

THE WILDFOWLER

MAY 2025

A PUBLICATION OF THE ATLANTIC WILDFOWL HERITAGE MUSEUM AND THE BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD

Bay Back Wildfowl Guild Memories:

Remembering Bill Walsh

Founder, Director, Curator, Mentor, and Friend 1935 – 2025

With profound sadness, the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum and the Back Bay Guild announce the passing of our founder, curator, and guiding light, Bill Walsh, on May 12, 2025, at the age of 90.

Bill's passion for preserving the history, artistry, and traditions of Virginia's wildfowl heritage was unparalleled. His vision brought the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum to life within the historic deWitt Cottage, transforming it into a place where stories of decoy carvers, hunters, and the natural beauty of Back Bay and the Atlantic Flyway would never be forgotten.

A Legacy Carved in History

Throughout his decades of service, Bill was not just a curator, he was a teacher, storyteller, and friend to all who walked through the museum's doors. His legacy includes:

Founding the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum, ensuring the preservation of our region's water fowling traditions for future generations. Championing local carvers and artisans, providing them with a place to showcase their work and pass down their skills. Establishing the Back Bay Guild, bringing together a community dedicated to the appreciation and conservation of our wildfowl heritage. Mentoring volunteers and historians, sharing his knowledge generously, always with a warm smile and a captivating story. Advocating for historic preservation, ensuring the deWitt Cottage and its surrounding gardens remained a beacon of Virginia Beach history and hospitality. Bill's influence extended beyond the museum walls. His commitment to community, culture, and conservation earned him the respect and admiration of countless individuals, organizations, and visitors from around the world.

Honoring a Life Well Lived

A Memorial Mass and Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, May 24, 2025, at 12:00 PM St. Nicholas Catholic Church 712 Little Neck Road Virginia Beach, VA 23452.

We invite all who were touched by Bill's generosity, leadership, and friendship to join us as we honor his extraordinary life.

Bill's legacy will live on in every carved decoy, every story told at deWitt Cottage, and every person inspired to protect our wildfowl heritage. He will be deeply missed but never forgotten.



MCNAIR & SONS DECOYS

A SPECIAL EXHIBITION INCLUDING THE MARK AND MARGIE CROMWELL COLLECTION

THE ATLANTIC WILDFOWL HERITAGE MUSEUM IN THE HISORIC DEWITT COTTAGE IN VIRGINIA BEACH

130 Years overlooking the Virginia Beach Oceanfront
30 Years of the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum

There will be an auction with live and online bidding for a decoy by Mark and
a decoy by Ian McNair to support the museum.

Opening Reception Saturday September 20th, 2025

3pm VIP, 4pm general admission at the Dewitt Cottage, Virginia Beach

Contact director@awhm.org for more information
and to register to bid on McNair decoys. AWHM.ORG | 1113 Atlantic Avenue Virginia Beach, VA 23451



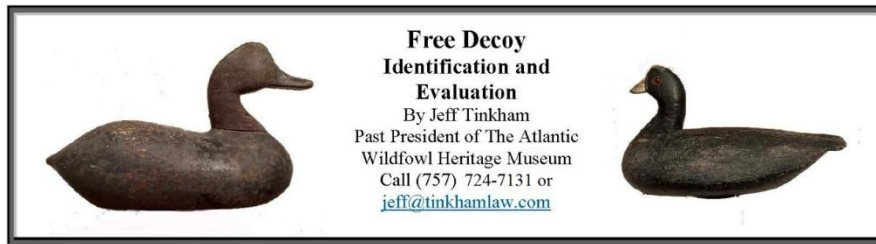
Meet the carvers, Mark, Ian, and Colin and experience a live carving demonstration.
200 of their carvings will be on display in the museum.

Sponsored by Copley Fine Art Auctions



DEWITT COTTAGE HERITAGE
CELEBRATING THE DECOY LEGACY





Upcoming Guild Events:

de Witt Garden Club
10:00 am, at the museum
Meets every Monday

05/11/2025 – Mother's Day

05/20/2025: Board Meeting 6:00 pm
In Person at the deWitt and on Zoom

05/26/2025: Memorial Day

06/17/2025: Board Meeting 6:00pm
In Person at the deWitt and on Zoom



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

It is with deep sorrow that I share the news of Bill Walsh's passing. Bill was a cornerstone of both the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum and the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild. His unwavering dedication and genuine warmth left a lasting impact on everyone who had the pleasure of knowing him. My heartfelt condolences go out to Bucky, Russell, and the entire Walsh family. May you find comfort in the cherished memories of his kindness and the remarkable legacy he leaves behind.

I am also pleased to share some uplifting news. Please join me in congratulating **Joe Leo** on his well-deserved promotion to **Museum Operations Manager** at the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum. Joe has been a devoted member of our community for nearly 12 years, tirelessly supporting the mission of the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild. In his new role, he will oversee the museum's day-to-day operations, ensuring that everything continues to run smoothly and efficiently. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated and experienced individual stepping into this key leadership position.

On Friday, May 16, 2025, the museum proudly hosted 49 business leaders from across Hampton Roads as part of a special networking event in collaboration with BizConnect Hampton Roads, a premier local business networking group. Guests enjoyed a lively morning filled with networking, refreshments, and cultural engagement. Catering was provided by Ultimate Event Management, featuring a delightful brunch menu complete with Mimosas, Bloody Marys, and a signature oyster bar showcasing *Lynnhaven on the Half Shell*, curated by Chris Ludford.

This event was a fantastic opportunity to highlight our museum's unique heritage and ongoing community programs to a new and diverse audience. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many guests expressing interest in future collaborations and visits. We look forward to welcoming them back again soon!

The weather is perfect for visiting the gardens at the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum, lovingly maintained by our de Witt Garden Club and Evergreen Landscaping, with special thanks to VB native and board member Mark Cromwell for his ongoing dedication and care.

Respectfully,
Aimee Rhodes
President, Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum



DECOYS WANTED

WE BUY WOODEN OR CANVAS DUCKS,
GEESE, SWANS & SHOREBIRDS

WHAT IS YOUR DECOY WORTH? ... IT COULD BE WORTH THOUSANDS!




WE WILL PAY
CASH FOR ANY
OLD DECOYS AND
HUNTING ITEMS



FREE DECOY IDENTIFICATION & EVALUATIONS
OF SINGLE DECOYS OR ENTIRE COLLECTIONS
BY MARK CROMWELL 757-721-2746
Member North Carolina Decoy Collectors Assoc.

Speak Up for Waterfowl Habitat in Virginia Beach

The City of Virginia Beach is currently weighing the option to convert a 19.5-acre lake off of Oceana Boulevard into a fill site, or Borrow Pit, for materials from public dredging operations, specifically from navigation channels and stormwater facilities. The Planning Commission, an 11-member body appointed by the City Council to review land use and zoning matters in Virginia Beach, will review this proposal at their May 20th meeting.

This lake plays a small but important role in waterfowl habitat for migrating and wintering waterfowl along the Atlantic Flyway, as it usually holds hundreds of diver and puddle duck species during this winter months. The local Back Bay Chapter of Delta Waterfowl has also installed wood duck boxes on the site.

In 1985, the City Council granted a Conditional Use Permit allowing the site to be used as an 11-acre borrow pit, known as Lilley Pit/Baillio Sand Pit. In 2001, an expansion of the borrow pit was approved, increasing its total size to 16.59 acres. Since completion of the excavation in 2016, the borrow pit has transformed into a lake in accordance with the approved conditions.

Now the City is moving towards filling in the entire lake and when the filling of the borrow pit is complete, the site will be converted to grade of 14 feet to 22 feet.

On top of the negative habitat impacts this will have for migratory waterfowl, there are also concerns about contamination of well water to surrounding residents, noise pollution from vehicle and equipment operating 12-hours a day 7-days a week and impacts to storm runoff in the area.

Add your name to a petition that will be presented to the City Council at their next meeting on May 20th.

[Sign Petition Today](#)



Join Us

Join us at our next event!

Your presence is more than participation; it's an investment in the tapestry of our community's future.

Get Involved

If you can't wait until the next event, there are plenty of ways to get involved today:

- **Become a Member:** Explore different membership levels and find your fit within our growing family.
- **Donate:** Every contribution helps us advance our mission and protect our natural resources. [Make a donation](#)
- **Volunteer:** Join us behind the scenes and experience the joy of service within our community. Volunteers interested in helping with outreach and education-- [sign up here](#) or helping here at the museum -- [Sign up here](#)
- **Shop:** Visit our gift shop for unique finds, including stunningly crafted local art, jewelry, decoys and more!

Contact Us

Questions or suggestions? Reach out to us at the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum. We're more than happy to hear from you.

Visit Us In Person:

1113 Atlantic Avenue

Virginia Beach, VA 23451

Or Online at:

[Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum Website](#)



Donate

With your support, we can continue to work to protect our natural resources, preserve the legacy of wildfowling, promote environmental education, history and the arts through a variety of events and community partnerships.

Please keep in mind that each dollar we receive plays a crucial role in maintaining the museum's operations.

Renew your membership online at www.awhm.org or, text WILDFOWL to 44-321

Memberships run for 12 consecutive months from the date annual dues are paid.

2025 MEMBERSHIP

\$35/YR INDIVIDUAL

\$50/YR FAMILY

\$100/YR BRONZE

\$200/YR SILVER

\$500/YR GOLD

\$1,000/YR PRESIDENTS CIRCLE

BACK BAY WILDFOWL GUILD 2025 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

NAME: _____ AMOUNT PAID _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____ [CELL] _____

Please pass this newsletter on to any potential new member

Thank you for your support!



AWHM Board of Directors:

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