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E. ALLEN DECOY PAINTING SERIES

Pintail-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, there is no way 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 the vermiculation & stipple texturing in the pictures above. Use a comb for the vermiculation and a sponge or brush for the stipple/fine dimple pattern (using Regular Gel). 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. .

Pintail-Drake

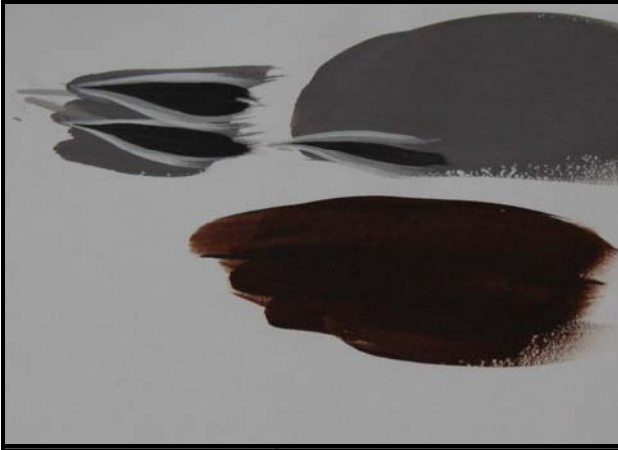


Establish the layout of the white patterns along the back of the head as well as the pattern areas throughout the decoy, base colors as well as feather patterns. Now, as I indicated previously, lay in your base colors, even covering over your feather patterns. This gives you the opportunity to redraw and refine your feathering (ok, you can skip all the coverup/redraw if you'd like). You will use Titanium White right from the bottle for all your white base colors. The Brown is Burnt Umber. The gray will be mixed, starting with Titanium White with a bit of Carbon Black added and then some Burnt Umber to tone the "bluish" color out of it, giving you a true gray color for the back and sides.

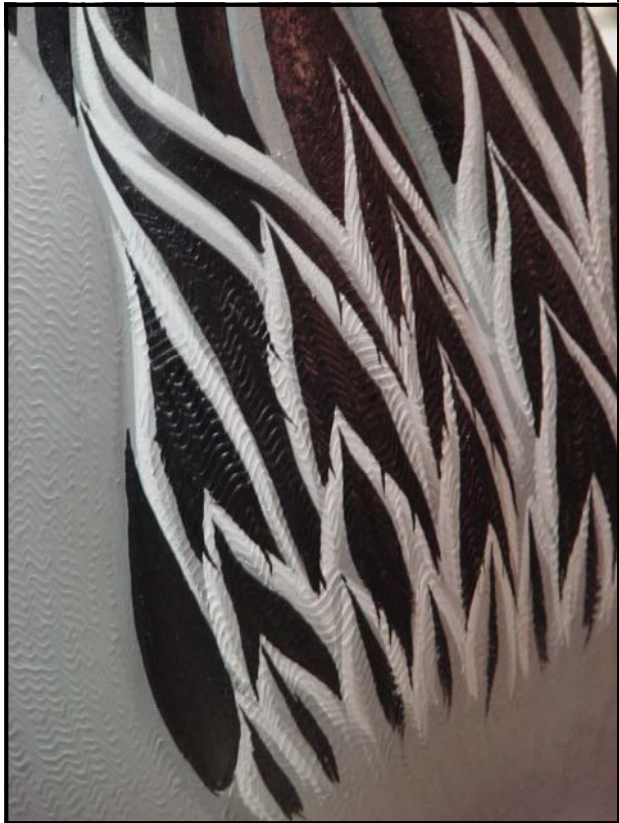


You have painted the breast, tail and back of the head with Titanium White, the side and back of the bird with gray and the head and primaries with Burnt Umber (this will be shown better later). Your feathers have been redrawn and defined using a chalk pencil. When laying down your first paint on the feathering, use your base gray and add a little T. White and follow your chalk lines to establish your feathers. Line the outer edge of the feathers with a lighter gray and then some T. White. Once the feather edges are established, load your #7020 brush with Carbon Black and establish the centers of each feather. Now complete the black areas of the feathers (pic-upper right). While you have the Carbon Black "active", block out (paint) the black areas of the rump & tail (pictures on following page).

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Begin keeping a “working board” (above) of your colors for all the decoys you paint. I use Bristol Board (found at any office supply store) and show the mixing of colors and my doodles and practices. This gives me a base for the next time I do the same decoy or need reference for another decoy.



Note that the black areas have been filled in, defining the feathers. The primaries are base coated in Burnt Umber. The head (see left) has also been base coated in Burnt Umber, with the White continuing from the breast up into the neck. This flows up behind the head a little and curves toward the center. Look at the reference picture of the back of the head shown on page 2, top left picture. Add feather splits as you see fit.



Don't worry about covering in one coat. Count on doing 2 coats (more if necessary) to get the coverage you desire.

Once you have painted the head with Burnt Umber, you can add some Raw Sienna to the cheeks, brows & top of the head to lighten & highlight these areas. Stipple or sponge this in while wet to blend and soften those areas.

Mix Paynes Gray with a little T. White to make a pale blue and paint the bill. Use as many coats as necessary to give an even tone to the entire bill.



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You can see how the cheek & brow areas have been lightened/highlighted with the R. Sienna.



The rump (under, sides & top) have been base coated in C. Black and the tail feathers have been painted with a base coat of Titanium White.



This picture actually belongs on page 2 but I couldn't fit it in properly. This gives you the layout of the Gray area for painting, allowing you to bring the black, white and brown areas into proper perspective.



Just a quick review.
Chalk line your feathers for layout reference..



Follow your chalk lines and delineate your feather edges with paint.



View from all angles and make sure that your feathers flow properly.



Lay in the black parts of the feathers and work on your detailing.

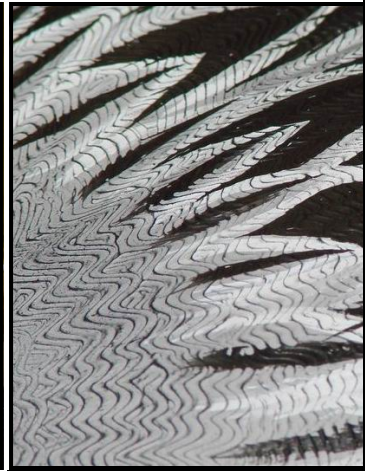
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Let's take a look at enhancing the vermiculation. You have applied the Reg. Gel Matte and combed it to give you highs & lows. You have then base coated that area...in gray in this case (ignore the fact that this one is a Mallard). On the Pintail, you have also finished most of your feathering detail prior to this point.



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.



The Dry Brushing technique will often get some of the black on other areas so be sure to clean up and redefine those areas, in this case, the white of the chest.

While you're at it, you can drag or flick some of the white down into the gray to "feather edge" that transition and soften the area.

You can also drag some of the gray over into the white to create the illusion.

You can use any brush (i.e. flat or filbert) to flick this transition area or you can use a #7020-4 and draw the lines in to give the desired effect.

Be sure to keep the feathers & details flowing in the proper direction.

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Time for a bit of detailing. Use a relatively stiff brush (i.e. short bright) & load the brush with some Burnt Umber. Again, clean most of it off on a towel as this is more of that “dry brushing” technique you learned earlier. Now, scrub (yup, back and forth) the black area and into the gray area of the feather with this short bright to leave some hints of brown on the feather.

Once you’ve got that done, you can take some dark gray and put some quills into the middle (or close to the middle) of several feathers. It’s not necessary to do all of them. One “hint”.....” a little of a good thing is great. A lot of a good thing doesn’t work”. Do some but not all.

Since we’re working on the back, let’s put some feather splits into the decoy.

A perfect decoy is a thing of beauty but a decoy with some “flaws” looks even better.

The sides pockets, when split a little bit, show the black underneath. When the light colors of the back feathers are separated, they show the black that is underneath. Let’s exploit this. Using your #7020-4, load it with some Carbon Black and, following the feather flow, put in some feather splits. Remember, a little goes a long way.....don’t overdo it.



This would be a good time for the rump area work. Using a bit of iridescent green, paint a “hint” of the speculum in the last feather coming down behind the side coverts.

The rump also has some yellow/ochre tinting in that white area. Thin your paint and “wash” some into that area. You can also put some onto your #7020-4 and draw in a series of feather lines to bring the whole area “alive”. If you put in too much of the yellow ochre, go back and line some of the Titanium White in for fill in and depth. It’s hard to go wrong here and you can always go back and touch it up as needed. Use some of the same color and lay in a line on part of the feathers coming down into the coverts as shown.

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Let's focus on two areas, the tail and primary feathers (shown in brown).

You will notice that the tail, top and underside, are painted white except for the center section on top. This is one way to do it and we'll discuss "cheating" the tail later also.

Using some Burnt Umber, you can underline the area between the tail feathers to give some depth and lay in some feather split. Another way to get the depth in that white area of the tail feathers is to use a short bright, load and wipe on towel and scrub a shadow under each feather and then do a few feather splits.

This will also be a good time to clean up any "overpainted" areas as you see (on the left) where the gray runs over the edge of the feather. Use a little Carbon Black on a #7020 and underline that feather to establish it's position.



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.

The underside of the tail gets a little detailing also and don't forget to sign your work. When you're dead, that will make it more valuable and your relatives can then cash in on your talent.

Take enough pride in everything you do that you would put your name on everything you produce. I began that back in 1970. Everything I've made has my signature somewhere on it. It's my statement of pride and ownership of the work.

Claim that pride for your own but.....we're not done here yet. We've more painting to do.



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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.

By now you’ve become an expert with that brush so let’s tackle the head.

You have a nice base coat of Burnt Umber and you’ve highlighted the brow & cheek areas with some Raw Sienna or Yellow Ochre. The eye is also critical as that brings the whole decoy alive. You can base coat in white to give an even tone and then do a couple coats of Burnt Umber, keeping the eye a little lighter than nature. Now for the pupil. Using the back end of the brush, dip it in black and touch the eye right where you want the pupil. That’s it. You now have a round pupil. Do a small “tick of white for reflection and gloss coat it.



To paint the bill, mix some Paynes Gray with some Titanium White and add a touch of Carbon Black for a grayish/Blue. Paint a couple coats until you have good coverage. Layout your black areas and paint with Carbon Black. Note how there is some black right in front of the cheeks.

Note: The back of the head/neck is much darker than the rest of the head. Wet blend or dry brush some black into that area and detail the white feathered piping going up the side/back of the neck. You can also dry brush a bit of green iridescence into the back/top of the head.

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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.

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.

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Pintail-Drake-Tail Installation



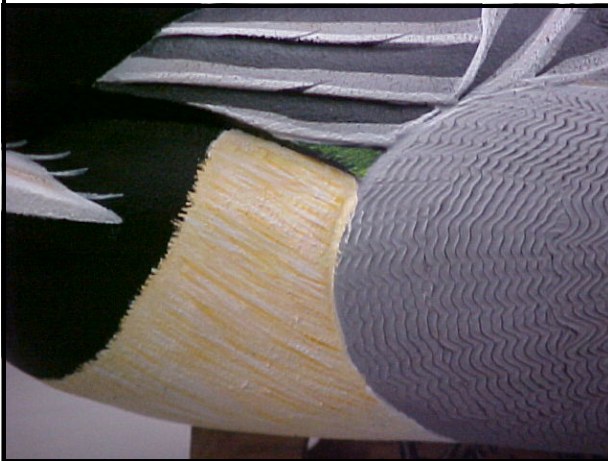
Installing a tail in either the Oldsquaw or Pintail is a simple matter. You can cut the tail pieces from a black trash can or a Coy Pond. Cut a couple strips about 1/2" in width and staple them together. Cut them to shape with a band saw and smooth on a disk sander.

Use a small drill (1/4" or 3/8") and drill down the middle of the tail, creating a cavity that will accept the tail. Tape this area off so as not to get adhesive on the decoy. Stand the decoy up and fill the cavity with epoxy, bondo or the adhesive of your choice. Insert the tail and allow the adhesive to cure, cleaning up any overfilling as it runs out. Once cured, remove the tape and trim around the tail. You are now ready to paint and you will have a tail that is flexible and will tolerate some abuse during hunting.

Gallery———Pintail Drake———Gallery



Gallery-Pintail 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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Step by Step instructions on Painting the Pintail-Drake

1. Prep, assemble & reprime bird for painting. Drill tail and set sprig with epoxy. You're now ready for fun!
2. Pencil (chalk pencil is best) flow lines, feather edges & edges of vermiculation areas. Think in a semi-circle for the back.
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. Force dry with a hair drier.
4. Gel and comb in small sections. Do ½ the back with gel and then comb. Do the second half of the back and comb. Then move to one side, gel and comb. Finish up with the other side, gel & comb. Force dry with hair drier. Be sure to note feather flow and combing direction to match that feather flow and curve. Think "sunburst". When doing the back, you could "flick" the gel a little to "fade" the vermiculation to the back.
5. Stipple the rest of the bird with some soft gel or you could merely use the regular gel (add color if desired) that you've been using for the vermiculation just don't work it too long or make it too heavy.
6. While the texturing is drying, mix the Gray you will need for the sides and back. Begin with Titanium White, a little black & check the color. Tone with Burnt Umber to eliminate the "blue" tone to the gray. Remember that the paint will "darken" when dried.
7. Apply gray (white/black/burnt umber) to the sides and back of the bird, 2 coats if necessary for full even coverage but do not fill up the vermiculations.
8. Block out the white areas of the breast, horns, rump and tail (cheating the tail if you'd like).
9. Paint the head with Burnt Umber and add some Raw Sienna to the cheeks, brows and top of the head to lighten & highlight these areas. You can stipple or sponge this in while wet to blend and soften.
10. Block out the primaries (to the edge of the side coverts) some thinned (not too thin) Burnt Umber mixed with a little Carbon Black. Use black on the side of the primaries & billboard. That's a "shadow" area we want to look as if it's not there.
11. Using a chalk pencil, draw out the feathering for the back (check pattern & reference) & think "sunburst". Add some white to the gray you have and use this "lightened gray" to paint the feather edges right where you drew the lines.
12. Load your #7020 brush with carbon black and establish the centers of each feather. Once the centers are established, complete the black areas of the feathers.
13. While you have the black paint "active" block out the black areas of the rump & tail.
14. Now is a good time to "dry brush" the vermiculation with a dry,dry,dry brush with some carbon black/burnt umber that has been wiped off on a towel to make it dry,dry,dry. You can do a second dry brushing with burnt umber to soften and "brown" the sides a little.
15. Re-white any areas of breast and rump that have been touch with the dry brushing.
16. Re-line the feather edges with the Gray/white lightened mix, using a #7020 brush. Edge a couple feathers (near the black teardrop) with some Raw Sienna with a little white added.
17. Establish some feather splits with black once the feather edges are reestablished. You can also dry brush some Burnt Umber along the black areas of the back feathers to soften them.
18. Wash the rump area with Titan Buff and while wet, add a little Raw Sienna to the upper edge of the rump and wet blend and "fade" it downwards.....stroking with the flow of the feathers. Once this dries, you can go back with a liner, alternating with White, Titan Buff & Raw Sienna to "feather flow" the rump.
19. Dry brush some Raw Sienna on the back edge of each primary (be sure you understand the "back edge", since it's facing forward. Establish quill lines and dry brush the edges.
20. Base coat the bill with a light/medium bluish paint. You can use Payne's Gray & Titanium White with a touch of Burnt Umber to "gray" it a bit. It will take a couple coats for full coverage. Outline and paint the black areas of the bill.
21. Dry brush some Burnt Umber into the overlap edge of each tail feather. Set some feather splits if you'd like.
22. The eye is already Burnt Umber which is pretty much what we want. Set the pupil of the eye with the back end of your brush and a white "tic" when pupil is dry.
23. Soften the transition between the breast and sides with some individual lines of white and gray....following the flow of the feathers.
24. You may want to define some of the side pocket feathers and we'll go into that if there is time.
25. 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. You're...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 page 8

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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