

Broadbill Decoys

of the

Thousand Islands



Broadbill is a frequently used colloquial name for two very closely related species of diving ducks, the greater scaup and the lesser scaup. Other frequently used names include bluebill, and in more southern regions, blackhead. Both species are quite similar in appearance and behavior. Most carvers didn't bother to differentiate between the two when making hunting decoys, and many hunters would have had trouble identifying them once they were harvested. A few of the early hunting decoys do have a greenish cast to the paint of the head when viewed under good light, suggesting the makers were intentionally painting them to represent the greater scaup.

Based on the numbers of decoys present in auction sales, broadbills appear to be the most commonly produced species in the Thousand Islands area by the early decoy carvers.

Photographs of the broadbill decoys featured in the TIDCA display at the 2023 Clayton Decoy Show; arranged by alphabetic order of the carvers last name.



Hen broadbill by George Andress [1860-1924], Gananoque, Ontario. Subtle shading of the brown paint which is difficult to capture in a photograph.



Drake broadbill by Raymond (Ray) Andress [1890-1955], Gananoque, Ontario. Excellent comb painting on the back.



Hen broadbill by Robert (Bob) Burke [1892-1962], Wolfe Island, Ontario. Larger size broadbill with groove carved along the side to delineate the wing-body boundary.



High-head drake broadbill by Roy Conklin [1909-1967], Alexandria Bay, New York. An earlier style decoy made and used for hunting.



Hen broadbill by Frank Coombs [1882-1958], Alexandria Bay, NY. Beautiful stipple painting on the forward half of the body.



Drake broadbill by Fairman Davis [1884-1953], Alexandria Bay, NY, made without eyes but with carved eye grooves (both features known in other Davis decoys). Pictured on page 192 of [Decoys of the Thousand Islands](#).



Hen broadbill by Rupert Davis [1898-1976], Kingston, Ontario. Wing and tail carving, and with U-shaped stamped feathers over most of the body including the area under the tail.



Drake broadbill by Sam Denny [1874-1953], Clayton, NY, with extensive comb painting over the back and a slight greenish cast to the paint on the head.



Hen broadbill by Sam Denny [1874-1953], Clayton, NY. This hen has comb painting on the back, with a richer brown paint on the head, breast and tail, and a darker brown paint on the back and sides. Other hens with this same paint pattern are known from a number of different rigs.

Both Denny decoys are pictured on page 216 of [Decoys of the Thousand Islands](#).



Drake broadbill by Rosh Douglas [1878-1962], Ogdensburg, NY. An earlier decoy with a narrower body and more elongated style head.



Drake broadbill by Ferman Eyre, Brockville, Ontario. This example painted with dark colored sides.



Drake broadbill by Don Gray [1913-1995], Gananoque, Ontario. Signed "D Gray" on the bottom.



Drake broadbill by Clovis LeFebvre [1850-1933], Alexandria Bay, NY. Decoys in good original paint by this maker are quite rare.



Hen broadbill attributed to Chancy Patterson [1904-1994], Wellesley Island, NY. A very nice example of Chancy's stipple paint usually found on the bodies of hen diving ducks. The bottom was left unpainted except for a few smudges of paint from the sides, and with twin shallow grooves carved in the bottom of the bill. Both features are found on many, but not all, Chancy Patterson decoys.



Hen broadbill by Augustus (Gus) Rogers [1892-1938], Alexandria Bay, NY. From the rig on Donald B. Baxter, Syracuse, NY, and with his copper label on the bottom.



Miniature drake broadbill with painted eyes attributed to Augustus (Gus) Rogers, Alexandria Bay, NY. Approximately 4 & 7/8 inches in length from tip of the tail to tip of the bill, with four 1/4 inch diameter holes drilled in the bottom and filled with lead.



Hen broadbill by James Stanley [1855-1927], Cape Vincent, NY. A good example of the splatter paint that James and Roy Stanley often used on their hen broadbills.



Drake broadbill by Chauncey Wheeler [1862-1937], Alexandria Bay, NY. From the "red triangle rig", and with the 'J.J.R.' stamp multiple times on the bottom and the letter 'P' carved in the ballast weight (referenced in the spring 2023 TIDCA presentation).



Hen broadbill by Don Wolfe, Cape Vincent, NY. Working decoy with full-length keel, in excellent condition.



Miniature hen broadbill by Stan Woodman, Wolfe Island, Ontario, with his initials stamped on the bottom ("S.L.W.").