



## **ANNOUNCEMENT TO ALL CARVERS**

Support PFDA and its commitment to the Pacific Flyway's waterfowl hunting heritage. Please donate a northern pintail "pickleweed" decoy at the June 6<sup>th</sup> 2020 CWA Hunting Heritage Rig Competition. The "pickleweed" decoy donations will be displayed in the marsh adjacent to the floating rigs. Carve and paint them like you would hunt them. This is a fund raiser, so we are leaving this one up to your own creativity! There will be judging with ribbons to the top three carvers. All donations will be auctioned or raffled at CWA Suisun Marsh Field Day or the PFDA Classic in Sacramento.

Below is a little background on the origin of "pickleweed" decoys and their history in the Suisun Marsh from Mike Miller. The great photographs were also provided by Mike Miller.

Duck hunters in Suisun Marsh needed large numbers of decoys, especially pintail decoys, to attract the real McCoy, wild pintails. Back in the day, pintails were the most abundant ducks in that area. So it followed, that the number one species for California hunters in general, and especially those who plied the wetlands of Suisun Marsh, was the pintail.

Typically, California hunters back in the day carved floating pintail decoys from redwood, balsa, palm fronds, and sugar pine. But many bucked that trend, and rather than put all their efforts into carving full sized floating decoys, complete with heads and bodies, many Suisun Marsh hunters figured that a good short cut would be to make pintail heads and put them on a breast-like piece with a stake attached. These would be pushed into the bottom of the ponds - no need for lead anchors or anchor lines.

The heads were carved from sugar pine or redwood and the breast pieces would have been carved from a 2x4, or similar size, piece of redwood. The stakes could be sharpened dowels or

just a sharpening of an extension of the breast piece. Another effective material for making the breasts was fishing net floats. The key was to have large numbers of these decoys, perhaps hundreds around each blind. They sat well in the pickleweed vegetation and were highly visible, because the white breasted decoys contrasted well with the dark pickle-weed. Suisun Marsh is well known for broad expanses of pickleweed vegetation, hence the name for these decoys: "Pickleweed heads!" Leo Tocchini made lots of these decoys for use on the Rich Island duck club in Suisun Marsh. Gene Copp, also at Rich Island, made a variant of these decoys called "artichoke heads" in which a head is attached to a round piece, typically hollowed, with no stake. Dick Townsend made another variant in which the head sits upon a rectangular base. But by far, most of the pickleweed head decoys were fairly crude and made by the hundreds by legions of unknown carvers/hunters in the Suisun region.

The Pacific Flyway Decoy Association is committed to preserving our west coast waterfowl hunting tradition. Please help us continue to do so with your generous donation.

Hand carried "pickleweed" decoys accepted on June 6, 2020 at Grizzly Island State Wildlife Area from 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM at the PFDA booth at CWA Marsh Field Day. Mailed "pickleweed" decoys must be received on or before June 5, 2020. Send to PFDA-Dorothy Wilcox 7113 Spicer Dr. Citrus Heights, CA 95621. Late donations gladly accepted, but you might miss the fun competition and display in the Suisun Marsh!



If you have questions please contact Rick Banko (707) 601-4850 [summerspaniel1@gmail.com](mailto:summerspaniel1@gmail.com) or

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