from GENERATION to GENERATION
FOLK ART OF ILLINOIS

Patrick Gregory, Duck Decoys

Overview

Situated in what is called the "Mississippi Flyway," Illinois hosts a number of migratory birds, including ducks. This resource has shaped a number of traditions found in Illinois, including decoy carving. Illinois decoy carvers have been documented as far back as the nineteenth century. The decoys are used in hunting, to bring live fowl closer to the hunter. However, cheaper, plastic decoys have become more popular and this significant tradition of carving became more threatened.

Today, it is carvers such as Patrick Gregory who have worked to preserve this carving tradition—not only to make beautiful decoys to be displayed, but also for use in the field. His great-grandfather, George Barto carved decoys from the 1890's through the 1950's. This art form was almost lost in his family, because Barto never taught any of his children or grandchildren. However, Patrick Gregory was lucky to have found a student of his great-grandfather, Art Behemetuik, and he taught Gregory what he had learned. Now Gregory even has some of the original patterns used by Barto to create the decoys and has fully regained a family tradition that was in danger of dying out.

Art and the Environment? There are a number of places where we can find beauty in our local environments. Often people will think about natural beauty first—that which naturally occurs in a sunset, flower, or particularly cute animal. However, there are many traditions that creatively use their local environments or are influenced by their surroundings to make beautiful, and often useful, art. Patrick Gregory is one such artist living in Illinois. There are also taxidermists, fish net weavers, dances which use animals as a muse, and traditional gardeners, to just name a few of the other activities where art and nature intersect.

Suggested Objectives

- Understand the relationship between natural environment and cultural traditions.
- Conduct interviews, including creating focused questions and demonstrating knowledge of subject under investigation.
- Identify different ways in which information (including natural history or biology) can be communicated, including visually.
- Understand relationship of personal cultural identity and cultural expression.

We offer full Creative Commons licensing for this material. Please credit Company of Folk (companyoffolk.org)
creative commons

Focus Standards

Writing

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

Speaking/Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

We offer full Creative Commons licensing for this material. Please credit Company of Folk (companyoffolk.org)

creative commons

Hunting

Discussion Questions to be adapted for a variety of groups/uses

Hunting is a topic that people can be very passionate about. Think about your potential audience and how they may react to thinking about hunting as being a cultural activity, or an environmental activity, or an artistic activity. (For example, some audiences or students may see hunting as environmental, but not artistic; others might get the cultural, but not environmentalist aspect…)

~ Ask for examples of where evidence could be found that would support these various beliefs about the sport and tradition of hunting.

~Discussing the different kinds of game and hunting traditions may also be helpful in your group (i.e. fishing, archery, rifle; OR big game, aquatic, ducks, etc…) before talking about the specific traditions or artistry that could be found in each area.

NOTE: As a discussion leader, it is good to think about the potential comfort zone of your audience, and then challenge them to think in new ways about hunting traditions—hopefully expanding the ways the ways in which they can think about their own beliefs about food, nature, and art.

If your group is bigger, you may want to break folks in to groups—starting with three groups that all believe similarly, and then breaking them in to smaller groups—one or two people from each of the bigger groups, to talk to others about their perceptions and beliefs.

Pat Gregory is proud of the fact that these are not decoys to sit on a shelf, but rather something that you would use. Listen to this story and think about what it tells you about the relationship of art and hunting for this tradition bearer:

"I love the fact that we can make something to use it. That's the other side of it, instead of carving something purely decorative, which we do some of that—I understand that people want an old looking decoy to sit on a shelf, and I make some shelf sitters—but for the most part what you see are birds that have been out in service. I told a group once, "How do we keep our craft going in the day and age of plastic decoys?" You know, to me the real essence of keeping this thing going is wholly in the spirit of the decoy. Meaning, if all we do is make these things to put them on the shelves, it would be about like training your hunting dog to hunt and never taking him hunting. You do all that training and never take him out. If you are going to make true decoys why would you not put it out in the water? Well, you know you spend $500. Yeah, but so? Hunt with them. It's the spirit of the decoy in terms of what it is made for."

We offer full Creative Commons licensing for this material. Please credit Company of Folk (companyoffolk.org)

Food
Discussion Questions to be adapted for a variety of groups/uses

Take a minute to examine your own beliefs about food.
~What is "good" food?

~Disgusting food?

~What makes food healthy?

~ What animals are "OK" to eat? (Which are not?)

Now go back to your responses above. *What beliefs can you see as being cultural?*

> In an interview that Pat Gregory did for the exhibition, he noted that: "I'm a meat eater and I enjoy it. You've got this whole organic movement, and I'm like really? We've been harvesting our own meat for years. And the duck numbers and goose numbers are so high, it's phenomenal, and so it's a good harvest. It's a great sport with a lot of history. They are beautiful animals, and we respect them."

~Does this quote provide a different way to understand the label "organic movement"?

~What does this statement suggest in terms of different ways to think about the intersection of food and politics? Gun rights or gun control? Does it disrupt any popular narratives that you feel like you see or hear in the media?

We offer full Creative Commons licensing for this material. Please credit Company of Folk (companyoffolk.org)
creative commons

from GENERATION to GENERATION
FOLK ART OF ILLINOIS

Food and Culture
Worksheet

Family recipes provide an important window in to many people's lives.

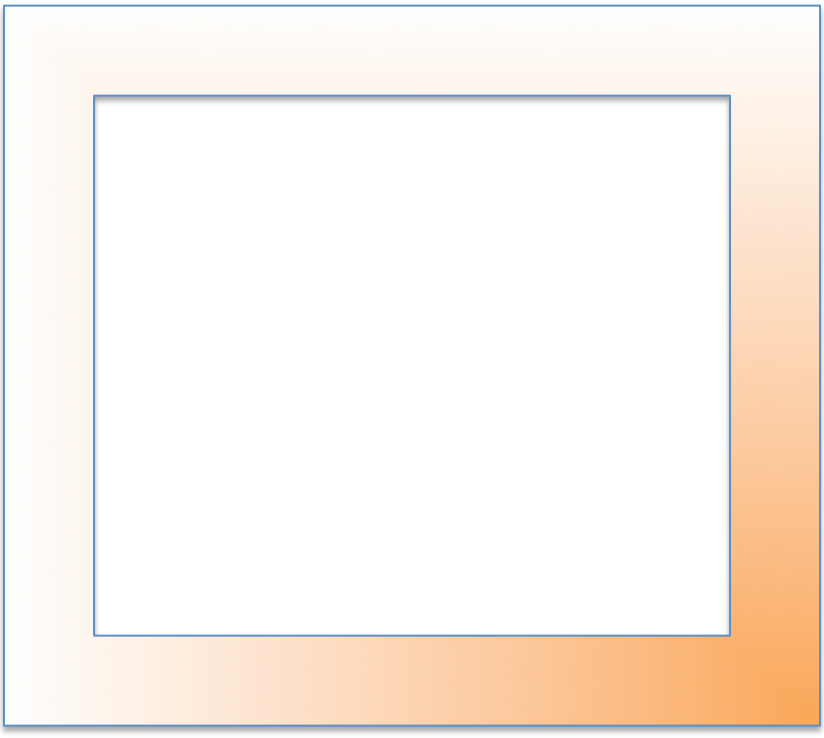
Some family recipes are important because it is food associated with special events, life passages, or spiritual holidays.

Draw a food item or list foods associated with an event important to you.

Other foods represent ethnic heritage. (Note that it often is in our food that we hold most tightly to heritage—language, dress, and other traditions may disappear, but certain foods will still be on our tables for holidays, weddings, or other celebrations.)

Still other foods represent those resources that were most available for the family—tropical fruits, fish, mushrooms, spices all often point to a particular region.

Draw a food item or list foods that may be a part of your ethnic or geographic culture.



We offer full Creative Commons licensing for this material. Please credit Company of Folk (companyoffolk.org)
creative commons

A Classroom Cookbook
Activity Guide

Use this activity to gather family recipes (those that can be shared—not all families are willing to share all their recipes). Work together to make class text with all the recipes. You might want to use these templates to make an electronic cookbook, complete with video demonstrations, or a print cookbook is very handy to have in the kitchen!

The following cards are formatted to be 4 X 6 and provide different prompts for your cookbook, but feel free to innovate to include the information that you think helps tell the story of your dish! For example,

- Include photos or illustrations of food or specialized ingredients or tools.
- Have student interview family members about the food. Take stories and quotes from the interview and include in your cookbook. Questions may include:
    - What stories do they have regarding the making or eating of this food?
    - Are there special memories?
    - When do they typically eat this food?

_____
(food name)

This recipe is collected from_____
(Cook name)

Ingredients: Tasks:

(cont. on reverse side of worksheet if more room is needed)

We offer full Creative Commons licensing for this material. Please credit Company of Folk (companyoffolk.org)
creative commons

Cookbook Templates

Card 2 of 3

_____

(food name)

This recipe is important because:

I learned this recipe or how to make this food from:_____

(cont. on reverse side of worksheet if more room is needed)

Card 3 of 3

_____

(food name)

Photo of completed dish.

We offer full Creative Commons licensing for this material. Please credit Company of Folk (companyoffolk.org)

Additional Activities

Nature illustration and art: Pat Gregory notes that: "Being a carver we have to study live ducks, and carvers use photos so much, and you develop an amazing appreciation of the birds themselves. That really shows up in my carving, my passion to do that."

~Have students create natural history illustrations of the world around them. Perhaps it is a leaf or plant that the student can bring to the classroom, or perhaps it is working from a photo, have them think about how to illustrate these natural objects.

- What are the details that are important?
- Does the illustration show context?
- Write a paragraph describing the choices and made and to help supplement the drawing(s). Have student specifically identify their audience and shape language to this audience.
- Collaborate with other students to design book that shares the illustrations. Create opportunities for students to debate design choices and organization. Will they use biological taxonomies to organize? Regions? Cultural traditions that include objects/animals depicted?
-

~Do leaf and plant tracings. Compare the different leaf formations. Research how different leaves offer protection and sustenance.

~Create-a-bird activity: This activity can actually appeal to a variety of age groups and be both fun and creative! (Adapted from Ward Museum of Waterfowl Art "Educator Resource Kit)

- Supplies:
    - To make birds: brown paper bags and variety of crafty supplies—paper, crayons, beads, feathers, yarns, etc…
    - To make bird beak types (just one or two of each of these needed, then each bird will "try on" different beaks to see how each type works…: baster, pliers, chop sticks, tongs,
    - Food for birds: glass jar with liquid (hummingbird), rubber or gummy worms, etc
    - Books: How and why birds use their bills: by Elaine Pascoe, Toby Toucan and his Noisy Beak: by Paul Flemming, The Beak Book: by Pamela Chanko, Unbeatable Beaks: by Stephen Swinurne, Have you seen Birds: by Joanne Oppenheim, Beaks! By Collard B. Sneed and Robin Brickman

We offer full Creative Commons licensing for this material. Please credit Company of Folk (companyoffolk.org)
creative commons

Additional Resources

Delta Waterfowl Magazine did a feature story in Summer 2012 on Patrick Gregory. The full story, written by Paul Wait, can be found here:

http://www.deltawaterfowl.org/media/magazine/archive/2012-02/patgregory.php

The Ward Museum of Waterfowl Art is located in Salisbury, Maryland. It has a rich website with educational resources. Pat Gregory has also presented at this museum.

www.wardmuseum.org

A website for decoy carvers and enthusiasts featuring Pat Gregory and other Central Illinois carvers, including its producer Tim Speight, can be found at www.thedecoyshed.org .

The New York State Museum has resources on nature illustrating, including Focus on Nature: "Focus on Nature (FON) is a biennial, international exhibit of natural and cultural history illustration. Started in 1990 in conjunction with the Northeast Natural History Conference, it continues to highlight the status of contemporary illustration." A pdf of the 2012 catalog with both brilliant illustrations and wonderful contextualizing narratives that could be used as a model and guide for a number of school and group projects can be found here:

http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/illustrations/fon/exhibitions/fon12/FONXII-catalog.pdf

Ducks Unlimited is a rich resource on Ducks—their biology, their habitat, migration, conservation of their environments, etc. They also have a number of educational links, maps, etc. This is a site that is also important to hunters, so there is also a number of links related to hunting.

www.ducks.org

The Charles Perdew Museum Association in Henry, Illinois includes decoys as a part of its holdings.

http://www.charlesperdew.com/

We offer full Creative Commons licensing for this material. Please credit Company of Folk (companyoffolk.org)
creative commons