

Great Lakes Fish Decoy Collectors and Carvers Association

2026 World Champion Fish Decoy and Carving Contest Rules

September 18 & 19, 2026 - Days Inn- Cadillac, MI

1. Competitions are open to all carvers. All entries must have been completed after the last GLFDCCA show. All visible marks that would identify the carver must be covered; dark colored masking tape should be used for decoys
2. Only natural wood may be used as a carving material. Wood composites, resins, or other plastics are not permitted. All fins or barbels are to be made from wood, leather, or metal. Epoxy or urethane may be used to attach fins or eyes but not molded as part of the fish. Materials used for ballast, or to cover lead cavities or make repairs are not restricted. Eyes, screws, snap swivels, line ties, and “cheater” hooks are the only pre-formed material that may be used.
3. All decoys should display proper swimming attitude in the water. Decoys should suspend at a relatively horizontal attitude and respond favorably to the jigging stick. This generally means that the decoy, when dropped into the water, will move forward and swim in a circular pattern when jigged.
4. There will be 6 Categories as follows (classes for each category are listed on the Registration Form):
 - a. **Working Fish Decoys** – Only the basic mouth shape, single gill coverings, and delineations for the beginning of the tail fin may be carved or burned into the fish (See Diagram #1). A simple open mouth (band saw cut only) is allowed.
 - a.i. **Judging Criteria:**
 - a.i.1. Swimming Ability = 80%
 - a.i.2. Likeness to Species = 10%
 - a.i.3. Craftsmanship = 10%

- b. **Decorative Fish Decoys** – Maximum details allowed.
 - b.i. **Judging Criteria:**
 - b.i.1. Swimming Ability = 40%
 - b.i.2. Likeness to Species = 50%
 - b.i.3. Craftsmanship = 10%

- c. **Folk-Art-Fish Decoys** – Fish must be generic (not like any real fish) in both paint and form (body silhouette), and critters must be generic in paint.
 - c.i. **Black & White 3 Color Class** - Eye colors do not count, but fin colors do.
 - c.ii. **Cadillac Style**- Folk Art
 - c.iii. **Natural Finish**- must be generic in form, no paint allowed except for eyes.
 - c.iii.1. - **Judging Criteria** (for all classes)
 - c.iii.1.a. Swimming Ability = 70%
 - c.iii.1.b. Design & Innovation = 20%
 - c.iii.1.c. Craftsmanship = 10%

- d. **Jigging Sticks:** Deluxe – maximum detail allowed. Working – no carving, burning or texturing allowed. Natural Finish – no paint allowed.
 - d.i. **Judging Criteria**
 - d.i.1. Design = 60%
 - d.i.2. Functionality = 30%
 - d.i.3. Craftsmanship = 10%

- e. **Decorative Fish Carvings** – Must be original. Contestants must create all elements from wood or metal, except display plaques, support structures, and substrate (all pieces of non-created bottom material must be less than 3/8" in size).
 - e.i. **Judging Criteria** (Emphasis will be on the fish)
 - e.i.1. Likeness to Species = 80%
 - e.i.2. Design = 20%

f. **Specialty Fish Decoys** – The only rule in the category will be Rule #1, however, the carver is expected to have made the majority of the decoy and only decoys that are ineligible within other categories will be allowed. Examples include: mythical animals, fish painted ½ musky ½ pike, animal combinations, the use of reflective tape etc.

f.i. **No-Holds-Barred Class**

f.i.1. **Judging Criteria**

f.i.1.a. Swimming Ability = 40%

f.i.1.b. Design & Innovation = 50%

f.i.1.c. Craftsmanship = 10%

f.ii. **Cheater Class** – Must have hook/hooks. It can be anything from Working to Folk Art Categories.

f.iii. **Tumblers/Sidewinder/Wiggler/Wobbler**

5. For all fish decoy categories: The misplacement of fins will not be penalized and if multiple line ties are used the carver should mark the one the judges should utilize.
6. Juniors are carvers who are 16 years of age or younger.
7. Entry fee is \$5.00 per individual entry; however, there will be no charge for juniors.
8. Multiple entries per contestant are allowed for all classes in all categories.
9. Species allowed are limited to native freshwater fish found in the United States and Canada with the addition of Brown Trout and common carp. Salmon will be considered freshwater fish. Coldwater fish are all fish with an adipose fin, except Catfish, Bullheads and Madtoms. Sunfish classes will include Crappie and all Sunfish species.

10. Judges reserve the right to drill a small hole in any entry to check its composition in the event of a concern or protest as to permitted materials. All decisions are final.
11. All contestants must agree to the rules, and complete and sign the Registration Form.
12. All entries must be made solely by one person, the only exceptions to this rule will be married couples and decoys entered into the Collaborative Fish Decoy Challenge.

Diagram # 1

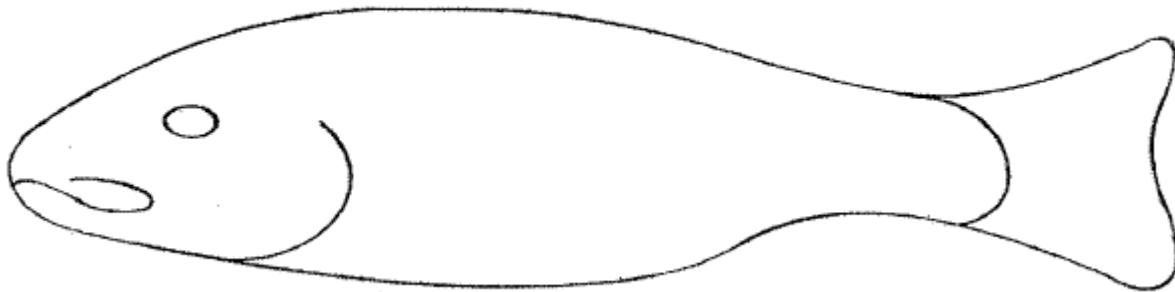


Diagram # 1 – Shows what can be carved or burned into a working fish decoy. Rules state: “Only the basic mouth shape, single gill coverings (one on each side) and delineations for the beginning of the tail fin may be carved or burned into the fish.”

**** There is no maximum length limit in most decoy classes: however fish must demonstrate their swimming ability in our six-foot diameter tanks. ****

In each class, 1st through 3rd place ribbons will be awarded. Honorable mention ribbons will be awarded at the discretion of the judges. Judges will determine 1st through 3rd Best of Show for all fish decoy categories. The “Best Decoy in the World” will be selected from the 3 “Best of Show: fish decoy winners from Categories A, B & C. First Best of Show only awards will be selected for jigging sticks and decorative carvings (Categories D & E). Registration for decoys and carvings will take place on the date of the contest from 8am to 10am or at the show hotel at the discretion of the registrar. Entries will be returned to the contestant after the final award presentations.

All Main-In entries should be sent to:

John D. Jones
2305 N. M-66
East Jordan, Mi 49727

Mail-in Entries must be received by September 15th, 2026. They should include the following:

- A Signed and completed Registration Form
- A return shipping mailing label
- A check for any entry fees
- A check for the actual return shipping and insurance costs

Please remember these items will be shipped twice and should be packaged accordingly. It is suggested that all carvings be double boxed, with packing material between the boxes.

Categories and Classes (species) are listed on the Registration Form.

If you will be completing the Registration Form before attending the show, please bring 3 copies. Registration Forms will be available at the show. Results will be available on our website and via email. Make sure you include an email address on the Registration Form. For those without an email address, and who would like a copy of the results, please include a self-addressed envelope with your Registration Form and our final results will be sent to you.

Collaborative Fish Decoy Challenge

1. This Collaborative Team Challenge was created to kindle positive relationships between fish decoy carvers. All are welcome to form a “Team”.
2. This year’s decoy must be “Folk Art Catfish Decoy.” See GLFDCCA contest rules for what is allowed in these decoys.
3. Judging Criteria

- a. Swimming Ability = 80%
 - b. Likeness to Species = 10%
 - c. craftsmanship = 10%
4. Only one decoy may be entered per “Team” however, a carver may be a member of more than one “Team.”
 5. All entries must have been completed after the last GLFDCCA show. All visible marks that would identify the “Team” must be covered; dark colored masking tape should be used.
 6. All “Team” members must agree to the rules, and complete and sign the Registration Form.

Working Pike Spear

1. Judging Criteria
 - a. Design = 50%
 - b. Functionability = 40%
 - c. Craftsmanship = 10%

Lure: 6-8 inch Top Water Popper

1. Judging Criteria
 - a. Design =50%
 - b. Functionability = 40 %
 - c. Craftsmanship = 10 %

For additional information or questions, please contact our Show Chairman:

Al Reeg

195 S. Matteson Lk. Rd.

Bronson, MI 49028

Phone: (517) 617-0797 (US)

Email: alreeg@yahoo.com