

BDWCA 2025 COMPETITION - RULES, JUDGING CRITERIA, AWARDS AND PRIZES
CHAMPIONSHIP AND COMPETITION RULES 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

The following rules are modelled on those issued by the American based International Wildfowl Carving Association (IWCA). Where necessary, changes have been made to reflect altered circumstances in the UK.

2. CLASSIFICATION OF ENTRANTS

BDWCA Competition

The competition is open to all members of the BDWCA of any level of artistic skill. There will be four classes of entrants: i.e. Advanced, Intermediate, Novice and Youth.

Members will normally enter competitions for the first time at Novice level. However, experienced carvers entering competition for the first time may request exemption from the rule, by application to the BDWCA Committee, in order to enter at a higher level. In cases of doubt the carver should seek guidance from the BDWCA Committee before registering his/her entry.

- **Advanced class**

This class is open to all members of BDWCA, but those entering will usually be of considerable experience and are expected to produce work of a high standard. Entries in this class must be original in their design and concept. Environments, feet and bases, if applicable, must be made by the artist (no cast legs and feet). Work done directly from published patterns and classroom projects, is not considered original.

- **Intermediate class**

This class is intended for BDWCA members with a reasonable level of experience. Entries into this class may be based on published patterns and projects but carvings made as classroom projects are not allowed. Those who have won three or more awards (Gold, Silver or Bronze) including two 'Gold' awards at the Intermediate class must enter the Advanced class. *

- **Novice class**

This class is intended for BDWCA members with limited experience, usually at their initial or early entries to Competition. Those who have won two awards (Gold, Silver or Bronze) at Novice class, including one 'Gold' must no longer enter this class. *

*** NOTE: While we wish to encourage progression to a higher class, if a carver has met the criteria to move to the next level and has not competed since, or has not won anything since competing at the new level, he/she may opt to move back to their previous level.**

In case of doubt the carver should seek advice from the BDWCA Committee before registering his/her entry.

- **Youth class**

Open to members up to the age of 17 years at time of entry (membership is free for youth members). Entrants can carve whatever they like be it songbird, birds of prey, ducks, geese, swans, shorebirds etc. Entries must be made of wood. Realism and creative postures are encouraged. Painting, staining and natural finishes are all permitted. Entrants can carve from patterns but original work is encouraged.

- **Regional Group Competition**

BDWCA affiliated Regional Groups are encouraged to enter a display of carvings of the bird selected by the previous year's winning group according to the criteria identified for that year's species which has previously been itemised in the BDWCA membership magazine, Wingspan.

3. GENERAL RULES

- a. There is no limit on the number of entries a carver may enter, however they must not have been entered in a previous BDWCA competition (including the 2020 Virtual Competition) with the exception of a carving which had previously been part of a Regional Group entry.
- b. BDWCA member entrants who have previously 'volunteered' to enter at 'Intermediate' or 'Advanced' level may revert to a lower level unless they have previously won too many awards to do so.
- c. The carving should not display the name of the carver or any means by which they may be identified. (Masking tape will suffice to ensure compliance with this rule).
- d. Where bases are used, which may or may not be separate, they will, for the purpose of judging, be considered part of the sculpture.
- e. In all matters relating to the judging of the competition, the judges' decisions are final – see Competition Information and Procedures for further details.
- f. All judges are to be in possession of a copy of the rules, including the criteria for judging, before the competition.
- g. Where the entry is not full size the onus is on the entrant to clearly identify the size, eg half-size.

4. CRITERIA FOR ENTRIES

- a. The range of categories is intended to reflect the aims of the competition and the diversity of the entries. There will be fifteen categories, and two of these (G and M) will be judged in two sub-groups:-
 - A Textured Waterfowl (Ducks, Geese, Swans)
 - B Birds of Prey (Eagles, Falcons, Owls etc.)
 - C Game Birds (Grouse, Partridge, Quail etc.)
 - D Sea Birds (Gulls, Terns, Auks etc.) and Shore Birds (Avocets, Sandpipers, Stilts etc.)
 - E Songbirds (Kingfishers, Swallows, Woodpeckers etc.)
 - F Decorative Miniatures "Miniatures".
 - G Interpretive Wood Sculptures "Interpretives" – 1) Wood which can be stained or varnished but to retain a natural appearance, and 2) Pyrographed, Painted or a combination of both
 - H Slick Smoothie Waterfowl
 - I Slick Smoothie Shorebirds & Waders.
 - * NOTE Categories J, K, L, M, N and O are "Open" categories where all entries are judged according to the criteria and rules for the Advanced class.
 - J Working Decoys *
 - K Fish * - Entries in this category will form part of a separate "standalone" Competition and will not be eligible for entry into the British Bird Carving Championship.
 - L Carved birds head *
 - M Carved birds head on stick * – 1) Head carved from Wood and 2) Head carved from Horn - Entries in this category will form part of a separate "standalone" Competition and will not be eligible for entry into the British Bird Carving Championship.
 - NOTE category M is also OPEN to non members of the BDWCA
 - N Innovative Wildlife Sculpture * - Entries in this category will form part of a separate "standalone" Competition and will not be eligible for entry into the British Bird Carving Championship.
 - O Feathers * - Entries in this category will form part of a separate "standalone" Competition and will not be eligible for entry into the British Bird Carving Championship.
- b. **Decorative (Categories A-E)**
 - Entries must be carved with wood the main material.
 - A live bird is the standard for judging.
 - Detailed carving, texturing and painting are expected.
 - Entries may be presented in any pose (standing, swimming, flying, etc.) and will be full bodied except where justified by the setting (e.g. flat-bottomed for a duck on water).
- c. **Miniatures (Category F)**
 - As for decorative, above, except that entries will be half size or less with a maximum size of 6" measured from the front of the breast to the rear upper tail coverts.
- d. **Interpretives (Category G)**
 - This style allows the carver great freedom to carve a piece in a style that is neither decorative nor decoy. Great imagination can be used - the style, character and finish is all in the hand of the carver.
 - Entries must be carved in wood and clearly depict a bird.
 - Staining, burning and painting are allowed **
 - Entries will be judged on artistry, craftsmanship and effective portrayal.
 - ** To be judged in two distinct groups - 1) - Natural Wood and 2) Pyrographed/Painted – in each class
- e. **Slick Smoothie Waterfowl (Categories H)**
 - Entries will be judged in hand for likeness of species and artistry. Keels are not required.
 - Entries are to be made of wood. Glass eyes are permitted.
 - Sturdy tails and bills are not required.
 - Realism and creative postures are encouraged.
 - Decorative painting to the artist's highest ability is encouraged. Translucence, shading and blending is encouraged.
 - No burning or fine texturing is allowed.
 - Groups of feathers can be defined, (i.e.) tertials, scapulars, and side pockets etc, but not textured.
- f. **Slick Smoothie Shorebirds & Waders (Category I)**
 - Entries must be made of wood. Glass eyes are permitted.
 - Realism and creative postures are encouraged.
 - Decorative painting to the artist's highest ability is encouraged.
 - No burning or fine texturing is allowed.
 - Groups of feathers can be defined (i.e.) tertials, scapulars, and side pockets etc, but not textured.
 - Entries must be mounted on a single dowel and simple base.

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- g. Working Decoys (Category J)**
- Entries must be made of wood and/or cork.
 - They are to be full size or larger and are to represent shooting decoys, and an unmistakable likeness to species when seen at a distance.
 - They will be judged floating in water. Entries found to leak or otherwise deteriorate in water or fail to self-right (ducks from a 'bottom up' position and swans from the side) will be disqualified.
 - Sound workmanship, no fragile parts, proper weighting and anchor attachment
 - There is no restriction on painting.
 - Awards received in this category will not count towards the rules of advancement
 - All entries to be judged in one class.
- h. Fish (Category K)**
- Entries must be carved from wood and may be any size.
 - They may be painted or unpainted.
 - Awards received in this category will not count towards the rules of advancement.
 - All entries to be judged in one class.
 - Entries in this category will form part of a "standalone" Fish Carving Competition and are not eligible for entry into the British Bird Carving Championship.
- i. Bird Heads (Category L)**
- Entries must be carved from wood and must not be larger than the actual head size of the bird.
 - They may be painted or unpainted.
 - Awards received in this category will not count towards the rules of advancement.
 - All entries to be judged in one class.
- j. Bird's Head on Stick (Category M)**
- They may be painted or unpainted.
 - Awards received in this category will not count towards the rules of advancement.
 - All entries to be judged in one class, which will be separated into two distinct groups -
1) Head carved from Wood and 2) Head carved from Horn
 - Entries in this category will form part of a "standalone" Bird's Head on Stick Competition and are not eligible for entry into the British Bird Carving Championship.
- k. Innovative Wildlife Sculpture (Category N)**
- Entries may be of any species of bird, to have no size restriction, and may be sculpted/carved using any variety of materials, to include but not restricted to wood.
 - The sculpture should be totally original in design and concept, and entirely innovative in its execution and portrayal.
 - Only one entry per carver, which must not have been entered into a previous BDWCA Championship.
 - Awards received in this category will not count towards the rules of advancement.
 - All entries to be judged in one class.
 - Entries in this category will form part of a "standalone" Innovative Wildlife Sculpture Competition and are not eligible for entry into the British Bird Carving Championship.
- l. Feathers (Category O)**
- Use means and materials that will provide a lifelike feather, provided that the feather itself is made out of wood.
 - The feather may be painted or unpainted.
 - The model/reference feather is not required to be brought to the competition but the description on the entry form should indicate the source.
 - Awards received in this category will not count towards the rules of advancement.
 - All entries to be judged in one class.
 - Entries in this category will form part of a "standalone" Feathers Competition and are not eligible for entry into the British Bird Carving Championship.

5. CRITERIA FOR THE JUDGING

a. Craftsmanship

This refers to the technical skills involved in bird carving, sculpting, painting, finishing techniques and their execution. It applies to the main subject of the carving, any habitat or accessories included in the entry and to the base itself if there is one. Consistency in the level of craftsmanship throughout the entire piece will be assessed.

b. Accuracy

Where applicable this involves the correctness of a piece from an objective perspective. Accuracy embraces the natural history of the whole piece, all of its components and the appropriateness of these components together.

Examples of factors to be considered are:-

- size and form of the bird,
- colours and pattern

- feather shapes and configuration,
- eye position and colour.

If the bird is assessed as extinct in the wild good reference material must be provided (measurements, photos of study skins and specimens) that the judges can use.

c. Essence of the species

This criteria takes accuracy one step further as it involves a thorough knowledge of the subject matter and the ability to characterise it in wood, to capture an attitude, to freeze a subject in a moment of time, as in a photograph, without losing the live nature of the subject. The carving must capture the spirit or the essence of the species, what some ornithologists refer to as "jizz." It is possible to have flawlessly crafted the bird but unless the subject has been given that essential spark which brings it alive your bird will not have achieved its full potential.

d. Artistry and Originality

This involves the design and composition of the entry; its success as a piece of sculpture. This is where presentation, innovation and creativity all come into play. Of the criteria this is probably the most difficult to define but this merely serves to underline its importance in the assessment of the carving as a work of art. Two pieces of work may meet other objective criteria equally, but the artistry in one will set it above the other in competition. Bird carving demands from the carver a wide range of technical skills but just as importantly it involves the ability to bring those elements together artistically. This aspect must be given full recognition by the judges.

e. Relative importance of the criteria

In order that a work may reach its full potential it must succeed in all these criteria; they all overlap and build on each other. They are all important and the degree of importance to be attached to each, the 'weighting' to be given by the judges, depends to a large extent on the particular carving being assessed.

6. AWARDS AND PRIZES

The following awards will be competed for:-

a. British Champion

Entries awarded '1st' or 'Gold' in all classes and categories, with the exception of Categories K, M, N and O as previously stated, will go forward for consideration by the judges for the award of British Bird Carving Champion (The Slimbridge Trophy)

b. BDWCA Best Open Carving

The winners of the Advanced categories, and the eligible 'Open' categories, ie Working Decoys and Carved Bird's Head, will go forward for consideration by the judges for this award and the winner will receive the Osterley Trophy.

c. BDWCA Competitors Choice

An award will be given for the carving selected by a simple majority vote of all registered BDWCA competitors. (The Woodcarving Magazine Award).

d. Best Intermediate

The best carving in the Intermediate Class, selected from those which have been awarded 'Gold', will be awarded the Jorvik Trophy.

e. Best Novice

The best carving in the Novice Class, selected from those which have been awarded 'Gold', will be awarded the Peter Deane Bowl.

f. Best Working BDWCA Decoy

The best working decoy will be awarded the Richard Chappell Trophy.

g. Artistic Award

The Snowdonia Mail Order Supplies Trophy is awarded for the entry which best meets the criteria for artistry and originality. Entries in Category N, Innovative Wildlife Sculpture, are excluded from the judging for this award.

h. Best Newcomer

The Alan Emmett Memorial Trophy will be awarded to the carver showing higher than expected standards with an initial entry in their first competition at any level.

i. Youth Award

The best carving in the Youth Class, selected from those which have been awarded 'Gold', will be awarded the Flutterby Trophy.

j. Fish

The best carving in the Fish Competition will be awarded the Steve Toher Trophy (formerly the Pintail Perpetual Trophy).

k. Innovative Wildlife Sculpture Award

The winning sculpture will be awarded the David Rose Trophy.

l. Feathers

The winning feather will be awarded the BDWCA Best Feather Trophy.

m. Category winners

At 'BDWCA Advanced' level the judges will award a first award – for which a Trophy will be awarded, a second award and as many awards of 'Highly Commended' as they think fit provided that the quality of the entries justifies these awards.

At 'Novice' and 'Intermediate' Level the judges may make as many "Gold" awards, "Silver" awards and "Bronze" awards as they consider appropriate, providing the carvings attain or exceed the set standards.