

The Paint Shed: Notes from the Artist

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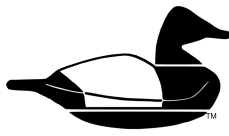
Friends,

Welcome to the Dixie Decoys® Paint Shed. In this tutorial section I'll try to explain the paint methods I've come up with for each species that we offer. When I first started designing our decoys, we discussed several design parameters that were needed in each of our decoy bodies that would be fairly anatomically and date correct for the decoys we were creating. These blocks had to represent what was coming out of North Carolina in the very early 1900s. Back then decoys didn't have eyes for the most part and used a very basic block painting method that didn't use much if any blending or include any feather detailing. But the fantastic thing we really enjoy seeing is your interpretation on how you finish your decoys...our paint maps are just a guide.

We initially began working with latex paints but they tend to be somewhat soft when really soaked for extended times and don't do too well if they are placed into a rough decoy bag once they have soaked all day long in the water. Marine enamels are made for the sort of use and abuse we put our decoys through. We began working with Parker Coatings on creating a line of paint colors that will serve perfectly for the kind of use even coastal guides put their decoy rigs through. Parker Coatings has been making outstanding marine enamel for many decades specifically for duck hunters. They have a line of paints specifically for duck decoys, and they also make a line intended for duck boats. Their oil-based paints are very flat and flow easily off of your paint brush. For best coverage we recommend you apply 2 coats of each color, but this allows for a neat old look if you want to work two colors over each other. While it is not required, you may consider giving your decoy's finish an added layer of protection by applying an enamel clear coat. Many options exist but Krylon® Flat Clear works best for my applications.

The colors in the Dixie Decoys® Paint Selection have been developed to work in the old school block painting style that hunters used back in the early 1900s and still today. I specifically asked Parker to develop a handful of new colors I thought would be useful to our customers that will work as they are, not requiring any blending. I also had them create several basic primary colors that will serve on some of the species that have very bright heads, wing patches, or bills. These colors can also serve to modify any of the other colors to create your own custom color tones through mixing and blending.

Oil based paints require the use of some sort of paint thinner to clean your brushes with. Parker Paints are the correct consistency right in the can for brush work. They should not require thinning unless you want to do some fancy feather detail work. I prefer to use odorless mineral spirits for thinning and brush cleaning. They dry to the touch fast enough that you can apply 2 coats in a single day. Always be mindful when using solvent-based paints to use adequate ventilation and wet down your cleaning rags with water before disposing of them outside. These paints do go a long way. I suggest buying them in the smaller 4 oz can if you are working on individual birds and move up to the pint can if you are working on a dozen or more blocks of the same species. This will prevent your paints

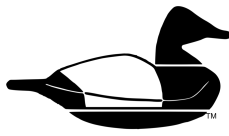


from drying out over time. I prefer to use a fine white or gold bristled brush like a ½" - ¾" wide flat or Filbert with longer bristles for most of my coverage and line work. I use a smaller round brush for detail work.

Surface preparation is every bit as important as the paint you use when it comes down to durability. Start your paint prep by scuffing the surface of the head and decoy using a coarse Scotch-Brite™ abrasive pad or sand paper at 120 grit or finer. If you choose to use sand paper keep in mind all of the negative spaces created by the wood grain detail. A scratch pad will help you reach down inside those areas. Urethane is really tough and the outer surface of our decoys is very slick and dense. Just like painting plastic decoy heads, a good scuffing gives the surface some 'tooth' for the paint to bond to. After the surface has a good scuff, Parker Coatings recommends wiping down the decoy using acetone. This will remove any dirt or oils from your hands that may have gotten on the surface. Do this outside and leave your rags out there. Acetone is very flammable and you don't need to expose yourself to the vapors. Once the block is wiped down, you are ready to prime your decoy. You can either go ahead and attach the head to the body or paint them separately and assemble them once the paint has dried. Prime the decoy using Parker Coatings gray Decoy Paint Primer. This primer was developed specifically for marine use. The medium gray color gives you a good base to lay other colors on. Allow the primer to dry for a couple of days. I then use a white or black pastel pencil or watercolor pencil to block in my paint lines depending on the species I'm working on. These lines can be painted over or easily removed using a moist rag. From that point, the colors go on.

In closing, remember these color maps are just suggestions on what I interpret as an early Eastern North Carolina decoy. The colors are adjusted to my eyes and my preferences. The entire Dixie Decoys team invites you to use these as a guide and hope you allow your eyes to interpret your decoys as you see them; or even better, allow your kids to add their own interpretation. Happy painting!

Warm Regards,



Species Specific Instructions

Barrows GE Drake: After prepping and priming, paint the block white from the neck down. Paint the entire side pockets white (2). You will paint in the black stripes when the rest of the black goes on. Once the white is dry, draw in your paint lines with a pencil. Paint in your black (5) including the bill. Paint the head purple (64). Paint in the white wing spots and the white face patch. For a darker purple head, use black as your first coat and then paint the purple over that once it has dried.

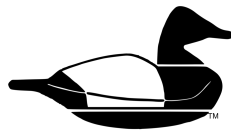
Black Belly Tree Duck: After Prepping and priming, mix up a small amount of paint using Cedar Brown (10) and Yellow Gold (18). You will need about a 3:1 mix of the 18:10. Paint the head, top of the back and breast with this mix. Once this has dried, Draw in your lines for cheeks and neck, side pockets, tail, rump, and tertials (shoulders). Paint the cheeks, lower neck, and tertials using taupe (21). Paint the rump white (2). Paint the tail and side pockets black (5). Mix a small amount of Venetian Red (61) and white (2). You want a coral red/pink color. Paint the bill with this mix. Once it has dried, paint the nail of the bill white (2). At the top of the bill is a deep yellow triangle. Paint this in using Yellow (67).

Black Duck: After prepping and priming, paint the entire body Brown (3) or Chocolate Brown (24). Paint the head either Tan (8) or River Bottom (30). Paint the eye stripes Black (5). Using an old bristle brush and black paint, you are going to dry-brush the top of the head and back of the neck. Slightly wet the bristles and then wipe them back off leaving basically a stain on the bristles. Brush the bristles in a light back and forth motion over the top of the head, leaving a very slight amount of black paint. Once you have achieved the desired darkness, allow to dry. Paint the bill Green Gold (11). Draw in the speculums using a pencil and then paint them in using Purple (64).

Bluebill Hen: After prepping and priming, draw in your back and side pocket lines. Paint the back and side pockets Medium Gray (13). Paint the rump/tail, breast and head Earth Brown (41). Paint the face patch White (2). Paint the bill Blue Gray (29).

Bluebill Drake: After prepping and priming, draw in your paint lines for the back and side pockets. Paint the side pockets White (2). Paint the back Smoke Gray (28). Paint the rump and chest Black (5). Paint the head Black, Blue (7), or Woody Green (66) per your preference. Paint the bill Slate Blue (60).

Bufflehead Hen: After prepping and priming, draw in your paint lines using a pencil. Paint the breast and side pockets using Smoke Gray (28). Paint the head, back, and rump using Timber Brown (34). Paint the bill Blue Gray (29). Draw in the cheek patches using a pencil. Paint in the cheek patches using White (2). Another technique is to stipple in the cheek patches using White (2). Using a small white old brush, get some white paint on just the tips of the bristles. Practicing on a piece of paper first, slightly press the bristles straight down onto the surface, leaving small paint dots. Once you are comfortable with this technique, apply the white paint to the cheeks.



Bufflehead Drake: After prepping and priming the decoy, draw in your paint lines. Paint the breast and side pockets White (2). Paint the tail Smoke Gray (28). Paint the back Black (5). Paint the head Black, Blue (7), or Woody Green (66) per your preference. Once this paint has thoroughly dried, paint the bill Blue Gray (29). Paint the top head patch and the wing stripes white (2). These will take several coats to keep the darker paint under them from bleeding through.

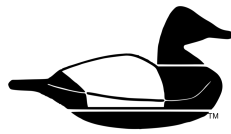
Canvasback Drake: After prepping and priming your block, draw in your paint lines with a pencil. Paint the back and side pockets White (2). Paint the rump and chest Black (5). Paint the head Burnt Sienna (63). You can blend in some Cedar Brown (10) onto the cheeks if desired. Paint the bill Black (5). Using an old bristle brush, you are going to dry brush some black onto the front and top of the head. Load a small amount of paint onto the brush and then wipe most of it off onto a paper towel, leaving a slight black stain on the bristles. Using slight pressure, brush back and forth over the top of the head and around the bill, leaving some black shading.

Canvasback Hen: After prepping and priming, mark off your paint lines using a pencil. Paint the back and side pockets using Ground Color (20). Paint the head, chest and tail using Hen Brown (65). Once this has dried, Paint the front of the head and the eye stripes Ivory (25). Finally, paint the bill Blue Gray (29). For a softer effect on the front of the head, use a dry-brush technique. Get a small amount of paint on a brush and wipe most of it off. You basically want the bristles of the brush stained. Then using light pressure on the brush, wipe back and forth over your paint surface to lighten the darker paint to your preferred tone.

Common Goldeneye: After prepping and priming your block, draw in your paint lines. Paint the chest and side pockets White (2). Paint the back, tail, and bill Black (5). Paint the head Woody Green (66). Once your paint has dried well, paint in the cheek spot using White (2). Paint the wing stripes in basically using a single long sweep stroke. This may take 2 coats of white. Once the white has dried, paint in the angled black stripes over the white wing patch.

Common Scoter: After prepping and priming, paint the entire decoy Black (5). Paint the bill hump using Yellow (67). A simple but very effective decoy.

Fulvous Whistling Tree Duck: After prepping and priming the decoy, use a pencil to draw in your paint lines. Using small amounts of Cedar Brown (10) and Yellow Gold (18), make an approximate mix 1:3 of the 10 & 18. Paint the head chest and side pockets with this mix. Paint the top and underside of the rump with White (2). Paint the wings and tail feathers using Black (5). Paint the underside of the chin and front of the neck using Ivory (25). Using the dry-brush technique, lightly shade in some Black (5) onto the top and back of the head. Using a small fan brush and Cedar Brown (10) paint, dab just the curve of the brush and a slight amount of paint over the black wings to suggest individual feathers. Using a clean flat brush and the dry-brush technique, apply a very slight amount of the Ivory (25) over the cheeks and breast of the decoy. This shading needs to be very light. Using a ½" flat brush



and white paint, brush in the side pocket stripes. It is OK for these feathers to be slightly transparent.

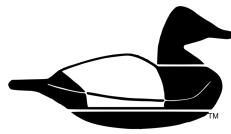
Gadwall Hen: After prepping and priming, draw in your paint lines with a pencil. Paint the head, chest, and side pockets using River Bottom (30). Paint the back and wings using Timber Brown (34). Using a thick flat brush, dry brush some Timber Brown (34) over the crown of the head and down the back of the neck. Paint the bill Cedar Brown (10). Once the brown has dried, dab a few blotches of black onto the top of the bill for the mottling the hens have. For the wing speculums, you can make things a bit easier on yourself if you use some painter's tape and tape off the different colors. Start in the back and paint the white, then black, and finish with the Redwood Brown (37). You can make these patterns any way you desire. Back in the day the old market gunners liked to make the speculums large for the ducks to really see them.

Gadwall Drake: After Prepping and priming the block, draw in your paint lines with a pencil. Paint the top of the back, breast, and side pockets using Medium Gray (13). Paint the rump and tail Black (5). Paint the cheeks and front of the neck Ground Color (20). Paint the top of the head and back of the neck with Oak Brown (22). Paint the bill Black (5). If desired, tape off the wing speculum using painter's tape. Paint the white in first, then move forward with the black, followed by the Redwood Brown (37).

Goldeneye Hen: This pattern will work for both Common and Barrows Goldeneye Hens. After prepping and painting the block, draw in your guide lines with a pencil. Paint the neck, breast, and side pockets using Smoke Gray (28). Paint the tail and back using Timber Brown (34). Paint the head using Earth Brown (41). Paint the bill Cedar Brown (10). Paint in the White (2) wing patches.

Harlequin Hen: After prepping and priming the decoy, paint the entire bird using Bison Brown (4). This is a fairly transparent color, so a couple of coats may be needed. Using White (2), paint in the two small white spots on each side of the head. Using a smaller old brush, you are now going to stipple more white around the front of the cheeks. Get a small amount of paint on just the tips of the bristles and then dab this paint off onto a paper towel. Then using a very light amount of pressure on the brush, you are going to dab straight down onto the surface of the head. This should leave small white dots. You want this area to look lightly shaded and transparent. Paint the bill Blue Gray (29). While this paint is still slightly wet, shade in some Slate Blue (60) towards the tip of the bill.

Harlequin Drake: Prep and prime the decoy. Using a pencil, mark off the side pockets and the white wing patches. Paint the head, neck, chest, and back using Slate Blue (60). Once this has dried, use a pencil to mark off the white paint patterns on the head, neck, and in front of the side pockets. Paint the side pockets with Redwood Brown (34). Paint in the wing patches using White (2). Paint the rump and tail using Black (5). Use a small fine round brush to paint in the thin black lines into the white wing patches. Using the dry brush technique, shade the breast and front of the head using Blue (7). Redraw in your pencil lines if needed for the white patches that are on the front half of the decoy. Around these lines in



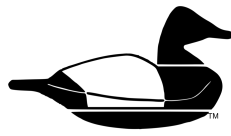
front of the side pockets, base of the neck, and neck, use a small old round brush to dry-brush in black. This doesn't have to be too neat and just has to darken the areas. Using White (2), paint in all of your marked areas including the round spots on the rump, head, and front of the cheeks running on up along the crown of the head. Paint the top of the head Black (5). Paint in the crown stripe Redwood Brown (37). Paint the bill Slate Blue (60).

Mallard Hen: After Prepping and priming the decoy, mark in your paint lines using a pencil. Paint the head, chest, and side pockets using Tan (8). Paint the back and wings with Timber Brown (34). This may take a couple of coats, but you can use the transparency of the paint with creative brush strokes to suggest feather detail. Paint the crown of the head and eye stripe using the Timber Brown (34). Paint the bill Cedar Brown (10). You can mottle on some Black or the Timber Brown on top of the bill if desired. Finish the decoy off by painting in the wing speculums. You can do this a bit easier by using painter's tape and tape the wing patches off. I suggest painting in the White first and then finish with the darker Royal Blue (69). You can make the wing patches any shape or size you want. Historically the market gunners would make them large so the ducks could see them better.

Mallard Drake: After prepping and priming your decoy, mark off your paint lines. Paint the back and side pockets Smoke Gray (28). Paint the tail and rump Black (5). Paint the chest Rust (17) or Redwood Brown (37). Paint the head Green (1) or Woody Green (66). Once the green has dried, you can paint the base of the head with a White (2) ring. Paint the bill Green Gold (11). Use some painter's tape to tape off the speculum wing patches. Paint the thin white lines first and then paint in the darker Royal Blue (69).

Old Squaw Hen: After Prepping and priming your decoy, use a pencil to mark in your paint guides. Paint the head, chest, and lower sides and rump White (2). Paint the front side patches and wing shoulders Hen Brown (65). Paint the back and lower wings Brown (3). Paint the crown and cheek patches Brown (3). Paint the bill Blue Gray (29). This decoy pattern can also be painted onto the puddle duck body using the Widgeon head for a higher tail pattern..

Old Squaw Drake: After prepping and priming your decoy, carefully lay out the paint lines using a pencil. Do some measuring if necessary to try and make each side fairly symmetrical....this decoy has some complicated curves and lines. Old Squaws normally swim and feed with their wings out of the side pockets exposed. Start off by painting the head and lower side pockets and rump White (2). Paint in the top shoulder patches using Smoke Gray (28). Paint the chest and tail Black (5). Paint the back wing secondaries with Redwood Brown (37). Paint the main wing patches with Brown (3). Touch up the light shoulder patches if necessary. For the head, paint the upper part of the cheek patch using Taupe (21). Paint the lower part of the cheek patch using Redwood Brown (37). Paint the center portion of the cheek using Brown (3). Mix a couple drops of White (2) with Redwood Brown (37) to give it a pinkish hue. Apply this mixture of (2) and (37) to the center portion of the bill. Paint the back and tip of the bill Black (5).



Pintail Hen: After prepping and priming the decoy, draw in your paint guide lines. Paint the head, chest and side pockets using Tan (8). Paint the back and wings Timber Brown (34). Paint the crown of the head using Timber Brown (34). Paint the sides of the bill using Medium gray (13). Paint the center of the bill Black (5). Using painter's tape, tape off the wing speculum stripes using the pattern you choose. Paint the white edge first, then paint in the main Green (1) stripe, then finish by painting in the thinner Cedar Brown (10) stripe.

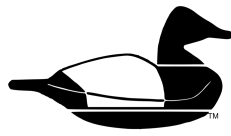
Pintail Drake: After prepping and priming the block, draw in your paint guide lines. Paint the lower side pockets, Smoke Gray (28). Paint the back and upper wings Medium Gray (13). Paint the tail and rump Black (5). Paint the head Oak Brown (22). Paint the neck stripe and chest White (2). Paint the sides of the bill Slate Blue (60). Paint the center stripe down the bill Black (5). Using painter's tape, tape off the side wing speculum patches. Paint in the thinner white stripe first, followed by the wider Green (1) stripe. Finish by painting in the thin Cedar Brown (10) stripe. Make these wing patches the shape and size you want. The old timers would make them large to be more easily seen by decoying ducks.

Redhead Drake: Start by prepping and priming the decoy and then draw in your paint lines using a pencil. Paint the back and side pockets using Smoke Gray (28) or Medium Gray (13). I prefer the darker and slightly brown Medium Gray. You can mix it up if you want to give your spread a more varied look. Paint the chest and tail Black (5). Paint the head Venetian Red (61). Optional colors for the head are Redwood Brown (37) or Cedar Brown (10). Paint the bill Smoke Gray (28). Paint in a thin White (2) stripe 2/3rds of the way forward, followed by a Black (5) bill tip.

Ringneck Drake: After prepping and priming the decoy, draw in your paint lines using a pencil. Start by painting the outer side pockets White (2). Paint the inner side pockets using Smoke gray (28). Paint the head, chest, back, and rump Black (5). Using a small round brush, paint in the ring around the neck using Burnt Sienna (63). Paint the bill Smoke Gray (28). Using a small round brush, paint the white margin of the bill and the stripe near the end of the bill White (2). Paint the tip of the bill Black (5).

Ringneck Hen: Prep and prime your decoy, then draw in your paint guides using a pencil. Paint the side pockets Cedar Brown (10). Paint the top of the head, neck, back and wings, and tail/rump Bison Brown (4). Paint the cheeks and breast River Bottom (30). Paint the bill Blue Gray (29). Using a small round brush, paint in the White (10) margin at the top of the bill and also the small stripe near the front of the bill. Paint the bill's tip Black (5).

Surf Scoter: After prepping and priming the decoy, draw in your paint guides on the head. Paint the entire head and body Black (5). Paint the spot above the bill and the long triangle on the back of the head White (2). The easiest way to paint the bill after you have drawn in your lines with a pencil, is to start with the White (2). Use a small round brush. Once the white is dry, paint in your Yellow (67) areas, followed by the Red (68) areas. Once these colors have dried, paint in the Black (5) spot in.

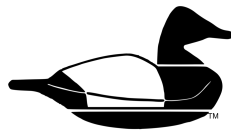


White Winged Scoter: Begin by prepping and priming your block. Then draw in your paint guidelines with a pencil. Paint the body and head (including the bill) Black (5). Once the paint is dry, paint in the White (2) wing patches on both sides and also the white eye stripes. Paint the front of the bill White (2) and let this dry. Over the white, paint in the Red (68) areas on both sides. On top of the red are some small Yellow (67) margins. Paint these in and the block is done.

Widgeon Hen: Begin by prepping and priming your decoy, and then draw in your paint guides using a pencil. Paint the side pockets on both sides using Widgeon Brown (62). Paint the wings and back with Light Brown (14). Paint the head, chest, and rump River Bottom (30). Paint the tail Black (5). Paint the crown of the head with Light Brown (14). Paint the bill Slate Blue (60). Finish by painting the tip of the bill Black (5).

Widgeon Drake: Begin by prepping and priming the decoy. Once the block has dried, draw in your paint guides using a pencil. Paint the side pockets and chest with Widgeon Brown (62). Paint the back with Medium Gray (13). Paint in the front of your wing patches and also the rump White (2). Paint the wing speculums Green (1). Paint the tail Black (5). With a small round brush, line the green wing speculums with black. Moving to the head, Paint the crown of the head White (2). Paint the lower portion of the head and neck with Tan (8) or Ground Color (20). Paint in the Green (1) eye patches. Move to the bill and paint it Slate Blue (60). Paint the tip of the bill Black (5).

Woody Drake: Start by prepping and priming your decoy. While your primer dries, do some research and find some good photographs of wood ducks. On paper, draw out some design maps for your paint patterns and colors. Once you have a good design going on, go and transfer your design onto your decoy using a pencil. We will give you several color variations to think about and try. I usually start by painting the gold color in the side pockets. For this you can use Tan (8). If you want it a little lighter than Parker's Tan, try mixing in some White (2) or even some Yellow Gold (18). You can even go with straight Yellow Gold (18) if desired. Next paint the chest and flanks Rust (17). Once this has dried, paint the tail and rump Black (5). For the back you can get creative. If you want things simple, I suggest painting the back pure Blue (7). This is a dark blue that actually is very accurate for a drake woody. For some neat variations, try some dry brush over your base color. Paint the initial coat Green (1), Woody Green (66), or Royal Blue (69). Once this has dried, get the darker Blue (7) and lightly load a 1" wide flat bristle brush and then wipe most of the paint off of it onto a paper towel. Then lightly swipe the brush over the wood grain on the decoy's back, leaving a light coat of the blue on top of the lighter paint. To help keep the blue off of your side pockets, you can tape off any areas using painter's tape. Once the back has dried, Get some White (2) and paint in the white stripe on the back edge of the wing tertials and also the wing primaries. This is best done using a small round detail brush. Move to the side pockets and add the white streaks along the top and back edges of the side pockets. Finish the white off by painting in the thicker white vertical stripe separating the side pocket and breast. Clean off your detail brush and using Black (5), paint in the black streaks along the side pockets that are between the white streaks. Finish the black off by



adding in the thicker black vertical stripe that separates the side pockets and breast. Moving to the head, paint it Woody Green (66). If you want, you can dry brush on some lighter Green (1) over the cheek areas of the head. Once dry, paint in the finger patch under the chin and cheeks using White (2). This will take a couple of coats to get good coverage and make sure your green is dry before painting the white over it. Using a small round detail brush, add your head streaks along the top and cheeks of the head. Once the white is dry, paint the bill margin between head and bill bright Yellow (67). Once this had dried, I then paint the white portion of the bill in using 2 coats. Once this has dried, paint in the Red (68) triangles on each side of the bill. Finish the bill by painting the tip and top center Black (5). Tip, to get the paint to flow off of your brush better, consider thinning a small amount of the paint with a bit of mineral spirits. You will need several coats of paint since the pigment is being thinned, but you will be able to paint much finer detail using thinner paint. Also keep your brush clean. A thick clogged brush will tack to the surface of the decoy, not allowing the paint to flow off of the tip easily. Practice brush strokes on a curved surface before trying to paint detail on your decoy. Figure out if it is easier for you to paint starting with a fine point and adding pressure to make your stroke thicker or vice versa.

Woody Hen: Start by prepping and priming your decoy. While your primer dries, do some research and find some good photographs of wood ducks. On paper, draw out some design maps for your paint patterns and colors. Once you have a good design going on, go and transfer your design onto your decoy using a pencil. Start by painting the head, breast, and side pockets Taupe (21). Variations can include Tan (8), or Hen Brown (65). Paint the top of the head, back, and tail Oak Brown (22). Using Royal Blue (69), paint in your wing patches and wing primaries. Line these patches and wing tips using White (2). Paint the rump, edge of the bill and underside of the chin, and eye patch using Ivory (25). Paint the bill Blue Gray (29). If desired for more detail, you can add Ivory (25) spots to the breast and streaks to the side pockets. Remember that thinner paint is easier to work detail in with. Thin using mineral spirits.