

# Russ Goldberger

Decoys and Folk Art in Original Paint

Thanks for a great year-end sale!



Burr Running  
Black-Bellied Plover  
(ex. McCleery)



Ward Bros. Pintail Drake



Early Crowell Miniature  
Pheasant

Crowell Goldeneye Pair



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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

### Couch Potatoes

For the better part of two years many decoy collectors we know have spent quite a bit of time on a psychiatrist's couch. They may be suffering from "Generalized Anxiety Disorder," which the National Institute of Mental Health describes as "an exaggerated worry and tension, even when there is little or nothing to provoke it."

I can't count the number of times I've been asked, "What's happening to the decoy market," or "Do you think the interest in decoys will ever come back?" as though it ever went away. It's gotten to the point that one long-time collector who swears he "loved them when they weren't worth \$100" suggested he had started to lose interest, even though, previously, money could never buy his loves. Thankfully his insanity never got the best of him and his shelves have not been depleted.

So maybe the results of Copley Fine Art Auction's recent "Winter Sale" will finally start to raise the shroud off this prevailing attitude, providing a needed jolt of optimism to reenergize and refocus the wayward attention that has so thoroughly affected many collectors. If you haven't seen the numbers, check out our auction report on page 18. It's what we'd enthusiastically call a "win-win" sale.

First of all, as the headline alludes, the cream at the sale rose to the top, quite richly at that. The ten highest priced lots in the auction beat their average estimate by roughly 60%, setting two auction price records along the way, including the top lot, a John Tax feeding Canada goose at \$115,000, and the auction as a whole went over the low estimate by more than 40%. Maybe it was fueled by a stock market that's hit two-year highs or rising corporate profits, I don't really know. But without a doubt, the heavy hitters responded.

Secondly, further down the line there were still fabulous buys, such as an Elmer Crowell swimming red-breasted merganser at \$8625 and a Nathan Cobb Jr. brant at \$6900, both quality decoys that would have commanded twice those prices just a few years ago. The new owners of those birds, who took advantage of this rare opportunity, should appreciate their good fortune.

And the timing, quite frankly, couldn't have been better, as it occurred just before

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## PUBLISHERS NOTE

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the start of a new collecting season. In fact, some of the most important shows of the year, including the Ohio Decoy Show, the East Coast Decoy Collectors get-together and the National Antique Decoy Show, are just on the horizon (check out our calendar of events on page 22). Maybe this will put a little wind behind our sails as we head out the door.

And there's been other good news. We've recently had conversations with a handful of dealers who have reported a pick up in activity on a variety of levels, from five-figure birds to hundred dollar decoys. That's particularly encouraging, because as dealers clear out some of their older inventory they'll, once again, become players in the market.

Maybe it's a result of a renewed consumer confidence, which the government reports are on the rise, or a reaction to an ailment that some economists are referring to as

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“frugality fatigue.” Hey, if you've weathered this recession without losing your home or your job, you might as well spend it if you've got it. And for decoy enthusiasts that translates into a new bird or two for the shelf. As we all know, our favorites always make us smile, and what better way to wile away a cloudy day.

I have no idea how this newfound optimism will roll into the New Year, whether this energy will sustain or peter out. But without a doubt it's certainly encouraging, particularly for those of us who do it for a living. If nothing else it might get a few gloom and doom collectors off the couch. And that's a positive start.

*Joe Engers*

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