

The Wildfowler

January 2026

A Publication of The Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum and Back Bay Wildfowl Guild



MARCH 13TH - 14TH
CREEDS RURITAN CLUB

VIRGINIA BEACH 23457

*Annual celebration of the waterfowl
heritage, decoys, carvers & artisans
of Virginia and North Carolina*

INFO: CHRIS LUDFORD 757-663-6970

Some big changes for 2026

We will close the show
at **3pm** on Saturday this year.

We are going to have a
duckboat display and MIGHT
have a contest for the best
duck boat/float blind.

Admission to the show is
\$7.00 for adults.

Friday the 13th open to the
public 4-9pm. Food truck will
be on site.

Saturday the 14th open to
the public 8am-3pm.

Creeds Ruritan Club
1057 Princess Anne Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23457

Proceeds will benefit Atlantic
Wildfowl Heritage Museum.





Upcoming Guild Events:

de Witt Garden Club
10:00 am, at the museum
Meets every Monday
We are a hands-on Garden Club
So, bring your gloves and tools.

01/20/2026: Board Meeting
6:00 pm at the Museum

February Board Retreat
Date & Time TBD at The Barrier Island Center

Save these Dates

Wednesday, 01/21/2026 7:00pm until 9:00pm
Winter Wildlife Festival
Decoy Painting Workshop
1113 Atlantic Avenue
At the Museum

Saturday 01/24/2026 - Winter Wildlife Festival 10:00am-3:00pm
Princess Anne Recreation Center
1400 Nimmo Parkway
Virginia Beach, VA 23456

March 13-14, 2026, Friday and Saturday
Back Bay Knotts Island Waterfowl Festival
Creeds Ruritan Club
1057 Princess Anne Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23457

MUSEUM HOURS CHANGING

THE ATLANTIC WILDFOWL HERITAGE MUSEUM WILL ONLY BE OPEN WEDNESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY 10:00AM-5:00PM UNTIL MONDAY MAY 25, 2026 WHEN WE WILL RE-OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK 10:00AM UNTIL 5:00PM.

Need to book a venue?
Book the Historic deWitt Cottage.
email: TheDewittCottage@gmail.com
For available dates



DECOYS WANTED
 WE BUY WOODEN OR CANVAS DUCKS,
 GEESE, SWANS & SHOREBIRDS
 WHAT IS YOUR DECOY WORTH? ... IT COULD BE WORTH THOUSANDS!



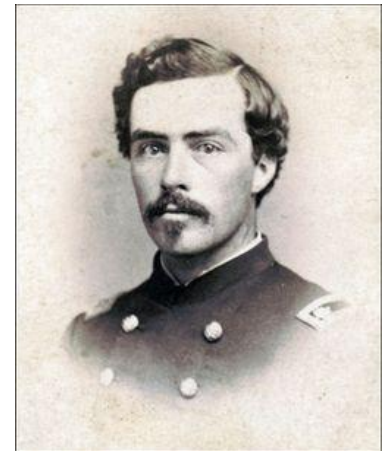

WE WILL PAY
 CASH FOR ANY
 OLD DECOYS AND
 HUNTING ITEMS



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

WATERFOWL HERITAGE
Henry Alger Gildersleeve
(1840-1923)

Henry Alger Gildersleeve was born in 1840 in Clinton, New York. He joined the Currituck Club in 1878. His family (“Gildersleeve”), was among the early Dutch founders of New Amsterdam (later, ‘New York’ under English control). He was a school teacher, Union Army officer, New York jurist, sport shooter/hunter, and a co-founder of the National Rifle Association (NRA). After growing up on his father’s farm, he taught school until the Civil War began. In 1862, he recruited an infantry company from his hometown to form the 150th New York Infantry. He was commissioned a Captain and he and his company served with General Sherman in Maryland, Virginia, the Battle of Gettysburg, and Sherman’s March to the Sea through Georgia. He eventually achieved the rank of Lt. Colonel. After the war, he studied law at Columbia University, was admitted to the bar, and served as a judge in the General Sessions and then Supreme Court of New York, being noted for both compassionate and harsh punishments. He continued practicing law after retiring from his judgeship, serving as legal counsel to Madeline Force Astor in settling the will of her husband, John Jacob Astor IV, who perished on the Titanic. Also after the war, he continued his military service as a member of the National Guard, where he took note of the lack of shooting proficiency among guardsmen, who often had never even fired their rifles. Being an excellent marksman himself, Henry developed a training regimen to improve the shooting skills of the guardsmen. This led to his role in co-founding the National Rifle Association, with the goal of encouraging rifle practice among the National Guard.

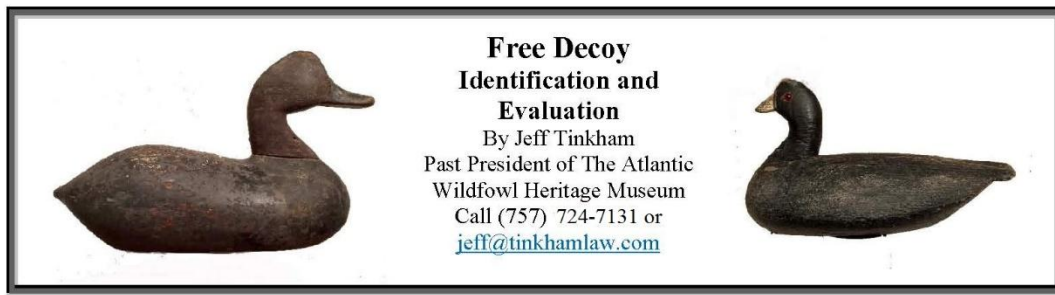


Henry served terms as a Director, Secretary, and then President of NRA. From these not so humble beginnings, in 1874 he became a member of the American Rifle Team, winning a number of national and international competitions when he and the team traveled abroad. While Henry was obviously not among the super-wealthy Gilded Agers we’ve previously read about, he led a quite interesting and comfortably exclusive existence nonetheless. And being an excellent marksman with a rifle, I suspect he could have been as proficient hunting waterfowl with that as I was with a shotgun! Henry was yet another person of interest who traveled to our area for what was incredible waterfowl hunting.

Larry Davenport

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As we welcome 2026, I want to begin by sincerely thanking each and every one of you for your support throughout 2025. Whether you contributed through membership, donations, volunteering, event participation, or simply by being an advocate for the Museum, your involvement truly makes a difference. We are deeply grateful and hope that you will continue this support with us throughout 2026.

This is also a friendly reminder that annual memberships and donations play a vital role in sustaining our programs, exhibits, and educational outreach. If you haven't yet renewed your membership or made your annual contribution, we would be so thankful for your continued support as we begin the new year.

We would also love to welcome you in person, please come by and visit the museum! We are open Wednesday through Sunday, 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM, through Memorial Day Weekend, and would be delighted to see you.

We are also looking ahead to one of our most important events of the year is the annual **2026 Back Bay & Knott's Island Waterfowl Festival**, and we need your help!

Volunteer Opportunity:

Friday, March 13, 2026 — 2:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Saturday, March 14, 2026 — 6:30 AM to 5:00 PM

We are seeking volunteers for 4-hour shifts within these time frames. This event would not be possible without our amazing volunteers, and we would love to have you be part of its success.

If you are willing to volunteer, please email us at information@awhm.org with your availability.

Thank you again for your continued support, dedication, and belief in the mission of the Back Bay Guild / Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum. We look forward to another wonderful year together.

Respectfully,
Aimee Rhodes
President, Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum

Paint Your Own Miniature Dudley Canvasback Decoy



Just like this one!



Join us for a special learning opportunity during the 2025 Winter Wildlife Festival! The Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum will host a hands-on workshop at the historic deWitt Cottage.

Attendees will have the exclusive chance to paint their own miniature Dudley-style decoy while learning about the rich history of the Dudley Hunt Club and the Dudley Brothers, renowned for their contributions to wildfowl decoy carving. With only 15 spots available, this intimate session is perfect for history buffs, art lovers, and wildlife enthusiasts alike.

Secure your spot early (only 8 seats remain) for this unique evening of art, history, and wildlife education by clicking the Link below and buying your ticket. The ticket is \$25.

ON Wednesday, JANUARY 21, 2026 FROM 7 TO 9 PM

1113 Atlantic Avenue (12th Street an Atlantic Ave.)

[Buy Your Ticket Here](#)

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



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.

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

2023 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 2023 MEMBERSHIP

RENEWAL FORM

NAME: _____ AMOUNT PAID _____ ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____
STATE: _____ ZIP CODE _____ EMAIL
ADDRESS: _____
TELEPHONE NUMBER: _____ [CELL] _____

January 1, 2026 kicked off our Annual Membership Campaign. Each member is encouraged to find one new member to join the Back Bay Wildfowl Guild. Our very existence depends on growing the membership of the Guild. Please encourage everyone you know to become a member!

Please pass this newsletter on to any potential new member

Thank you for your support!

AWHM Board of Directors Officers 2026

President – Aimee Rhodes

Secretary – Parke Atkinson

Treasurer – Larry Davenport

