on trips to Chincoteague; and larger, more decorative, or otherwise more valuable pieces could be placed in auctions and traded among art and antique dealers and collectors around the country.

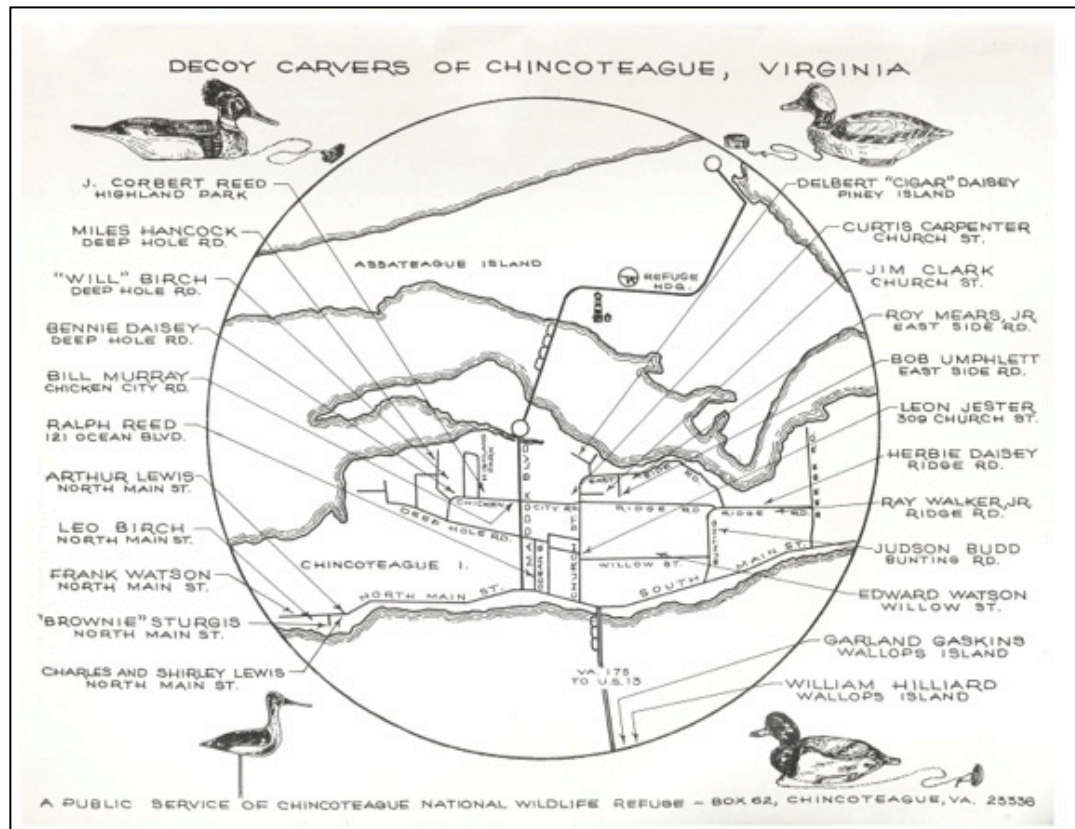


Figure 10 Map of Chincoteague decoy carvers by Evelyn Taylor, ca. 1970. Courtesy of the Museum of Chincoteague Island.

Hunting stools and decorative wildfowl carvings today are part of a large and lucrative collector's market. For example, an Ira Hudson wood duck²⁶ decoy sold for \$82,500 in a 1995 auction (Mariner 2010b: 124). More recently, an Ira Hudson black duck²⁷ decoy sold for \$54,625 at auction in 2011 (Guyette, Schmidt and Deeter 2014). Delbert "Cigar" Daisey, probably Chincoteague's most famous living carver, reported to me that he sold one duck for approximately \$20,000. In tourist shops and when buying directly from carvers on Chincoteague, a buyer can expect to pay anywhere from \$25 to several hundred dollars for most pieces, depending on size, quality, and the maker's reputation. Stores throughout Chincoteague sell decoys (though not all are made on the island), the Museum of Chincoteague Island features a permanent exhibit on carver Miles Hancock, and at least three annual carving and arts festivals are held each year on the island.

I was curious why today's visitors to Chincoteague Island are attracted to these birds, and asked dozens of tourists why they think people collect decoys or decorative wildfowl. Reasons covered a wide range, for example:

"I like to collect decoys and decorative wildfowl because of the artistry; it reminds me of my time bird watching and it brings the birds into my home. I do not like to think of their original purpose and do not really collect the old hunting models. I prefer the decoys that are made for the joy of carving a decorative or artistic sculpture."

- 51 year-old female from New Jersey
(2013)

*

²⁶ "Wood duck" here refers to the species *Aix sponsa*, not simply a wooden duck.

²⁷ "Black duck" here refers to the species *Anas rubripes*, not the duck's coloring, though black ducks are a very dark brown.

“I collect decoys for the love of waterfowl. I am an avid duck hunter and enjoy all aspects of waterfowl history. I appreciate the art of decoys themselves.”

- 33-year-old male from Delaware
(2013)

*

“They depict the artist's talent as well as show part of [a] history of nature. Also [I] get to know the local history of each carver and stories as related by each prior owner in his or her relationship to carver.”

- 70-year-old female from Maryland
(2013)

*

“I like decoys because they help us hunt for ducks. I like to collect small wood ducks because I like to pretend that they are a family. I will play with them. They are fun!”

- 9-year-old female from Arkansas
(2013)

*

I collect “because it is a lost folk art that helped shape the nation, and the protection of our wetlands’ great history.”

- 51-year-old male from Pennsylvania
(2013)

Clearly there are different motivations for participating in the decoy and decorative wildfowl market. Most of the carvers I have talked with still claim lineage to older hunting traditions, validating their work as associated with traditional behavior and Chincoteague heritage. They claim relationship by activity to early carvers such as Hudson and Hancock, a phenomenon that will be discussed in the chapters that follow. Some of the carvers on the island participate in the decoy market in conventional stores or gift shops. Several of the most well known carvers, however, operate businesses out of their homes or back yard workshops, or sell at regional festivals. In this sense they continue their craft very much in the way it has long been done (i.e., staying and working

close to home, on Chincoteague, with traditional methods), despite branching out stylistically and into niche markets (e.g., producing primarily collectors' or tourist pieces).

It is not only the carvers who feel a connection to the history of decoy carving on Chincoteague. It has become evident to me over the course of extensive participant observation and informal interviewing that decoys are an important point of access to the local community on the whole. To be sure, Assateague's ponies, the beach and other features of Assateague Island and its waters, and other valuable aspects of Chincoteague heritage are important to the people of the island. However, when I mention early in conversations that I am interested in decoys, informants' questions have led almost every time to conversations about historical Chincoteague decoy carvers who were also famed hunters and watermen, and to conversations addressing a range of Chincoteague heritage-related concerns, such as restrictions on access to Assateague Island. There is a connection that exists between Chincoteague as a community and decoy carving that relates to Chincoteague identity, and which seems to aid in understanding of this place.

Theoretical Orientation

My understanding of the communities of Chincoteague Island was informed in large part by bodies of theoretical literature related to heritage, tourist art, work, and performance. While the concept of heritage was introduced above, this section provides an overview of relevant literature to aid in fleshing out this and important related concepts, and the ways in which my research contributes relates to and expands existing theory related to these topics.

Heritage, Work, and Tourism

The notion of heritage, introduced earlier in this chapter, has become popular as a selling point in the tourism industry for those who seek an understanding of or exposure to traditional lifestyles and material culture. Heritage generally has to do with meaningful connections to one's past. Like the term "culture," however, it is broad and defined in many ways. In this dissertation I will use both scholarly and popular notions of heritage, some of which are fleshed out below.

For many tourists there exists a desire to experience an "Other's" traditions, or remnants of some "authentic" past (Gable and Handler 1996). For others, who feel their heritage is being lost (e.g., locals in a tourism locale, or marginalized groups) the heritage concept may be used to revitalize and renew a group's connection with its past; or critical heritage theory, which focuses on politics of representation and identity, may be used to galvanize groups working toward civic renewal and social justice (e.g., see Little and Shackel 2014). Heritage is a term that has come to be used in both preservation and revitalization—in attempts to memorialize and reify, and to breathe life into, continue, or renew. As such, over the last decades there has been a surge in study of the concept of heritage, which propelled my own research.

Much of the heritage that is managed and talked about among those I have interacted with during my dissertation research relates to the working traditions of Chincoteague, especially decoy carving. Here I use "work" and "working" to refer to productive and reproductive activity, usually with the expectation of remuneration or reward (Waite 2006: 15-16)—though reward may be emotional or meaningful rather than

tangible (e.g., monetary). The forms of work associated with decoy carving (e.g., woodworking, hunting) are themselves associated with Chincoteague's specific cultural past and its evolution and growth into a modern tourism destination, especially given its coastal location and history of utilizing the natural environment as a food and livelihood resource. Decoy carving is also closely associated with work in the natural environment (i.e., through hunting, as well as connections related to aesthetic value). Carvers' themselves and the products they create can thus be understood as embodiments of Chincoteague heritage.

Performance scholar Diana Taylor (2003: 20) argues for an understanding of "embodied memory," for recognition of the *repertoire* of action performed through culturally imbued bodies *in situ*. In action the body becomes, ontologically, a source of understanding as well as a vessel for the transmission of this knowledge. It is possible to conclude that work is a sort of performance that provides observers clues to how people come to understand through their bodies, and how people move and act in accordance with their learned history or heritage. Thus work is more than a simple act; it reveals tacit cultural knowledge incorporated through mimesis and practice.

Sociologist Richard Sennett, writing of craftsmanship as work, states, "every good craftsman conducts a dialogue between concrete practices and thinking; this dialogue evolves into sustaining habits" (Sennett 2008: 8-9). Importantly for Sennett, doing work such as decoy carving involves some use of both the mental (thinking) and physical (concrete practice) aspects of our selves, of knowing and doing. Similarly, anthropologists Charles Keller and Janet Dixon Keller (1993: 125) suggest that, "action has an emergent quality, which results from the continual feedback from external events

to internal representations and from the internal representations back to enactment.”

Working is a way of building knowledge for an individual, both technical and cultural.

This is echoed by Sam Beck (2005: 2), who writes that as practice-based learning (such as in learning a craft) “occurs through repetition and predictability, the learning becomes ‘tacit.’ ... Self-efficacy and mastery emerge from the specialized and skilled handling of symbols and materials, what we usually refer to as knowledge and skills.” Beck is one among a handful of anthropologists and related scholars who have recently begun to address the ways in which work is intimately tied to cultural knowledge (e.g., see also Feng 2007; Lancy 2012; Maloney and Paolisso 2006; White 1996; Wilkinson-Weber 2004). I suggest that Beck’s and others’ scholarship might be fruitfully used to think about work’s connection to the past; work is a way of understanding heritage. There is a relatively unexplored area here, looking at work’s relationship to historical life-ways and identity, or work’s relationship to the definition or understanding of heritage in a particular community.

Heritage is something that involves claiming one’s or a group of people’s identity through the past. David C. Harvey (2001: 320) writes that heritage has to do with “understanding the meaning and nature of what people tell each other about their past; about what they forget, remember, memorialize and/or fake.” Not quite history, as it is adapted to life in the present, heritage is a tenuous link to history, giving meaning to those who claim it, and providing a view into other cultures for those who experience it from the outside. It can legitimate a place, person, or thing; the claim of “heritage” provides meaning and confers value.

Erve Chambers (2005, 2006) pares heritage down when he divides it into two categories: public and private. To Chambers (2006: 2) public heritage is “an expression of the past” derived from “close association with history” and historical thinking (Chambers 2005: 7). This sort of heritage may be associated with memorialization, is observable in museum settings or monuments, and encourages us “to think in terms of contrasts and differences” (Chambers 2005: 7). Private heritage, on the other hand,

encourages us to focus on the ways in which the past is dynamically linked to the present, with heritage values identified and interpreted by community members rather than by outsiders. ... This second sense of heritage...encourages us to disassociate heritage from the stricter confines of history...

and subsumes “the past in the present so thoroughly as to leave unrecognized any significant differences between the two” (Chambers 2006: 3). Private heritage is carried on by the community whose past is being interpreted or lived out. Peter Howard (2003: 1) similarly states, “the management of heritage tends to apply only to the public heritage,” in settings such as museums, “but there is an even more meaningful, [formally] unmanaged heritage behind the scenes in people’s lives,” and this is private heritage. Though we as a public are likely more aware of publicly managed heritage because of its management and broad reaching themes, private heritage is arguably more meaningful in its intimate, lived expression.

I suggest that work can be a form of heritage. Crafting, for example decoy carving, is one example of work tied to private heritage. The production of particular crafts tells stories about the times and places from which they come (c.f. Costin 1998). Decoys are representative of working culture (wildfowling). Techniques used to make the decoys are directly related to particular locations or peoples, and these techniques are

sometimes passed down over generations and performed today. Through the action and display of craftwork we can see private heritage continue. We can come to know the past as it continues through modern artists or workers.

One of the major contributions I make here is to make clear this connection between craft and private heritage, as well as the ways that craftsmen manage and perform this heritage. In my research I connect the decoy carving market to the traditional life-ways of the people of Chincoteague Island. One way to do this is to see craft as work, and work as heritage. Another is to see art or craft itself as heritage. The anthropology of art, and specifically the anthropology of tourist art (which the craft of decoy carving has largely become in Chincoteague), however, has by and large failed to explicitly recognize this connection between art and heritage, or the agency performed by artists and craftsmen.

Early in the study of the anthropology of tourism, Nelson Graburn (1976: 1) introduced the idea “fourth world” people’s art. He describes so-called fourth world peoples as “powerless groups swamped by the larger surrounding populations” and he suggests that “the arts and crafts of these peoples are...promoted as tourist attractions or for sale” in potentially harmful ways, with little combative agency displayed on the part of the artists or craftsmen (Graburn 1977: 53-54). Generally in early literature on tourism and tourist art, the tourist is cited as a powerful influence on host populations and their art (e.g., see Abramson 1976; Boynton 1986; Low 1976; Popelka and Littrell 1991), rendering “fourth world” artists victims of tourism, reliant upon art to convey some small aspect of who they are to outsiders. My research has shown that artisans or craftsmen in tourist economies are well aware of their ability to manipulate craft production and use it

to their advantage, oftentimes preserving traditional practices and promoting their heritage in the process. Artists have agency enough to create products specifically for the tourist market. The scenario of tourist as influencing power misses the ways in which artists act as their own agents, able to shape their craft to suit audiences, or as people who may claim rather than relinquish their identity as they welcome the influx of tourist dollars and act as hospitable capitalists (c.f., Sullivan and Chambers 2011).

Increasingly, ethnographies involving art and tourism have been published that do address the roles artists and their surrounding communities play in the production and sale of their work, the way art is tied to producers' identities, as well as the place that both local art markets and tourism have in global economic and political systems (e.g. see, Adams 1998, 2006; Chibnik 2003; Chibnik et al. 2004; Colored-Mansfeld 1999; Costin 1998; Duggan 1997; Frederik 2012; Little 2004; Hoerig 2003; Tice 1995; Wherry 2008). Notably, Kathleen M. Adams (1998, 2006) examines the ways in which identity is intertwined with art in touristic settings, focusing largely on what she calls identity politics. She makes the argument that the arts provide an arena for negotiating, affirming, and challenging relationships and positions of power within given social structures. Art has “‘an affecting presence’ imbued with emotional force,” and spaces with art provide “a particularly apt arena for negotiating, reaffirming, and at times challenging asymmetrical social identities” (Adams 2006: 27). Adams (2006: 27) thereby advocates “an understanding of material objects as vehicles for articulating ideas concerning contrasting sets of identities--what are often termed we/they relationships.” She complicates the relationship between material culture and human agency by linking art objects associated with tourism to a host of ideas and actions related to social and

political relationships, with objects taking on lives of their own: representing cultural values, being ascribed shifting value, and revealing information about owners' and makers' identities.

It is from Adams's and related authors' ideas—as well as my understanding of heritage, above—that my own ideas concerning tourist art emerge. Attempting to address artists or craftsmen and tourists as only “hosts” and “guests,” (c.f., Smith 1989) and “fourth world” and “first world” people is incredibly problematic, as these categories are no longer helpful models due oversimplification and ill-conceived notions of others, respectively. Additionally, focus on tourism impact and the fourth world model removes agency from people who often do control their participation in the tourism industry.

In Chincoteague, there is a multitude of actors in the tourism industry, as there are in its arts or craft communities. There are Chincoteaguers, long-time come-heres, recent come-heres, part-time residents, seasonal visitors who have visited for years, occasional visitors, first time visitors, and others such as military personnel, contractors, and others who are stationed or living in Chincoteague temporarily. Additionally, in Chincoteague (as elsewhere in the country) national chain hotels are sometimes owned by local families, and businesses that appear to be locally owned, mom-and-pop shops or restaurants, are sometimes controlled or owned by outside sources. That is to say, in tourism economies, things are not always as they appear. There is nothing strictly linear in the progression of tourism development on the island, nor are there ubiquitous sentiments among Chincoteague communities regarding the relationships between variations of locals and outsiders or visitors to the island.

My research reveals that some on Chincoteague have welcomed increased tourism and have adapted to it or make the most of tourism-related opportunities, for example through the arts and the art market (see Chapter Two). Decoy carvers and other artists on Chincoteague are an integrated and active part of the art market on island, and not only resist cultural involution (c.f., McKean 1989), but thrive through the telling and showing of their heritage through their craftwork. There are hunting or gunning decoy carvers, decorative carvers, decoy-style decorative carvers, carvers who carve just for their families, carvers who carve primarily for tourists, carvers who carve for competition, and at least a couple of artists on the island carve or paint whimsical pieces for fun. Each of these groups has its own sort of connection to the island and to its art or craft community, and interacts with different island communities accordingly.

An examination of the ways in which different carvers have continued this tradition—the ways in which they have continued, adapted, and managed this heritage—becomes particularly important when considering perceived threats to Chincoteaguers' natural heritage. Today's battles over use of the land and waters surrounding Chincoteague (e.g., with the USFWS and NPS, and occasionally with tourists and new residents on the island) have much to do with values ascribed to the land- and waterscapes that are associated with Chincoteague's working traditions (e.g., hunting). When a carver continues to make traditional style decoys, or carvers perform personae associated with traditions such as hunting, there are elements of natural heritage that add value to a carver and his wares, and at the same time the carver is expressing understanding of the value of natural resources—land and waters connected to important hunting traditions.

Examining the value of these natural resources in the form of “natural heritage” (i.e., connections related to historical use and value of the natural environment) is important for understanding policymaking and public attitudes toward continued work in nature in Chincoteague, especially as part of or in opposition to environmental conservation. Karl Jacoby (2001: 193) writes of American conservation and national and state park creation, saying that “memory formation and policy making evolved in tandem...for in justifying their programs, many of the [park] movement’s leading proponents found it useful to offer a vision of the past to which conservation emerged as the only logical response.” He adds that there are myths in environmentalist history, however. Among these, that conservation brought order to a chaotic world (e.g., to squatters on unsettled land, or “uncivilized” rural people), and that “rural folk” are either quaint or reckless (Jacoby 2001: 198). I suspect that these myths are pervasive among those who quickly dismiss working traditions such as hunting on and nearby Chincoteague (e.g., see Chapter Four). Richard White (1996: 171) points out that “most [modern environmentalists] equate productive work in nature with destruction. They ignore the ways that work itself is a means of knowing nature....” He goes on to say, “work that has changed nature has simultaneously produced much of our knowledge of nature” (White 1996: 172). Knowledge comes from working the land, and knowledge about the land comes from understanding working relationships with it (White 1995, 1996). White suggests that getting at a history of work in nature—perhaps part of our public natural heritage—will help break down “our hopeless fixation on [environmental] purity,” and ultimately lead to a more sustainable environmentalism by appreciating the

heritage work in nature has left us, as well as the knowledge possessed by people who continue working traditions in or related to the natural environment (White 1996: 185).

My dissertation research in Chincoteague will help to broaden the discourse about environmentalism by acknowledging the ways in which traditional work such as decoy carving and hunting relates to values associated with the natural environment. Rather than dismissing hunters as reckless killers, for example, it may be helpful to consider the ways in which hunting and related traditions (e.g., decoy carving) can be used to highlight and discuss the ways in which people are connected to and learn about the land and water, and why some Chincoteague community members might want, for example, to hunt illegally (see Chapters Three and Four). It has been interesting to me to find that, while most Chincoteague hunters and carvers do not refer to themselves as environmentalists, nearly all see themselves as some form of conservationist. I believe it is beneficial to understand why working traditions are valued, how they are part of a working group's heritage, and how they might be used to understand a people and their relationship to the environment.

Performance: Verbal, Visual, and of Everyday Life

The ways in which I have come to understand much of the cultural and natural heritage issues described above is through the observation and analysis of performance, including all behavior displayed or words spoken, usually to an audience. As Elizabeth C. Fine and Jean Haskell Speer (1992: 1) suggest, "it is in action that we define and create ourselves.... We can better understand cultural identity not [simply] by studying the artifacts of museums or libraries, but through observing emergent performances...."

Performance, broadly construed to include even everyday action, is a means through which scholars can get at the location of culture as shared between people (c.f., Agar 1994; Bhabha 1994). The elements of culture I have studied emerge through the enaction or performance of embodied cultural knowledge (see above, this section), as well as through narrative, verbal art, display, and the performance of everyday life.

Verbal Performance

Frames are one of the implicitly understood rules of performance (c.f. Bateson 1955). These can be considered “structures of expectations” based on experience (Tannen 1993: 16), or “schemata of interpretations” (Goffman 1974: 21) used to help a speaker-performer act or talk appropriately, and guide audiences in their reactions and responses. A frame might be a convention such as joking. Locations can frame performance, too. I have been especially interested in decoy carvers’ workshops and hunting blinds as conversation frames. Additionally, I have spent much of my dissertation research exploring two verbal performance frames: narrative, and the folklore that comes from it.

Narrative is a manner of speaking in which “transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted” (White 1981: 1-2). Rather than something like a chronology or historical analysis, narrative fills in the voices of history and provides context clues through its performance about the aims of a given narration. Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1981: 338) proposes that common speech statements such as “he said” and “they said” reveal the “psychological importance in our lives of what others say about us, and the importance, for us, of understanding and interpreting these words of others (‘living hermeneutics’).” Narrative usually involves the enactment of important

people's voices in a story, and a performer employing narration is allowing multiple voices to be heard (though perhaps favoring the speaker's understanding of events). Oral history and tradition, then, "are extended, organized expressions of this sort of casual storytelling" important for our understanding of the past, as well as interpretations of the past such as those that might be part of heritage interpretation (Niles 1999: 2).

Oral history is created through what Jan Vansina (1973, 1985) describes as a dynamic process: "As messages are transmitted beyond the generation that gave rise to them they become oral tradition" (Vansina 1985:13). Oral history narrative may be simple accounts that have been told for a generation or so, "but in most cases the resulting story has been fused out of several accounts and has acquired a stabilizing form" (Vansina 1985: 17). For example, reminiscences may become family memories and personal tradition. If the person involved in the memory-turned-tradition is of importance in a community, and their story is recalled more often over time, this sort of oral history tends "to form the basis of anecdotes in group traditions," (Vansina 1985: 19) which may lay the groundwork for community mythmaking, for community foundation or creation myths, and folk heroes. Many of the most important stories I have heard on Chincoteague relate to locally famous decoy carvers and hunters, who are described in fantastic detail as tricksters (see Chapter Three). I suspect that these folkloric heroes help to convey important messages about Chincoteague's heritage, including values associated with the natural environment and cultural traditions.

The adept oral history performer practices what Richard Bauman (1977) dubs verbal art. To Bauman (1977: 5) verbal art is "myth narration and the speech expected of certain members of society...and it is performance that brings [segregated speech genres

and verbal behaviors] together in culture-specific and variable ways....” Important in assessment of this communicative verbal art are the notions of keying and patterning performance (Bauman 1977, borrowing the former from Goffman 1974). Recognizing verbal art in the narration of Chincoteague’s and Chincoteaguers’ history has been important for me in determining where individuals intended to highlight important characteristics of people or situation, characteristics that are themselves markers of community values and identity.

Display as Performance

Beyond looking at forms of speech as performance, my research draws on the notion of display as performance. This includes issues surrounding the production and agency of objects (art, utilitarian objects, souvenirs, etc.), and their places in locations such as museums, stores, and workshops. It also has to do with the display of people representative of place, who may be especially noticeable in touristic settings, representative of identity, heritage, or other aspect of local culture.

Objects carry value. This value may be associated with tradition, identity, aesthetic pleasure, assigned monetary value, materials used, and so on. In turn, when one displays an object, the object confers some of its value onto the person displaying it; objects say something about us. There is a cache that comes with objects, as discussed above in the section on art (e.g., see Adams 2006). Igor Kopytoff (1986: 67) states that: “biographies of things can make salient what might otherwise remain obscure.” The ways in which objects are made or given purpose, and are repurposed, reveals what is important to the owner, or person or institution displaying the object. It has been

suggested that “to craft [or perhaps to produce art] is to create with a specific form, objective, or goal in mind. Crafting is a quintessential human activity, involving premeditative thought and deliberate, design-directed action” (Costin 1998: 4). I would argue that the consumption and display are equally deliberate, although motivations behind consumption and display may have more to do with cultural norms and ideology than critical, premeditated thought.

Deliberate display and consumption of displayed objects (via gazing) are clearly seen at places like museums. Store owners displaying objects such as decoys do this as well, sometimes placing decoys in constructed nature scenes replete with plastic plants and driftwood “trees.” Artists are also capable of this sort of deliberate display and consumption. Artists and craftsmen have control over the products they keep and the products they release to the art market via tourism, along with the ways in which they are displayed in tourist settings (e.g., see Geertz 1976). Part of the value ascribed to objects on display in tourist settings relates to the person selling—the authenticity they bring (or do not). This is managed, in part, by the seller or maker’s performance of self. This form of performance may or may not be conscious, however, so it is helpful to consider what the performance of everyday life entails.

Erving Goffman (1959, 1974) suggests that everyday speech and actions—the clothes we wear, the manner of our speech—are forms of performance. How does one console another appropriately? What defines personal space or territory? What does it mean to embrace, distance one’s self from, or reject a socially or culturally-ascribed role (Goffman 1997: 35)? It has been fascinating in Chincoteague to see people wearing hunting-style camouflage in daily situations (e.g., at grocery stores and restaurants), and

to see the ways in which artists talk about their connection to their craft in their shops and at festivals. Many people in Chincoteague associate themselves with traditional life-ways through mundane actions such as putting Ducks Unlimited²⁸ stickers or camouflage bumpers on their trucks, or putting signs with family names and decorative waterfowl on their front lawns (see Fig. 1). Others, if given the time, tell you about their history of decoy carving and why they got into it, even if unprovoked. My own research interests began when a carver volunteered information about learning to carve from his father, and how carving is used for hunting (this performance was undoubtedly guided by the home-turned-decoy-store frame). I suggest that performance of Chincoteaguer has value in the decoy carving market, a point that will be expanded upon in the following chapters.

My research objectives, stated earlier in this chapter, are aimed at determining or identifying the ways in which decoy and decorative wildfowl carvers, and people who practice traditional life-ways related to carving such as hunting, use art to represent important aspects of their heritage. They may imbue material culture with value through the performance of display, or confer value to folkloric individuals, teaching lessons through their tales. It is through performances in and of everyday life that I have come to know how something that might be considered tourist art (modern decoys) is related to cultural and natural heritage for the people of Chincoteague Island.

Methodology

Population and Timeframe

²⁸ Ducks Unlimited is an international non-profit organization dedicated to environmental conservation and waterfowl hunting.

Although many people with connections to Chincoteague value decoy carving, the carving itself has always been and remains largely a male-dominated pursuit. As such, my dissertation is based primarily on male opinions and accounts. To my knowledge there has been only one well-known female Chincoteague carver, Dorothy “Dot” Quillen (1917-1982), who created primarily souvenir decoratives. I have found relatively little information on Mrs. Quillen (i.e., a brief section in Berkey and Berkey 1981). Furthermore, during my research I was only able to conduct one semi-structured interview with a female carver: Lynn Branson of Courtenay, British Columbia, who won Best in World for Interpretive Wood Sculpture at the Ward Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition, 2013. She is not connected to Chincoteague nor associated with Chincoteague carving traditions. While I was able to conduct informal interviews with the few female carvers participating in decoy festivals on and nearby Chincoteague (who are also not from Chincoteague, but travel for the festivals), the one female carver I was aware of during my research and who lives on Chincoteague was unreceptive to being interviewed. I have recently become aware of two additional female carvers and one female decoy painter (two are deceased, I have been unable to contact the other). In contrast, I am aware of 56 male carvers (living and deceased) closely associated with Chincoteague (see Appendix B). Undoubtedly many more men carved who are not known primarily as carvers, or who do not sell their decoys.

Most (male) decoy carvers have met me with openness with respect to my interest in the history of carving, and my desire to learn to carve as participant observation. However, while it is not wholly uncommon for a husband and wife pair to carve and paint decoys, respectively, decoy carving is a masculine pursuit (whereas painting is

sometimes feminine), and what I am doing is unusual – a point which will be addressed further in the section on participant observation, below. This is highlighted by an anecdote: When one of my key informants introduced my husband and me to a friend of his, the informant explained that I was learning carve ducks. The friend looked at my husband and asked sarcastically, “What does *he* do, paint ‘em?” This was an important jab, highlighting the gender role upheaval inherent in my research. The joke also served to “work on,” or tease us in a way that let us know what I am doing is unusual, but also that we were accepted enough to joke with. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that I was unable to learn more about carvers in underrepresented populations during the course of my research—women, as well as people of color.

Research for this dissertation began while serving as a research assistant to Dr. Erve Chambers on the Ethnographic Overview and Assessment for Assateague Island National Seashore, September 2010 – June 2013 (Chambers and Sullivan [2014]). This project examined traditional associations with and uses of Assateague Island and its environs. The scope of research included inquiry into the history of Chincoteague Island, as well as periodic visits to Chincoteague in order to conduct research. I performed archival research and participant observation, and I conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 Chincoteague residents or persons closely associated with Chincoteague, such as watermen, hunters, and decoy carvers. Through the assistantship I became familiar with Chincoteague and its surrounding environment, and met many individuals who came to serve as informants in my own fieldwork.

Research directed toward this dissertation began in 2011 and continued through December 2013, though at the time of writing (March 2014) I continue to live on

Chincoteague, and daily interactions undoubtedly continue to inform my report. An account of time spent on Chincoteague follows:

- **August 2011**

During the entire month I conducted pre-dissertation fieldwork while living in a rental house in Chincoteague. While there I initiated contact with key informants, and conducted participant observation in local establishments such as tourist shops, decoy carvers' workshops, and local festivals, and while volunteering for an arts organization, the Chincoteague Cultural Alliance.

- **December 2011**

One weekend visit to maintain established relationships.

- **January 2012**

One week visit for the Ethnographic Overview and Assessment for Assateague Island National Seashore (Chambers and Sullivan [2014]), during which time I maintained established relationships and became acquainted with individuals in the Town of Chincoteague government.

- **March 2012**

Weekend visit to attend a running race on Chincoteague sponsored by the Island's YMCA, as well as attend a weekend-long decoy and arts festival.

- **May 2012 – time of writing**

During this time I have lived on Chincoteague Island and conducted the work that follows below.

Archival Research

Extensive archival research conducted for the Ethnographic Overview and Assessment for Assateague Island National Seashore contributed significantly to my understanding of place and the history of Chincoteague Island (Chambers and Sullivan [2014]). In addition to utilizing these resources I also took advantage of resources such as collections made available to me at the Museum of Chincoteague Island, interviews in the Chincoteague Island Library's Community Heritage Project, and interviews and photographs on file at the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. I conducted simple text analysis of these resources to learn about the history of Chincoteague carvers and their traditional lifestyles.

During summer 2012 I volunteered as Archive Consultant at the Samuel H. Dyke Research Library at the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, Salisbury University, in Salisbury, Maryland. As a consultant I digitized 242 oral histories or interviews recorded with decoy carvers from around the country, as well as recordings of heritage festivals and traditional folk-ways demonstrations throughout the Eastern Shore. Several of these interviews relate directly to or are with Chincoteague carvers.

Participant Observation, Informal Interviews, and Unstructured Interviews

At the outset of discussing participant observation and interviews, I find that a very brief discussion of myself may be relevant, as visible outsider status has certainly affected the outcomes of my research activity.

I fit the majority profile in Chincoteague in that I am of the majority race. I have attempted, in most cases, to perform in everyday life—dress, carry myself, and speak—as an average-seeming Chincoteague resident. However, despite my intentions I am a

usually immediately outgoing, whereas many Chincoteague residents that I have met are more reserved until you get to know them; I am heavily tattooed, whereas most women in Chincoteague are not tattooed or are minimally tattooed; and I have an upstate New York accent, as opposed to the distinctive Chincoteague accent that combines elements of Southern American and Scottish²⁹. Further, I am a woman actively inquiring about an historically male-dominated craft. In short, I stick out.

Even for those who have lived on Chincoteague for many years, outsider status remains. There is a strict distinction made between the categories of “Chincoteaguer” (or “Teaguer”) and “come-here” (or “c’mere”). The former is described as “one who is born and raised on Chincoteague Island” and “someone who is indigenous to or family of indigenous people of Chincoteague,”³⁰ though most Chincoteaguers by marriage I have met define themselves as such. The use of the word “indigenous” is interesting here, as it implies aboriginality, as used in anthropological discourse to denote American Indians and other peoples for whom a landscape is their ancestral home, often for millennia. Most Chincoteaguers claim no American Indian heritage and most do not use the term “indigenous” to define themselves, yet many do emphasize their indelible connection to the landscape.

Come-heres, on the other hand, are permanent residents of Chincoteague who have moved to the island at some point during the course of their life. A man in his mid-90s who was born on Assateague Island (separated from Chincoteague only by the

²⁹ Several informants speculate that this accent is the result of relative isolation over centuries. As examples, the word “house” is pronounced to rhyme with “mice,” and “flounder” has something close to a “oow” sound in place of the “ou.”

³⁰ These quotes are taken from a survey conducted online between July and December 2013.

narrow Assateague Channel), and who moved to Chincoteague as a boy—almost nine decades ago—jokes that even he is still called a come-here.

Perhaps barely having achieved the status of a recent come-here, it is clear that I am still an outsider on the island. Being an outsider has worked to my advantage, however, because I stick out. For example, one of my key informant's friends refers to me as "the tattooed lady" and reports that he asks my informant periodically about what the tattooed lady is up to. My status as a relatively new come-here also helps in initiating conversations. Many people have seemed to not hesitate to ask where I am from, or what I might be doing at a decoy festival or other event. I am more than happy to tell anyone I can that I live on the island to study decoy carving, in an effort to begin informal interviews.

As crowds thin after Labor Day, marking the end of the summer tourist season, people who live permanently on the island become more visible and more familiar. Increasingly, beginning in September 2012, I was invited into conversation at the grocery store, the post office, and the pharmacy. Everyday errands became opportunities to get to know Chincoteague community members and make it known that I was not a tourist in the sense that I intended to live on the island year-round.

Once given the opportunity to talk with people, the quickness with which conversation gets going when I introduce the topic of decoys—whether at the Museum of Chincoteague Island or a neighborhood bar—has never ceased to amaze me. While the island is perhaps best known today for its connection to Assateague's ponies or its seafood, displaying an interest in decoy carving (as opposed to these other, more famous associations) is an incredibly effective entree into Chincoteague life. Many locals,

Chincoteaguers and long-time come-heres alike, have invited me to see their collections of decoys, suggested names of collectors and carvers to talk with, and otherwise encouraged my study. Much of my day-to-day participant observation occurred in this manner. Detailed daily notes were recorded for participant observation, and I performed text analysis on many of these. When appropriate, I also took photographs to document my experiences and illustrate emerging concepts and ideas.

The majority of the material in this dissertation has grown from information gathered during participant observation in four key location categories: 1) decoy and decorative wildfowl carvers' homes or workshops, 2) the Museum of Chincoteague Island, 3) public spaces dedicated to decoy and decorative wildfowling or the arts more generally, and 4) public spaces on Chincoteague ostensibly unrelated to decoys, including restaurants, bars, and stores. Examples of the third category include the annual Chincoteague Decoy and Art Festival, tourist shops on Chincoteague Island, and island festivals and events such as monthly art strolls and annual carnivals and food-themed festivals. Highlights of participant observation may be found in Appendix C.

This extensive participant observation provided many opportunities for informal interviews—conversations where I was able to ask extensive follow-up questions—most especially as a volunteer and employee at the Museum of Chincoteague Island and at decoy and other arts festivals (Dewalt and Dewalt 2002: 122). Additionally, I was able to perform unstructured interviews—structured conversations during which I attempted to focus content to my interests, and elicit answers to predetermined questions, while maintaining a conversational tone and leaving answers fully open-ended (Bernard 2006: 213; Dewalt and Dewalt 2002: 122). I conducted these primarily at decoy festivals, where

I would bring lists of questions and write down answers as I spoke with participants and visitors. At each decoy festival I would initiate or participate in conversations with as many as 20 carvers and many more visitors. The three most common questions I asked are: 1) “Why do you collect decoys or decorative wildfowl, or why do you think others do?” 2) “How or why did you start carving?” and 3) “Who taught you and how did you learn?”

Detailed notes were recorded regarding these interactions and during participant observations, simple content analysis was performed on all of the notes, and many were analyzed using text analysis software (Atlas.ti) or simple text analysis such as color-coding in Microsoft Word.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to the ethnographic methods described above, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with 25 individuals, asking pre-determined questions, and in many cases recording the interview as a digital audio file, which was later transcribed.

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to conduct semi-structured interviews with 15 carvers. Of these 15, 13 identify themselves as Chincoteague carvers, though one is a come-here, two now permanently live off the island and on the mainland Eastern Shore (though they are from Chincoteague originally), and one lives primarily in Germany, although he maintains a house on the island. The other two carvers are from and live on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. Additionally, I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine other key or specialized informants, comprised of decoy and decorative wildfowl collectors, decoy and decorative wildfowl dealers and auctioneers, wildfowl hunters, and

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries conservation police officers (commonly referred to as “game wardens”). Subjects for interviews were found primarily through interaction in participant observation, and through snowball sampling (Bernard 2006: 192). Questions used in interviews may be found in Appendix D. Interview transcriptions will be donated to the Museum of Chincoteague Island for use by future researchers.

In addition to conducting semi-structured interviews with individuals for my own research, I also conducted or assisted with five semi-structured interviews at the Ward World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition in Ocean City, Maryland, April 2013. The persons interviewed comprised the “Best in World” winners of five categories of wildfowl carving, and offered insight into wildfowl carving experienced and practiced in a very different way than I had experienced in my own research.

Surveys and Questionnaires

In addition to informal, unstructured, and semi structured interviews, I conducted two surveys aimed primarily at visitors to Chincoteague Island. The purpose of these surveys was to determine the ways in which visitors to the island think about decoys and decorative wildfowl and their connections to Chincoteague (if they do), and values visitors ascribe to Chincoteague’s cultural and natural heritage, including decoy carving.

The first of these two surveys consisted of questionnaires requesting that respondents fill out their age and the state or country they are from, and that they respond to the following question: “Why do you collect or own decoys or decorative wildfowl, or why do you think others do?” These questionnaires were administered on paper that was

placed in a basket at the Museum of Chincoteague Island along with an informational sign and pencils. They were collected by staff and volunteers at the museum. In total I received 55 responses, from 24 males and 31 females, ages 8 to 79 (mean age = 43).

The second survey was hosted online via surveymonkey.com between July 1 and December 31, 2013. Flyers requesting participation were placed in Chincoteague restaurants and bars, art stores, gift and specialty shops, and the Museum of Chincoteague Island. Additionally, requests were circulated online, for example via the Museum of Chincoteague Island's Facebook page. Between July 1 and September 30, 100 respondents completed the questionnaire. An additional seven respondents participated in the following months. This survey addressed primarily visitors' ideas about Chincoteague heritage, with attention to decoy carving and hunting. Survey questions may be found in Appendix E.

Introduction to the Remaining Dissertation

The following three chapters are written in an article style, suitable for academic journals, and they are based on the research represented above. While there is some overlap in content, as is necessary for contextualizing each piece as a separate article for publication, each addresses a somewhat different aspect of Chincoteague heritage related to hunting decoy or decorative wildfowl carving.

The first section addresses the presence of decoys within particular tourist markets, the carvers' selective participation in island events and organizations, and the ways in which carving is learned and passed on. Each of these aspects of the decoy

carving tradition reveal ways in which art is used to express and continue heritage, and negotiate identity in the context of touristic exchange.

The second section examines the ways in which hunter-carvers' identity and heritage is incorporated through rural work, embodied through the performance of work both formal and informal, and expressed through local narrative. Performance is here understood not as formal theatre, but as expression, storytelling, and day-to-day representation of self and community. In doing so, this section looks at the intersections of performance, folklore, work, and heritage.

The final section examines hunting as an important tradition in Chincoteague that is closely associated with decoy carvers' lives. Hunting, as I present it, relates to community cohesion and reveals social structure, and conversation about hunting reveals important environmental and cultural values, and at times local environmental knowledge. There are varying opinions about this form of heritage among the myriad visitors to and locals on the island; hunting is shown to exist as something of a lightning rod for claims to environmental resources and understandings of Chincoteague's position with regard to its natural environment.

I begin each section with one or more quotes from the surveys described above, which help illustrate the aspect of heritage being addressed.

CHAPTER TWO

Carving the Past: Art, Tourism, and Heritage³¹

*Why do you collect decoys or decorative wildfowl, or why do you think others do?*³²

“I like to collect decoys or decorative wildfowl because of the artistry; it reminds me of my time bird-watching and it brings the birds into my home. I do not like to think of their original purpose and do not really collect the old hunting models. I prefer the decoys that are made for the joy of carving a decorative or artistic sculpture.”

- 51-year-old female from New Jersey
(2013)

*

“I believe that others enjoy collecting waterfowl because they are interested in learning the breed of fowl and its anatomy. People who decorate their houses may enjoy hunting fowl and keeping them to use for decorative use in their homes as souvenirs.”

- 14-year-old male from New Jersey
(2013)

*

“I enjoy collecting decorative waterfowl. Grew up on the water and now that I live inshore the sculptures that I have bring me back to good memories. My dad also enjoyed waterfowl so they remind me of him as well.”

- 55-year-old female from Florida
(2013)

*

“They are an expression of art and heritage.”

- Female from Louisiana, age 18-24
(2013)

³¹ An earlier version of this chapter appears as “Carving the Past: Art Tourism, and Heritage in Chincoteague, Virginia” in *Travel, Tourism and Art*. Tijana Rakić and Jo-Anne Lester, eds. Pp. 97-111. Farnham: Ashgate. (2013)

³² All responses come from a survey with self-selected participation, conducted at the Museum of Chincoteague Island.

In cultural anthropology the art market has long been understood as related to social structure, with different modes of production related to different relationships between producers and outsiders such as tourists. Less attention has been paid, however, to the ways in which art is linked to a tourist (host) community's heritage. My research examines art's connection to heritage in a touristic setting. Hunting decoy and decorative wildfowl carvers in Chincoteague are one group of utilitarian craftsmen-turned-artists whose work is intimately tied with their community's past, and understandings of their evolving community today. Wildfowl carvers, veterans of a rural lifestyle involving waterfowl hunting and trapping, have continued and passed on a vernacular art form that reflects local values associated with work, the environment, and other forms of cultural and natural heritage. They have done this despite the gradual decline of access to natural resources due to increasing government presence and regulation, environmental pressure, and tourism growth. The presence of decoys within particular tourist markets, the carvers' selective participation in island events and organizations, and the ways in which carving is learned and passed on reveal much about the ways in which art is used to express and continue heritage, and negotiate identity.

This chapter provides a review of relevant literature, and then explores some of the ways in which hunting decoy and decorative wildfowl carving in Chincoteague have evolved from their previous utility into an art form marketed for tourist consumption. I will show that those involved in the sale of carvings in the region have managed their heritage by managing the production and performance of their art, a notion that lies outside or on the periphery of early theoretical literature within the anthropology of art

and tourism, which tends to downplay artist and local community agency and leave heritage almost entirely out of the discourse.

Setting the Scene

Three life-size wooden carvings of ducks sit in a storefront window in downtown Chincoteague Island (see Fig. 11). These decoys are placed atop a mirror, apparently representing water. Behind them is a framed painting of the Assateague lighthouse, a landmark present since the mid-1800s only a few miles away, on what is now a federally protected wildlife refuge. Surrounding these objects are baskets of ivy, and carved waterfowl placed on driftwood. One can understand the temptation for tourists to interpret this display as something straight out of the refuge—beautiful birds as if in their natural environment—invoking a sense of serenity or a connection with a public natural heritage. Over the past couple years I have come to know this scene as something a little different.



Figure 11 Display of decoys for sale in a store window on Main Street, 2011. Author's own photograph.

While the scene is certainly serene, it is born of hunting traditions from which the decoys come, and speaks to a local heritage of decoy carving as necessary for attracting wildfowl for food—for survival. The shop owner is likely aware of this, and yet has positioned the hunting decoys in a simulacrum of nature quite on purpose for his tourist audience, perhaps playing to their expectations. Decoy and decorative wildfowl carvers, shopkeepers, and others involved with this art form in the Chincoteague tourism industry have managed their local heritage in such a way that the once primarily utilitarian craft of decoy carving has become a means to position oneself in the potentially lucrative tourist art market and, at the same time, convey an important part of their heritage.

Situating Chincoteague

Chincoteague is a small barrier island off the coast of Virginia that has become known for its seafood and waterfowling, as it is surrounded by productive salt marshes and brackish bays, and is positioned along the Atlantic Flyway, a bird migration route following the east coast of North America. Industries revolving around these resources long ago took root, and many long-time local residents, “Chincoteaguers”, trace their lineage along generations of watermen, trappers, and hunters. Nevertheless, Chincoteague today finds itself less a fishing village and more a modern tourist destination with visitors attracted to the picturesque town and to nearby Assateague Island’s federally protected seascape, which is connected by bridge to Chincoteague. Many long-established commercial fishing and hunting practices are becoming repurposed and replaced by tourism related activities as longtime residents find it increasingly difficult to make a living and as new residents with new goals, many of who

are retirees, slowly become the majority. Complicating this, Chincoteague's major tourism assets are today controlled by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the United States National Park Service (NPS). The natural resources of Assateague Island have helped make tourism a \$24 million per year industry on Chincoteague and provide habitat for a range of wildlife species (Mariner 2010b). While the resources are thus arguably economic and environmental boons to the island, the agencies that manage them are often perceived as threats to local independence and to the continuance of traditional life-ways, as the now-protected lands include traditional hunting and fishing grounds as well as traditional places of recreation.

Decoy carving on Chincoteague is a tradition that dates back long before the federal agencies were put in place, to a time when wooden decoys (also called gunning stools) were used to fool live ducks, geese, and shorebirds into thinking hunting grounds were safe for landing. Carvers would create rigs of decoys for hunting purposes—for their own use, or for others to buy and use personally or as a hunting guide. Hunting parties were composed of some of the region's earliest tourists. Affluent men from nearby cities such as Baltimore, Maryland and Washington, DC would visit to hunt for sport, using local guides and locally made decoys. Yet even then hunting decoys were given aesthetic consideration and even considered art. One bird from a rig might be saved by someone in a party, and placed on a shelf back home as a souvenir.

Into the mid-20th century gunning decoys were sold for around \$1.25 US. A few noted carvers were sought out for their work, however, and reputations grew. By the 1960s many Chincoteague carvers were creating gunning-style birds for sale as decoration and taking special orders from around the country. Also by the 1960s both the

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS) and the Assateague Island National Seashore (NPS) were in place, along with increased state hunting restrictions. Between the reputations gained by a handful of fine carvers, the diminished access to hunting grounds, and the development of mass-produced plastic decoys for hunting purposes, carved wooden decoys shifted in purpose. What was once primarily used for hunting and occasionally art became known as an art form occasionally used for hunting. Today wildfowl carving has developed into a highly refined artistic tradition, bringing thousands of dollars per bird to top carvers, and thousands of tourists to local carving competitions, shows, and shops.

Background and Research

I first visited Chincoteague in the height of the tourist season, a hot summer day buzzing with people in shops, ice cream parlors, and on their way to the beach. I wandered into a garage-turned-decoy store on the side of a carver's home, off of the boulevard leading to Assateague Island. After looking around for a while I found a bird off to the side that I particularly liked for its roughness, its gestural appearance, and other aesthetic and natural qualities I value. The storeowner, also the carver in residence, quickly chastised me for my choice, saying the bird was not finished; it was not yet for sale. He explained to me the qualities it still lacked, the same qualities that would make it a good decoy: the proper coloring, certain wing and eye details. He followed up on this lesson with stories of his father carving, and a brief history of hunter-carvers on the island. I was intrigued by this turn of events. Here was this beautiful object, in my estimation, that he understood as needing to be refined in order to meet his standards of

appropriate art before he would sell it. He was able to sell me another bird that met both our aesthetic criteria; however, in refusing me the first bird for the reasons he gave, he placed himself in a tradition of carving related to his community's heritage, a heritage of working the land and water, of using natural resources for food, and of taking pride in the objects that were perhaps meant only to be shot over in the process. He also managed how that heritage was distributed.

In the years since this first encounter I have had the opportunity to return to Chincoteague on a number of occasions, both for field visits during a study of regional heritage for the NPS, and for my own ongoing dissertation fieldwork in anthropology. During these visits I have relied heavily on qualitative methods such as participant observation with carvers, collectors, tourists, and museum staff; interviews with carvers, collectors, shop owners, and tourists; and text analysis of oral histories and previously collected interviews with carvers. The following analysis is based on this research.

Art and Tourism in Anthropology

In cultural anthropology, tourist art has often been understood as a means to understand social structures. Less attention has been paid to art's relationship to the ways in which locals and outsiders understand a place's and people's past, and artists seem to possess little agency. Many writers in the 1970s and 80s suggest that tourist art is part of social integration and differentiation (e.g., Graburn 1976), where locals may produce art separately for tourists and insider populations (external and internal audiences); but tourist art is yet a reflection of tourists' desires, or artists' responses to forces in the tourist market (e.g., Abramson 1976; Deitch 1989; Low 1976). Art is thus a potentially

hegemonic marker by which we might understand seemingly powerless people (c.f., Graburn 1976, 1977) in relation to the outside world and its *tourist gaze* (c.f., Urry 2002), rather than as a means to understand how artists craft their own links to their consumers and their past.

Increasingly, recent ethnographic accounts concerned with art and tourism do address the roles artists and their surrounding communities play in the production and sale of their work. No longer mere descriptions of stylistic and social changes resulting from so-called tourist impact, these studies address concerns such as identity formation and representation (e.g., Adams 2006); shifting gender roles (e.g., Tice 1995); human agency, work, and creativity (e.g., Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999; Duggan 1997); questions of authenticity (e.g., Littrell Anderson, and Brown, 1993); and the effects of anthropology on the study of tourist art (e.g., Castañeda 2005). The insistence on framing art and tourism within a structuralist model persists, but generally this frame is used to consider greater issues of power negotiation and the ways in which artists may move within and move out of roles as result of economic success, fame, and other forms of cultural capital.

Notably, Kathleen M. Adams (2006) writes of how art is something that can be activated to display self-attributed values. She suggests that art has “‘an affecting presence’ imbued with emotional force,” and a space with art provides “a particularly apt arena for negotiating, reaffirming, and at times challenging...social identities” (Adams, 2006: 27). Part of what Adams and others exploring identity are concerned with are the ways in which art is used to present and represent identity found through heritage, and yet the concept of heritage is rarely mentioned in the anthropological literature on art and

tourism. On the other hand, tradition, often associated with heritage, is considered at length (e.g., Moreno and Littrell 2001).

Tradition is often seen as the opposite of modernity; and due to the same modern factors that motivate the *tourist gaze* or the desire to see the authentic *back stage* of a tourist setting (c.f., MacCannell 1999), there exists a modernist desire to preserve tradition, the remnants of some authentic past. Nostalgia drives the present to idealize this past (be it fictitious or otherwise); and for scholars studying art in tourism, the drive to study or preserve tradition leads to near obsession over stylistic details, materials used, and explaining changes to tradition apparent in modern pieces—the impact tourism has had on tradition. Less emphasis is placed on the meaning traditional elements hold from an emic perspective, or why a local (host) population might change tradition over time. I believe it is important to consider not just the traditional elements of art, but the art's—the artist's and host community's—heritage in studying tourist art, in order to understand how their heritage is managed through the tourist and art industries.

Art, Tourism, and Heritage

Heritage involves something akin to claiming identity through the past. Not quite history, as it has a mutable life in the present, heritage is a varyingly tenuous link to history that is intended to continue into the future, giving meaning to those who claim it. Heritage claims can legitimate a place, person, or thing, providing meaning and value (c.f., Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). I would argue that one could also begin to understand heritage and the meanings and values associated with it through art in touristic settings.

Tourist art takes on a range of meaning for locals and tourists that can be expressed in terms of what may be understood as public and private heritage, where the former involves the attempt to preserve an idea of what the past might have meant, and the latter looks at the past through its expression in a living community (c.f., Chambers 2006). Private heritage may further be broken down into an assemblage of personal heritages, the veins of continuity running through individuals within a community body of tradition. On one hand, if we consider the private and personal heritages of the arts we may ask several questions: In what traditions has an artist been taught stylistically, what skill sets have been learned, what gender or other identity roles are assumed, etc.? What is the significance of the pedagogical design, of teaching and learning the art, but also what is the art intended to tell the viewer? How does the art relate to the artist's worldview and understanding of the artist's past, and how is the past represented? On the other hand, if we consider the public heritage of the arts we may ask similar questions with regard to artistic communities, representations of worldviews, and so forth; but we must consider additional questions: Who decides its meaning, and for what purposes is it created and displayed? What does its display tell us about social and political positioning? Museums and other public heritage venues run the risk of creating "a kind of 'orientalism', a fascination with the 'otherness' of other cultures, times, and places, in exhibitions of all kinds that deal in absent people"—absent not necessarily due to physical location or time, but perhaps absent from majority or popular discourse (Dicks 2003: 145). Public heritage displays similarly run the risk of creating the impression of a unified people or ethnicity. People may be lumped in to a certain heritage category (e.g., Native peoples, farmers, craftsmen, rural Americans, etc.) and presented either as of one

people, or as an unproblematic cultural mosaic (Chibnik 2006). Artists expressing their private or personal heritage may find their art repurposed in public heritage contexts in such a way that emphasizes certain broad themes important to a large public (or region, nation, cause) while deemphasizing connection to the maker's personal past (which may even be in opposition to the public heritage, e.g., a hunter-carver's association with killing the thing—a bird—a tourist buys a piece of art to remember). While this may easily be viewed in a negative light, where public heritage institutions (e.g., museums) co-opt or misappropriate heritage, an artist may also take advantage of the divide in forms of heritage as well, creating and marketing objects according to audience. To be sure, the shopkeeper's display described above does just this; it takes private heritage objects and situates them in such a way as to appeal to a public heritage-seeking audience. The hunting decoys have become part of the story of one version of wildlife protection; they stand in for nature *in situ*.

Art, Tourism, and Heritage in Chincoteague

Chincoteague carvers are acutely aware of the different audiences for which they carve, as well as the different ways other carvers use Chincoteague's heritage. As one carver informed me tongue-in-cheek, "there are carvers, and there are trinket-makers." When asked what makes a carver a carver, he replied that they have to have lived a certain lifestyle, have hunted, "been out there." Trinket makers, on the other hand, have capitalized on the limited successes of decoy carvers, creating decorative birds called decoratives, fit for public consumption, in line with ideas about the public heritage of

Chincoteague. What this particular carver refers to in discussing a sort of authentic carving may be what Michael J. Chiarappa (1997: 339) calls “vernacular craft”:

Vernacular craft is defined as artefact production that embodies the functional, historic and symbolic relevance of a community or region’s occupations, social relations and environmental interaction. Furthermore, the producers of these crafts are community members who have, from their own life experience, a deep knowledge of the history and cultural logic of these issues.

Decoy carvers aren’t artists who simply carve and paint what they see. Carvers draw on their private and personal heritages, heritages that involve intimate contact with their surrounding land and waters. They draw on a body of environmental knowledge and set of values that relate to uses of the environment, and they have an understanding of the ways in which their art has been used practically and politically in the past (i.e., its utilitarian value and history). Importantly, carvers tend to learn to carve by observing other carvers. I have yet to meet a Chincoteague carver who underwent formal training for the purposes of carving decoys, including formal apprenticeship. Instead, knowledge is passed on through informal transfer and learned through observation. Carver Roe Terry recalls his own education in a magazine interview, with commentary from the author:

“When I grew up, I wanted to be just like [decoy carver and waterman Doug Jester, Jr.]” ... Terry wasn’t 10 years old when he first went hunting with Jester, taking his mentor’s 10-gauge double barrel shotgun and a set of shorebird decoys. “He did the shooting and I did the retrieving,” [Terry] remembers. ... After school, when Jester wasn’t working on the water, Terry enjoyed going to his shop to watch him work. “He was always fixing and repairing things, always talking as he worked,” Terry says. “I got to watch him cut out and make gunning decoys, as well as decoratives, which he usually gave away.” (Trimble 2006: 41)

This passing of knowledge from generation to generation in a subtle, informal way, with respect due to earlier carvers, is very much part of the continuance of heritage (see Fig. 12). It is also evident in the art object produced. Several modern Chincoteague carvers

report having spent time with Miles Hancock, a renowned carver and entrepreneur from an earlier generation. Most of them have shown me decoys made in his style; they learned to carve like Hancock before adapting and building on Hancock's techniques to create their own style. Similarly, one of Chincoteague's most famous carvers, Delbert "Cigar" Daisey, who himself learned to carve alongside his father, allowed a handful of young men to watch him carve, and he reports that he can see his influence clearly in their styles. He and other carving enthusiasts can pick out which birds were made with his patterns and techniques, versus the ones created by the younger carvers alone. In this way there is physical evidence of intangible inheritance. Skill sets, embodied cultural understandings of nature, and values are passed on from generation to generation, with current carvers and their work representing their heritage. Carving is a performance of embodied cultural knowledge.



Figure 12 Jimmy Bowden takes a break from carving to tell a carving-related story, 2012. Author's own photograph.

Even when skill lacks evidence of formal education, artwork may still be evidence of the past, in what the object was once used for. Chincoteague carver Bobby Umphlett (see Fig. 13) tells how he began carving:



Figure 13 Bobby Umphlett at a carving competition, mid-1970s. Courtesy of the USFWS, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.

Umphlett: The reason that I got into it: I wanted to hunt, and were poor. I wanted to make my own stuff, and I started, and oh they were crude. (laughs) But, as I got going I got a little better, and the tourists started buying them! So I'd make them to hunt with that winter, and the next summer I'd end up selling them and had to make all new ones. But, the money was good, and that's how I got doin'. I started hunting. ...

Kristin Sullivan: Who'd you learn to carve from when you were first making them to hunt with?

Umphlett: Me. Nobody taught me. I got my hatchet out and started just trying it. ... I learned basically myself. Then other boys got into it and we'd exchange. You know, something I liked that he'd done; we'd kind of talk back and forth like that. That's how we did. ...

Sullivan: It doesn't sound like anybody was ever really formally taught....

Umphlett: We kind of picked up. Well, if you wanted to hunt, and you wanted some decoys, that was probably the best way to do it - get you a block of wood. And some of these decoys now, they're expensive!
(Interview with the author, 11 October 2012)

Today many of Umphrelett's carvings exhibit fine detail and lifelike features. These birds are not decoys but decoratives, meant for display purposes only. Nevertheless they are in a line of waterfowling tradition, where hunters were valued for their ability to put food on the table and maybe turn over a dollar or two by selling their product to a tourist. Carving was necessary for their way of life. Thus heritage continues and is present in the art object (the decoy or decorative) as it is evidence of the tradition—carving lineage and skill set, or hunting tradition—and it is evidence of the necessity that brought it to fruition.

Situating and Selling Chincoteague's Heritage

Carved ducks, geese, and other wildfowl are today found throughout the island on mailboxes, as lawn ornaments, on shop signs, and so forth. Decorative birds are sold in many gift shops, but they are largely made for export elsewhere in the world, sometimes molded of plastic, resin, or other materials uncommon in traditional carving. It is telling to see which shops feature different types of decoys and other carved waterfowl. Resin decoratives are predominantly in shops that also sell beach towels and bumper stickers, or other common tourist souvenirs found in many beachside resorts. Most local carvers' works are on display either at their home workshops, or in specialized stores that seem to be more in line with the carvers' ideas about proper tourism development—i.e., small scale and with respect to local culture.

I am told that tourists will buy small, inexpensive decoys in stores, but that it is a rare tourist who will seek out a well-made, and therefore expensive, decoy by a Chincoteague carver in a tourist store. In the early 1970s tourists visiting Chincoteague's

“Visitor Information” stands would receive “a schematic map of the Island with a listing of the local decoy carvers and their addresses” (Berkey and Berkey 1981: 87) (see Fig. 10). Today some of the carvers featured on that map still sell their work, but rarely in stores, and almost never with advertisement. Their art, still sought after, is limited in distribution, perhaps to protect its cultural value.

For example, if you want to buy one carver’s specialty you find the street where he lives and follow the hand-painted signs to his backyard workshop (see Figs 4 and 5). Another carver sells his decoys out of a small stand on his front lawn on a well-traveled street (see Fig. 2). These two artists have responded to the desires of different audiences in different ways very much on their own terms, which is evidence of their ability to adapt to and make decisions about varying tourist art markets. The first of these carvers sells decoys out of the same shop in which he creates them. He has no set hours and relies on his reputation for sales. He regularly stocks a small number of birds for quick sale, but relies in large part on special orders from tourists who have found his shop over the years by word of mouth. It should be noted, however, that the first bird of each species this carver made was given to his wife. He places high personal heritage value on some of his pieces, and distributes them accordingly. The second carver creates hundreds of small birds for sale at low prices, which he sells on his front lawn. He creates decoys for an external audience, but retains aspects of traditional carving and painting common in his family. He creates and sells objects related to the island’s private heritage in a way that appeals to the masses of tourists, creating a true tourist *borderzone* (Bruner 2005), a leisure space where tourists have access to the “exotic” Other, that locals, on the other hand, use as spaces of commerce away from their true *back-stage* lives.



Figure 14 Three different bufflehead (locally called "dipper") decoys by the same carver, 2011. Author's own photograph.

A third Chincoteague carver is fully aware of his various audiences and capitalizes on the opportunities related to each. On one visit to his workshop he pulled out three bufflehead drake decoys for me to examine (see Fig. 14). One is made in the style he most naturally gravitates toward making. It is well constructed, simply painted, and is able to serve as a decoy but is intended as decoration. The second started its life as the exact same decoy, but he took the time to rough up the paint and attach an eyhook and partially unraveled string in the front, to give the impression that it had been used in hunting as part of a rig. The third uses the same carving pattern as the first two decoys, but is painted in greater detail, waxed to a smooth sheen, and has metal on the bottom to balance it properly. This third decoy is for competition in a decoy-carving contest. I asked the carver how people respond to the different birds. He said that consumers at decoy shows, and tourists who find him, tend to gravitate toward the antiqued decoy. In

fact, he mostly sells decoys that he's purposefully made to look old. This is the case for many carvers I have met. There are a few people who will buy the first style; these tend to be local or repeat consumers. The third style isn't meant for sale; it is meant to establish the artist according to public set standards. The second, however, sells well and shows us that tourists do tend to gravitate toward an idealized past represented and authenticated by a local person tied to that past (perhaps public heritage in the guise of private), rather than gravitating toward the art object most related to the living connections to the past (private heritage). Regardless, it is the carver who negotiates his market. He understands the various demands, and adjusts designs accordingly. None of what he does falls outside of what he wants to do; he makes his living elsewhere and does not rely on tourist art for his sole income. He creates what is appropriate for him in different situations.

Through the decoys and decoratives made by these individuals we can see lineages or legacies of carving tradition or heritage, but we can also see agency in adaptation to tourist markets, and active control over the marketing and distribution of the artist's product.

Concluding Thoughts

In *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* Robert Pirsig (1974) describes what he calls "mechanic's feel," a sort of incorporated knowledge that an action is right, apparent when practicing a finely honed skill—manipulating wood with finesse, for example. I associate this with habitus, with an ability to perceive, know, and react with one's body based on years of training, or being in a given culture. I am convinced that

carvers understand this implicitly. Several times I have asked carvers how to start carving birds. Nearly every time the response I receive is, “You just take away everything that doesn’t look like a bird.” There are books written about carving, but most carvers I have met thus far have learned through trial and error, observation of other carvers, and close association with the birds themselves in their natural environment. Carvers understand what the birds look like from endless hours watching them in their backyards or from hunting blinds, and they know how to carve because they have been doing it since they were young, and they learned from watching their father or neighbor, who did the same, and on back for generations. For Chincoteague carvers there exists a very personal heritage of connection to the land and water, and perhaps especially to the community that thrives on these resources. Importantly, however, there is also a sense that this heritage can be managed through the production and sale of decoys and decorative wildfowl. Over the years in Chincoteague, carving has evolved from a primarily utilitarian (though skillful) task to an artist’s arena. Tourist shops have opened that attempt to capitalize on the popularity of decoy carving, but the local carvers of gunning style birds and fine decoratives alike have decided how their style will evolve, and the ways in which their sales will take place: in locally-run shops, from their back yards, in bulk, by special order, and so on. There is no one size fits all tourist art formula for Chincoteague decoy carvers, and I think this is in large part due to the personal heritage connection these carvers have to those who taught them, the reasons for which they began carving, and the ways they feel are fit to pass on part such an important and ongoing part of their past to those tourists and collectors who become interested in their craft. As such, Chincoteague decoy and decorative wildfowl carvers well illustrate the

ways in which heritage is strongly tied to tourist art, and the extent to which artists act as agents on behalf of that heritage. This research helps fill out a picture of how heritage and tourist art are intertwined through transmission of skill and active engagement with different art markets. It also points to the need for further exploration of the ways in which host community artists are not “powerless” or passive members of a tourism industry, but powerful actors, shaping their identity and negotiating heritage values through the production and distribution of tourist art.

CHAPTER THREE

Hunting Decoy Carvers and the Embodiment and Performance of Local Heritage

*Why do you collect decoys or decorative wildfowl, or why do you think others do?*³³

“The fun of owning something handmade.”

- Adult female from Pennsylvania, age 35-44
(2013)

*

“They are pieces of art and reflect what Chincoteague *is*.”

- Female from Maryland, age 45-54
(2013)

*

For the “heritage of hunting” on the Eastern Shore. “It’s born and bred in us.”

- Adult male from Delaware
(2013)

³³ Answers come from unstructured interviews conducted at decoy festivals, or from responses to a survey conducted online between July 1 and December 31, 2013.

In Chincoteague Island, hunting decoy and decorative wildfowl carvers are, traditionally, participants in a rural lifestyle involving the hunting and trapping of wildfowl such as geese and ducks. These hunter-carvers have continued and passed on a vernacular art form over generations, which reflects local values associated with work, the environment, and other forms of cultural and natural heritage. They have done this despite the gradual decline of their traditional employment related to hunting, and decline in their access to natural resources, and an *increase* in tourism development and activity on the island. I have learned over the course of my research that the presence of decoys within particular tourist markets, folklore surrounding top carvers, and the ways in which carving is learned and passed on, reveal much about the ways in which their art is used to express and continue rural heritage related to the natural environment. Here I will discuss some of the ways in which hunter-carvers' identity and heritage is related to rural work, embodied through the performance of work both formal and informal, and expressed through local narrative.

Hunting and Carving as Rural Work

Decoys are carved birds traditionally made of wood, which are placed in water or marsh to attract live prey to hunting grounds. Usually they vary stylistically according to their place of origin and purpose. For example, oversized geese used in the waters off Maine's forested coasts are unnecessary in many of the calms marsh waters of Virginia, where life-size goose decoys are easily visible to their live counterparts (see Figs 15 and 16). Differences in decoys go beyond this, however, and reflect not only aesthetics of

necessity, but education lineages and affiliation with particular communities and community traditions.



Figure 15 Antique Canada goose decoy by an unknown New England carver, at the Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, Salisbury, Maryland, 2013. An adult male's hand and cellular phone remain in the photograph for size reference. Author's own photograph.

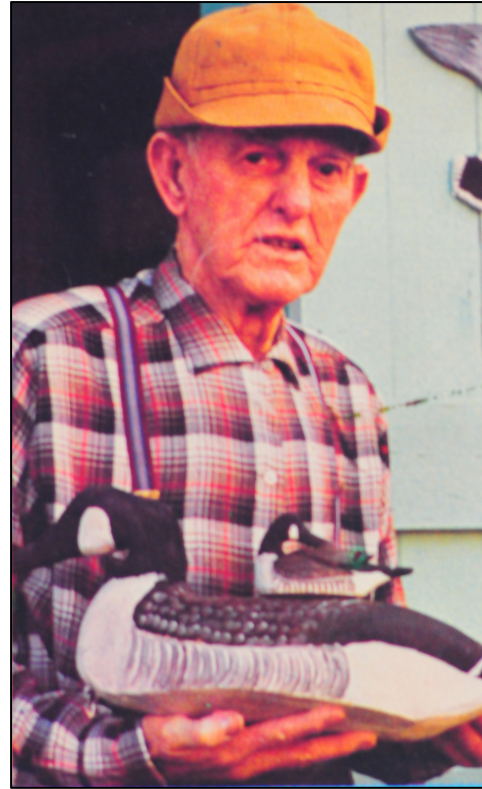


Figure 16 Miles Hancock with a full size and a miniature Canada goose, ca. 1960s. The full size goose is approximately 1/4 to 1/3 the size of the goose in Figure 15. Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Chincoteague Island.

Many of the most valued carvers in Chincoteague are known for being part of a long tradition of hunters. These hunters can be broadly placed into two groups: 1) small-scale hunters whose aim it is to retrieve food, and 2) hunters whose aim it is to make money, either as market hunters (a.k.a. “market gunners”) or as hunting tour guides. In both of these cases, one of the defining characteristics of those who have participated in this rural work in Chincoteague is thriving despite relative isolation and, oftentimes, poverty. Though natural resources have long been plentiful nearby Chincoteague, money

has not. From centuries ago through the present, hunting expertise was, and continues to be, important for the impoverished or struggling Chincoteaguer, as one local explains:

Only thing I'll say is when we came up we came up poor. Therefore [hunting] was a way of putting food on the table...you did not want to miss, because you could not afford a [shotgun] shell. Sometimes you'd go hunting with just five shells all day, because you didn't have no money to buy any! So therefore everything counted. It was a good way to learn.
(Elvie Whealton in an interview with the author, 9 April 2013)

Skill related to hunting is thus highly valued. Part of this skill is the creation and proper handling of hunting decoys. The ability to cheaply create, and effectively use, decoys, was, and is, valuable.

The values of thrift, and of best use of materials, carry over into carving itself. This can be well seen in the tradition of propping (c.f. Chambers and Sullivan [2014]). According to long-time hunter and carver Carlton “Cork” McGee, propping is when one would “be in the marsh a walkin’ and anything you seen you picked up if it was eatable [*sic*].”³⁴ To be sure, carving materials are not food, but they may be found in the way McGee describes—happened upon, claimed, and repurposed. Delbert “Cigar” Daisey, a Chincoteague carver officially recognized as a Living Legend at the 2013 Ward World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition, recalls propping during his start at the craft:

I went on the north end of Wallops Island [near Chincoteague] – used to be an inlet ‘ere, called gunboat inlet.... Anyway, I found a raft on ‘at beach.... And I told...my father, I said I know where a raft is. I found it up ‘ere.... So we took one of them old saws...went in ‘ere and sawed it up in

³⁴ Interview with Cork McGee by Charlie Petrocci, April 1998, as part of The Chincoteague Island Library Community Heritage Project.
<http://chincoteagueislandlibrary.org/oralhistory.html>

chunks. ... And me and him made it up in black ducks and hairy heads – which is hooded mergansers.³⁵

Propped wood allowed for the creation of decoy rigs—sets of decoys, individually called stools, used in hunting—which, in turn, allowed for more successful hunting trips and more food for one’s family.

The second group of traditional hunters around Chincoteague includes market hunters, who became outlaws by the early 20th century. In 1918 the United States federal government ratified the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which implemented international wildfowl protection legislation signaling the death knell for this form of employment, which itself included large-scale waterfowl hunting for the purposes of sale, usually by the rural poor to the urban elite (USDA 2009). Market hunters would hunt and trap wildfowl and sell them en masse to restaurateurs in nearby major cities. When it became illegal to conduct this sort of business, and restrictions to hunting grounds increased with the creation of the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, Chincoteague hunter-trappers became “outlaw gunners.” Outlaw gunning related to market sale continued at least through the 1970s, though small-scale outlaw activity continues even today.

Examples of outlaw gunner activities in the mid-20th century include a hunter hiding a day’s limit worth of ducks in hollowed out goose decoys, only to go out and kill another day’s worth; or baiting ducks with corn. Another is simply evading the law. Many hunters knew the lay of the water better than conservation police officers, or “game wardens,” and would evade capture by swiftly boating into hard-to-navigate waters in an

³⁵ Interview with Cigar Daisey by unknown interviewer, April 29, 1998 as part of The Chincoteague Island Library Community Heritage Project.
<http://chincoteagueislandlibrary.org/oralhistory.html>

era before GPS (global positions systems) and depth finders, as former outlaw gunners explain:

Kristin Sullivan: You think, are hunters still doing this stuff [outlaw gunning] today?

Tommy Reed: No.

Andy Linton: I don't know of anybody that baits or anything like we used to.

Reed: Well, see you've got cell phones and helicopters. [Meaning, game wardens have sophisticated means of finding outlaws]

Bobby Umphlett: You know what the worst thing is that they've got? GPS.

Reed: GPS, yep.

Umphlett: You can't— . I mean, they mark that trail where deep water is, and you can't— . See, they used to— . When they'd get a fresh game warden it took him a long time to learn the waters. Oh, man, you'd have a ball then! (Interview with the author 9 April 2013)

Despite the beliefs of older outlaw gunners, today hunters continue some old tricks.

Examples of modern-day outlaw gunning techniques—many of which carry over from earlier days—include stuffing birds in waders (rubberized hunting pants) in order to hide numbers over their limit, stashing sunken coolers in which to hide birds throughout the marsh, or baiting ducks in concealed areas ahead of duck season, in order to train ducks to come to particular areas.

These sorts of activities—and perhaps more importantly, the stories about these sorts of activities—confer value to hunter-carvers. Locally, carvers such as Cigar Daisey and Bobby Umphlett are nearly as revered for their trickster antics or hunting reputations in some circles as they are for their artistry—notably, among other Chincoteaguers.

Outlaw gunner cache adds to a carving's value, by associating the craft with a traditional

lifestyle synonymous with a fiercely independent island community. As such, this is a form of rural, community-related work that is either enhanced by the decoy carver, or that enhance the value of the product of a carver's work. Carving and outlaw gunning are forms of local heritage bound to identity, and tied to a craftwork tradition, that confers capital and materializes in real economic value.

Before continuing with our association of decoys with hunting traditions, it may be helpful to understand what a decoy is, and how such an object can be so closely associated with the island.

Carving 101

At the outset, a carver selects wood for its characteristics. For example, a fine grain and harder, denser wood such as tupelo is better for a more decorative bird, whereas lighter, cheaper wood that's easy to work with is better for quick production (e.g., white cedar). Availability often plays a role, too. Many a shipwrecked and propped timber has become part of a rig.

After the wood is selected one begins to clearly see marked divergence in traditions, with regard to whether and how much one uses power tools. At this point a carver chooses a self-made pattern for the bird, traces it on the block of wood, and roughly cuts the bird using either a band saw or hatchet. Any carver I have met that uses a hatchet is steeped in the hunting tradition associated with carving and proudly claims it as his own (and it is usually *his*). This is not to say that those who use band saws are not hunters; rather, that the hatchet is a sure-sign of traditional values being upheld. Occasionally, chopping with a hatchet is an especially moving performance element for

carvers selling to tourists who desire seeing process-in-action, or living history (see Fig. 17).



Figure 17 Arthur Leonard chops a decoy body at a carving demonstration in Chincoteague's Robert Reed Park, ca. 2010. Photo by Jim Dayton, courtesy of the Museum of Chincoteague Island.

After a rough-cut bird body and head, or “blanks”, are created, carvers again choose between power and hand tools, using either a flexible shaft rotary power tool or a draw knife to round the bird’s shape (see Fig. 18). Similarly, a carver may choose a rotary power tool or one of several knives to carve detail into the bird’s head. For those not employing power tools, the next step usually involves using a spoke shave to smooth out knife marks. Detail may then be cut into the body using knives or a rotary tool, or

wood burning tools for fine detail such as feather barbs. Alternatively, the body may be left smooth (as a “decorative smoothie”) with the intention of paint adding detail later. Then at this point, some carvers choose to sand their birds by hand or with a rotary tool, or use specialty techniques. For example, one decoy restoration expert insists on scraping pieces of glass along the wood to smooth edges. He notes that one might use sandpaper,

if you’re making something that you really want to sand and be pretty, but these guys that made these old decoys, they weren’t looking for pretty...they wanted something serviceable and something they could get done in relatively fast speed. Unless you had a village of young children willing to sand decoys—like I understand [famed Chincoteague carver] Ira Hudson did. After school they would come home and sand his decoys that he made that day. They would all sit around and have to sand his decoys. (Interview with Reggie Birch, 21 November 2012)



Figure 18 A decoy body and head cut with a band saw, head roughly shaped with knives, 2013. Author's own photograph.

After shaping and sanding the bird body and head, the two are connected, usually with an adhesive or epoxy as well as a nail or dowel rod to keep it in place. If the carver has not sanded or otherwise smoothed out the bird yet, at this point he has another option: burning. When one burns a bird to smooth out knife marks, one can also expect the wood grain to rise. Some carvers use this technique to create antique-style birds that will be roughly sanded after painting, or to create birds that appear more rugged. Some simply find burning to be less time consuming and laborious than sanding, and prefer it for efficiency. We can see here eventual purpose associated with technique: decorative pieces will be more finely sanded and usually shaped with finer detail, whereas antiqued pieces might be rougher and sometime manipulated to appear older, and hunting stools are generally fashioned in the quickest way possible.

At this point the bird is ready for any number of treatments, most popularly, painting. Each carver has his own technique for painting. Some treat the wood with washes of homemade concoctions such as teas made from dark plant roots (see Figs 19 and 20). Others paint their birds and then buff them with wax. Some create a base-coat of color with pigments that have fallen out of used brush cleaning fluid. Some apply paint and then scrape it off with a comb to create texture. Truly, a wide array of individualized artistic skill is possible here. As such, each bird is also engraved with the maker's initials or name, signed, and finished with detail that might include glass eyes, or practical considerations such as weights or a keel for balance, and means of attaching string and a weight for anchoring in the water in the case of a floating bird, or inserting a dowel rod for sticking the bird in mud, in the case of shorebirds.

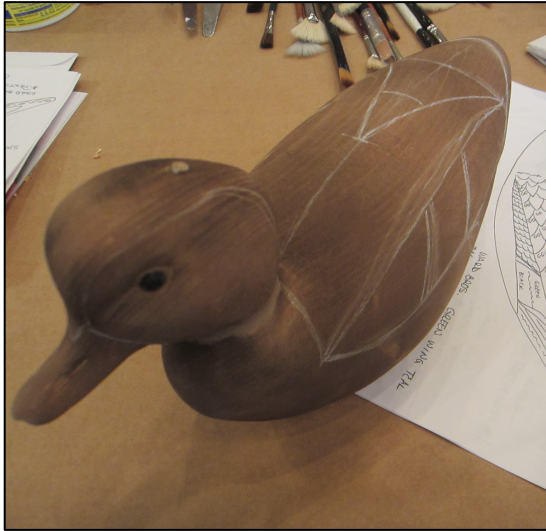


Figure 19 A stained decoy with white chalk marks to guide painting, 2013. Author's own photograph.



Figure 20 The completed green wing teal hen decoy seen in Figures 17 and 18, carved and painted by the author in a workshop led by carvers Rich and Ross Smoker of Marion, Maryland and Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, respectively (2013). Both men have hunted in Chincoteague with Chincoteague guides. Author's own photograph.

Rural Work, Carving, and Performance: Narrative

What does this history of decoy carving for hunting, and the process of decoy creation, have to do with to the embodiment and performance of rural work as heritage? Theories of work and performance studies address ways in which we can understand heritage through action (Harper 1987; Rose 2004; Sennett 2008). Doing—in this case carving—leads to knowing, through the incorporation of knowledge, through trial and error attempting to understand and recreate a bird's form and behaviors, and learning how to thrive in a community through participating in a culture of carving and hunting. The body's activity "as it engages in manipulating various materials according to different processes has open it to different possibilities for behavior" that are related to the movements it makes (Morris 2010: 5). One's actions become extensions of incorporated knowledge, the process of which will be discussed further below. Additionally, we can

understand the past through action and speech related to the performance of self and performance of community or folk hero narrative surrounding carvings and carvers (Hillaire-Perez and Verna 2006; Stewart 1996; Taylor 2003; Vansina 1973, 1985).

Work—and the stories told about it—may be understood in this way as a form of local or private heritage (c.f. Chambers 2005, 2006), as they are passed on from generation to generation, are primarily learned through informal education, and they connect a community's identity and behavior in the present with selected features of that community's past.

My research indicates that carvers associated with traditional work such as hunting—but also other forms of traditional work on Chincoteague such as being a waterman or trapper—produce more valued artwork in the form of carvings. Here I mean value to be both monetary value (higher sale prices or large quantities of sales) and cultural value (adding to the Chincoteague's collective folklore, embodying an ideal community member). Collectors and Chincoteaguers alike talk as much about Miles Hancock's resourcefulness as a market hunter and terrapin farmer as his craftsmanship, for example. One carver told me that there are “artists and there are trinket makers.” The latter carve birds but the former have lived a certain lifestyle, hunted, and “been out there.” In other words, the product of work (a carving) is authenticated by its maker's working heritage (hunting, or working as a waterman). This heritage must be relayed—performed—in order for consumers to understand its value. Narrative folklore is one way in which heritage related to decoy carving and associated rural work traditions are relayed.

Many carvers key stories about their experiences and creations in the way that performance scholar Richard Bauman (1977: 15-24) details, using special codes (e.g., archaic or poetic language, or language particular to a genre of speech), figurative language (i.e., creative language including metaphors, specific wording, etc.), appeals to tradition (i.e., signaling assumption of responsibility), disclaimers of performance (i.e., denials of storytelling competence), and so forth; and narratives about carvers build community mythology and a sense of cohesive identity. For example, carver Bob Booth tells the story of his history in the craft to people who visit his booth or table at local carving festivals, and he uses many of the techniques outlined by Bauman. To underscore his story, and to tell the story to those he misses speaking to while speaking to others visiting him, he hands out the following information (which closely mirrors his usual spoken narrative):

Bob Booth's very first breath was of the salt air of Chincoteague Island, Virginia, on March 11th, 1936. It was taken in the upstairs apartment of an oyster shucking house, his father managed. The building, long gone, was right on the [Assateague] channel.

When he was old enough, his father taught him to trap muskrat, as his father before him. Clamming, oystering and hunting or "gunning," as it was called here, were all the things Bob learned to love early. It looked as if he was destined for a life of "following the water", as the old timers referred to it.

...

In 1990, after his family had lived on Chincoteague since the 1700's, Bob and his family relocated 15 miles south, to a farm on the mainland. With his arthritis growing worse it was necessary to depend solely on his decoy carving, once again drawing on his heritage, passed down through generations of hardship and self-sufficiency.

Being a native born Chincoteaguer, Bob possesses an independent spirit expressed in his carving by making no two birds alike. They are like their maker, definitely, "one of a kind". (Booth 2012)

This passage draws heavily on appeals to tradition to place the carver within a particular tradition: “his father taught him...as his father before him,” “his family had lived on Chincoteague since the 1700’s,” and “being a native born Chincoteaguer, Bob possesses....” There is also a sense of vanishing tradition in this story. It is noteworthy that Booth no longer lives on Chincoteague Island. While he was born and raised there, and strongly claims attachment to the place, he moved—as have other carvers, such as Jimmy Bowden—to enjoy what is perceived as freedom on the rural mainland that is no longer available on an island that increasingly features townhouses, chain hotels, and other evidence of tourism development. Many carvers on (and nearby) Chincoteague lament the loss of traditional lifestyles on Chincoteague that included fewer regulations on hunting, fishing, and trapping. Many carvers also suggest that decoy carving is a vanishing art and in that supposition exists what I call the myth of the last carver. This myth of the last carver provides appeal for those carvers and their carvings that yet remain. While some carvers may genuinely fear the decline of their craft, others appear to use their position of one in a dying breed to their advantage for sale, reminding prospective buyers and anthropologists alike that they are one of the last remaining *real* carvers on (or nearby) Chincoteague, or that “unfortunately, it’s a dying trade” as one carver put it, and it would be wise to buy while you can, and before prices rise after a carver is gone. In this sense, carving is not unlike other forms of art that gain value after the maker passes away. One Chincoteaguer told me that he jokingly asks older carvers from whom he has collected when they’re going to pass on, so he can make a profit. This statement got a good laugh from others around him, including an older carver.

Other stories that add to a carver's cache are outlaw gunner stories. Decoy carving on Chincoteague is historically a part of something else: wildfowl hunting culture. The tradition of carving is a piece of an assembly of what carvers have done for centuries as larger life and survival strategies. Today it is not uncommon for collectors and Chincoteaguers alike to talk about Cigar Daisey's antics as a hunter and trapper at least as much as his artistry. People who buy, display, and talk about his and others' decoys often use them to represent their interest in the lifestyle associated with Daisey. Following this, outlaw gunner stories add to the folklore of Chincoteague, and create folk heroes out of many of the "old heads" of the island, whether or not they are carvers. These stories, if they do not directly add to the reputation of a particular carver, certainly add to the reputation of Chincoteague Island, and by extension, its carvers. Chincoteague decoys on the whole are widely associated with the resourceful and independent lifestyles from which they were born in market hunting and subsistence hunting days, and the continuation of local folklore helps retain the aura of independence that surrounds carving as a craft associated with this heritage. Decoys, necessary for wildfowl hunting, represent a rugged hunting lifestyle for many people. They are integral to many island residents and collectors alike as markers of local hunting heritage. As such, it is worthwhile to explore the ways in which this folklore is disseminated and used in narrative.

Outlaw gunning, introduced above, resulted from local populations continuing large-scale hunting practices after they became illegal in the early- to mid-20th century; the stories are directly linked to rural working traditions that are no longer viable. These practices include baiting ducks with corn, shooting more than the legal limit of birds,

hunting in restricted locations, and employing any number of additional tricks to hunt where and when one wants, and getting as many birds as needed or desired. They show how this form of work—hunting—is tied to the heritage and reputation of Chincoteaguers as fiercely independent, but humorous and wily, people. I turn to a group of former outlaw gunners (see Fig. 21)—two of whom are also revered decoy carvers—to illustrate some of the antics:



Figure 21 From left to right: Elvie Whealton, Bobby Umphlett, Tommy Reed, Delbert “Cigar” Daisey, and Andy Linton, 2013. Author’s own photograph.

Kristin Sullivan: I heard a story about how somebody painted the side of a boat one color, and the other side another [in order to avoid being caught by game wardens].

Tommy Reed: That was me.

Sullivan: That was you?

Reed: Yep. I had a 14-foot scow painted white on one side and green on the other, so when I was going up the bay I was green, and coming down the bay I’d be white.

Andy Linton: They'd³⁶ sit in the same place?

Reed: And he'd wait for long out there, waiting for me to come back down. I was in bed [by then]. (Laughter)

Linton: The one time I was up on Wildcat there, I had green wing teal [ducks] baited up in there. And I had walked up, nearly about from East Side to Wildcat³⁷ [a good distance], so my boat wouldn't be there [with me]. ... And I shot, and shot, and shot a few. ... But I heard the [game warden's] boat coming 'round from the Cove, coming around there. ... I guess I was about a hundred yards away from that big ol' floodlight. You see it go right over top of you. You could hear the ducks in there and that corn (Linton makes eating noises). Good lord have mercy, won't they [the ducks] shut up? It was so loud! That [warden's] light would go right over top of me, lying in that grass, and I would say, "Lord, if you would just let me go I will never do this again," you know? You get home, about three nights later, you're right back up there doing the same thing. (Laughter)

...

Bobby Umphlett: How about the time, I think me and [Elvie Whealton] were together, and we had a load of marsh hens³⁸? We tied them together and tied them to the anchor, threw it overboard, and the anchor floated. (Laughter)

Sullivan: You had that many marsh hens?

Umphlett: We had 90-some on it [far over the limit]! (Laughter) I said, "That ain't going to work!"

...

Sullivan: Now Cigar, were you telling me...a story about you getting away from Mel Olsen³⁹, but you left a message on the beach. (Laughter) Can you tell me that story?

³⁶ Linton refers here to game wardens.

³⁷ East Side and Wildcat are neighborhoods on Chincoteague. See Glossary

³⁸ Marsh hens are clapper rails: long-billed, chicken-like birds that live in marshes.

³⁹ Mel Olsen was a Ranger for the Assateague Island National Seashore, National Park Service. Assateague Island is directly east of Chincoteague Island, separated by a narrow channel.

Delbert “Cigar” Daisey: I left a—. What’s his name, that big tall man? ... Big Mel. Big Mel.

Linton: Yeah, Big Mel.

Daisey: Yeah! I said, F-U-C-K [Mel] in the sand. (Laughter) Wrote it right in the sand! Then the next day he found it. (Laughter)

Linton: He was alright.... He was alright. ... He didn’t go out of his way [to arrest hunters].

Umphlett: No, he was reasonable.

Linton: He didn’t—. I mean, he did his job, but he wasn’t like he was trying to catch you to do something. He would come up and talk to me sometimes....

Daisey: I thought he was alright. (Interview with the author on 9 April 2013)

In the above passage Chincoteague men discuss their antics as though they are folk heroes in trickster stories (c.f. Chambers and Sullivan [2014]). A trickster is said to be:

a figure who defies category. He is at once the scorned outsider and the culture-hero, the mythic transformer and the buffoon, a creature of low purpose and questionable habits who establishes precedent, dabbles in the creation of the world that will be, and provides...to the people who will inhabit the world. (Ellis 1993: 55)

The men describe incidents where they take questionable action in order to evade the law, almost always successfully, and in the process describe an honorable or proper course of action for a Chincoteaguer—always staying a step or two ahead of the law, continuing old traditions in the process, and doing so in a cunning and inventive manner.

One of the most common trickster stories on Chincoteague involves Delbert “Cigar” Daisey’s nickname (see Fig. 22). Here is my own quick version:

One night Cigar and friends sculled a boat to Assateague Island, which was newly under the management of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge staff were trapping and releasing ducks to band, or identify, them at that time. Young Cigar and friends saw

this as an opportunity for quick loot. They relieved the Refuge of their trapped ducks under cover of night, but Cigar made one mistake. He dropped his cigar in a trap, and it froze in the marsh water. The Refuge Manager knew he was on the trail of a man who smoked a particular brand of cigars. Though he was never able to pin the crime on anyone in particular, the nickname stuck. (Sullivan 2012)



Figure 22 Delbert "Cigar" Daisey carving a decoy, ca. 1970s or 80s. Courtesy of the Museum of Chincoteague Island.

When Chincoteaguers tell this story, across the board, they grin wryly. Despite Daisey's mistake, he is clearly the hero of this story, having successfully outsmarted the Refuge Manager, and perhaps more importantly, the agency perceived as having taken

Chincoteaguers' land. When Daisey tells you this story he smiles the same way as others who tell it, but then is fairly quick to say he ended up working for the Wildlife Refuge decades later, trapping ducks; he amended his ways. Nevertheless the latter piece of information is always told as an aside. The former is a story well on its way to being local oral history canon, and it always involves keying elements such as special paralinguistic features (e.g., a change in tone or facial expressions), appeals to tradition (e.g., "Cigar told me when I was at his workshop one time..."), and disclaimers of performance (e.g., "Now so-and-so could tell you this better than I could, but..."). It is given far more weight, culturally, than the fact that Daisey ever worked for the Wildlife Refuge later in his life, a point that I will expand upon below.

Characters are created in trickster stories that stand for values. Note that one authority in the passage with the group is nicknamed "Big Mel," a moniker bestowed on a larger-than-life persona that one must battle; even I imagine David and Goliath, though I have met Mel Olsen and know he isn't all that big, and he comes across as very kind. Narrative tales become trickster folklore in the telling of Chincoteague's past, and of how Chincoteaguers have successfully battled encroaching law enforcement, even if a win is only secured by hiding and laughing about it later. I suspect this sort of story is helpful for community cohesion in the face of rapid change. In the decades preceding the events recounted above, stricter laws were put in place limiting hunting practices, and the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and Assateague Island National Seashore were created on nearby Assateague Island, limiting access to hunting grounds and to land once considered a sort of extension of Chincoteague Island by many locals.

The fact that Daisey, and other hunter-carvers such as Cork McGee, eventually worked for the Refuge becomes important when considering the part each person in the narrative plays. Daisey—or McGee, or Reed—will always be the folk hero in stories about them, because they represent the bigger community of Chincoteaguers, or particular community values. The individuals, in their individual day-to-day lives, are separate from their folk hero roles. Notice that there are no hard feelings held against the villainous figures, despite efforts made to find and arrest outlaw gunners. It is almost as though it's understood that there needs to be foil to make a good story, and that the story is at least as important as the hunt. The story is what illustrates the ways in which Chincoteague hunters have reacted and adapted to changes in their environment, and it sets an order for things—the proper way individuals are to act in relationship to others on and around Chincoteague. This phenomenon is documented in other rural hunting populations as well, for example in Mary Hufford's (1992) study of working-class fox hunters who create a "storyrealm" with collaborative story telling, a sort of local cosmology in which their community operates, dictating appropriate community activity. The game warden or park ranger is necessary for the Chincoteague trickster story—vilified as part of the system, yet occasionally held in respect as an individual. In many cases, though the outlaw gunners pride themselves on their stories of cunning escape, there is respect for the individuals who pursue them—the *individuals*, not the overarching authorities—and the respect is, interestingly enough, mutual. One Virginia Conservation Police Officer, Sargent Steve Garvis, explains that this may be true on the other side of the fence as well:

I can...say I've probably had more in common with the people that I have dealt with, either arrested or issued summons, as we call arrest, than I do

with a lot of people I work with. I could understand this culture. For me, there have been a lot of times where I've actually caught people in violations and I can say, "You know why I'm here today?" He'll say, "Yeah, I know." I said, "All right, now that that hurdle's over with, what do you got planned?" It's usually on a holiday. I know these guys...are with their family or kids and you don't want to embarrass somebody in front of their kids, so you pull them aside and say, "You know why I'm here?" [Him:] "Yeah." [Garvis:] "What time is Thanksgiving dinner?" He says, "We were getting ready leave when you showed up and we were going to go eat," and I say, "Okay, well, can we meet tomorrow and we'll take care of the paperwork?" "Yeah, sure, that would be great," and that's how we'll handle it so their kids don't know. (Interview with the author 27 March 2013)

In another excerpt from the above interview, Sargent Garvis explains his understanding in this way: "American hunters are preprogrammed to [think] hunting is a right, and it's free plunder, and it's here for the taking." To Garvis, outlaw gunning is an extension of the American psyche, part of who we are—or at least who Chincoteaguers are. As such, he identifies with them as individuals, and attempts to treat outlaw gunners respectfully. It seems as though he thinks that in a way you can't blame the hunters for attempting to continually renew or recreate their world, and they do that—if not in deed—with their stories.

Rural Work, Carving, and Performance: Display

In addition to telling stories that maintain a particular understanding of the Chincoteague community, which potentially add value to carvings created by hunter-carvers, decoy and decorative wildfowl carvers also utilize their connection to the landscape and their local heritage by creating a sense of place through displaying objects as a sort of performance. These displays place carvers in working traditions, consciously or not, adding additional value to their craft. Howard Risatti (2007: 23-28) argues that the

relationship between the functions of objects (e.g., decoys and decorative displays surrounding decoys) do not necessarily relate to human needs in a clear way. That is, when decoys are removed from the water and used for something other than hunting, they lose their original function (i.e., to attract birds to the water or marsh) and instead satisfy sometimes hidden needs and desires, and serve abstract aims. These desires may include reminding oneself of times or places one is nostalgic for, or objects may reveal alignment with particular modes of thinking or values. This works because there is a cache that comes with objects. Kathleen Adams (2006: 27) writes that material objects can be “vehicles for articulating ideas concerning contrasting sets of identities—what are often termed *we/they* relationships.” In her work, Adams links art objects to a host of ideas and actions related to social and political relationships, with objects taking on what Arjun Appadurai (1986) calls a “social life,” representing cultural values, being ascribed shifting value as objects’ use changes, and revealing information about owners’ and makers’ identities. Carvers situate themselves as the characters we meet in trickster stories by surrounding themselves with appropriate objects—consciously or not. They do this, for example, through elaborate festival displays that might include camouflage netting covering a display table, drift wood or crab pot pieces placed around decoys for sale, and homemade wooden signs featuring the carver’s name and where they are from (e.g., see Fig. 23). One island restaurant owned by an outspoken Chincoteaguer not only has decoys on ledges around the ceiling and on half walls, but a replica punt gun (used in market gunning) and a gun safe by the hostess stand. Association with rural work traditions found in displays grounds the people who appreciate carving and its related traditions in a past associated closely with the landscape, as well as with the hunting

traditions revered in outlaw gunner stories, and with the broader history of Chincoteague Island.



Figure 23 A decoy festival display by Jimmy Bowden, 2013. Author's own photograph.

As with creating a myth of the last carver, or telling trickster stories, I believe for some this form of display is purposeful, performative⁴⁰ action. This might be seen in Bob Booth's pre-written hand-out, above, as well as in replica workshop walls he puts up at festivals, creating a space that looks and feels like a Chincoteaguer's home or workshop. For others I believe it is a deeply-embedded part of who they are. For example, Cork McGee sells directly from his backyard workshop, and so much of what is in his store is what he actually needs for carving. There are saws, knives, piles of wood chips and sawdust, and painting supplies, as well as objects he uses in day-to-day life, or are a result of day-to-day life: game hooks, a wood stove, deer antlers, empty shotgun shell

⁴⁰ While "performatives" have historically been used to denote words that do things (e.g., saying "I do" in a marriage; see Austin 1975), I use the term here to discuss actions that confer cultural meaning and help create identity (c.f. Butler 1988). Performative actions such as telling trickster stories with relish, and conspicuously displaying decoys, create, build, and maintain Chincoteaguer identity.

boxes, and so on (see Fig. 24). Furthermore, objects and things around McGee's shop are natural to the setting. For example, the flock of vultures that regularly populate his yard nearby the shop are because of discarded game parts McGee throws to them after hunting. Both Booth and McGee perform roles as Chincoteaguers; it is arguable that one does so in a much more cognicent manner than the other. Though they are both performing "Chincoteaguer," one is more of a concious performance, and one is more of a performance of embodied cultural knowledge. As one attendee at a decoy carving festival told me: "It's like if you were in Paris you'd eat croissants or something.... Hunting and carving are just what you do if you're from Chincoteague; it's who we are, you know?" And so I move from what it is to perform one's self as a Chincoteague hunter-carver through narrative and display, to how it is that one becomes and embodies the culture of a Chincoteague hunter-carver.



Figure 24 Inside Cork McGee's backyard workshop (painting room) and store, 2012. Author's own photograph.

Carving as Enacting Embodied Cultural Knowledge

Diana Taylor (2003) and other anthropology and performance scholars suggest that there exists a way of knowing and understanding the past through the observation of doing—through observation of performance, broadly construed, and enactment of embodied knowledge. Embodiment might be understood as the way in which “our life experiences, subjectivities, and agency emerge from our body’s habitual understanding of the world” (Annandale 1998 in Waite 2006: 24). It is what has been taken into the body throughout our lives. The body and the actions it performs becomes a source of understanding as well as a vessel for the transmission of this knowledge. The embodied state has to do with how people physically act in given situations and with what is

culturally appropriate, reflecting the ways in which a person has internalized experiences over the course of their lifetimes, managing tacit cultural knowledge in a particular locale, community, landscape, and so forth. Performance then reveals the tacit cultural knowledge—in this case, how to *act* as a carver steeped in the working traditions of Chincoteague. Embodiment might here be understood as related to Bordieu's (e.g., 2011) notion of *habitus*, a mode of conduct or action—behaviors—that are evidence of enculturation and that are appropriate to a given situation, or a “patterned set of dispositions that undergirds apparently complex and varied behavior” (Downey 2005: 207). These behaviors might include ways of moving through space (e.g. appropriate physical positioning or natural movement), or they may include skills honed over time evident in crafting.

Performance of embodied knowledge includes the demonstration of skills honed over time, evident in hunting and in crafting: deftly maneuvering through marshes while trapping and hunting, or smoothly and quickly manipulating wood. Carving is a performance of embodied knowledge. The very act of carving, the performance surrounding it enacted by carvers and others on the island, and the values ascribed to carving, thus reveal ideas, not only about adaptation to change on the island, but about broader issues such as learning modalities (e.g., informal apprenticeship) and socialization through informal master-apprentice succession, dedication to laborious craft built from culturally-informed skill, and claims to identity and place in what is clearly a complicated human ecology (Calhoun and Sennett 2007; Lave 2011).

Sam Beck (2005: 2) suggests that, “As [assimilation] occurs through repetition and predictability...learning becomes ‘tacit’.” Repeating behaviors is a way of taking

knowledge into the body—literally incorporating knowledge (c.f. Prentice 2008)—that results in the “inculcation of bodily dispositions and their almost subconscious enactment” (Waite 2006: 28). Performers (hunter-carvers) learn how to act appropriately in the Chincoteague hunting and carving community, and then performers build upon this tacit knowledge with their own unique talents and experiences, often building skill in particular areas of their craft to suit niche tourist and collector markets, allowing them to adapt to and thrive in a rapidly-changing Chincoteague. Skill sets and careful handling of traditional practices (literally and figuratively) are thus reflections of generations of masters and apprentices teaching and learning through observation (usually informally; i.e., without any formal structure), or through trial and error and mimicking the ways of elders, or figuring out what is culturally and logistically appropriate in a given situation. Physical behavior is a source of cultural knowledge, and the taking of that knowledge into one’s own self—even in my own experiences carving in participant observation—is a way of coming to understand a culture and its past.

On some level many carvers know this, and use it for marketing their goods. Nearly every carver on Chincoteague I have met has, at some point, told me that they used to work with, or have learned from, Miles Hancock, or someone who learned from Miles Hancock (see Fig. 25). Hancock was a carver who rose to fame in the early- to mid-20th century, and his pieces are highly sought after today. Also a hunter, waterman, and terrapin farmer, Hancock embodied the independent and ever-evolving Chincoteague spirit many value today. If one can say that they learned from Miles Hancock, helped Hancock in his shop, or can create birds in a Hancock style, it means they have taken

some aspect of what he embodied into their selves, and their products are that much more valuable—culturally and economically.



Figure 25 Delbert “Cigar” Daisey talks with Miles Hancock at a decoy festival, late 1960s or early 1970s. Courtesy of the USFWS, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.

For many carvers, on a more personal level, a legacy of craft work (itself passed on like oral narrative) not only sheds light on contemporary associations with rural work born of tradition and association with the landscape, but it also provides a way to understand on a physical level how it is they are tied to the past. Chincoteague carver Jay Cherrix beautifully expresses this sentiment when he recounts learning to carve, and the ways in which the carving tradition has brought him closer to his grandfather, famed Chincoteague carver Ira Hudson:

[Ira Hudson] died when I was about three years old, I guess. I still have vague memories of him. And, you know, I heard about him all my life. ... But, as I got into doing art, doing woodwork and artwork, I began to know him intimately...I spend a lot of time by myself doing what I do, and so I became intimately related to him because I could see his struggle, and his art, and his creativeness, and all the worldly things that are related to making a living. You don't really know a person until you really do what they did. ... He became more real. ... So when...you hear stories and everything, and you're a kid and you don't have those memories so much, if you do what they did you get a real understanding of that person. You

become closer to them. It's a neat thing. (Interview with the author, 15 October 2012)

Physical behavior—here carving—is a source of cultural knowledge, and the taking in of that knowledge to one's own self is a way of coming to understand a past associated with that behavior.

A Personal Account

I would be lying if I said I did not feel similarly to Cherrix. Though I have never met Ira Hudson, Miles Hancock, or many of the other Chincoteague hunter-carver legends, I know I have been taught by some of those who knew them. For my own fieldwork I have tried my hand at carving.

The first time I attempted this, I was given a blank already cut out by Cork McGee—a roughly cut piece of wood ready for carving with hand or rotary power tools. The only instructions I was provided were something to the effect of “carve away everything that doesn't look like a bird.” I brought back to McGee something whose shape looked more akin to a stack of lumpy rocks than a bird, and he handed the lumps (which were supposed to resemble a loon) to his friend, stating “I gave her a piece of wood, and look at what she did with it!” He was teasing, or “working on” me, but I did get a few pointers amid the teasing. This is how it has been: rather than receiving written or verbal, step by step instructions, for the most part I have learned by being shown how to carve, observing carvers, and putting my own knives and paintbrushes to wood. The one Chincoteaguer who has given me step-by-step instructions commented that it was very strange to try to put into words what he does. He primarily showed me what to do by performing the work on a bird he carved alongside me, rather than explicitly articulating

instructions (see Fig. 26). This reflects what Tim Ingold (2011: 295) suggests: Craftsmen and artisans, based on learned skill, have the,

capacity to envision particular forms, and to bring...manual skills and perceptual acuity into the service of their implementation. ... The artisan...knows what he is making.... He may be less than clear, however, about the methods by which his results are achieved, and is often quite unable to specify these methods with any precision.



Figure 26 Student (the author) and teacher (Russell Fish) with the half-size loons they created, 2013.
Author's own photograph.

Knowledge regarding carving exists in the body as much as in the mind, if the two may even be considered separate, and skill such as carving must be learned through some combination of repetition and acculturation.

A year and a half after my first attempt at carving that loon, I brought a green wing teal hen I carved to Cork McGee to see what he thought. He told me, “I’ll tell you what, there ain’t a thing in the world wrong with that lil’ gal” and he proceeded to suggest creating a mate for it, and asked me if I had necessary materials to do so, offering supplies and suggestions. I received explicit feedback that I adequately learned how to

carve a decorative decoy. In that bird, and in others I have created, there are telltale signs of those from whom I have learned: specialized painting techniques, recognizable stylized detail, and so forth. My personal narrative related to carving has given my creations a modicum of value, too. For example, a mallard hen I carved for Cork McGee sits in a place of honor, and a local mechanic has offered to trade oil changes for decoys.

My creations reveal a lineage of informal education and both incorporation and performance of cultural knowledge, as do the creations of those who taught me. My hands, though not nearly as masterful as those who have taught me, *know* to some very small extent what Ira Hudson, Cork McGee, and others knew or know; and my carvings provide tangible evidence of what I have learned throughout my research, as well as relationships I have made on the island. My creations, as the creations of those who have taught me, reveal a lineage of informal education and both incorporation and performance of cultural knowledge.

But I'm still a trinket-maker. I will never be a true Chincoteague carver. My heritage and identity do not come from cultural knowledge acquired in Chincoteague. There are no stories telling how I evaded the law at a time of community crisis, and if I were to attempt to display my decoys in the way many Chincoteaguers do at festivals it would amount to a performative misfire (see Austin 1975), an obvious anomaly or attempt at blending in gone wrong. Chincoteague carvers' lifetimes of inculcation, of work in hunting, trapping, and carving—getting to know wildfowl with multiple senses involved—have led to what is sometimes called “mechanic’s feel,” (c.f., Harper 1987; Pirsig 1974) that sort of knowing, and ability to react, through one’s hands and with one’s body. In the case of my research, materials and tools selected, the smooth motions with

which they are used, and the stories about the makers help reveal the true hunter-carvers, and their work. Performance, display, and folkloric narrative tell a story about Chincoteague—via their very transmission and the manners in which that transmission takes place—a story that can't be expressed even in the trickster tales that add so much value to their products. Instead it is told through the broader performance of the embodied Chincoteague.

CHAPTER FOUR

“It’s The Cadillac Of Hunting”: Wildfowling and Community Heritage

Why do you collect decoys or decorative wildfowl, or why do you think others do?

“The decoys are a combination of art, history and beauty. They calm us by provoking memories of happy days on the water. We are reminded of the balance of nature, and the ways in which we must take responsibility in order to not harm that balance. We remember ways in which the species of waterfowl have been harmed by the practices of man. We try to maintain the environment more carefully for their sake and ours. They encourage scientific study as we think about the lives of the models for this art form.”

- 70-year-old female from Virginia
(2013)

*

“They are beautiful works of art. They remind me of duck hunting days long gone.”

- 67-year-old male from Pennsylvania
(2013)

*

“Because they are interesting and useful, and symbolize something important about man’s relationship with nature.”

- Adult female from Washington, DC
(2013)

My initial encounter with hunting decoys and decorative wildfowl in Chincoteague Island quickly showed me how closely connected the craft of wildfowl carving is to wildfowl hunting. What I thought were beautifully carved, wooden art objects for my consumption as a tourist interested in art, are actually birds born of a history of hunting—of luring in live prey with handmade wooden copies. During that first encounter, I walked into a decoy maker's shop and attempted to purchase a roughly cut, gestural sort of bird I thought was interpretive. It was not; it was unfinished and on display by mistake. When the maker took it back from me he explained what would make it finished – details that would make it more like a traditional, utilitarian hunting decoy. He also told me about his family's history of carving, and of decoys' uses in wildfowl hunting. Since that initial rich moment (c.f. Agar 1996), I have conducted interviews or participant observation with scores of carvers, collectors, tourists, and others related to decoy production and consumption in Chincoteague, attempting to determine the ways in which decoys are part of this barrier island community's identity and heritage. I have found that conversations about decoys and decorative wildfowl quickly turn to the subject of hunting, however, or to environmental resource values—and more often than not, both. It takes effort to steer the conversation back toward decoys.

In order to better understand decoy carving, carvers told me, I needed to understand hunting and its place in Chincoteague. Decoy carving is a tradition that stands in for a larger body of traditional life-ways associated with the natural environment (e.g., wildfowl hunting and trapping). Their production and display in Chincoteague are inextricably linked to a wider wildfowling culture, which I knew almost nothing about at the beginning of my research. Through hunter safety classes, conversations and

interviews with hunters and hunter-carvers, interviews with Virginia Conservation Police Officers (commonly referred to as “game wardens”) and others related to wildfowl hunting, as well as extensive participant observation including two important hunting experiences, I have become familiar this sport. I now see hunting as an integral part of Chincoteague’s heritage.

Heritage, as I use the term here, is “a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 7), and it represents “a personal connection with the people and spirit of earlier times” (Cameron and Gatewood 2003: 55). I am especially interested in what Erve Chambers (2006: 3) calls “private heritage,” or heritage that “encourages us to focus on the ways in which the past is dynamically linked to the present, with heritage values identified and interpreted by community members rather than by outsiders.” Study of this form of heritage provides a window into community values as relayed and performed by community members. Hunting, and traditions related to hunting such as decoy carving, comprise one arena in which private heritage may be considered. These traditional life-ways also inform many aspects of Chincoteague community identity, including modes of acculturation and avenues to community coherence, an understanding of gendered spaces, and acquiring knowledge pertaining to the natural environment. These are the issues I will consider here.

When I began my research on hunting as it relates to decoy carving, I expected to find hunting to be primarily about putting food on the table. Between initial conversations about hunting, and my own experiences with hunting, I learned that hunting is not just about this, although self-provisioning remains an incredibly important part of the sport.

Hunters in Chincoteague, Virginia—as elsewhere in rural America (e.g., see Boglioli 2009)—learn about the natural environment through hunting, use traditional ecological knowledge gained through hunting to support traditional activities such as decoy carving, and hunters develop familial bonds because of the sport. Though many visitors to and residents of Chincoteague have varying opinions about wildfowl hunting, some of which are negative, it is undeniably an important aspect of the private heritage of the island, and hunting traditions—as well as the narrative surrounding these traditions—convey important information about local cultural and environmental values, and community identity and heritage.

An Anthropology of Hunting

Anthropological and related literature that addresses hunting activity in modern rural communities suggests that there exists for hunters a deep, if complicated, relationship with the natural world. This relationship and its related activities are multisensory, and permeate many aspects of life outside of actual hunting activity (e.g., see Adams 2013; Boglioli 2009; Bronner 2004; Hufford 1992; Marvin 2005). Simon Bronner (2004: 15) states that hunting “is ritualized behavior, set off from the ordinary world and repeated seasonally with social ceremony, and consequently its rituals serve as cultural synecdoche for the whole experience.” I would add that hunting in Chincoteague plays a role, too, in mapping out proper relationships between a range of individuals and groups even outside of hunting parties. For example, gender norms are defined in part through access and relationships to hunting culture (c.f. Zeiss Stange 1998), appropriate behavior for the communities of Chincoteague Island vis-à-vis nearby federal agencies

that manage hunting grounds are conveyed through stories about hunting, and best use of the natural world might be understood through hunting and hunters' behavior. Marc

Boglioli (2009: 32) suggests that hunters,

generally approach their physical surroundings in a rather practical manner, clearly designating things such as prey and animals as resources that can and should be utilized by human beings. ... Yet the fact that animals are natural resources [does] not prevent hunters from expressing deep respect, sometimes even affection, for them. Furthermore, most hunters...[view] hunting as an important aspect of a larger stewardship process in which they [care] for their physical environment.

This is not to suggest that hunters are necessarily environmentalists as the word is popularly understood (i.e., protectors of nature, environmentalism potentially relegating nature to "wilderness" areas, where only play and certain forms of archaic work are permissible (c.f. White 1996)⁴¹), nor do I intend to romanticize hunting or hunting culture by suggesting an intense connection between the human and non-human natural world in the sense of being one with the earth. Rather, as Boglioli (2009: 33) goes on to explain regarding his own research on deer hunters in rural Vermont, "in the normal course of their daily lives, rural [communities] are exposed to mundane existential realities that most people in suburban and urban settings can live their entire lives without ever witnessing," and rural life exists for many "in direct connection with ideas about hunting, specifically with regard to a prevailing acceptance of the idea that the lives of animals (including humans) often depend on the death of other animals." In order to thrive within these mundane realities, one becomes attuned to non-human nature and humans' place in

⁴¹ The popular website Urban Dictionary provides a definition for environmentalist that well explains the way many rural hunters I have encountered feel about "environmentalists." Its user-provided definition suggests an environmentalist is a "person who lives in a nice timber and stone house filled with wooden furniture, who advocates a total ban on cutting trees.... This person is inevitably a city-dweller, but acts as if he knows what is best for people in rural environments" (Cap'n Bullmoose 2005).

it in a way that tends to be quite different than experienced by non-rural populations, especially with regard to understanding of the place of death in the course of life. This can be highlighted by a common refrain I have heard from non-rural visitors to Chincoteague who bemoan hunting and suggest it is unnecessary because of access to meat in grocery stores. Respondents to a survey I conducted stated: “I do not want to personally kill animals [though] I do eat meat and understand that they are killed for this purpose,” “I don’t need [hunting] to get food,” “there is little reason to hunt,” and that “I eat it just not shoot it.”⁴² Yet, many wildfowl, deer, and other hunters consider themselves conservationists, and point to a desire to maintain prey populations for hunting purposes, inhumane conditions found at some factory farm facilities, questionable government intervention into farming and seafood industry programs, and the existence of local programs that help redistribute extra meat to the poor (e.g., Hunters for the Hungry 2014), as the other side of the coin for those who consume meat. They believe what they are doing is more along the lines of the natural order of things. In other words, many rural hunters feel non-rural populations are “out of touch” with their ecosystems and with the realities of food supplies. Chincoteague as a community has a particularly tenuous relationship with nature in this respect, having come to learn about its relationship with the environment through life on a barrier island subject to the whims of coastal storms, tides, and changes in water quality (e.g. salinity, nutrients) as well as land quality issues that affect the human population, year-round animal populations, and migrating wildfowl populations necessary for successful hunting. Many Chincoteaguers are especially tuned in to what is happening in their natural environment. The island is

⁴² This survey was hosted online between July 1 and December 31, 2013. Respondents were invited by flyers left in area restaurants, stores, and other tourist locations.

also a half hour's drive from the nearest city with a big-box store, and an hour's drive from the nearest shopping mall. That is to say, it is a relatively isolated place, and hunters pride themselves on their ability to be independent and live at least partially off the land and waters. Virginia Conservation Police Sargent Steve Garvis, who is from elsewhere on Virginia's Eastern Shore but interacts regularly with Chincoteaguers, and who carves some of his own decoys, puts it this way when I asked him about the connections between regional heritage and hunting decoy carving:

The...culture is very independent, so they didn't have the money to go buy store-bought decoys [for hunting] or [they would say], "I'm not going to spend good money on something I can make myself." Everything you look at, all these people—not only do they make their own decoys, they probably built their own boats, and they trained their own dogs, and they picked their own ducks, and they loaded—. It's a whole thing of self-sufficiency and...if you look at the folks along here it's...a great pride...when they say, "Where'd you get these decoys?" "I made them." If you live on the coast, it's kind of a tongue-in-cheek. It's like, "I've never had to buy a crab or an oyster or a fish in my life because it's out there, and if you can't go get it yourself, then you ought not to be eating it." (Laughter) If you can't go out and carve a decoy and go put them out and kill a duck, why don't you take up golf? (Interview with the author 27 March 2013).

Here taking up golf, as opposed to hunting and fishing, is used as a teasing insult, associated with non-rural and upscale living. Hunting, on the other hand, has provided a consistent means of making use of and coming to understand the natural environment, working in and with it, sensing it, and reacting to changes in ways that profit humans and the animals on which they rely.

However, hunters have also obtained a negative reputation as being greedy and unnecessarily depleting natural resources. To be sure, some hunters act in this way, shooting for sport only and taking more than what is perceived of as their share of natural resources. In the process, and because of negative stereotypes related to social and

economic factors, they have acquired reputations as being uncivilized, “country,” and “redneck.” Protection of the Atlantic Flyway and other migratory routes, including the creation of the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, were a direct result of overharvesting and general public reaction to the perhaps unnecessary depletion of natural resources—a point which might be countered in that overharvesting was in part due to demand for wildfowl in urban restaurants (Addy and Blandin 1984; Walsh 1971). The anthropological literature on hunting necessarily, though sparsely, addresses this phenomenon.

Michael Adams (2013) explores the notion of hunters being stereotyped as “redneck” and “bogan” (uncultured) in an article that considers hunting as a way to come to know nature. Adams participates in and studies “self-provisioning”, a term for unnecessary subsistence hunting including edible gardening, hunting, and fishing (i.e., the hunter does not need to hunt for food, but chooses to do so; c.f. also Teitelbaum and Beckley 2006). He suggests that most self-provisioning hunters are unfairly categorized as uncultured, though there is a tendency for these hunters and the public who oppose their activities to talk past one-another rather than engage in logical conversation about conservation goals and ethics. Hunting, by its nature, is an emotionally charged sport rooted in killing, which makes it difficult to have rational discussions of the subject. Yet, Adams (2013: 53-54) argues, “hunting...teaches us how to directly, sensitively participate in ...the ‘conversation of death,’” and that engaging with death “might teach some of us how to properly engage with life. Relearning the skills of our ancestors...might actually open new ways of thinking about how to most appropriately respond to the key questions of the Anthropocene.” And so on this note I shift to the

telling of my own introduction to hunting, my own part in this “conversation of death,” so as to introduce what hunting is in Chincoteague, and how it affects the very identity of the island’s community—part of the way Chincoteaguers are acculturated in their community, learn and practice gender roles, and act within the natural environment.

An Anthropologist’s Introduction to Hunting

My own introduction to hunting occurred during my dissertation fieldwork. I recount this experience here, as well as thoughts leading up to it, because it may be useful for understanding some the dynamics of wildfowl hunting—for example, the camaraderie and knowledge shared. This story—recounted in an impressionist style, in an attempt to allow the reader into an unfamiliar world by coming to know my experience of it—will provide context for understanding the issues discussed in later sections (Van Maanen 1988: 103).

For most of my life I have been a vegetarian, and I could never imagine shooting an animal, or more importantly, getting excited about shooting an animal, as most hunters do. A Chincoteague carver named Russell Fish, whom I interviewed early on in my research, sensed this. Fish told me about some of the connections between carving and hunting, and I suggested to him that it might be interesting if I accompanied a hunting party of his. He professionally guides hunters, using some of his own decoys while hunting, and I wanted to tag along. Fish stopped conversation and looked me square in the eye with a grin on his face and asked, “Do you think you could shoot a duck?” I knew immediately he was not questioning my marksmanship, but rather whether I could kill a bird. I just made a quizzical face back, and eventually said I didn’t know. He smiled. I

don't think he thought I could, and I was sure I couldn't. Over a year later when Fish was my hunting guide I bagged eight birds total, my limit for ducks and geese that day. Part of me enjoyed it.

The first time I went hunting was not with a guide, but a friend I will refer to as Chester Johnson. I met Chester while at a bar with my husband, and I told him about my research on decoys. Chester is a carver who creates both functional gunning decoys and decorative pieces in a gunning style. He was interested in my project, and was one of the first people who, based on my interest in carving, told me I needed to go hunting. And so, after some time, I asked Chester if I could accompany him one morning when he went hunting. He agreed to take me, but told me I had to be prepared to shoot as well. As much as I resisted, I found myself joining him one morning at about 4:30 with a shotgun and a box of shotgun shells in tow. I met Chester when it was still quite dark and the island was nearly quiet. I handed him my supplies and then held onto a rope as he pulled his truck forward and let his boat—a refurbished Chincoteague scow—slide off the trailer into the water.

I got in the boat and Chester took off, driving very slowly, with a floodlight to guide us⁴³. It was very dark, though the stars were incredibly bright – a clear early morning. I barely recognized where I was, though I'd kayaked by all the places we went more than once that summer as a kayak tour guide. On the way over, Chester asked if I ever shot anything, and I said I had shot tree stumps and cans and things. I left out that it

⁴³ As a contrast, when I accompanied Russell Fish hunting, he deftly maneuvered through the marsh in his boat—in complete darkness, and in the fog. It was both impressive and terrifying. Whether or not Chester would have the ability to do this and chose not to for his own reasons, I cannot say. However, Fish's years of working as a hunting guide and waterman clearly made him well acquainted with the land- and waterscape surrounding Chincoteague Island.

was with a BB gun and not a shotgun. He seemed to be a little taken back by that, repeating it back to me in a surprised manner. I asked if I was allowed to talk much, and he said on the way over it was okay, and sitting in the blind we could talk really quietly at first, but should quiet down as the sun came up. He explained that the ducks were mostly sleeping around nearby Assateague Island and the marshes separating Assateague and Chincoteague, and that they'd be waking up and flying over, possibly landing near us, as the sun came up. He explained the timeframe in which we are legally allowed to hunt, and we made small talk as he continued toward our destination.

We arrived at the blind⁴⁴ by 5:00am. When we approached the structure he had me hold onto the floodlight as he threw out decoys. He had a laundry bag he “stole” from his wife, full of buffleheads, which he and most hunters in Chincoteague call “dippers,” made from old crab pot buoys. He had sawed the buoys in half lengthwise, and fitted them with a flat, painted silhouette shape of the duck, and tied on a line and weight to serve as anchor. Chester said he got the buoys from the water in front of his house, that they wash up from time to time—demonstrating resourcefulness I have seen or heard about, repeated among many Chincoteaguers. He also had plastic decoys of black ducks and one pintail. He didn't put them out in a pattern, but did throw them out purposefully: dippers in a group, and in slightly deeper water than the black ducks, mirroring behavior of the birds while eating.

Chester pulled the boat up to the back of the blind after the last of the decoys was set. The blind is framed mostly by 2"x4"s and panels of plywood, and it is covered on the

⁴⁴ Hunting blinds are camouflaged shelters. Duck blinds are often wooden boxes elevated above the water or set up in the marsh (see Fig. 27). They are covered with tree branches and reeds to aid in blending into the surroundings.

outside in cedar branches. It feels like a jungle sitting inside; I crawled up a ladder into the box and couldn't easily see out. I could only see the night sky above bits of branches. I felt like I was in a beautiful foxhole. There were two tiny benches, and we rested our guns in our respective corners, placed backup ammo on the floor, and sipped coffee Chester brought for us. I saw two shooting stars, and when the sun rose it was unreal—incredibly bright.



Figure 27 Hunters in a duck blind, surrounded by decoys, near Assateague Island, mid-20th century.
Courtesy of Diane Scott Savage and Ricks E Savage.

Chester and I sat in the blind talking occasionally, for an hour and a half or so. We talked a lot about our personal lives—spouses, past relationships, the difficulties of raising children, what we were like growing up, jobs we've held, and so forth. I asked why he likes to hunt so much. He said that he just likes guns, and has a big gun

collection. He said too, though, that he enjoys the sport of it. Sure, he said, he eats what he kills. He has freezers full of meat—though he’s the only one in his family that eats ducks. He really loves the thrill of it, though: “When you get one: ‘Ha ha! I got you!’” I asked if his wife ever hunts with him, and he said she has not, though she’s expressed interest. He didn’t know of many, or any, women who hunt ducks; deer, yes, but not ducks.

At some point we started talking about hunting limits (i.e., the limit on numbers of birds an individual may legally kill per day or season) and outlaw gunning. Chester referred to himself as an outlaw hunter. Outlaw hunting, or gunning, has become a sort of folklore on Chincoteague, with trickster heroes made out of those men who most cunningly evade the law, all the while maintaining traditional life-ways related to hunting and fishing. He obviously took pride in this. He was smiling a little, and going on with stories even when I didn’t specifically ask. He hunched over in my direction while talking, and it reminded me of the way a grandpa tells stories to kids seated on the floor around him. A few of the accounts I remember, which took place throughout the course of his teenage and adult years⁴⁵, include the following:

- When he was younger, maybe 16, Chester would stuff ducks down his waders. He would slosh around in dead ducks in order to shoot more than his limit.
- Chester would fill up a cooler with dead ducks and, should the game warden come to catch him, he would throw the cooler in the water and shoot it to sink it, claiming it was never there or pointing out that the warden couldn’t prove what was in it.

⁴⁵ Chester is in his late-30s.

- Chester has gone to nearby, federally protected Assateague Island in the dead of night to shoot snow geese, wood ducks, and other species prevalent there. He would then “high tail it” out before anyone could catch him.
- If chased with more than his limit, or if he was coming from a location where hunting is not permitted, Chester might ride his boat into the marshes. He said that the game wardens’ boats aren’t well designed for the marshes around Chincoteague. The boats ride too deep, and Chester can always get away in his flat-bottomed scow. Worse comes to worst, he added, he could jump out and cover himself up in the grasses, or ditch a cooler full of ducks in the marsh and then come back out and ask, “What’s the problem, officer?”

It strikes me that Chester doesn’t need to do any of this outlaw gunning. As far as I can tell, he is not selling these ducks on the black market, as older generations of outlaw gunners have. He is not reliant on duck to feed his family; his family doesn’t even like duck. This is something he seems to personally enjoy.

Around 6:50am Chester started slowly popping up over the blind to look for ducks, which we could hear arriving. He showed me how to rise up very slowly, and turn around very slowly, pointing out that they can see us very well; ducks have very good vision, he reminded me repeatedly. He said if we were hunting deer I could wear blaze orange and stand still and I’d be okay, but with ducks: “they’re on to you.” He said ducks even get suspicious of decoys sometimes – they’ll land near them, but when they get close they sometimes seem to know what’s going on and get spooked.



Figure 28 A hunter retrieves kill in his boat, with dipper decoys in mid-ground; taken from inside a duck blind. Author's own photograph.

By 7:15am it was light enough that we could see easily, and there were three dippers swimming around the decoys. He encouraged me to shoot at them, and after several long seconds of making sure it was the right time and I should really shoot, I did. I killed one drake as the other two quickly flew away. Chester couldn't be more excited and, after a high five, went down to the boat to retrieve my kill (see Fig. 28). I stood in the blind literally shaking, half crying, and trying to put my gun down safely. As Chester went to the boat he pointed out more dippers and I, thankfully, couldn't get my gun reloaded; it jammed. When he got back within earshot more dippers came in and he encouraged me to shoot again; he told me to use his gun. I did and I got a second dipper. One drake and one hen at this point. He started calling me "killer" as a term of

admiration. He had to knock one of the two ducks' heads on the side of the boat to finish my job.

Chester came back up to the blind after the second duck and seemed like a proud dad. I asked if he wanted to try to shoot anything, and he said that today's my day – that he was there for me, to make sure I had a good time. He was acting as my personal guide, or like I was his child or niece, even though we are close in age.

I don't remember when or how I shot the third duck, but I did – I got another bufflehead drake. Chester commented that one of the drakes I killed was "real pretty" as he looked it over, handling it gently. He remarked that if I had not shot it directly in the head it would have been good for mounting.

We tried to shoot at some flying birds. The geese were too high, but he pointed out every flock that went over us, telling me the species and then cursing at them for being too high, but noting how pretty the snow geese were. He kept saying: "Wouldn't that be something for you to get a goose your first time out?" He gave me pointers about shooting in the air. We had one other opportunity to shoot brant (small geese) close, and missed again. I seemed to be picking things up little by little, but was too slow and nervous to get it all at once. I apologized several times for not getting it right, and he was very patient, reminding me that it was my first time and that I'd get it. He assumed I would go hunting again.

After the sun was up for a while, and there was a lull, we got talking more, and he gave additional pointers on shooting. One tip was, if there's more than one duck in a cluster, to try to maim as many as possible, and then go back to kill them. It seemed like no sooner than he told me this that two dipper hens started making their way toward the

blind, dipping under the water and back up (this is how they get their local name), dipping and swimming in a zigzag pattern. Chester knew exactly where they would go, based on his knowledge of water depth and food sources. They would follow a particular oyster bed ridge little by little, staying together. When the time came I shot, first the one on the right, and quickly the one on the left as it started to fly away. I killed the one on the right with one shot. I maimed the one on the left as it started to fly away. It took several more shots for me to finally kill it, as I lost my composure. Chester started calling me “The Great White Hunter,” a name—loaded as it is—that made me cringe, despite his obvious pride.

We gathered up his decoys around 9:30am—him in his waders in the water, and me in the boat trying desperately not to get blood and other fluids on me, as a viscous mess from the ducks had gotten everywhere. On the way back we saw one ruddy duck hen. Chester told me to get ready, barely stopped the boat, and I fired - it dipped in the water and we lost it for a minute. He turned around and we saw it; he told me to fire again, and again. I started swearing down the barrel of my gun at the duck, and I was simultaneously terrified of myself for doing that, and obsessed now with killing that duck. I wanted to kill it to be done with the trip, and kill it just to kill it. There really is something to the thrill of the hunt. Finally I got her. Chester pulled the boat near the floating duck, picked it up, and tossed it in the boat near my feet. It twitched once and I let out a short scream, which led to teasing.

We went back to the boat launch much more quickly than we’d gone out, but there were boats there, so Chester pulled up to his residence on the water, docking there. He threw the ducks onto his yard unceremoniously. Then Chester began the process of

cleaning the ducks (see Fig. 29). He said that the leg and wing meat isn't substantial or tasty enough to merit cutting it out. The breast is the only good thing on these sorts of small ducks. So he proceeded to pluck feathers off the area he would cut and I followed suit. He then took a knife and cut down either side of the sternum, and pulled back the skin. When enough skin was pulled back, he cut around the muscle and eventually pulled the breast meat out and put it on a nearby paper plate he had waiting. While Chester was doing this he got a phone call. He bragged to the person on the other end of the call (whom I did not know) about my first hunting trip, relaying details of the morning. After that, and after we breasted all the ducks, Chester asked if I had a gun case, and was surprised I didn't. He threw one at me at me and said I could have it. At some point along the way Chester said that he had taken two boys out hunting recently, and that between the two of them they got only one duck. He said that when he takes them out again, if they don't get anything, he's going to rub it in good that I got six.



Figure 29 Cleaning a ruddy duck hen on a truck tailgate, 2012. Author's own photograph.

In this experience—and in a similar one, repeated with a formal hunting guide weeks later—I not only learned some of the basic practices of duck hunting, but was also

introduced to many values and cultural norms and practices that are associated with wildfowling around Chincoteague Island, which I will explore further below. These include: 1) family values, *communitas*, and cultural capital associated with hunting; 2) the gendered dynamic of hunting; and 3) environmental knowledge and values associated with hunting.

A Brief History of Hunting in Chincoteague

Today it is not uncommon to see camouflage worn in non-hunting situations all over Chincoteague; people act as hunters even in non-hunting situations. It is socially acceptable, and even expected by some that if you are from Chincoteague you—or your dad and brothers, if you are a woman—hunt. But hunting is more than a socially acceptable practice; it is a cultural practice that is woven into Chincoteague's history and continues today. It is, among Chincoteaguers, considered an important part of the island people's (private) heritage.

Hunting has for centuries been an important means of putting food on the table. By the 20th century, however, hunting became a lucrative business for many in Chincoteague. Some Chincoteaguers became involved with what is referred to as market hunting, or market gunning, in the 19th century. Market hunting refers to large-scale hunting and trapping of wildfowl for the purposes of sale. Buyers of the barrels of ducks shipped out included restaurants and the wealthy in cities as far away as Boston, Massachusetts (Eshelman and Russell 2004; Walsh 1971). Market hunting and the related practice of trapping wildfowl for sale on the market were not only ways for hunters to make money, but they benefitted boat builders, decoy carvers, and others involved with

the market. Many, such as Chincoteague's Ira Hudson, excelled at several aspects of the business and became famous as a sort of market hunting renaissance man – building gunning skiffs (boats suited to market hunting), decoys, and participating to a limited extent in the gunning himself.

The wildfowl market took its toll on wildfowl populations, however, and national and international legislation limiting hunting and trapping activity was put in place in the early 20th century. However, this did not entirely stop activities begun in the market hunting days on Chincoteague. Many hunters continued what became known as outlaw gunning for decades after it market hunting practices became illegal. Here former outlaw gunner Tom Reed explains how he continued this activity:

Kristin Sullivan: When did market hunting stop—officially, and then unofficially?

...

Tommy Reed: I'd say maybe in the [19]70s.

Sullivan: That late?

Reed: I had a guy down in—. (Reed laughs) I don't know about all this⁴⁶. (Reed laughs) I had a guy down there, a guy named [name withheld]. He lived down there in the Exmore [Virginia] area. ... I would lay all my clothes out on the couch [at] nights, you know, and right across the creek from me at Morris Island there was a gut there, near Deep Hole, that gut. And I put my little pole boat right behind the house, and I'd lay all my clothes out so I didn't have to put no lights on. And I kept getting up in the morning after I set my [duck] trap, and I put my clothes on with no lights, and I went out the back, and I'd pole that little boat right out across there and bring 'em [the ducks] in to the house there. ... So, but I'd ring those ducks' necks after I got to the house. I always kept them alive 'til we got

⁴⁶ Reed here refers to being uncomfortable recording stories of outlaw behavior. On several occasions during the interview, he smiled, shook his head, and pointed to the recorder, indicating that his stories may have been altered for my purposes. He nevertheless chose to include his real name in my dissertation research products.

to the house so I could let ‘em out in case somebody come. So, I’d wring their necks in the back yard. Then I’d box them up in seafood boxes, and I had an old ’48 Ford out here I rode around in.... And...I’d put them [ducks] in those seafood boxes. Then I’d call [a middle man] on that. He was buying them for [a buyer] down the county there. [The buyer] had big parties and stuff, I guess, you know? And I’d get on the phone. I’d dial that number, and I’d say, “Twenty pair.” And I’d get three dollars a pair for them. Well, when I’d come home—I’d have the seafood [boxes filled with ducks] planted—well when I’d come home for lunchtime I’d go to my old Ford there, and on the seat would be the money. The ducks would be gone. I did that for a lot of years....

Sullivan: Sounds like pretty good money, too.

Reed: Well, it was—. (Interview with the author 9 April 2013)

For many in Chincoteague, market gunning and related activities were viable traditional life-ways, and it just happened to be that the law crossed over them, so to speak.

Traditions continued, but became illegal, black market practices. While some outlaw gunners today express remorse about their behavior as outlaws, most explain in the same breath that this was a way for them to make money and feed their families. Further, some hunters suggest that their activities are not as awful as they may sound, and that tourism activity, modern pollution, and development on and around Chincoteague have done more harm to wildfowl populations than hunters ever did. Nevertheless, regardless of their own participation, or lack thereof, most wildfowl hunters—and even non-hunters—on Chincoteague relish telling outlaw gunner stories, and this time in Chincoteague’s past is held in special regard.

Another traditional form of hunting activity on Chincoteague is guiding parties of hunter-tourists. Beginning in the late-19th century, “sport hunters traveled from their homes, often in the cities, to the waters of America to shoot waterfowl for leisure. ... Gunning clubs were founded on top locations...” such as Assateague Island nearby

Chincoteague, which “needed to be paid for through membership fees. Local guides should be hired and equipment should be bought, such as guns, boats, and decoys” (Efting Dijkstra 2010: 64). Chincoteaguers were employed as guides, cooks, repairmen, housekeepers, boat builders, and decoy makers in and nearby relatively grand hunting lodges staffed with this variety of caretakers. This sort of activity—decoy carving, hunting tourism, and so forth—continues today, though the gunning clubs on Assateague are no longer in operation since the land and buildings have been purchased or taken over by the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Many of the skills and services related to hunting and carving that were offered to the wealthy hunting club visitors are now made available through Chincoteague locals’ guide services. Hunting guides own duck blinds surrounding Chincoteague, and continue to host groups from around the country. Many hunting guides I spoke with—some of whom are also decoy carvers and watermen⁴⁷, other traditional occupations on the island—develop relationships with their clientele, maintaining “regulars,” or annual paying visitors, and developing friendships with their clientele, over decades. Most of the time these wintertime tourists are seen as a great boon to Chincoteague’s economy, and they are welcomed at a time when there is little tourist activity on the island otherwise⁴⁸. Others on and who visit the island, however, note that some of the sport hunters who visit are not “respectful of the land” as much as local hunters, and many non-hunters find the sport unnecessary and disgusting—a point which will be elaborated upon below. One

⁴⁷ “Watermen” is a designation given to men who work off a boat on the water, whether fishing, harvesting or shellfish and crustaceans, or participating in some forms of aquaculture.

⁴⁸ Tourism is today Chincoteague’s most lucrative industry, bringing tens of millions of dollars annually to the island, and many thousands of visitors, primarily in the summer months (Mariner 2010b: 146).

Chincoteague resident reported that housekeepers at an island hotel complain about having to clean hotel rooms littered with discarded dead ducks. As such, there is ambivalence about the continued presence of hunting parties visiting Chincoteague. Hunting is nevertheless an important tradition—related to market hunting, tourism, and simply, though perhaps most importantly, providing food for one’s family—that has continued into the present.

Today, as in the past, new generations of Chincoteaguers, especially boys, still continue to take up the mantle of Chincoteague wildfowl hunter. They are no longer market hunters, but they are sportsmen often steeped in family or community tradition, and sometimes outlaw gunners, guides in the making⁴⁹, or both. The son of one hunter-carver has recently started the “Tump⁵⁰ Hunting Club,” a group of friends who hunt together. The familial aspect of hunting—new generations of young hunters learning about and carrying on this traditional sport in their father’s or grandfathers’ footsteps—has become of special interest to me. In hunting today, family is important to the continuity of the sport; and the notion of family is expanded among some hunters to include a greater hunting community, a point that I was surprised to discover as I was taken into the fold.

Family Value, Communitas, and Cultural Capital

⁴⁹ Regarding learning hunting and guiding, Chincoteaguer Tommy Reed provides an example: “See, I started as a boy with my grandfather. He was a guide. He guided for years. . . . I’d go on Saturdays and help him...and that’s how I started hunting. I kept on for eighteen years after the time I started guiding” (Interview with the author 9 April 2013).

⁵⁰ Many residents of Chincoteague colloquially call Chincoteague “the tump,” a word that refers to a patch of marsh or a small island in body of water. See Glossary

The results of a nationwide survey conducted by rural sociologists in the 1990s suggest that family connection to hunting is a greater indicator of whether an individual will hunt than whether an individual comes from a rural, suburban, or urban environment (Stedman and Haberlein 2001). The authors showed that if an individual (usually male) hunted, it was more likely that their father hunted than that they were from a rural location. While hunting traditions are commonly associated with rurality, there is a great diversity of people in rural settings, and it seems that there is something driving hunting culture beyond the population density and landscape of a locale. This is something I was surprised to find out during fieldwork. I was encouraged again and again to go out hunting, and it made sense. If I was going to be in Chincoteague studying hunting decoy carvers, I was told, I needed to understand what it was these birds were used for. As a bonus, I realized hunting would give me the opportunity to get to know some of these hunter-carvers in an intimate space. However, as a long-time vegetarian the idea of hunting did not appeal to me. Nevertheless, I conceded that I should at least accompany a hunting party or hunter on a trip, the first of which was described above. For this I needed to obtain a hunting license.

In order to obtain my hunting license for the 2012-2013 wildfowl season I enrolled in a hunter education course prescribed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. I attended three classes during which I learned about safe shooting, when to take cover in camouflage and when to make myself visible, hunting blinds and other places from which I might shoot, how to quickly skin a squirrel, and a range of techniques and terms with which I was mostly unfamiliar, having never hunted before. The class consisted mostly of men and boys, with only a few girls and women. Most of

the students were children or teenagers accompanied by adults, mostly fathers. There was one grown man who had never hunted off of private land (where he did not need this certification), and there was one adult woman there for herself. She had hunted in her past, and now wanted to become a Virginia Conservation Police Officer and felt this course would be helpful in that endeavor. Everyone there was either a sub-adult (some of whom had hunted), or an adult who had hunted before.

On the last day of class the instructors discussed reasons people hunt. It occurred to me that, until this third day, hunting for food was not mentioned. I had presumed this was the number one reason for hunting. Instructors, students, and people in videos we watched talked about hunting for sport to an extent, but by and large people talked about hunting as a form of family bonding, which surprised me. On the last day an instructor asked the students, one by one, to say who got them interested in hunting, or why they wanted to hunt. One by one students responded, “I want to go hunting with my dad and grandpa,” “This is my uncle and he got me into hunting,” and so on. I was next to last, and I was terrified, and stumbled as I explained: “Actually, I am an anthropology student working on a project for my Ph.D., about decoy carving up in Chincoteague, and I wanted to learn about hunting because I think it might be important for that.” I was sure everyone in the room thought I was crazy, and I was scared to look around. The instructor barely skipped a beat, however, and asked in a sweet tone, “Well, do you think you might go hunting now?” At that time I had no intention of hunting, but I responded: “Yes, it’s a possibility.” She smiled and said, “Well, then you’re part of the family!” as she gestured with her arms out, bringing them in as if I were being brought into the fold. And there it was.

This experience was underscored in a slightly different way two months later, when I finally did go hunting for the first time, in the situation described above. Before I even brought my ducks home after hunting with Chester I stopped by hunter-carver Carlton “Cork” McGee’s house. My intentions were twofold. I wanted to buy a decoy as a thank you present for Chester, and I wanted show myself off to McGee and his friends, who regularly hang out around McGee’s wood stove in his workshop in the morning. I wanted to let them know I had been hunting, and that I was successful. McGee joked that he didn’t recognize me in my camouflage pants and jacket, and he asked whether I got anything. I told him, and the two friends with him, about my morning. McGee joked that he would report me if I shot over my limit, something that his friends found particularly humorous. They joked that he was a game warden, and they all laughed, knowing he had participated in outlaw gunning activity, and because we all understood the animosity that has long existed between Chincoteaguers and the federal agencies that manage nearby Assateague Island⁵¹; he was clearly joking. I reported with a laugh that I was legal. The friends asked what birds I shot. I told them, and they congratulated me. Then they started telling me about their own hunting stories while McGee went to retrieve the decoy I wanted out of another room. I didn’t have to prod or attempt to elicit answers from these men. Contrary to experiences in many other circumstances, where I found interviewees to be quiet at first, suddenly information was being volunteered to me, based on their

⁵¹ The Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) was established on Assateague Island in 1943, in the middle of World War II. Cork McGee told me in an interview that Chincoteaguers would just as soon deal with Japanese and German soldiers at that time than game wardens from the Refuge; animosity ran very deep (Interview of Cork McGee with the author and Becca Lane, 1 August 2013 for the Museum of Chincoteague Island World War II Research Project). While conditions have improved between the Refuge and Chincoteague, tension still exists.

understanding of me as hunter. It seemed my role in the community had changed, at least a little. We had something important in common.

Similar experiences followed. For example, when I would see Chester at a bar or elsewhere in town, he would brag about our hunting adventure to his friends, and compare the number of birds I bagged to others' tallies on their first hunting trips. I had been through an experience they hold dear, and it created a sort of *communitas*, or bonding created through shared experience. The *communitas* was shared with more than the hunter I accompanied, however. Others draw on their own memories of hunting experiences, and can imagine what I experienced. A bond is formed through this shared understanding. Victor Turner (1982: 47) writes that oftentimes

the *experience* of *communitas* becomes the *memory* of *communitas*, with the result that *communitas* itself in striving to replicate itself historically develops a social structure, in which initially free and innovative relationships between individuals are converted into norm-governed relationships between social *personae*.

Social structure, Turner suggests, is created through attempted re-creation of *communitas* that prescribes roles in groups. I suggest that this can occur, not just through the reliving of experiences shared, but in the retelling of shared experiences among individuals who did not necessarily accompany one-another on their community's (hunters') journeys. In this case the acceptance of an outsider (me), and the creation of fictive family bonds, were developed through the interactions of experience and memory related to hunting, even if we hadn't been through the hunting experience together. In a sense, hunting had conferred on me cultural capital (c.f. Bourdieu 2011) that I would not have been able to acquire without the hunting ordeal, and which allowed me to become part of some broad notion of a hunter family. While my research analysis is based on years of developing

rapport with communities on Chincoteague, going hunting has most singularly changed my relationship with some locals on the island, opening conversation and, it seems, providing me with a stamp of approval necessary to proceed with my research in some circles.

The shared experience of hunting is not the only way in which this sort of bonding occurs, however. Time spent wildfowl hunting is time spent in close quarters, quietly, sometimes without much to do for hours. Regular confinement in duck blinds leads to a sort of “high-context” communication mode that bleeds out into non-hunting situations (Bronner 2004). As referenced above in my story of hunting the first time, I spent hours in close confinement with Chester, and during that time learned about his family, his history on the island, and other explicit pieces of important information about him and his values. I also learned through observation (and the occasional reprimand) how to behave in a duck blind, information that informs how one might best embody and perform hunter identity in that space.

Gendered Dynamics of Hunting in Chincoteague

The second time I went hunting was with a hired guide, Russell Fish, who is someone I came to know well as an award-winning decoy carver (see Fig. 30). Fish and I had talked at length about carving and related topics during the course of my research. Hunting with him, however, was different. Another novice wildfowl hunter, my husband, Ryan, joined me that day, and he proved helpful for getting yet another perspective on all of this.



Figure 30 Russell Fish navigating between duck blinds near Chincoteague, 2013. The objects on the right are aquaculture floats. Author's own photograph.

Ryan grew up with a turkey-hunting father, and is an Army combat veteran. As such, he knows something about hunting and guns. When we arrived in the first of three duck blinds we were to visit that day Ryan put his shotgun on the edge of the blind and held it up, making himself ready for the first opportunity. Fish teased him a little that his arms would get awfully tired if he did that all day; duck hunting is as much about waiting in a blind as it is shooting. Ryan discovered that he didn't know how to properly act in a blind. By the end of the day he began to learn how to hold himself, when to talk, and so on. Ryan and I realized that a lot of what he was being shown and taught mirrored behavior we have observed elsewhere on Chincoteague. That is, certain aspects of behavior common to wildfowl and other hunters mirror aspects of behavior in day-to-day life of many men—especially older Chincoteaguers, or “old heads,” as they are called—at their homes and elsewhere on the island. Many of these men are calm, reserved or

quiet unless the situation warrants storytelling or louder behavior, they often tease rather than reprimand or explicitly teach, and they tend to stay in their own space (allowing ample personal space). There seems to be some level of carrying on of learned behavior—how to act as a hunter—into the daily life of Chincoteague men, into how to perform as a man.

We spent hours between three different blinds, and ended up getting nearly our day's limit of both ducks and brant. We talked during the down times, sometimes about my dissertation research and decoys, but mostly about other things. This time, with Ryan in the blind (as opposed to just Chester and me) the conversation was geared more toward guns, hunting practices, work, and discussion related to mechanics, machinery, and engineering specific to Ryan's and Fish's work. In a way, it was Ryan's turn to be brought into the group. This was an extension of bringing a new fictive family member into the fold, but it also allowed for me a glimpse into the male hunting experience.

The conversation between Fish and Ryan—focused on traditionally male topics such as guns and blue-collar work—not only reveals how acculturation happens through hunting and how bonds are built through communication in this confined space, but it also spotlights gendered behavior. Wildfowling (i.e., hunting, trapping, boat building, decoy carving, etc.) is a starkly gendered activity. Despite the important place hunting holds in Chincoteague identity and heritage, there are few women who partake in the sport in any form, as is the case elsewhere in the United States. Nationally, and since the mid-20th century, “males have been 10 to 20 times more likely to participate in hunting” than females (Stedman and Haberlein 2001: 603). In Chincoteague, even fewer women try their hands at wildfowl hunting than participate in deer or other forms of hunting.

Waterfowl hunting is historically a man's sport and it appears to have continued as such into the present. In the course of my research I attempted to figure out why. The following conversation depicts one attempt and is excerpted from an interview with two Virginia Conservation Police Officers:

Kristin Sullivan: I've not found too many women or girls who go waterfowl hunting and I can't quite figure out why that is. I don't know if you've talked to anybody about that.

Anonymous Conservation Police Officer: They're probably smarter, that's why. (Laughter.)

Steve Garvis: Yeah, smarter. Yeah, anybody gets into waterfowl hunting anymore is insane.

Sullivan: Why do you say that?

Garvis: It's just a long series of heartbreaking events that every once in a while everything you do—.

Anonymous: It all comes together but you're usually—.

Garvis: You're messing at a boat or you're cussing at a dog or you're carving decoys or buying decoys. There's a never-ending list of stuff that—. And the weather never cooperates. Heck, we've got a global conspiracy going against waterfowl up on the eastern seaboard now. I mean how can you fight that? That's climate change.

Anonymous: You get—. One good hunting day keeps you going for the next three years like, "Maybe today will be like then," and then you go out there and then you come dragging home: "Well, that was a waste of time." The boat didn't run. The [shotgun] shells were rusted.

Garvis: Yeah, and I say that tongue-in-cheek because I could no more not go duck hunting as I could—.

Sullivan: It's just like: you'll still go out there and do it again?

Garvis: Exactly, yeah. You stand out there in the morning going, "Why am I doing this again?" I have no idea, but I've got to go. (Interview with the author 27 March 2013).

The desire to hunt, though presented jokingly, is here portrayed as a male phenomenon, a need men have that outweighs common sense or goes beyond what women might put up with. Here women are jokingly portrayed as too smart to partake in an ostensibly unrewarding experience. Other hunters have suggested it's simply "inconvenient for a woman" to hunt due to practical reasons, such as the inconvenience of having to relieve oneself (interview with Andy Linton 09 April 2013).

During my hunter safety course I had the opportunity to ask the one female instructor whether she partook in wildfowl hunting; she had only mentioned her interests in deer hunting during the course. She explained that she went duck hunting once. Her husband dropped her off near a blind early that morning, and then he left for a separate location. She shot two ducks right away and decided that was enough, and signaled for her husband to pick her back up. During the time she waited, she became very cold and decided it was a miserable experience. Adding to that, she did not want to deal with plucking and cleaning the ducks in preparation for eating them. The whole thing was portrayed as an uncomfortable and burdensome. She has no desire to go wildfowl hunting again.

I asked other women, some of who have hunted deer, whether they would go duck hunting. One woman complained that she had asked her husband to take her and he hasn't yet. Another said she would, but she hasn't had the opportunity and she may join her boyfriend in the future. In almost every instance that I talked with women regarding wildfowl hunting they either had no interest (none of the need described by the game wardens) or they had an interest, but the possibility of going hunting is contingent upon the ability and desire of a man—usually a spouse or older family member—to take them.

One respondent to a survey I conducted primarily with visitors to Chincoteague stated that her father would not take her hunting when she was younger *because* she was a girl. Women are very much on the periphery of hunting culture in Chincoteague. Wildfowl hunting serves in part to demarcate gendered space in Chincoteague's community.

Nevertheless, women remain a part of some stories related to hunting in local folklore (though they are mentioned far less often than men). When women are a part of these stories, they often retain the same spirit as the often-revered outlaw gunners. The following story, though it is about a fishing incident, exhibits this spirit. It is told between hunting buddies in Chincoteague:

Kristin Sullivan: Now, did you all ever hunt with women? Did women ever go out hunting with you?

...

Elvie Whealton: (to hunter-carver Bobby Umphlett) Oh, his wife goes!

Sullivan: Does she?

Bobby Umphlett: She used to.

Whealton: Tell him about [your wife] hiding things. (Laughter)

Umphlett: This is a fishing story. ... She wanted to go flounder fishing. We go out, I caught two that were nice. But I think back then they were about 18 inches, they might've been 16⁵². We got a great line [of communication among anglers and hunters] here: if anybody sees the law...call each other. Well I got a call, said "Man's on the dock." [My wife] said, "What're we going to do with these fish?" I said, "Give me that knife. I filleted them up right pretty, and had two of those Ziplock bags. I put them [the flounder] in that. I pulled her bra up like this and set them right under there. (Laughter) To the dock they come! I said, "Now, if he reaches down there I'm going to knock him over." (Laughter)

Whealton: That's personal!

⁵² Umphlett here refers to the minimum size a flounder needs to be to legally keep it.

Tommy Reed: You didn't have no problem, did you? (Umphlett indicates he did not)

Umphlett: I told that to [another man], I said, "You know what? They didn't take hardly any propane to cook them fish." He said, "Why is that?" I said, "They were pre-warmed!" (Interview with the author 09 April 2013)

Women are included in the general canon of Chincoteague folklore and can help illustrate how to act within norms as a Chincoteaguer: here, the wife helps to evade "the law," which many Chincoteaguers feel they should not necessarily be beholden to when it comes to hunting and fishing. However, women tend to be passive agents in hunting and related stories, and hunting is repeatedly portrayed as a man's world. Notice that the wife "wanted to go flounder fishing." Rather than simply go fishing herself, she requested the assistance or presence of her husband. Though some women hunt and fish, I have never heard of a group of women going on a hunting trip with other women exclusively.

As studies other than my own bear out, hunting as sport or self-provisioning is commonly a male activity (e.g., Boglioli 2009; Stedman and Heberlein 2001; Zeiss Stange 1998). When a newspaper wrote about my own aunt, who bagged a moose in Utah in 1979, the title read "Gal is Avid Huntress" and it reports that she got her hair done before hunting, she carries a heavy gun, and that she is an "attractive nimrod" (Strand 1979). The title reveals it is unusual for a female to hunt, and the descriptions reveal judgments or expectations related to femininity. The male author also pointed out that my aunt began hunting in order to spend time with her husband while he hunted, rather than sit at home while he had all the fun. In his research on Vermont deer hunters, Marc Boglioli (2009: 79-80) finds that this is not uncommon: women with whom he worked repeatedly indicated that they took up hunting in order to spend "quality time"

with their husbands, or learned to hunt while dating, in a process he refers to as “courtship hunting.” It would not surprise me if this also drove Umpheltt’s wife’s desire to go fishing, above.

An additional intriguing aspect of the gendered nature of hunting in Chincoteague is that norms associated with hunting carry over into other areas of traditional life-ways associated with hunting, for example decoy carving. I am aware of only four female decoys carvers from Chincoteague who ever carved on their own⁵³. Of these, one (Dorothy “Dot” Quillen, 1917-1982) was known for selling souvenir ducks after learning to carve and paint from her husband, who himself made working decoys for hunting club off of Assateague Island (Berkey and Berkey 1981). Three make detailed decorative miniatures, songbirds, or other decorative sculpture (not hunting decoys). One of these learned to carve from her husband⁵⁴. A fourth woman painted decoys for her husband as part of a team, but to my knowledge she did not carve. This is not wholly uncommon. Painting is usually the woman’s job when there is a husband and wife decoy carving team (which is itself unusual in Chincoteague). Very few women anywhere, however, carve hunting style decoys. Even the female carvers mentioned above created souvenir and purely decorative pieces, rather than working decoys. This is not to say these women did and do not have tremendous skill; rather, they are outside of the realm of what is perceived as an authentic hunter-carver, and are instead lumped into a group one male carver refers to, tongue-in-cheek, as “trinket makers.”

⁵³ In contrast, I am aware of 56 male carvers from Chincoteague (living and deceased), and there are a great many more who occasionally carve or have tried decoy carving, but are not known primarily as carvers.

⁵⁴ I have been unable to determine the manners in which the other learned her carving skills.

There are clearly gendered spaces related to how Chincoteaguers perceive their place in a gendered system, and men's spaces tend to include hunting blinds. Hunting and activities related to hunting are overwhelmingly male pursuits. Nevertheless, I would be remiss if I were not to include that in my personal experience, I have found the men I hunted with to be welcoming and helpful, and also willing to let me take on some limited work during hunting trips, for example throwing out and pulling in decoys. In my own experiences I felt like I just happened to be a woman hunting in a duck blind with men. However, it is quite possible that I was allowed into this role because of many factors, including individual personalities (including my own), a perceived need to take care of a friend, or perhaps my place as an anthropologist, a curious outsider.

Local Environmental Knowledge and Environmental Value

In addition to learning about tacit understandings of gendered spaces through hunting, I also learned that hunting and related practices such as decoy carving are important ways that Chincoteaguers interact with, learn about, and express values relating to the natural environment. The natural environment is today perhaps Chincoteague's biggest draw, and an important factor in Chincoteague's lucrative tourism industry. It is also an important part of Chincoteaguers' everyday existence.

For most visitors today, Chincoteague is known more today for its relationship with nearby Assateague Island and the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge than for its hunting potential. Many of the visitors to Chincoteague are birders and others who identify as environmentalists, and some of these visitors question the validity of environmental values held by wildfowl hunters and many Chincoteague locals, bringing

into question whether a hunter intelligently understands his or her place in the natural environment. While some respondents to a survey I conducted primarily with visitors to Chincoteague concede that “hunters cross a broad spectrum of...culture,” and that some hunters are conservationists in their own right, others suggested that hunters “are spending time with animals in the wrong ways,” and “haven’t had a consciousness raising yet.” Some suggested that hunting should not be allowed around Chincoteague at all, and some respondents to the survey and to informal interview questions stated that they believe hunters to be “rednecky” or unintelligently interacting with nature. Wildfowl hunters, on the other hand, counter that they care deeply about natural resources, including birds, and if they didn’t there would be nothing left to hunt. Further, they have demonstrated to me that they well understand how wildlife behave in the natural environment (e.g., Chester describing buffleheads’ swimming patterns related to their eating behaviors), and how humans should engage with the natural environment in order to live, to some degree, off of it. Hunting, I suggest, may be understood as a cultural activity that involves an intense and complex interaction between humans and the ecosystem to which they belong. Garry Marvin (2005: 16) writes:

At the heart of all hunting of wild animals is a close engagement with the natural world.... Hunters must understand and know the world they are entering but, more importantly, they must feel, sense, and respond to it. ... Hunters hone their understanding of the senses of animals and then develop their own skills to counter the animal senses.

In other words, hunters develop knowledge of the natural world around them, and perhaps their place within that ecosystem, on many levels. Some of this knowledge is built from observation of wildlife, and some from moving around and acting in the environment, as well as engaging with it. Hunters in Chincoteague will sometimes joke

about their understanding of the behaviors of wildfowl vis-à-vis tourist birders and others who come to Assateague to enjoy its natural beauty. Here waterman and former outlaw gunner Tommy Reed relays a story about interactions with tourists:

I was over on the beach. Me...and my little girl...and my wife was over there [on Assateague Island]. I had that old black four-wheel and my surfboard. I was a surfer. And coming off the beach I had my daughter in this arm, and my surfboard in the other, and there was a man and a woman there with a big ol' scope, and they were looking out toward the [Toms] Cove. And one of them said, "That's an ibis!" And the other said some other kind of name bird. I was walking and I said, "They're willets," and I kept on walking. She says, "Oh! Come here, come here. How do you know they're willets?" A willet's just about the only shorebird that will pitch on a pole; a willet will pitch on a pole. And she said, "Oh, come here! Are you a birder?" I said, "Yes, ma'am. I'm a birder." (Laughter) Well anyway I talk with them a while, and when they got ready—. They pinned me a little bit, because I had that old '48 Ford, you know? And he says, "Wait a minute, come here. You've been so nice us. We've just come from Florida, won't you take a box of these oranges?" I said, "Oh, we're tickled to death." We were coming off the beach, and I was peeling one for [my wife and daughter], I was eating one, and I was laughing about being a birder. [My wife] said, "Yeah, you're a birder all right! You'll kill anything that moves!" We were going along eating those oranges, and were tickled to death, you know?

Though Reed relayed something that might be considered trivia rather than a deep, sensory understanding of the natural environment, he nevertheless quickly knew what the bird was, and he gained this knowledge through hunting and trapping birds; he understood part of his ecosystem through being a hunter. This amounts to something akin to local environmental knowledge or local environmental talk, concepts built on the assumption "that *talk* about the environment is the *expression of knowledge* about the environment" (Palmer and Wadley 2007: 750).



Figure 31 Delbert “Cigar” Daisey outside his backyard workshop, 2011. Author’s own photograph.

One time when I sat with hunter and champion decoy carver Delbert “Cigar” Daisey in his back yard overlooking the Assateague Channel, he remarked about a bird that landed in front of us, and how it was holding its wings in such a way as to imitate a different species of bird (see Fig. 31). Then he speculated why that might be. It struck me how quickly and casually he noticed what, to me, was such a small difference in stance. In truth, I had not even noticed the change. Daisey, however, demonstrated a sort of local environmental knowledge: that bird is acting in a way that conveys a particular message; it is acting unusually. This struck me as particularly interesting, because I had recently begun my first attempt at decoy carving as participant observation, and any knowledge I thought I had about a bird’s shape went out the window when I tried to create that shape in wood. I was impressed by Daisey’s ability to immediately notice and sense a slight difference—something that might be important to a hunter (the ability to sense changes in

a bird's behavior, and react accordingly). This ability is also important to a decoy carver, who must accurately mimic a bird's "look."

After he made the comment about the bird, my interest was piqued and I asked whether he had learned anything about live birds by carving wooden ones. One of the things he mentioned is color. Daisey stated that he got into an argument with a decoy carver from the Great Lakes region one time regarding the colors of mallards. The mallards painted by the northern carver were darker than his own, and Daisey told the man he was using the wrong colors. The man protested. After some discussion and subsequent research, the two realized the differences in coloration were likely resultant of differences in water quality. The water in the Great Lakes region, Daisey suggested, had higher levels of tannins (which can affect the nutritive value of plants), changing the look of its birds, and therefore the paint chosen by the carver. To be clear, I take this story at face value since I am not educated in the ways in which tannins affect duck feather coloration, and so consider it local environmental talk (i.e. hearsay about the environment) rather than verified knowledge, without having determined the accuracy of the claim. Nevertheless, what strikes me is that Daisey picked up on this difference, and I, in turn, realized that local iterations of carved wildfowl likely reflect local ecology.

Attention to detail for carving purposes leads sometimes to consideration of the ecology of a bird's habitat, and ecology influences the outcome of a decoy carver's work. This understanding has potential value, not just for carvers and those who appreciate decorative wildfowl carvings, but for those who might utilize a hunter-carver's body of knowledge.

Cork McGee, a respected hunter and carver, is sometimes asked to aid in bird identification. One time when I stopped to ask a ranger at Assateague Island National Seashore what ducks she was looking at through binoculars, she handed them to me and said she thought they might be shoveler ducks, but she wasn't quite sure, as they might be a cross-breed. After some conversation about the prevalence of hybrid ducks around Chincoteague and Assateague (many of which on Chincoteague Island are simply called "town ducks" rather than a cross-species name), she explained that sometimes if no one at the National Seashore can identify a duck, they will bring a picture of it to Cork McGee. "Cork," she said, "will look at it and go 'Yep – that's part teal, part mallard,'" and so on. The National Seashore relies on McGee's knowledge built from years of hunting, trapping, guiding hunting parties, and carving wildfowl to better understand the wildfowl they're tasked with helping manage. In short, though hunters and those involved with hunting-related activities (e.g., decoy carving) may not line up with outsiders' images of an ideal environmentalist, they are sometimes rich sources of local environmental knowledge gained through interaction with their landscape and the non-human animals therein.

On the Cadillac of Hunting

In this chapter have attempted here to paint a broad picture of some of the ways in which wildfowl hunting, and the related practice of decoy carving, are related to Chincoteague's identity and is part of its heritage—the ways in which this historically important activity shapes sociality, and how it creates and bonds a community, reinforces cultural norms, and adds to a body of knowledge related to the natural environment. It

occurs to me that many of the ideals of Chincoteague's hunting community related to these issues come together in explanations of a phrase hunters have described to me: "the Cadillac of hunting." While the phrase is not ubiquitous, it is well understood almost immediately by any hunter I've asked about it, and it is always described in similar terms, terms that reflect ideal hunting theatre, if you will. The following conversation is an excerpt from my introduction to "the Cadillac of hunting":

Elvie Whealton: Well, Tommy [Reed] and I, and another guy...were really hunting. Of course we hunted—we called it night hunting. It starts in the evening [which is illegal], just about as the sun is setting. And of course, most times you have your ponds baited [with corn, which is illegal].... So I invite Tommy, and he says, "Yeah, I want to go with you." So I said, "Come on!" So we were sitting there, and we were just pretty. I mean—.

Tommy Reed: Full moon.

Whealton: You'd hold [the gun] right in the air. ... And that evening, for some reason, every time you shot it just echoed. She echoed. And this guy with us, he said, "You guys are a bunch of fools." We had killed 20, 30, and Tommy, Tommy wouldn't stop at all. (laughter) Tommy was like, they'd come in and: boom boom boom boom! [The other man] got out the blind, went to the boat and sat there. Well Tommy kept right on, and I kept right on rollin'. So we had I don't know how many that night - maybe 40, 50 [ducks]⁵⁵? Somewhere along there.

Kristin Sullivan: How long ago was that?

...

Reed: 1974, '75. ... The funny part was I was walking to the boat, and [the gun] felt light. I looked, and I'd shot the stock out of her! (Laughter) We went back in the marsh; I kicked it out. I shot the stock out of her. It fell off her or whatever. (Laughter)

Sullivan: You wore that right out!

⁵⁵ For comparison, during the 2013-14 season, the bag limit in Virginia was six ducks total per day, per hunter, with additional restrictions placed on certain species (DGIF 2014). Though the bag limit in the 1970s would have differed somewhat, Reed's numbers undoubtedly exceeded it.

...

Whealton: And it is quick hunting. For us to hunt in the evening, it's the Cadillac of hunting, because you've got possibly one hour. ... M-hm. Just as fast as you can shoot, all you know. And really it's the thrill of a lifetime, going huntin' in the evening.

Andy Linton: It's nothing like shootin' over [a duck blind].

...

Bobby Umphlett: You know the Cadillac of shootin' in the nighttime? Full moon.

Reed: Yeah it is.

Umphlett: You get in the pond. You face that full moon. You've got to have your oil skins on, and sit right there in the marsh, and you lay back, with your feet overboard. And them ducks come up against that moon, and you can see them. (Noises of agreement from others in the room)

Linton: See, you don't use a blind, because the wardens can see the blind. ... If you lay flat in the grass he looks around there; he doesn't see nothing, because you're lying right flat. (Interview with the author, 9 April 2013)

The Cadillac of hunting, it would seem, encompasses the ideal hunter's realm, according to a Chincoteaguer. Descriptions of it reveal values related to Chincoteaguers' identity and heritage in the process. There might be one man or a small group of male friends who have a history of hunting together. Note that the unnamed man in the story apparently lacked the outlaw gunner bond. He was unsettled by Reed's behavior rather than finding it humorous as the others do, and he was not from Chincoteague. In this way hunting remains a masculine pursuit among friends with ties to the island. The men evaded the law in clever ways recognized by the others in the group—positioning themselves in a marsh in just such a way, in particular clothing—and in this way they managed to continue traditional practices or behaviors despite the perceived encroachment of the

nearby federal agencies. The hunters were also literally in nature, lying down in the marsh, surrounded by grasses, and dusk or night, using only the moon as a tool for finding prey. They were familiar with their prey's behavior in this situation, and were able to make the most of it, shooting as many ducks and geese as they desired. They are masters of this realm, and utilize figurative language—"the Cadillac of hunting"—to emphasize the extent to which this combination of factors is an ideal.

It is worthwhile noting that I was allowed to record many of the stories above—not necessarily because of my persistence in asking to interview members of this group—but because one of the men in the group hoped I might record some of the stories of the "good ol' days" before the stories are gone, and put them together in a book. He and others hope this hunter's realm, whether it exists in real life or in stories only, continues. There is a nostalgia that surrounds hunting, and a concern that the way it has always been on Chincoteague (including activities that help define Chincoteaguers' heritage and identity) might slip away as more tourists arrive and more land is taken over by agencies rather than Chincoteague community members. Reliving hunting tales, and examining hunting behavior, is a way to get a glimpse into one ideal of what Chincoteague community is. And if hunters like Chester are any indication, it's not going anywhere too soon.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Over a period of approximately two years I lived in and carried out extensive participant observation, interviews, and archival research on Chincoteague Island, Virginia. The majority of my research focused on whether and in what ways decoy and decorative wildfowl carving—vernacular art or crafts associated with Chincoteague’s traditional life-ways—are used to talk about and manage locals’ identity and heritage. I have come to understand these terms in various ways. Heritage is a term used to evoke meaningful connections with the past either by continuing and adapting local traditions in the present (as is the case in the enactment of private heritage), or memorializing and conferring value on people, places, and objects because of their association with history (as in public heritage). The study of private heritage in particular has been important for understanding how Chincoteaguers come to know their selves as part of their community, and the symbols and narratives used to maintain their identity. Being “part of” requires a narrative in which we locate ourselves,” as well as objects or symbols to represent identity—a sense of self or community (Anico and Peralta 2009: 1). Objects and narrative together tell a story of the ways in which private heritage is managed on Chincoteague. Creating, consuming, and displaying objects related to decoy carving and wildfowl hunting, and creating or retelling narrative related to these traditions, produces a sense of identity, and comprises private heritage for participants. Private heritage, in this sense, is “a kind of direct an inalienable inheritance of human and environmental properties and relationships, which might be appreciated by outsiders but can never be [fully] claimed or possessed by them” (Chambers 2005: 7).

Through interaction with carvers, shop-owners, collectors, tourists, hunters, museum professionals, and others involved with the carved wildfowl market and its history, I have begun to understand carving's place as part of Chincoteague's private heritage. Carvers and others in Chincoteague use decoys and decorative wildfowl, and stories about these traditional objects and their makers, to shape their identity. Additionally, over the course of my fieldwork, I became increasingly aware of the profound connection of wildfowl hunting to decoy and decorative wildfowl carving. The traditions are inextricably linked for most Chincoteague carvers, as well as most of their collectors. Together they are, as one collector put it, "part of who we *are*." Reflecting on an understanding of these traditions, including the use of objects related to them and stories told about them, helps flesh out an anthropology of the performance of heritage, and it allows us to see the ways in which the local population of a particular tourism locale has managed and maintained their heritage over several dynamic decades.

I have found that decoy and decorative wildfowl carving, and the closely related tradition of wildfowl hunting in Chincoteague, help express heritage and identity for this rural population, especially as they adapt to and attempt to thrive amid myriad changes over the past century related to tourism development, environmental regulation, and a host of unforeseeable issues related to living on a barrier island, such as major storms. Objects such as decoys, stories such as those related to outlaw gunners, and actions associated with traditional practices such as carving and hunting, reveal the ways in which Chincoteaguers have done this. As stated in the introduction, I have found that decoy and decorative wildfowl carving aid in the expression of various forms of heritage in touristic and community exchange in three major ways:

1. *Wildfowl carvers connect with and express their heritage, and negotiate community identity, through the conscious creation and marketing of their vernacular craft.*

Chapter Two shows how craft is directly related to community heritage through the origins of the craft, and at the same time, how craft is adapted to suit an evolving Chincoteague. For example, one carver today creates different versions of the very same object to suit different audiences. Although the carvers react to and address different consumers' desires, they do this by adapting traditional craft forms, never fully losing sight of the connections their adaptations have to the historical craft. Decorative wildfowl carvers create antiqued decoys to resemble older birds valued for their connection to Chincoteague's past by some, and valued as something representing a vestige of rural America to others. Carvers also create smaller or less intricate birds for sale to tourists who are less familiar with the tradition and simply want a souvenir to remind them of their visit to the island. The same carvers also create grander, more finely painted birds for competition purposes, as well as establishment in the decoy and decorative wildfowl carving festival and competition circuit, legitimating themselves as established members of a larger carving community. Still others give prized decoys—whether decorative or simply made—to dear family and friends.

Chincoteague decoy and decorative wildfowl carvers have adapted their craft to suit their individual aesthetic and artistic preferences (for example, creating imaginative shapes and designs), as well as adapted their craft to benefit from the tourist art market. Carvers purposefully engage with and produce

products for a variety of audiences, and yet retain control over the sale of their products. For example, it is not unusual for a carver to set up a store in their yard or an outbuilding on their home property rather than selling their wares in conventional stores, finding that they are better able to manage prices or develop closer relationships with clientele on their own terms. In actively managing their craft production and sale, decoy and decorative wildfowl carvers have remained conscious agents in the management of their heritage, something that goes against ideas of “fourth world” domination in early tourism literature. Chincoteague carvers have, by and large, managed to control these objects, which retain significant value for being representative of identity and heritage.

Heritage and tourist art are also intertwined through the transmission and incorporation of skill. For example, carvers learn their craft through informal master-student apprenticeships over successive generations. Carvers informally pass down the importance of activities with heritage value and the knowledge to do them. Those activities translate to skilled craftsmanship or artistry related to heritage, which is managed in different markets and arenas. Through carvers’ active and purposeful engagement with different art markets in different ways, carvers form their identity and negotiate or shape their heritage values through the production and distribution of decoys as tourist art.

Further, vernacular craft “embodies the functional, historic and symbolic relevance of a community or region’s occupations, social relations and environmental interaction” (Chiarappa 1997: 339). As explained in Chapters Three and Four, decoy and decorative wildfowl carving are born of traditional

life-ways such as hunting, which require intimate knowledge of the natural environment, and bodily knowledge of the materials and processes required to carve and hunt. Wildfowl carvers continue to participate in these traditional practices, honing skills through craft work as well as work in the natural environment such as hunting. This conscious participation in these traditional life-ways—including claims made of connection to early carvers and hunters, use and adaptation of traditional carving methods, and participation in outlaw gunning or the telling of outlaw gunner stories—reveals a community closely tied to and knowledgeable of its historical situation. This is a community actively adapting to changes to their cultural situation through the performance of artwork and folkloric narrative, for example creating multiple styles of birds for sale, adorning festival tables and stores or workshops with context clues such as camouflage netting and driftwood, and shaping tales such as those about Cigar Daisey and Tommy Reed to teach (im-)moral lessons related to Chincoteaguer identity.

2. *Hunter-carvers' identity and heritage are incorporated and expressed through the performance of work-related embodied cultural knowledge.*

The preceding chapters describe some of the ways in which we can see heritage through the performance of craftwork (decoy and decorative wildfowl carving), and learn about values related to community identity and heritage through stories about the traditional life-ways associated with that craft, such as hunting and trapping. Materials and tools selected by carvers (whether they are antiquated items such as hatchets, or modern power tools), the skill with which

the tools and materials are used, and the stories about the carvers and hunters associated with the lifestyle from which decoy carving comes, all tell a bigger story, a Chincoteague folklore. Actions of carvers, especially hunter-carvers, help reveal embodied cultural knowledge, that bodily knowledge of materials and how they are to be used in a given culture. Carvers such as Jay Cherrix have expressed to me an ability to know their ancestors, teachers, and other community through the physical act of carving. Actions also reveal important values related to the island and its people—how to act in situations such as hunting or carving arenas (i.e., within those frames), or in the natural environment. This knowledge is not necessarily relayed or gained through explicit communication, as I learned from carver Russell Fish teaching me how to carve a loon through doing the motions I was to repeat rather than simply telling me what to do. He had a hard time explaining to me with words how it was I should move my hands or hold objects, but he was able to show me how to do the actions with his adept use of tools, though it took me mistakenly cutting myself several times before I caught on.

Such knowledge, borne out by skill-in-motion, comes not just from inculcation related to carving, but through participation in or active association with a lifestyle that includes direct and regular contact with the natural environment on and around Chincoteague. It is in this environment that most carvers have come to know the birds they carve. Contact with the natural environment occurs in day-to-day activities related to living in, and adapting to, a particular landscape including tidal marshes, waterways, and forests. It also occurs through highly valued practices such as wildfowl hunting and trapping,

which are often learned from a very young age and through transmission within a family, who is itself part of a bigger community of Chincoteague hunters or carvers. Through the performance of valued traditions such as hunting and working the water, hunter-carvers described in the preceding chapters have had the opportunity to physically engage with the natural world around them. This occurs when a hunter holds and cleans downed waterfowl, stalks prey or watches prey move from inside a duck blind, or learns wildfowl behaviors through experience in the natural environment, in order to be a more successful hunter. Becoming a successful wildfowl hunter includes making or utilizing hunting decoys appropriately, and in the tradition of the community—whether like a famous maker, or by using propped materials to act appropriately resourceful. The practice of these traditions and the successful performance of embodied knowledge teach cultural norms. The performance or retelling of narrative related to these practices, including trickster-like tales, also teach lessons pertaining to embodiment of Chincoteague identity. These performances provide evidence of compliance with normative behaviors, and evidence of connection to a heritage of wildfowl carving related to hunting—that is, of being, ontologically, a Chincoteague wildfowl carver or hunter.

3. *Hunting decoy carving is inextricably linked to wildfowl hunting culture, which is itself a source for understanding important natural and cultural heritage values.*

I was surprised during the course of my research at the great number of wildfowl carvers that insisted I should try my hand at wildfowl hunting in order to

better understand their craft. While I understood that the craft was related to hunting historically—that decoy carving and wildfowl hunting are part of the same public heritage of rural America—I did not realize how important this would be to people on Chincoteague who still practice one or both of these traditions. This encouragement to hunt is evidence of carvers’ connections to a greater wildfowling culture. It provides evidence for the connection of the tourist art of decoy carving to the private heritage of Chincoteague, as examined in Chapter Two, regardless of whether or not it is relayed explicitly or understood completely by the tourists who purchase souvenirs to remember their vacations.

Chapters Three and Four examine the ways in which hunting, an historically important activity on Chincoteague Island, shapes sociality—affecting not only carving culture but the ways in which an important community on Chincoteague (wildfowl hunters) behave, and why. For example, hunting and wildfowl carving aid in the development of familial bonds and *communitas*, such as when I was explicitly told I was part of the greater family of hunters by a safety instructor after expressing interest in hunting, and as evidenced by the strong, positive response I received from long-time hunters after I had been hunting. This positive response included more open communication, hunters bragging about my accomplishments, and hunters showing acts of hospitality such as sharing their coffee, providing me with equipment such as a gun case, or engaging me with stories that appear throughout this dissertation. Carvers have also expressed coming to know their ancestors through the practice of wildfowl carving; through performing the same actions as those who come before them, one may understand

through one's body how it is to do something or be someone performed in the past.

Practices and stories related to hunting also show or relay appropriate gendered behavior, creating gendered spaces and relaying ideas about gender: who, traditionally, goes hunting, how women are part of the outlaw gunner narrative if only on the periphery, and how men learn the performance of everyday life through practice in places such as hunting blinds. Hunting and decoy carving also depend on actions in and reactions to the natural environment, which reveal potential local environmental knowledge, for example about wildfowl behavior and appearance as relayed through stories, observations, and material culture (i.e., decoys).

Hunting practices and stories, and the closely related tradition of decoy carving, create bonds within a community and between the community and their environment, as well as reinforce cultural norms. These norms are reinforced through trickster tales and other folklore, and through the conscious display of carving and hunting accouterment. Decoy carving, though today widely respected as an art form, comes directly out of wildfowling or wildfowl hunting culture, and decorative wildfowl as material culture oftentimes represent and stand for this larger body of hunting-related values among Chincoteaguers, especially as they find themselves in a rapidly changing social environment and landscape. When carvers such as Cork McGee display their many hundreds of decoys around their houses, or restaurant owners fill spaces near salad bars and hostess stands with decoys and punt guns for decoration, they are claiming a part in the greater

wildfowling culture connected to Chincoteague; they are doing performative actions that create, in part, their Chincoteaguer identity. They are showing that they are part of this tradition, and that this tradition has meaning and value in today's Chincoteague culture. Further, these people are evidence of the continuation and adaptation of heritage. Rather than putting their decoys, guns, stuffed kill, and so on in a museum to protect their cultural value or a sense of their heritage, they have adapted the use of these objects and incorporated them into their daily lives in such a way that they and others may get to know them in a modern context. In this sense they remain part of Chincoteaguers' private heritage—linked closely to the community in new and changing ways, as the community evolves in its connection to its past and its landscape. Objects related to Chincoteague's private heritage serve as decoration and conversation starters in the performance of display, standing in, as signifiers, for important aspects of their culture.

In summary, each of the preceding chapters revolves around the concept of heritage as it might be understood or expressed through the interrelated practices of decoy carving and wildfowl hunting in Chincoteague, Virginia. Each chapter shows facets of the ways in which the practices and objects discussed, all of which are related to generations-old traditional life-ways (including occupations), act as private heritage. They show how the community practicing and evolving this private heritage manages its culture through the production and performance of objects and stories imbued with local meaning and cultural value. In doing so, these chapters all point to the agency demonstrated by a local

population in a popular tourist destination despite myriad changes to their home and perceived threats to their historical lifestyle.

There is a particular assemblage of factors that exists in Chincoteague Island's history that comprise the reasons for which these traditions continue to exist in the ways they do. This assemblage includes changes in land management, population and demographic changes, tourism development, and attachment or connection to a place where many residents' generations of ancestors existed for centuries. Historically, Chincoteaguers have been able to rely on nearby land- and waterscapes, living at least in part off of the wildfowl and other natural resources surrounding them, or marketing natural resources to small numbers of early tourists as well as waterfowl or seafood buyers along the eastern seaboard. Times have changed and Chincoteaguers have faced rapid growth related to tourism, and government regulations resulting in restricted access to important natural resources. Carvers today say something about their place in their community through the continued practice of their craft, or by telling stories about wildfowling culture, despite these changes. They affirm through their art and traditional lifestyles that they are still a vibrant and integral part of the community, and that there is value in their practices. Their statements are made visible or known through performance and narrative surrounding traditional life-ways such as hunting and carving, and the display of important objects such as decoys and hunting paraphernalia. They are seen through the performance of skill such as using a hatchet to carve hunting decoys, and the creation of products related to hunting and decoy carving, such as carved wildfowl and fantastic, folkloric tales with trickster heroes who manage to evade the game wardens while shaping Chincoteaguer identity in comical ways.

Furthermore, carvers represent and manage their interpretations of the past, as well as the ways in which they continue to practice traditional lifestyles, through the means described in the preceding chapters. These include managing decoy stores in their home workshops; creating a range of styles of decoys from the finely detailed to the purposefully antiqued; practicing carving methods learned through generations of informal training; and performing a repertoire of trickster tales. They do this in a place now connected strongly to tourism, and driven by a tourism economy dependent on a perceived pristine landscape (i.e., an “unspoiled” Assateague). Existence in this way is commonplace in the daily lives of modern Chincoteaguers; tourists and federal employees seasonally or permanently inhabit portions of Chincoteague’s landscape, a landscape that is traditionally associated with Assateague and Chincoteague Islanders’ historical lifestyle. Decoy carving is a way to retain a connection to the heritage that exists beyond or in addition to this reality. And so, when one goes into a garage-turned-decoy store on Chincoteague to find a souvenir today, one should expect to find a bird related to the landscape. But one should not be surprised to find that that bird is related to much more than an outsider is possibly able to consider within the frames she is accustomed to. Decoys and decorative wildfowl, and the hunting culture—the heritage—from which they come, are a part of those birds, and the people who make them.

APPENDIX A

List of Persons Contacted and Interviewed

The following is a list persons contacted or consulted, who have been especially helpful in my understanding of waterfowling culture on Chincoteague Island. Most of these individuals worked with me either as key informants, or as interviewees. Many of those listed below were kind enough to participate in semi-structured interviews, though not all semi-structured interviews were recorded.

While I met, and often interviewed, additional carvers, collectors, and others related to wildfowling culture at festivals, competitions and elsewhere, the following list comprises the persons who continue to strongly associate themselves with Chincoteague, or who taught me a good deal about wildfowling culture in Chincoteague.

- * Indicates that a semi-structured interview was recorded with the individual listed, for the purposes of this dissertation.
- ** Indicates that a semi-structured interview was transcribed for the purposes of this dissertation.
- + Indicates that a semi-structure interview I conducted with the individual is on file as part of The Ethnographic Overview and Assessment for Assateague Island National Seashore (Chambers and Sullivan [2014]).
- ++ Indicates that a semi-structured interview I conducted with the individual is on file as part of the Museum of Chincoteague Island World War II Project.

Name	Association	Location
Randy Birch	Hunting, Working the Water	Chincoteague, VA
Reggie Birch**	Carving	Chincoteague, VA and Berlin, Germany
Bob Booth*	Carving	Modest Town and Chincoteague, VA
Bill Borges	Collecting, Museum Management	Chincoteague, VA
Jimmy Bowden**	Carving	Atlantic and Chincoteague, VA
Jay Cherrix**	Carving	Chincoteague, VA
Tommy Clark +	Hunting, Tourism	Chincoteague, VA
Billy Crockett	Carving	Parksley, VA
Freddie Cox	Carving, Hunting	Chincoteague, VA

Delbert “Cigar” Daisey**	Carving, Hunting, Trapping	Chincoteague, VA
Herb Daisey	Carving	Chincoteague, VA
Jennifer Daisey	Carving	Chincoteague, VA
Mark Daisey**	Carving	Chincoteague, VA
David Farlow	Carving	Quinby, VA
Russell Fish +	Carving, Hunting, Working the Water	Chincoteague, VA
Steve Garvis**	Law Enforcement, Hunting, Carving	Eastern Shore of VA
Gary Guyette**	Auctioneering, Collecting	St. Michael’s, MD
Arthur Leonard	Carving	Chincoteague, VA
Andy Linton**	Hunting	Chincoteague, VA
Tyrone Mason	Collecting	Chincoteague, VA
Carlton “Cork” McGee ++	Carving, Hunting	Chincoteague, VA
Tommy Reed**	Hunting, Trapping	Chincoteague, VA
Diane Savage +	Collecting	Berlin, MD
Ricks Savage +	Collecting	Berlin, MD and Chincoteague, VA
Rich Smoker	Carving, Hunting	Marion, MD
Ross Smoker	Carving, Hunting	Selinsgrove, PA
Bill Spann	Collecting, Museum Management	Chincoteague, VA and Baltimore, MD
Roe Terry	Carving, Hunting	Chincoteague, VA
Bobby Umphlett**	Carving, Hunting	Chincoteague, VA
Elvie Whealton**	Hunting	Chincoteague, VA

APPENDIX B

Carver and Hunter Biographies

The following is a list of carvers from or closely associated with Chincoteague Island, which I have compiled through snowball sampling and archival research (especially Berkey and Berkey (1981), and a map of Chincoteague carvers by Evelyn Taylor (see Fig. 10). Where I am aware of a carver but have not had the opportunity to interview or learn about them, I have included their name without additional information. I have also included here brief biographies of those hunters from Chincoteague who are mentioned in the preceding chapters. These and other individuals not listed here may carve decoys, but are not known as closely associated with this occupation. The hunters are marked with an asterisk (*).

John Beam (b. 1944) Beam is a come-here who splits his time between Chincoteague Island and Baltimore, Maryland. A fine artist by training, and raconteur by nature, Beam has tried his hand at decorative decoy carving with hand tools as a way to understand and to evolve the local craft from a fine artist's perspective. Beam and his wife own an art store on north Main Street called aNoPheles Blues.

Charlie Birch (deceased) Birch is noted in interviews as a carver related to Reggie Birch.

Leo Birch Birch is noted as having a workshop on north Main Street on the 1970 map of Chincoteague decoy carvers.

Reggie Birch (b. 1953) Though Birch spent most of his life on Chincoteague Island, he now lives in Berlin, Germany and maintains a house and workshop on Chincoteague, near Miles Hancock's old home. Birch is known for carving graceful, artistic decoys and decorative waterfowl with hand tools, and enjoys hiking north on Assateague Island to carve birds while sitting on the beach. Birch is also an antique decoy restoration expert, and has a deep respect for the history of decoy carving. Birch is one of the few carvers I met who claims the title "artist," though non-carvers regularly refer to most decoy carvers as artists.

Will Birch Birch is noted as having a workshop on Deep Hole Road on the 1970 map of Chincoteague decoy carvers.

Bob Booth (b. 1936) Though Booth was born and raised on Chincoteague Island, he now lives with his wife in Modest Town, Virginia. Booth prides himself in his ability to recreate the styles of early Chincoteague carvers such as Miles Hancock, and is a regular fixture at regional decoy festivals, where his table or booth is fashioned to look like visitors are stepping into a carver's home or workshop.

Jimmy Bowden (b. 1949?) A native of Chincoteague, Bowden now lives in nearby Atlantic, Virginia, with his wife on a small farm comprised of exotic fowl. Bowden is a prolific carver who primarily creates decoy-style pieces for collectors and tourists, though he also experiments with artistic representations of some birds, such as owls. He is a regular fixture at regional carving competitions and festivals.

Judson “Juddy” Budd (deceased) Budd sold decorative wildfowl of many descriptions out of his home on Bunting Road in Chincoteague, including flying waterfowl and miniature decoys.

Curtis Carpenter Carpenter is noted as having a workshop on Church Street on the 1970 map of Chincoteague decoy carvers.

Walt and Joyce Carpenter (contemporary) This husband and wife team collaborates to create decorative wildfowl that have gained acclaim at regional carving competitions. Walt carves the decoy bodies, while Joyce finishes them with paint. Joyce also sells her own detailed miniatures carvings at the Delmarva Discovery Center (Pocomoke City, Maryland).

Jim Clark Clark is noted as having a workshop on Church Street on the 1970 map of Chincoteague decoy carvers.

Jay Cherrix (contemporary) A Chincoteaguer into his sixties, Cherrix is the grandson of famed Chincoteague carver Ira Hudson. Cherrix is known for larger than life, interpretive hand-carved sculptures of egrets and graceful shorebirds with “their heads turned up and...they’re prayerful” (Interview with the author 15 October 2012). His carvings are found in Chincoteague’s art and bookstores, as well as private collections throughout the country. Cherrix also owned a kayaking tour company on Chincoteague for many years.

Freddie Cox (b. 1974) Though Cox is not from Chincoteague originally, he has lived on the island for most of his life, and expresses appreciation for many of Chincoteague's traditional community and environmental values. As an active decoy and decorative wildfowl carver, Cox lists Ira Hudson, Cigar Daisey, and Roe Terry as important influences. Today he carves and sells out of his home workshop on Wayne Avenue, Chincoteague, and uses his own decoys—many from repurposed materials—in his own hunting rigs.

Gary Crossman Crossman is noted as being an up and coming Chincoteague decoy carver in Berkey and Berkey (1981: 95).

Bennie Daisey (deceased) Daisey is cited as one of the earliest carvers to create miniature decoys on Chincoteague. He is noted as selling out of a home workshop on Deep Hole Road on the 1970 map of Chincoteague carvers.

Delbert “Cigar” Daisey: (b. 1928) Daisey is one of Chincoteague's best known contemporary residents, revered not only for his artistry in carving, but for his skill in hunting and trapping wildfowl and other game. Daisey's first decoys were made of salvaged wood for hunting purposes, and he continued to make gunning stools almost exclusively until the 1950s. By the 1970s he produced mostly decorative birds and gained a reputation for fine craftsmanship in carving competitions and among collectors around the country. In 2013 he was honored as a Living Legend at the Ward World

Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition and Art Festival. His nickname comes from a cigar dropped when evading capture after poaching wildfowl on the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.

Gary Daisey (deceased) Son of Herb Daisey, Sr. and father of Mark Daisey, Gary Daisey was also a noted decoy carver.

Greg Daisey (b. 1952) Though Daisey has, for the most part, stopped carving, he has developed a respectable reputation as a fine decorative carver. He is best known for life-like songbirds and detailed miniatures utilizing bright and realistic color, despite having no formal art training. In addition to these, Daisey carves hunting stools for his own use.

Herb Daisey, Sr. (? – 1980) Herb Daisey is the father of Gary, Delbert “Cigar”, and Herb Jr. Daisey. He is credited with teaching Cigar Daisey how to carve, using found, repurposed wood.

Herb Daisey, Jr. (contemporary) Son of Herb Daisey, Sr., Daisey carves primarily miniature decoy-style decoratives and decorative shorebirds out of his front yard stand on Ridge Road. Though Daisey is not as well known as his older brother, Cigar, Herb Daisey lives primarily off of selling souvenir decoys to tourists, many of whom collect a new piece each year, and he is well respected on Chincoteague in that regard.

Jennifer Daisey (contemporary) Daisey specializes in life-like songbirds and miniature decorative wildfowl, much like her husband, Greg Daisey, from whom she learned to carve.

Mark Daisey (b. 1971?) Daisey, son of Gary Daisey, is in his 40s and works out of the workshop adjacent to his home on Circle Drive. The workshop has large doors that swing open to reveal Daisey's chopping block and tools, photographs of his relatives and mentors, and chairs for visitors to sit in. Daisey learned to carve from his father, and uncle Cigar, when he was 12 years old. He has spent decades participating in, and winning honors at, regional competitions. Daisey primarily sells to repeat clientele, taking orders for both decoys and decorative wildfowl, including ducks, geese, and shorebirds. He no longer carves miniatures and does not make songbirds.

Rocky Detweiler (contemporary) Though a come-here, Detweiler now lives and carves on Chincoteague Island and is based on Willow Street. He is a regular fixture at regional decoy carving festivals and creates primarily detailed decoratives.

Russell Fish (b. 1950s) Fish is a fixture at decoy festivals around the mid-Atlantic. He began carving in high school, around 1968, but did not become serious about selling decoys until his first decoy show, in 1982. Over his lifetime, Fish has been a sea clam fisherman and dockworker, aquafarmer, and hunting guide, in addition to now working a full time job unrelated to these ventures. He hunts over a combination of mass produced

decoys and his own hand-carved decoys, including award-winning stools, which he makes in his backyard workshop on north Main Street.

Miles Hancock (1888 – 1974) Known by his contemporaries as “Mr. Miles,” Hancock is one of Chincoteague’s best-known carvers. In my own research Hancock is most cited as the carver from whom others have learned, or whom modern carvers emulate. In addition to being a successful decoy carver based on Deep Hole Road, Hancock was a highly revered hunting guide with his own houseboat, a market hunter, and a diamondback terrapin rancher. Hancock was featured in the movie *Misty* in 1961. There is a permanent display on Hancock at the Museum of Chincoteague Island, including his hatchet and chopping block, rocking chair, an unfinished stool body (likely a goose), and a decoy shop sign.

John “Guinea Bird” Hill (contemporary) Hill’s father, Jack Hill, ran a successful decoy shop on Maddox Boulevard in the 1980s, buying and selling local carvers’ works. Guinea Bird today runs the shop, carving and selling his own work—primarily decorative decoy-style miniatures—in addition to others’ decoys and paintings.

Ira Hudson (1876 – 1949) Hudson is one of Chincoteague’s best known and most collectable decoy carvers, revered for his expert artistry. His decoys tended to feature much greater detail than necessary for gunning stools—for example, carved details on duck bills. Hudson is reported to have carved out up to six-dozen decoys in a week using only hand tools. In addition to carving new stools, Hudson would repair up to 900 ducks

per season for one client alone, a local hunting lodge. Hudson was also an expert boat builder, making gunning skiffs for market hunting, and various boats for working the water. His workshop was on north Main Street.

Charles Edward Jester (1876 – 1952) A market hunter for many years, Jester also led hunting parties, using rigs of his homemade decoys, before eventually becoming a game warden after market hunting became illegal. Though Jester is less known than his cousin Doug Jester, Charles Jester is described as a “master carver,” whose stools were almost “too pretty to shoot over” (Berkey and Berkey 1981: 47). They feature finely sanded bodies and delicate paint detail.

Cloyd Jester A decoy ascribed to a Cloyd Jester of Chincoteague was brought to the Museum of Chincoteague Island. I have been unable to find information on Jester.

Doug Jester, Jr. (mid-20th c., deceased) Son of S. Doug Jester, Doug Jester, Jr. is noted as having taught Roe Terry to carve.

Jeff Jester Jester is noted as being an up and coming Chincoteague carver in Berkey and Berkey (1981: 95)

Leon Jester Jester is noted as having a workshop on Church Street in the 1970 map of Chincoteague decoy carvers.

Samuel Doug Melvin Jester (1876 – 1961) Doug Jester was a market hunter at the turn of the 20th century, hunting at times with a large muzzleloader, or a gun with three barrels, at night with a spotlight. After market hunting, Jester was primarily a waterman, though he also built houses and boats, and carved model boats and working decoys. He began making decoys commercially in the early 20th century. He is known for using a piece of rubber tubing dipped in paint to “print” eyes on his stools, and for scratching paint to make feather details.

Ronald Justis (contemporary) Justis is noted by contemporary carvers as being a reclusive but highly respected carver.

Arthur Leonard (contemporary) Leonard carves with handtools, having learned by watching carvers such as Cigar Daisey, Tom Savage, Reggie Birch, and Roe Terry. He has won several awards, and has been a featured craftsman at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. In a biography on the Chincoteague Cultural Alliance website Leonard is quoted saying: "Carving is a lifelong passion I can't get away from. It began at an early age, as a baby, with my mother holding me up to look out the back window at the ducks in the creek. It continued with my father taking me hunting as a kid on our farm. I've been carving ducks and hunting on the marsh ever since" (CCA 2014). Leonard also co-owns the Refuge Inn on Chincoteague and serves on the Chincoteague Town Council.

Charles and Shirley Lewis The Lewises are noted as having a workshop on north Main Street in the 1970 map of Chincoteague decoy carvers.

“Sickle Bill” Lewis (20th c.) Lewis is noted by contemporary carvers as a decorative waterfowl carver who made miniatures primarily. He had a shop on Main Street.

Troy Libertino (contemporary)

Andy Linton* (b. 1947?) Though a long-time come-here, Linton has lived on Chincoteague for decades and guides hunting parties to his blinds nearby the island. He is a well-respected hunter by locals, who was kind enough to share some of his stories, which informed Chapters Three and Four.

Danny Marshall (contemporary) Marshall is noted as an up and coming carver in Berkey and Berkey (1981: 95).

Matt Mason (contemporary) Mason cites Carlton “Cork” McGee as a teacher, and now makes hunting and decorative decoys and shorebirds.

Carlton “Cork” McGee (b. 1931) McGee has had a long career as a hunter, hunting guide, waterman, and decoy carver. Today he carves, paints, and sells decoys out of his backyard workshop off of McGee Lane, where he is also host to regular gatherings of friends who spin stories around his wood stove. Though he has made many working decoys, today McGee primarily makes decorative decoys and shorebirds in a range of sizes, and is well known for his herons and rails. McGee has been a regular fixture and

winner at Chincoteague's many decoy-carving festivals for decades, and has developed long-standing friendships with hunting and decoy-related clientele from around the country.

Roy Mears, Jr. Mears is noted as having a workshop on East Side Road on the 1970 map of Chincoteague decoy carvers.

Curtis Merritt (deceased, lived mid- to late-20th c.) Merritt is commonly referred to as “the blind carver.” Though he was unable to see, Merritt expertly carved and stained full size and miniature decorative wildfowl. His carvings are not painted. The harbor at the south end of Chincoteague Island—Curtis Merritt Harbor—is named for this carver.

Steve Merritt Merritt is noted as an up and coming decoy carver in Berkey and Berkey (1981: 95).

Bill Murray Murray is noted as having a workshop on Chicken City Road on the 1970 map of Chincoteague decoy carvers.

Dorothy “Dot” Quillen (1917 – 1982) Quillen cites Ira Hudson as one of her first carving influences; she would watch him carve when she went to his shop to play with his children. As an adult, Quillen helped her husband, Orville Quillen, paint working decoys as a hobby. She began carving miniature and life-size souvenir ducks and shore

birds later in her life, selling them from the Dot's Ducks "duck hut" in her front yard (Berkey and Berkey 1981: 93).

Orville Quillen (deceased) Quillen worked for years at the Pope's Island Gunning Club, and took up decoy carving as a hobby while there. In his later years he carved as part of a team with his wife, Dorothy "Dot" Quillen.

James "Corb" Reed (1897 – 1984) Taught by his father how to hunt, fish, and carve ducks, Reed had a great knowledge of market hunting, firearm repair, taxidermy, and decoy carving. In 1924 Reed left for Washington, DC, where he took art classes and found work as an interior designer and artist before returning to Chincoteague in the 1960s. Reed continued to carve decoys while in the city, but he moved toward decorative and lifelike styles, and shifted away from typical gunning stools. Reed is known for many innovations. Perhaps most notably, Reed was a pioneer in carving webbed feet into birds, or attaching webbed feet onto them.

Ralph Reed (deceased, lived mid-20th c.) Reed is known for making six to seven inch miniature ducks in decoy style with considerable detail, and in a stylized manner.

Tommy Reed* (b. 1944?) Reed is a long-time waterman and hunter, and former surfer, with an engaging repertoire of outlaw gunning stories. He can be found many mornings spinning tales with other Chincoteaguers over coffee at McDonald's.

Thomas “Tom” M. Savage (b. 1951) Savage became a fulltime professional carver in the late-1970s, and is known both for decoys, and a wide array of other carved sculptures, including carved fish, various animals, signs, totem poles, and caricatures of people.

Gale Savage (mid-20th century) Wife of Tom Savage, Gale Savage is known for intricate carved wildfowl such as songbirds, as well as objects including people and dogs.

“Brownie” Sturgis Sturgis is noted as having a workshop on north Main Street on the 1970 map of Chincoteague decoy carvers.

Roe “Duckman” Terry (b. 1953) Terry learned to hunt and carve early in his life from Doug Jester, Jr., and began entering decoy carving competitions in 1971. He quickly became a champion carver, using a techniques such as rough chopping with a hatchet, and carved as his primary occupation for nearly a decade. Today he sells his gunning stools and decoratives out of his backyard workshop on north Main Street. Additionally, Terry occasionally teaches or demonstrates wildfowl carving for regional museums, brokers antique and collectable decoy sales, and is an avid hunter. Terry co-founded the Chincoteague Carvers and Artists Association over 20 years ago, an association that still meets and holds festivals regularly on Chincoteague, and it is comprised of carvers and artists from all over the Eastern Shore.

Jimmy Thornton (mid-20th c.) Noted by a contemporary carver as a decorative decoy carver who also made carved objects such as whales. His daughter Jennifer is a contemporary painter on Chincoteague.

Bobby Umphlett (b. 1945) Umphlett is an award-winning hunting decoy and decorative wildfowl carver. He is a builder-contractor by trade. Umphlett continues to use a hatchet for rough carving, a skill he learned from his great uncle, Miles Hancock. The wildfowl he produces, however, are expertly crafted with lifelike expressions on many of the birds' faces and unusual, though lifelike, postures. In addition to carving, Umphlett is an expert hunter with a repertoire of engaging outlaw gunning stories.

Ray Walker, Jr. Walker is noted as having a workshop on Ridge Road on the 1970 map of Chincoteague decoy carvers.

Dave “Umbrella” Watson (1851 – 1938) Originally from nearby Willis Wharf, Virginia, Watson moved to Chincoteague after he was married, where he lived until his passing. Watson was a respected commercial wildfowler and guide in the days of market hunting, and he continued hunting into the outlaw gunning years. Additionally, Watson was an expert duck caller, and he carved his own decoys as well—taking time to hollow out birds, and carefully align glass eyes. Watson's nickname comes from his tendency to carry an umbrella, even on sunny days.

Edward Watson Watson is noted as having a workshop on Willow Street on the 1970 map of Chincoteague carvers.

Frank Watson Watson is noted as having a workshop on north Main Street on the 1970 map of Chincoteague carvers.

Elvie Whealton* (b. 1943?) Whealton is an electrician by trade and an avid hunter. He was kind enough to share and add to some of the outlaw gunning stories in Chapters Three and Four.

APPENDIX C

Highlights of Participant Observation Locations and Activities

The following activities comprise a substantial portion of participant observation locations and activities supporting the above dissertation. These activities are in addition to participant observation in mundane settings throughout Chincoteague Island during day-to-day activities:

- Regular visits to the workshops and homes of Chincoteague decoy carvers such as Delbert “Cigar” Daisey and Carlton “Cork” McGee. Cork McGee was especially instrumental in my participant observation, as he often provided wood and advice for carving in addition to colorful stories.
- Volunteering one day per week at the Museum of Chincoteague Island, July – November 2013, and working part-time as Assistant Director of the Museum June – December 2013. There I interacted regularly with visitors to the museum, assisted with the museum’s Road Scholars programs, and took part in museum development.
- Working part-time as a pontoon boat and kayak tour guide for a local business, summer 2012. During this time I acted either as sight-seeing tour guide to tourists on a leisure cruise captained by a Chincoteaguer, or led groups of kayakers through the water and marshes around Chincoteague and Assateague Islands. During this time I quickly became acquainted with the land- and waterscape between the islands, with common questions tourists ask and opinions many hold, and with dominant narratives told about the islands to tourists, by those in the tourism industry.
- Regular attendance at decoy festivals and auctions, including the following:
 - Easter Decoy and Art Festival (Chincoteague), April 2011
 - Ward World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition and Art Festival (Ocean City, Maryland), April 2011
 - Easter Decoy and Art Festival (Chincoteague), April 2012
 - Chincoteague Island Decoy and Arts Festival (Chincoteague), September 2012
 - Waterfowl Festival of Easton (Easton, Maryland), November 2012
 - Deborah Waterfowl Show and Auction (Chincoteague), November 2012
 - Easter Decoy and Art Festival (Chincoteague), 2013
 - Ward World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition and Art Festival (Ocean City, Maryland), April 2013
 - Refuge Waterfowl Museum auction (Chincoteague), May 2013

- Chincoteague Island Decoy and Arts Festival (Chincoteague), September 2013
- Attendance at a Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries hunter education course, October 2012
- Waterfowl hunting with two types of guides:
 - Hunting on the Assateague Channel with a male, long-time come-here on Chincoteague who wishes to remain anonymous, December 2012.
 - Hunting on the Chincoteague Bay with professional guide and Chincoteaguer, Russell Fish, January 2013.
- Carving lessons from champion decoy carver and Chincoteaguer, Russell Fish, winter and spring 2013.

Participation in a carving workshop at the Ward World Championships of Wildfowl Carving led by world champion carver Rich Smoker, of Marion, Maryland, April 2013

APPENDIX D

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The following is a list of questions commonly asked of decoy and decorative wildfowl carvers during semi-structured interviews:

1. Where are you from?
2. When and why did you start carving? Follow-up questions:
 - a. From whom did you learn?
 - b. How did you learn?
3. How would you classify the style of your decoys? Follow-up question:
 - a. Has your style changed over the years?
4. Do you have a favorite piece you've made? Follow-up question:
 - a. Do you have a favorite piece made by someone else?
5. What is the difference between a decoy and a decorative?
6. Why do you think people like or value decoys/carvings?
7. How, if at all, would you say carving relates to Chincoteague's heritage?

Questions asked of others depended on their particular expertise (e.g., auctioneer, collector, conservation police officer). Examples of additional or substitute questions asked include the following:

- How do you determine the value of a decoy? Follow up question:
 - o Why do you think people value decoys as collectible items, or, where/what does a decoy or decorative's worth come from?
- Are there particular makers or features collectors look for in Chincoteague decoys?
- What are some of the changes you've noticed over the years in your job as it relates to policing hunters?
- Do you have any memorable stories of interacting with carvers or hunters?

APPENDIX E

Survey Questions

The questions below were posed to self-selected respondents who participated in an online survey hosted at SurveyMonkey.com between July 1 and December 31, 2013. The survey included the following text as introduction:

“The following questions will ask you about your relationship to and impressions of Chincoteague, VA. They will also ask you about two specific Chincoteague traditions: decoy carving and hunting.

Your answers will be used to aid in PhD dissertation research conducted by Kristin Sullivan, Department of Anthropology, University of Maryland, College Park. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes, and survey results may be used in Kristin's dissertation and related publications and presentations. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Kristin at kmsulliv@umd.edu anytime.

All answers will remain anonymous.

Thank you for taking time out to share your thoughts!”

1. What is your age?
Below 18
18 to 24
25 to 34
35 to 44
45 to 54
55 to 64
65 to 74
75 or older
2. What is your gender?
Female
Male
Other (specify if you choose) [open-ended]
3. With which of these groups do you identify? Choose all that apply.
White
Black or African-American
Asian
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
American Indian or Alaska Native
Latino/a

Other (specify if you choose) [open-ended]

4. What state are you from? (if outside the U.S., what country?)
Open-ended responses
5. Is this your first time to Chincoteague? If not, how often do you come?
Yes
No – I am a Chincoteaguer (please fill in: Chincoteaguer means... [open-ended])
No – I've been here once before
No – I've been here more than once
No – I live here part time
No – I live here full time
6. What are the top three reasons you visit or enjoy Chincoteague?
Open-ended responses
7. When I think of Chincoteague's cultural and natural heritage I think of... (choose up to 3 answers)
The seafood industry
Fishing
Hunting
Decoy carving
Pony penning
Natural beauty
Water sports (e.g., kayaking, boating)
The life-saving service or coast guard
Wildlife preservation
Tourism
Assateague Island National Seashore
Assateague Village
Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge
Other (please specify) [open-ended]
8. Have you ever purchased, or do you own, a hunting decoy or decorative waterfowl? (wooden bird for hunting or decoration)
Yes
No
9. Do you carve decoys or decorative wildfowl?
Yes
No
10. Do you know or have you heard of any carvers from Chincoteague?
No
Yes – too many to list
Yes – List name(s) below [open-ended]

11. Why do you buy or collect decoys or decorative wildfowl, or why do you think others do?
Open-ended responses
12. How do decoys relate to Chincoteague's heritage (if they do)?
Open-ended responses
13. What makes a Chincoteague decoy or decorative distinct (if it is)?
Open-ended responses
14. Please finish this sentence, choosing all that apply: I think hunters (in general)...
- Are good stewards of wildlife and natural resources
 - Deplete natural resources
 - Are conservationists
 - Are "rednecks" or "country"
 - Get a bad rap from the public
 - Get a bad rap from environmental agencies or the government
 - Carry on important traditions
 - Should face tougher restrictions
 - Other (please specify) [open-ended]
15. Are you a hunter?
Yes
No
16. If no, why not? Check all that apply
- It's cruel
 - I don't want to deplete the number of animals/birds
 - I couldn't stomach it
 - I didn't grow up in a hunting family
 - I've never had the opportunity
 - Other (please specify) [open-ended]
17. If yes, why do you hunt? (Check all that apply)
- Sport
 - Food
 - Tradition or heritage
 - Family or friends bonding
 - Other (please specify) [open-ended]
18. If yes, who taught you to hunt?
- Father
 - Uncle
 - Grandfather
 - Mother

Aunt
Grandmother
Brother
Sister
Male friend
Female friend
I learned on my own or from a hired teacher

19. Have you ever hunting near Chincoteague?

Yes, wildfowl

Yes, deer or other land animals

No, but I would

No. People shouldn't hunt here.

No.

20. What is this survey missing? What do YOU think is important to know about decoys, hunting, resource management, art, or some other part of Chincoteague and its heritage? Anything you want to get out there?

Open-ended responses

21. Please leave your contact information if you'd like to be emailed the results of this survey.

Open-ended responses

GLOSSARY

The following terms, found throughout the text above, are commonly used names and expressions relating to Chincoteague Island, Virginia.

Assateague Bridge: Originally installed in 1962, this bridge connects Chincoteague and Assateague Islands.

Assateague Channel: The body of water separating Chincoteague and Assateague Islands.

Assateague Island: A barrier island approximately 37 miles long, off the coast of Maryland's and Virginia's eastern shore. Assateague Village, which once existed on the island's southern end, was considered by some to be one of Chincoteague's neighborhoods. Today the island is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Assateague Island National Seashore: Created in 1965 and managed by the National Park Service, this designation encompasses the island's entire shoreline, and much of the land on the Maryland portions of Assateague Island.

Blind: A freestanding or floating structure created to camouflage hunters. Wildfowl hunting blinds (or "duck blinds") are often made of wood and various tree branches or reeds, and have a wooden platform on which to stand.

Brant: A brown and white goose with an all black or dark brown neck and head, closely resembling a Canada goose, though smaller in size.

Causeway: The section of Route 175 in Virginia that connects Chincoteague Island to the mainland Eastern Shore.

Chicken City: Neighborhood in the vicinity of what is today Chicken City Road, Chincoteague. This area was known for its large number of chicken houses.

Chincoteague-Assateague Bridge: See Assateague Bridge

Chincoteague Bay: The body of water separating Assateague Island from the mainland Eastern Shore. Chincoteague Island lies at its southern end.

Chincoteague Island: Also referred to as Chincoteague, this island is approximately 7 miles long and 1.5 miles wide, though marsh and water associated with the island extend beyond this.

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge: Land owned and managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Virginia portion of Assateague Island, designated in 1943 to protect snow geese.

Chincoteaguer; ‘Teaguer: A designation referring to Chincoteague residents born on Chincoteague Island. Most Chincoteaguers, or ‘Teaguers, trace family connections to Chincoteague over many generations.

Come-here; c’mere: A designation referring to Chincoteague residents originally from elsewhere; any person who has moved to Chincoteague.

Deep Hole: A neighborhood in the vicinity of Deep Hole Creek, near Little Oyster Bay

Delmarva: A portmanteau of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia referring to the parts of those states that comprise the peninsula on the eastern side of the Chesapeake Bay. See also Eastern Shore.

Dipper: A bufflehead (a species of duck)

Dodge City: Neighborhood along what is today East Side Road, Chincoteague

Down the Marsh: Neighborhood on the south end of Chincoteague Island, and a way to refer to the southern end of Chincoteague Island. Sometimes referred to simply as “Down Marsh”

Drake: A male duck

Duck Blind: See “Blind”

East Side: This designation refers both to East Side Road on the eastern side of Chincoteague Island (midway between north and south), and to the portion of the island the road follows.

Eastern Shore: The land east of the Chesapeake Bay, including parts of Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware. See also Delmarva.

Game Warden: A wildlife conservation officer; in Chincoteague this usually refers to Virginia Conservation Police Officers, and occasionally to Assateague Island National Seashore rangers.

Gunner: A hunter, usually a term associated with market hunting, or market gunning

Gut: A narrow waterway in a marsh, like a creek

Hairy head: Hooded merganser (a species of duck)

Hen: A female bird

Hunting Guide: A paid guide responsible for leading a hunter or group of hunters on a hunting trip. A hunting guide is usually responsible for transportation to and from hunting grounds or blinds, setting out decoys, and retrieving prey.

Mad Calf: Neighborhood along with is today Clark Street, Chincoteague

Marsh Hen: Clapper rail (a species of chicken-like bird that lives in the marsh)

Morris Island: A small island separating Oyster Bay (itself off the northeast end of Chincoteague Island) from Assateague Island. It is comprised primarily of marsh. A few dilapidated buildings, likely hunting lodges or oyster watch houses, still exist there today.

New Road: Neighborhood or location at the east end of Church Street, Chincoteague

Old Head: Older person, usually at least 70 years of age

Outlaw gunner: A hunter who persists in market hunting or other illegal hunting activities

Piney Island: Neighborhood that comprises much of the eastern portion of Chincoteague. Piney Island is separated from the majority of Chincoteague only by a small creek and marshes.

Rattlesnake Ridge: Neighborhood along Ridge Road

Refuge: Colloquial designation for the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge

Rig: Group of decoys used for hunting.

Scow: A flat-bottomed boat with a blunt bow, ideal for use in shallow waters. Chincoteague scows are fashioned in a design originating in Chincoteague, though today they are not always made on the island.

Shell Duck: Red breasted merganser (a species of duck)

Shorebird: Any of a number of birds whose habitat includes marshy or sandy ground nearby water. Examples include sandpipers, avocets, oystercatchers, stilts, and plovers. Chincoteaguers often refer to birds such as herons and rails as shorebirds, though others refer to these as wading birds or marsh birds.

Snotty Ridge: Neighborhood along what is today Ridge Road, Chincoteague

Stool: A single hunting decoy.

Tick Town: Neighborhood along what is today Willow Street, Chincoteague

Toms Cove: Water surrounded by the Toms Cove “hook,” or land at the southernmost portion of Assateague Island, which formed since the mid-19th century.

Town Duck: Name given to the ducks, usually mallards and mallard hybrids, which live year-round on Chincoteague Island in yards, and parks and other public spaces

Tump: Usually a small patch of marsh or land in a body of water. Many on Chincoteague refer to Chincoteague Island as “the tump.”

Up the Neck: A neighborhood on the northern end of Chincoteague Island, usually referred to simply as “Up Neck.” People from this neighborhood are called “Up Neckers.”

Wildcat: Part of the northern end of Chincoteague Island

Working on (a person): Teasing or joking with a person

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