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E. ALLEN DECOY PAINTING SERIES

Bufflehead-Drake



Before you ever start painting there are some very specific things to do. Study the live bird and accumulate your reference materials. If you do not know what the bird looks like, it will be difficult to reproduce it in a painting. Once you have your basic priming done, use a chalk pencil and draw in the basic pattern lines to give you an idea where the paint will go and how the feathers are laid out. The more you draw, the more you learn the bird and the easier it will be for you to do the painting. A mount will also help you understand some anatomy, feather layout and coloration.



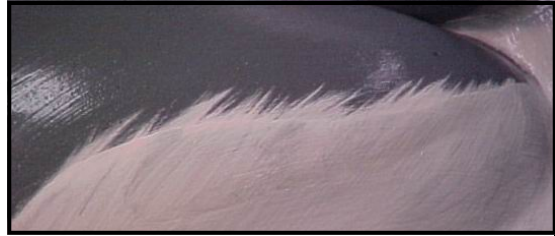
Only when you have some reference can you intelligently do a layout of patterns for painting. Now, go ahead and texture your bird. You can see vermiculation & stipple texturing in the pictures above. Use a sponge or brush for the stipple/fine dimple pattern (using Regular Gel) for your Buffy Drake. You can go ahead and reprime if necessary. If you've covered up your previous lines...redraw them. That drawing practice develops muscle memory and learning, in your hands and mind. .

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You can stipple the bird with some soft or regular gel, to give a little bit of texture to the surface. Use the end of a brush or a fine sponge. This can aid you when dry brushing. If you'd prefer, you can skip texturing....your choice. For this demo, we have kept the decoy smooth.....GAC 200 only, no texturing.

Mix some "off" white by starting with Titanium White and adding a small amount of Raw Umber to "gray" it a little. Use this mixture to paint the breast, sides,



lower rump, upper rump and crest of head. You will probably have to do 2 coats. Flick the white up from the sides onto the back a little.

This "off" white will allow us to come back later for some "white on white" feather detail using straight Titanium White.



Mix a medium gray by starting with Titanium White, adding a bit of Raw Umber and Carbon Black (only a touch of CB). Remember it's easier to darken a color than it is to lighten it.

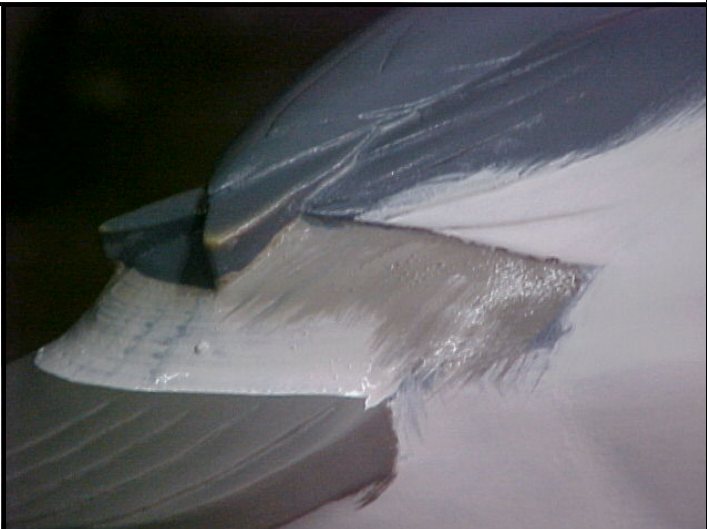
Base coat the tail with a medium gray, slightly lighter than you will use for the rump gray. Once the tail gray is dry, do some dry brushing along the inner portion of the tail feathers with a darker gray or black and the outer edges of the tail feathers with a light gray and a touch of white/lighter gray (This detailing will come later). (see pictures on the left).

Paint your quills and feather splits. (Mix: TW,RU,BU,CB). (Pictures to follow).



Paint the rear portion of the top rump with TW mix and the front of the top rump with the medium gray you made (see picture below).

While this mixture is wet, draw the gray down into the white and the white up into the gray....repeat until you get a nice gradation of color. (see page 3)



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You have painted the rear portion of the top rump with TW mix and the front of the top rump with the medium gray you made.

While this mixture is wet, draw the gray down into the white and the white up into the gray....repeat until you get a nice gradation of color. The picture (above right) shows this wet blending of the two colors.



Note the reference mount on the left. You can see the tail detail as well as the overlapping of some of the rump feathers onto the gray tail feathers. You can replicate this effect by thinning some Titanium White and paint with thin coats as shown in the picture, lower left)..

Also notice that the inner edges of the tail feathers have been dry brushed a bit with a dark color and the outer edges of the tail feathers have been lightened to give depth to the feather. You will also want to do some feather splits. To do this, use a Lowe-Cornell #7020 Round brush (size #4 or #6) and draw in the splits. That “imperfection” in the feathers enhances the look of the decoy.

The picture on the bottom right shows a little different take on painting the rump and tail. When doing feather splits, use a dark color for the splits and then a lighter color for a “high light” to “pull” the split out for depth.



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It's now time to paint in the dark areas of the decoy. Mix some Carbon Black with a little Burnt Umber (if desired) and paint the head, back and primaries. While you're at it, redefine the White/Black patterns on the head.

As you are painting the CB, flick some into the white, above the side coverts as a transition.



Edging of the Feathers at top of side coverts



The black lines at the top of the side coverts are NOT feather splits. These lines are actually the top edge of the feathers along the top of the side pockets. Make special note of the direction of the brush strokes and thus the feather edges.

Do this detailing with a Lowe-Cornell #7020 Round brush in #2 or #4 or #6, whichever works best for you.

A little later, when we do the White on White, you will see those feathers painted white with the black edges at the top.



Bufflehead-Drake



“White on White”

Now you will see the payoff of using an “off” white for your base coat. Take some Titanium White and load a Filbert (I like the Eagle Gold 3/4” Filbert). You do not want the brush “loaded” heavy. Work some paint into the brush. You are going to lay in some feather edges with that brush to give the look & feel of feathers. This technique will take some time to learn and is close to dry brushing...in that you are not heavily loading the brush.

You can also load a Lowe Cornell Round (#4 or #6) and add some detail and splits in the white feathers you’ve just added.

Once the feathers are painted in and detailed, you can drop in those top feather edges on the coverts with CB.

Bufflehead-Drake



Feathering the Back

You are now going to feather the back of your decoy, much the same way as you feathered the sides. Load a L/C 3/4" brush with some Burnt Umber and lay in some feathers.

Lighten that color and set some outer edges to that feather. If necessary, you can dry brush some black under the outer feather edge to re-establish the feather separation and to raise the feather visually.

While you have the Burnt Umber handy, paint the primaries and the edges of the other feathers along the back as shown on the right.

Use some Carbon Black (with #7020 brush) and lay in some feather splits. Follow this with a light brown and highlight that split to give some depth. This lighter edge on the feather split is an area that would catch sunlight and highlight the real birds feather.



Again, get a stiff brush (i.e. short bright) and load it with a light brown (i.e. Raw Sienna in this case) and wipe most of it off on a towel. Scrub the front area of the primary (which is actually the back of the feather in flight) with that brown. The stippling will pick up the light brown and give it some depth. Using your #7020 with some black, underline the primaries (or scrub a black shadow) and put in some feather splits that you will highlight with some of the light brown. Draw in some quills. Understand also, the quill will not be down the center of the feather. It is toward the leading edge...toward the back here.

Yup, I know this is the Mallard's tail but the technique is the same.

Bufflehead-Drake



Let's take a look at the head for a minute. You will mix up 3 puddles of paint, using Bone Black (tube paint) and mix that respectively with Interference Green, Red & Blue. Thin these down a little as you want to "wash" the colors on, not "paint" them on. These colors work best over a Carbon Black Base. Put splotches of these various colors all around the head and then "wet blend" the edges where one color meets the next. You can tap the transition or lightly wipe it back and forth with a brush.

Mix up some Paynes Gray with Titanium White (and a touch of Carbon Black if you want) and give the bill a good coating. Detail the nostril, nail and lips (ok, maybe they're not truly lips but that's where I shoot them when hunting). ;)

Base coat the eye with some Burnt Umber and allow to dry. Dap the wrong-end of the brush into some Carbon Black and touch the eye with that to give an absolutely round pupil. When dry, put a little "tic" of T. White to act as a reflection. Gloss coat the eye to make it look real.....or just like glass.

Take some time to touch up the white of the head as it probably got some interference colors on it.



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At this point, we're pretty much done with the painting. As you have been painting, you want to use a hair dryer to fast dry the paint to allow you to move on faster. Once the Golden Acrylic paint is dried.....it's water proof. If you make a mistake, wipe it off and you shouldn't have to worry about the previous layer of paint being damaged.

There are **two very important things** that must be learned and it only happens with practice:

1. **Brush Control**-This is teaching your hand to make the brush do what your mind wants it to do. Once you learn Brush Control.....you OWN the technique and you will progress faster.
2. **Paint Consistency**-Most paint is too thick to be used in all situations. You will need to thin the paint to make it workable. Too thick and it does not flow properly and pulls. Too thin and it runs and is uncontrollable. The proper consistency will almost flow like magic and you'll be amazed. Again, once you learn this....you OWN the technique and can apply it to all your painting.

Another thing that will come in very handy is color matching. I struggled with this until it was necessary for me to come up with colors I needed. You will learn this in time. Look "through" the feathers you will be painting and "find" the medium color. This is your base and you can then go lighter and darker as needed for detail and depth. The only way to really "learn" this is to practice, practice, practice. One of the fellas I took a class from told me "paint is cheap, don't skimp". This is another technique that you will OWN once you have mastered it.

After your decoy is dry, spray a couple mist coats of a flat clear finish and then "flash" it off with a hair dryer. We use Testors Dull Cote. This is a lacquer based paint and has a solvent that will attack the paint if allowed to remain "wet" on the finish. Using a hair dryer will drive the solvents out (preventing paint damage) and set the clear coat into the paint.

Well, sign your bird and enjoy it. If you have any questions, please give me a holler. I'm here to help you have fun with your sport.

Lou Tisch duckguylsb@Juno.com

Gallery———-Bufflehead Drake———Gallery



Gallery-Bufflehead Drake-Gallery



We can supply you with your Decoys, Paints (FME-oils or Golden Acrylics-Matte), Brushes, keels and supplies. You can download our catalog right from the website and see what you can't live without.

If you have any questions, please give us a holler and we'll help any way we can.

We are here, **"Helping you Enjoy your Sport"!**

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Glossary of Some Terms & Techniques



Texturing

In the beginning, we talked about stippling to give a very tiny “pebble” finish. This is easy to accomplish with a sponge, as shown to the left.

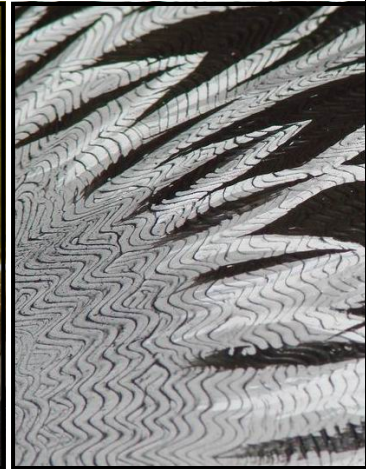
Load the sponge with a little of the Golden's Regular Gel Matte and “tap” the decoy. As you tap, you will leave a nice texture. This texture allows for the dry brushing we talked about as the highs of the pebble pick up the paint and the lows do not. You can also do the stippling with the end of a cheap chip brush though I prefer the sponge. This is only a cheap sponge cut out from packing material. Experiment with various sponges until you find what works best for you.



Let's take a look at enhancing the vermiculation & other texturing. You have applied the Reg. Gel Matte and combed it to give you highs & lows and stippled for all over texture. You have then base coated that area...in gray in this case (ignore the fact that this one is a Mallard). The Buffy has body texture and dry brushing can be used to enhance feather detail.



Take a stippling brush and “load” it with Carbon Black. Using a towel that is in your lap, get most of the paint OUT of the bristles. You only want a “hint” of C.Black on the brush. You are going to brush lightly ACROSS the ridges so you leave a small amount of paint on the high ridges and not down into the low valleys. This is called **“Dry Brushing”**.



Looking at the Pintail's back, you can see the effect of this dry brushing technique upon the vermiculated/combed areas. You have black on the ridges with the gray still showing down in the valleys. As you are dry brushing, you can shade some areas to give the illusion of depth & shadows.



Cheating the Tail

Cheating the Tail is a very cool technique I learned during a seminar from Pat Godin.

The tail of a decoy is typically “blocky” and thick to keep it strong so it holds up while hunting. If you paint this whole tail area, it just looks...wrong. So, just “sweep” the white of the tail more than halfway down the “blocky area” with it tapering off in front and back. This gives a nice curve to the edge of the feather. When you stand back a bit, the entire feather appears to be curved and much more pleasing to the eye. Give it a try, you'll be amazed.

Glossary of Some Terms & Techniques



Bristol Board-Reference Sheets

Begin keeping a “**working board**” (left) of your colors & patterns for all the decoys you paint. I use Bristol Board (found at any office supply store-stiff, absorbent paper).

I show the mixing of colors along with my doodles and practices. This gives me a base for the next time I do the same decoy or need reference for another decoy.

Step by Step instructions on the Drake Bufflehead Painting

1. Prep, assemble & reprime bird for painting. You're now ready for fun!
2. Pencil (chalk pencil is best) flow lines & feather groups, showing white & black areas.
3. Brush GAC 200 onto the entire decoy. This becomes a primer/adhesion coat. Use the GAC 200 as it comes from bottle (unthinned) and apply sparingly. Brush with flow of feathers where possible.....establish this as a habit. If you have small air bubbles in the GAC on the bird, wait a small amount of time and then lightly rebrush. You can add a little titanium white to the GAC 200 to "block in" that primary color. Force dry with a hair drier. This may dry a bit shiny and that is no problem. Your G/A will bond very well to it.
4. You can stipple the bird with some soft or regular gel, to give a little bit of texture to the surface. Use the end of a brush or a fine sponge. This can aid you when dry brushing. If you'd prefer, you can skip texturing....your choice.
5. Mix some "off" white by starting with Titanium White and adding a small amount of Raw Umber to "gray" it a little. Use this mixture to paint the breast, sides, lower rump, upper rump and crest of head. You will probably have to do 2 coats. Flick the white up from the sides onto the back a little.
6. Mix a medium gray by starting with Titanium White, adding a bit more of Raw Umber and Carbon Black (only a touch of CB). Remember it's easier to darken a color than it is to lighten it. Paint the rear portion of the top rump with TW mix and the front of the top rump with the medium gray you made. While this mixture is wet, draw the gray down into the white and then the white up into the gray....repeat until you get a nice gradation of color.
7. Base coat the tail with a medium gray, slightly lighter than the rump gray. Once the tail gray is dry, do some dry brushing along the inner portion of the tail feathers with a darker gray or black and the outer edges of the tail feathers with a light gray. Paint your quills and feather splits. (Mix: TW,RU,BU,CB)
8. Mix a back & head color using Carbon Black & a bit of Burnt Umber. Base coat the back and head with this color. One coat should do it. Be sure to flick the black on the back down toward the sides.
9. Lay in the black tops of the side covert feathers. Remember, these are the tops of feathers and not a "feather split"....direction is everything.
10. Mix 3 puddles of iridescent colors using equal portions of Bone Black and separately, Interference Blue, Violet (or Red) & Green. Thin each puddle for wet blending or use it straight if you're going to dry brush. **Wet blending:** note the positions of the iridescent colors on the head (top front moves from violet to blue and then to green). Put a thinned portion of each color in the appropriate places and then either stipple to blend or flag back & forth to blend. **Dry brushing:** get some unthinned color on a stippling brush, remove most of it onto a towel and lightly brush the appropriate areas, leaving paint on the tops of the ridges or peaks of texturing.
11. Mix up the blue/gray for the bill using Payne's Gray and Titanium White. Paint the entire bill this color. You can then stipple a little black if desired and then detail the bill with some black.
12. Dry brush (if desired) some dark gray or black into the grooves on the sides if you'd like to give some depth to the sides. Depth can also be achieved when doing the sides initially if you use the technique we employed painting the Goldeneye Drake.
13. Mix up a gray/brown (Titanium White/Raw Umber/Carbon Black) and lay in some feather edges into the back of the bird.
14. Base coat the primaries with Burnt Umber mixed with a little Carbon Black. When dry, lay in the quill and dry brush a lighter color along the trailing edge of each primary for depth.
15. The secondaries can be outlined with a little hint of brown and then blended with black to give some depth. Add feather splits and highlights as desired.
16. Paint the eye Burnt Umber (lighten slightly if desired) & black for the large pupil and a "splash" of white for reflection. Gloss coat the eye when dried.
17. Finish painting quill lines & feather edges in primaries, secondaries and back of bird and feather splits in the side pockets (Burnt Umber or Black with a hint of white for highlighting).
18. You may want to define some of the side pocket feathers and we'll go into that if there is time. Use straight Titanium White to do side feather detail and this will stand out against the "toned" white.
19. Clear coat if you would like with Testor's Dull Cote (#1260) on the entire bird...force dry (will explain)... sign your bird, develop a legacy for your kids & grandkids... andvoila. Done & Happy!

Helping You Enjoy Your Sport!

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Quick Look at Brushes

Just a quick look at brushes for a minute. This encompasses the majority of the brushes we use for painting decoys and we periodically find others that we can't live without. We will address the brush issue in a subsequent tutorial. Holler with any questions. Lou



Brushes to match jpg's on previous page

1. Stippler
2. Stippler
3. Fan-Silverstone 1104 #2
4. Fan-Bob Ross R-6413 #3
5. Fan-Loew Cornell 32 #4
6. Rake-Eagle Gold 75 3/8" - Flat Rake
7. Round-Richeson 9118-#16
8. Round-Eagle Gold 25-#4
9. Round-Loew Cornell 7020-#4 Ultra Round
10. Round-Eagle Gold 25-#6
11. Liner-Bob Ross Script Liner
12. Round-Loew Cornell 7020-#4 Ultra Round
13. Filbert-Eagle Gold 60-3/4"
14. Filbert-Eagle Gold 60-3/4"
15. Filbert-Robert Simmons 767-#14
16. Filbert-Robert Simmons 767-#12
17. Filbert-Grumbacher-Renoir 626-F
18. Filbert-Loew Cornell 7500-#4
19. Flat-White Taklon-Connoisseur-Series 265-#12
20. Flat-Loew Cornell 798-3/4"
21. Flat-Richeson 9164-#20
22. Flat-Windsor Newton-University F-#6
23. Flat-Richeson 9164-#8

Brushes not shown but mentioned in tutorial....Blenders. The blender is a somewhat round, bushy brush that is typically angled. There are many brushes that will perform the same function with some trial and error. Give it a shot and holler with any questions. We could also use any feedback on what you would like to see in subsequent tutorials/seminars.

Thanks much,

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