

WHITTLING

Flat-Plane *ANIMALS*



15 Projects to
Carve with
Just One Knife

James Miller

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Dedication

In memory of Dave Fowler, who channeled my urge to create woodchips into an everlasting passion.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all the people who have supported me along my carving journey. The members of my hometown's carving club were instrumental in providing the instruction and support that I needed as a young child eager to immerse myself in the woodcarving world, and their support continues to this day. Those who invite my trail of woodchips at local gatherings and festivities push me to create more and allow me to share my passion for handcraft with others. And of course, none of this would likely be possible without Harley Refsal, friend and reviver of the flat-plane style.

Tusen takk (a thousand thanks) to my Scandinavian friends for providing invaluable feedback on which animals should be represented in this book and for providing stories and context for what makes them so important.

All step-by-step photos in this book are taken by my beloved girlfriend, Allison Cully. Without her, life would not be as beautiful—partially because I would have needed to grow a third arm.

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Print ISBN 978-1-4971-0115-9
eISBN 978-1-6076-5819-1

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Preface

As a child, I always wanted to become an author. In preschool, I began creating books of my own that told stories of imaginary creatures having crazy adventures. Most conclusions dealt with the characters returning home and relaxing. I must have known, even then, that all the toil and excitement of daily life needs some balancing out. My creative attention soon turned to woodcarving, and as I entered middle school, I discovered that woodcarving could provide my life with the balance it needed.

Countless woodchips later, I am being presented with one of the most exciting opportunities of my life: constructing an actual book for Fox Chapel. Although I have previously made and distributed a book on Scandinavian-style figure carving, the copies were black and white, stapled together, and not professionally designed. After all, it started as a collection of pamphlets to be used in classes I taught. With the help of Fox Chapel, this book will be able to provide an even more lucrative experience for seasoned carvers, beginner carvers, and those who have never carved before but would like to.

I know from numerous public carving demonstrations that there are plenty of people who are interested in taking up a handcraft. Even in today's technological world, word is spreading that directing your eyes to your hands rather than glowing devices can be calming and healthy for the soul.

Previous books on flat-plane carving have done a great job promoting the style as something that is accessible and inviting to all, regardless of skill level. This book does not aim to waver from that, nor does it aim to twist the flat-plane tradition in a direction it has not already historically frequented. Rather, this book aims to shine a spotlight on another major area of flat-plane carving: representing animals in wood. While many flat-plane carvers today like to carve European immigrants from the past, the flat-plane tradition originally focused on carving people and animals the carvers saw in their daily lives.

I specifically chose a selection of animals that would be, for the most part,

familiar to much of the Western world. Many Scandinavian animals are nearly equivalent to those in the northern regions of North America. Carving familiar subjects ensures that you have some frame of reference from the start, and it also allows an artist to focus on features they think are important in order to create a proper representation. If one had never seen a rooster, but heard it had a red comb, one could easily miss important details and end up creating a sparrow-chicken hybrid. That could make for an interesting piece, but this book intends to encourage thoughtful and appreciative reflections of the natural world. Animals are amazing, and they have provided endless inspiration and direct utility to humanity since the beginning of human history. A sparrow-chicken hybrid would, however, be a great subject for a future book! For now, I will focus on hybridizing three of the things I love most in this world: animals, woodcarving, and Scandinavian culture. In doing so, I hope to encourage you to explore your passions as well.



My first animal carvings, a pig and an owl.

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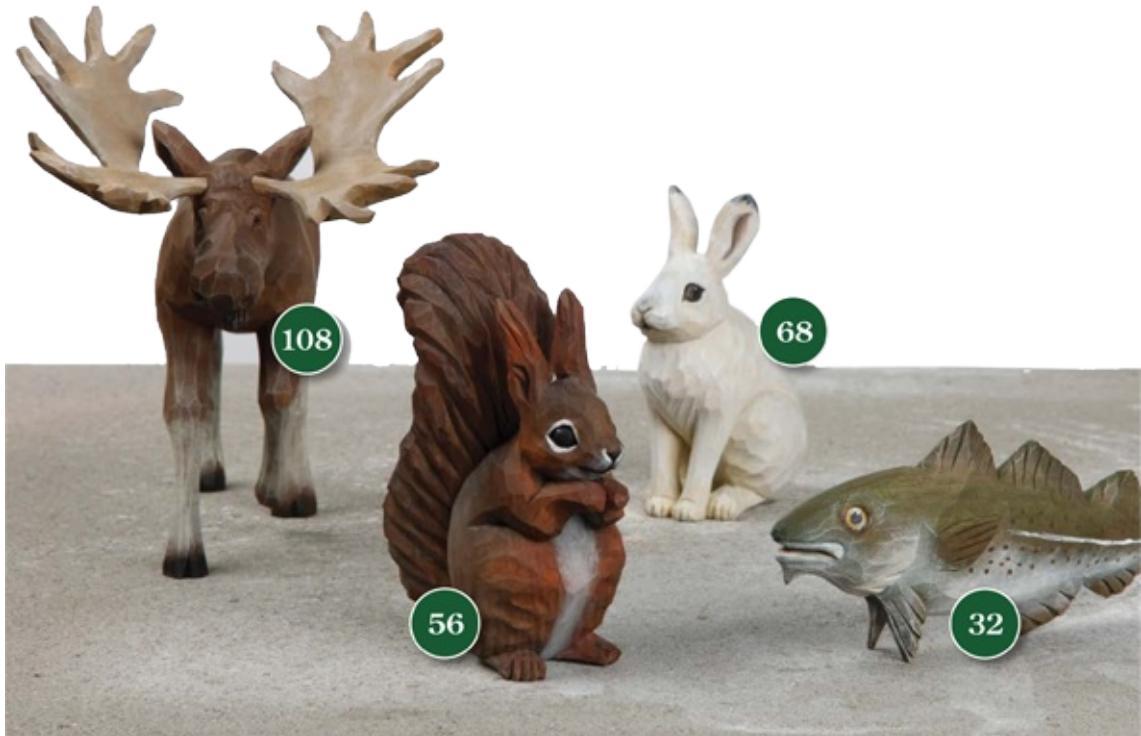
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Wooden Animals: A Selection of Scandinavian Culture

Strictly speaking, Scandinavia is made up of the countries Norway, Sweden, and Denmark—yet the term is often used more broadly to include other Nordic countries such as Iceland and Finland. Regardless, these countries share related geography, history, languages, and other cultural elements. For the purpose of this book, the term will be used without specific distinctions. While Scandinavia may not be the most common vacation destination for those without Scandinavian ancestry, the general public seems to understand a few basic facts about these countries: mountainous terrain, cold winters, and sing-songy speech patterns. And, of course, Scandinavia is also known as the home of the Vikings. What many may not know is the important role that wood, animals, and wooden animals have played in the region throughout history.

Scandinavia is naturally a heavily wooded region, so traditional homes and workplaces were also heavily wooded. Spoons, bowls, furniture, wagons, boats, houses—all were primarily built of wood. And since these objects were so critical to a people who toiled the land, raised livestock, and fought off harsh cold winters just to stay alive, they were well appreciated. It seems that this appreciation, and potentially some occasional seasonal downtime, led Scandinavian craftsmen to decorate the surfaces of such wooden objects with beautiful forms and motifs. While craftsmen obviously reused symbols and overall styles throughout Scandinavia from time to time and place to place, I have not yet seen evidence of entire patterns being shared. Rather, traditions in these countries ebbed and flowed in the spirit of folk art; that is, inspiration was the primary subject that was passed on from one interested person to another.



An ale hen drinking vessel with decorative chip-carved feathers.

In terms of style, Scandinavia has had a fairly diverse palette. Carved dragons must have been high fashion in the Viking Age, since they not only stretched out from the ends of ships and drinking vessels, but also covered panels around doors on farmhouses and religious centers. Such carved dragons twisted and turned around each other, much like the floral patterns and acanthus leaves of later periods did. Another common decorative carving style is known in English as chip carving. In this style, simple geometric shapes (often diamonds, triangles, and crescents) are chipped out of surfaces over and over to form intricate designs. Of these decorative styles, basic chip carving is the most accessible. It can be executed with just a knife, it can be applied to almost any wooden surface, and, once you learn to make clean cuts, patience is all you need to make a pleasing piece of art.



A 19th-century Norwegian mangle board, a non-metal pre-electric clothing iron.

Folk art in pre-modern Scandinavia was rarely purely aesthetic; it was often inspired by important elements of the surrounding natural landscape.

Scandinavians have historically utilized the natural shapes of tree limbs to create useful tools, and they have also formed traditions centered on borrowing the shapes of animals to make their wooden creations more interesting and meaningful. Naturally, the shapes of horses—common symbols of fertility—found their way into the handles of pre-modern wooden clothes irons called mangle boards. The necks and tails of horses, chickens, and other birds became widely used shapes for the handles of ale bowls. Lions, animals that have never in recorded human history natively occupied Scandinavia, were also popular symbols, especially in Norway. Lion heads are some of the most commonly used figureheads for the traditional Norwegian fiddle, although they may not look terribly recognizable to the untrained eye. While familiar animals were represented in imaginative yet meaningfully caricaturistic ways, depictions of unfamiliar animals like the lion or fictional beasts like dragons varied greatly.

Today, the Scandinavian countries are prosperous, their people are wealthy, healthy, and happy, and their influence extends throughout the globe.

Scandinavian design, which focuses on naturalism and simplistic forms, is popular among interior designers and artists of all kinds. Furniture from IKEA, a Swedish company, seems ubiquitous. Mads Mikkelsen, a Danish actor, has been featured in many blockbuster Hollywood films for the past two decades. Many popular video games, including Minecraft, call Sweden home. Norwegian sweaters are loved by many Americans—especially those in the Midwest. Many young Scandinavians are obsessed with cell phones, listen to hip hop music, and often enjoy frozen pizza.

However, despite complete societal modernization, Scandinavian countries have preserved their cultural traditions. It is no longer commonplace for all men to carry knives, for handcraft to be depended on, or for whittling to be a common pastime, yet various organizations have risen up to preserve both cultural artifacts and traditions. Folk art clubs and organizations specializing in more specific branches—such as folk music, dance, carving, weaving, painting, and so on—exist throughout Scandinavia and abroad. If you visit the Scandinavian countryside, you will still see sheep and cattle roaming freely, the forested mountains will still inspire awe, and you might even run into traditional craftspeople. Without even leaving your own home, you can participate in traditional Scandinavian handcraft yourself. Flat-plane carving could be your

perfect starting point.



Scandinavians have formed traditions centered on borrowing the shapes of animals to make their wooden creations more interesting and meaningful. Even today, if you visit the Scandinavian countryside, you will spot some of the same animals that inspired ancient craftspeople.

Flat-Plane Carving Basics

What Is Scandinavian-Style Flat-Plane Carving?

The term “flat-plane” is used to describe the Scandinavian figure carving style that flourished in the late 1800s and eventually migrated to North America. The only tool that one needs to carve in this style is a knife, and the style is characterized by the large facets left by the long blade.

While “whittling” seems to also describe essentially the same means to an end, figure carvings created in the last few hundred years in Scandinavia certainly have more in common with others in Scandinavia than with carved figures from other regions. To me, the shared quality is a sly simplicity. Many such figures literally have a sly twinkle in their eyes, which denotes the other meaning of the phrase: the degree of simplification expressed by the carver is sly as well. A well-carved flat-plane figure may look simple—minimal hair texturing, perhaps the belt buckle isn’t carved all the way—but the amount of lifelikeness expressed by the piece as a whole exposes that there is something more to it than just an avoidance of details. Part of this conundrum is the essence of caricature: making art that looks more like the subject than the subject itself.

The term “flat-plane” has been in place since the 1980s, when Harley Refsal was discussing Scandinavian figure carving with a radio host. The term originated organically as Harley was describing the relatively large, flat facets that are left prominently by the knife on such figures. Since then, the term has matured and solidified itself through Harley’s several books and countless classes, which have in turn bred further instruction and proliferation by followers of the style. Now, flat-plane is the official, perhaps even scholarly, term for Scandinavian-style figure carving.



The characteristic “flat planes” of this style can clearly be seen on this reindeer.

It is impossible to describe an entire art style in one phrase, and “flat-plane” is no exception. While some Scandinavian figure carvers of the past seemed to enjoy reducing circles to octagons—so that every arm and leg would not be round, but rather an eight-sided prism—I like to also admire the prominent curved planes created by the knives of Scandinavian figure carvers. These curved planes are not only common but also vital in representing textures such as the wrinkles of fabric and organic details such as the curve from a cheek to a nose. Then again, the truly flat facets of a traditional figure carving also express a characteristic boldness. And anyway, “flat-plane” has a nice ring to it.

Basic Materials and Tools

The projects in this book are minimally demanding in terms of tools and materials. More importantly, you can substitute and sometimes even omit what you do not have or do not have access to.

Saws

Before carvers slice into a block of wood, it is very common to use some form of saw to cut the wood down to the general shape of the pattern they have selected. This starting point is called a blank. While tiny carvings do not benefit much from this step, anything over a few inches in height or length most often does. A band saw is the modern carver's saw of choice, since it can easily cut fast and straight, but hand saws are cheap and quiet alternatives. I recommend a coping saw for hand-sawing most projects in this book, but a pull saw can be used when only straight cuts are needed.



A band saw, coping saw (left), and pull saw (right).

Knives

A knife is the only tool you need to carve the projects in this book. Scandinavians of the past likely used their common work knives, with sturdy 2–4" (5–10.2cm) blades. Today, flat-plane carving knives have evolved to be

thinner than their rugged ancestors, with the bevel extending from the edge all the way to the back of the blade in order to better slice through the softer woods modern carvers prefer. This long blade leaves the large facets that define the flat-plane style.



This Harley knife was used to carve each project in this book.

Wood Selection

All of the projects in this book are carved out of basswood, since it is commonly available and the generally preferred wood species for figure carving with hand tools. Basswood, known as linden in Europe, can be found at woodworking supply stores, lumber yards, saw mills, and maybe even your backyard. If you are just starting out, have minimal space, or do not mind the price, buying a nice smooth basswood block from a woodworking store may be a convenient option, but to save money in the long run, I recommend seeking out a lumberyard or small-scale sawmill operation in your area if possible. Local carvers and woodworkers of other disciplines, who often appear at various community events and art shows, can be helpful in-person resources for sourcing wood.



Basswood blocks patiently waiting to be carved.

Paints and Painting Tools

To paint the projects in this book, I use simple acrylic paints. The only brands I have considerable experience with are Apple Barrel®, Delta Ceramcoat®, and FolkArt®, but feel free to use whatever you have access to. More expensive, higher quality acrylic paints are also available, but since you will be applying an oil-based finish later on, I have found the brands listed above to do just fine. Such paints are easily found at stores like Walmart, craft supply stores, or online.

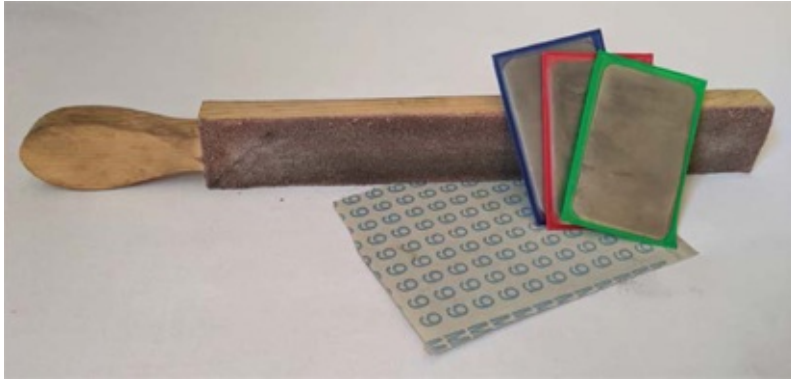
The tools I use for painting are just as simple as the paints themselves. I use cheap craft brushes with soft bristles (not the hard plastic ones) with a variety of shapes and sizes. The brush that gets the most use is a flat brush about the width of a pinky finger—but use whatever is comfortable for you. My favorite painting tool is a toothpick, which I use for adding fine details such as eyes and decorative dots.

Safety and Knife Maintenance

Every carver will tell you that a sharp knife is safer than a dull knife. It's true! To keep your knife sharp, strop the blade about every half hour to hour throughout the carving process. You'll need a strop, which can be purchased or made from a piece of leather attached to a board, and some stropping compound. First, cover the strop in the stropping compound. Then, push the blade across it at a low angle (with the back of the knife raised up about a dime's thickness) away from the blade, keeping the edge of the blade flat so that you do not stab into the leather. Repeat this motion until the blade is honed and your knife leaves a polished surface. After a month or two of regular stropping, you may find your bevel begin to round in toward the edge, so that no matter how much you strop, your knife does not slide through wood as easily as it should. At this point, actual sharpening is necessary. The process is similar but does not require a compound; instead, repeat the procedures while laying your knife flat on fine-grit sandpaper (800-grit or more) or using diamond hones. When a thin, wiry edge begins to form at the edge, transition to finer sandpaper followed by some stropping.

Whenever you carve, wear a safety glove on the hand you do not hold your knife with. Some carvers like to also use a thumb guard on the hand they hold the knife with. Even when wearing protective gear, make sure to note which side of the blade is sharp every time you pick up a carving tool. When carving figures like the ones in this book, you should almost always use two hands to carve—your dominant hand should hold the knife, and the thumb of the non-dominant hand, the hand which is holding the wood, should be placed behind the spine (back) of the knife to help guide it.

If you do use power tools such as a band saw to cut the blanks, make sure to wear safety glasses and a dust mask when such tools are in use. If using loud machinery, especially for extended periods of time, some form of earmuffs or plugs are also recommended. Although basswood dust is not known to be particularly irritable (like dust from some other wood species), breathing in dust of any kind is not recommended.



Leather strop, sandpaper, and diamond stones.

Preparing the Wood

As discussed earlier, most carvers prefer sawing their projects down to the general shape before slicing in with a knife. Some projects, such as the horse on (here), benefit greatly from being sawn out from the front view and side view, while others, such as the cod on (here), have most of their distinguishing shape coming from just one side, and thus can be sawn from that side alone. A common case for cutting from two sides is when an animal has four legs that are clearly separated from the front and the sides, since digging out such areas with a knife is time-consuming. Sawing in this manner is not new; it has been around since the very beginning of flat-plane carving. A saw is not technically required for the projects in this book; it will certainly save plenty of time and effort, though.

To transfer a pattern onto wood, I recommend tracing or copying the pattern, cutting it out with scissors, and tracing its perimeter onto the wood. For a project that will be sawn from just one side, simply use your saw of choice to saw around the traced line. When using a front and side view pattern, you have to be a little more careful. Trace both patterns, then begin sawing the side with fewer curves and cusps. Instead of sawing off the waste, leave just enough space between cuts to keep all flat edges of the block intact. Then, flip the block on its side and saw the next pattern. At this point, you can saw the waste completely off. Finally, break off the waste from the first side.

Note: Always be aware of the grain direction on a block of wood. Think of a tree as a bundle of narrow straws facing straight up. These straws are essential for transporting water and nutrients, but they also determine the strength of the wood. If you were to take a thin cross section of most tree varieties (picture a cross section of a bundle of straws), it could easily be snapped with minimal force, but a similarly-sized board with the grain running its length would be much stronger. Take note of the instructions in the Getting Started section for each project regarding how to orient the grain in relation to the pattern. Grain direction determines not only the direction you will have to carve, but also the structural integrity of a carving. For example, the grain is oriented vertically on the reindeer (here) to give strength to the thin legs. If it were oriented

horizontally, the legs would be much more likely to snap during the carving process. While carving, you will have to carve “downhill,” or into the grain, since if you carve against the grain, the wood fibers will get pushed apart and potentially cause unwanted splitting.



Attach and trace the pattern.



Cut out the pattern with a band saw or other saw.



The finished result, ready to carve.

Carving Techniques

Scandinavians never really came up with a unique term for their style of figure carving, since to them it has always just been figure carving or whittling. Similarly, terms for the techniques required to carve in the style also lacked official names. Traditional teaching methods in Scandinavia were centered on an “I do, you watch, then you do” mentality, so there is no officially recorded flat-plane terminology. Nonetheless, here are some common carving terms that I will use throughout this book.

Stop cut: a cut made directly into the wood rather than along the surface, used to create a stopping point for subsequent cuts so the grain does not split. This can be the first step of a V-shaped cut (see here).



V-shaped cut: a two-part cut requiring the carver to cut in from one direction, back the knife out, and then cut in at an opposing angle to remove a V-shaped section of wood.



Slicing cut: a standard knife cut in which the blade is pushed or pulled along the surface of the wood, as with peeling a carrot. It can be made away from or toward the carver, depending on preference.



Sweeping cut: like a slicing cut, but with a twist of the wrist to create a curved, concave surface.



Painting Techniques

For the painting method I use in this book, the process can be broken into four main steps.



Base coat wash: Cover the entire figure in a watered-down mixture of black and some brown, thinned so much that if you were to let it dry, it would appear a light gray.



Base colors: While the wash is still wet, blend in the main coloration of the figure without letting the paint obscure the wood grain too much. If the paint begins to build up over the surface of the wood, either add water to your brush or rub some paint off.



Drybrushing: This step is used when a carving would benefit from additional texture and/or highlighting. For this style of carving, drybrushing also lets you highlight the distinctive carved facets. Begin after the figure dries completely.

Add full-strength paint to a flat brush, wipe it back and forth on a paper towel to somewhat dry it out, then lightly dust the brush onto the carving where needed.



Details: Use a small detail brush or sharpened toothpick to add the final details, such as eye details on any figure, spots on the lynx (here), and floral designs on the rooster (here).

Applying Finishes

While painting a figure is enough to technically “finish” it and add some protection to the wood, I always apply an oil-based finish after the paint dries or directly to unpainted figures. This is to liven up the colors and bring out the grain, since acrylic paints, especially the inexpensive ones I use, dry rather dull. Linseed oil is a favorite of many carvers and was once my oil of choice, but its odor and tendency to greatly yellow wood as it ages led me to switch to Watco® Natural Danish Oil, which also seems to dry faster. This oil was used for all the projects in this book, and it is easy to apply; you can use any brand you like.

I keep my oil in a sealed plastic container so that I can dip carvings directly into it. Wear rubber gloves to avoid making contact with the oil, dip half of a carving in, flip it around, and submerge the other half. Let it drip for a few moments, then set it out to dry. Some recommend wiping off excess finish, but I tend to skip that step since basswood does a great job at soaking it up. Make sure to deal with hazardous oils in a well-ventilated area, and dispose of any rags in an airtight container to avoid combustion.

If you do not want to use linseed or Danish oil, reasonable alternatives include (but are not limited to) tung oil, paste wax, and Howard Feed-N-Wax® (a great-smelling mixture of mainly beeswax and orange oil).



My painting and finishing station.



A variety of waxes and oils that are suitable finishes.



Dipping a figure in Danish oil.

Projects



The animals of Scandinavia have provided human residents with resources, inspiration, and challenges for thousands of years. There really is no single most iconic animal of Scandinavia—they are all important and interesting in their own unique ways.

Scandinavia is home to an impressive array of animals. Some inhabitants, like the raven, are common in many other areas of the world. These animals may be ideal subjects to take on for beginner carvers, as you will need to spend less time figuring out which

features are most necessary in representing them. Keep an eye out for details that make some Scandinavian animals a bit different than what you are accustomed to. American red squirrels, for example, lack the ear tufts that characterize their Scandinavian counterparts. While you may have known that real reindeer cannot fly, there are other details that make them unique and almost mystical in their own way. One of the biggest challenges in carving a reindeer could be forgetting the cartoony elements that Christmas advertisements have ingrained into our minds. For those animals that you may have never seen, such as the lynx and wood grouse, you will have a unique chance to pick out details to emphasize when you carve them.

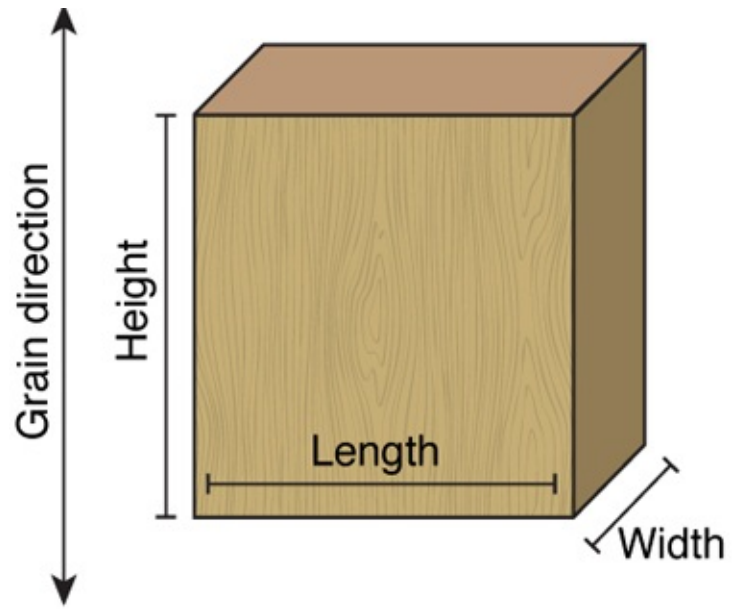
Once you are comfortable with the basics of carving wood, the best teacher for how to carve a certain subject is the subject itself. If you want to carve a ram, look no further than an actual ram to learn how it feels, behaves, and carries itself. A ram wouldn't look very ramlike with scales instead of wool, just as it wouldn't look natural if it was creeping with its belly on the ground like a lizard. If you let your subject teach you about itself, you will continue to make interesting discoveries.

Materials & Tools for All Projects

All projects in this book, with a few indicated exceptions, require the same basic set of materials and tools.

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **Basswood block (dimensions specified in each project)**
- **Band saw or coping saw (to cut out blank)**
- **Table saw (to cut out blank for certain projects) (optional)**
- **Carving knife**
- **Pencil**
- **Finish, such as Danish oil, linseed oil, or Howard Feed-N-Wax**
- **Clean, dry, lint-free rags**
- **Acrylic paints (colors specified in each project; brands are given, but feel free to use your preferred brands and shades)**
- **Paintbrushes in a variety of sizes (for painting base colors and larger areas)**
- **Toothpick (for painting fine details)**



Stylized Rooster

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Body: ivory
 - Beak: pumpkin orange
 - Body and base details: white, barn red, English ivy green
- **FolkArt paints:**
 - Body and base details: yellow ochre

The rooster rose to prominence in Scandinavia as a Christian symbol, harkening back to the story of Peter denying Jesus three times before the rooster crowed. Like many traditions that make their way to Scandinavia, this one has been strongly preserved—especially in Sweden. The carved Swedish rooster, though not quite as prevalent as the Dala horse, remains ubiquitous. Like the Dala horse, such roosters are often colorfully painted with floral imagery that varies from maker to maker. I encourage you to come up with your own paint scheme to suit your interests and painting ability.

With few carved details and no appendages to deal with, this project is a

good starting point. That said, it does offer one particular challenge: changing the direction you slice from in order to complete some of the curves. Unlike peeling a potato, where you can slice any which way, wood has grain, and you always want to slice into the grain to avoid unwanted splitting. For example, you can carve downward from the middle of the chest to the base and up from the wings through the head, but to complete the curve that starts at the eyes and connects to the neck, you will have to slice from one direction, back out, and complete the slice from the opposing direction. With some practice, you will get the hang of this technique, and you might just have to construct a coop!



Simple patterns and traditional motifs can be combined to create designs that appear elaborate when viewed as a whole.

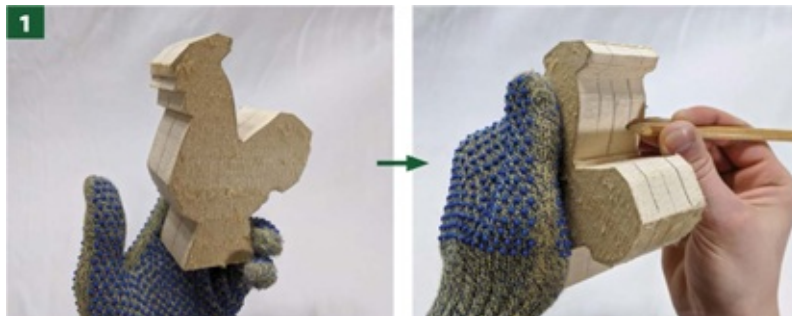


STEP-BY-STEP

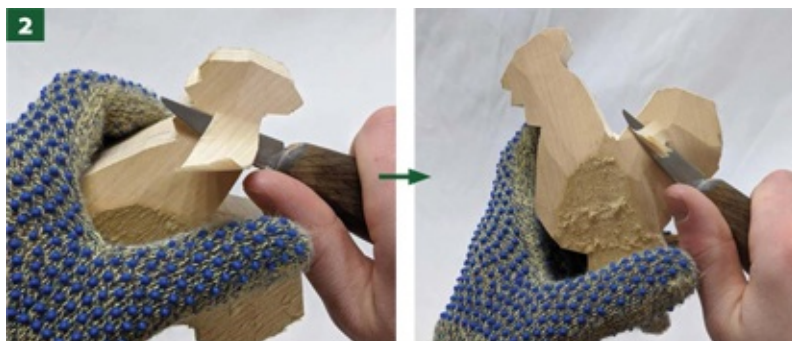
GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: 5¼" high x 4" long x 2" wide (13.4 x 10 x 5cm); grain along height

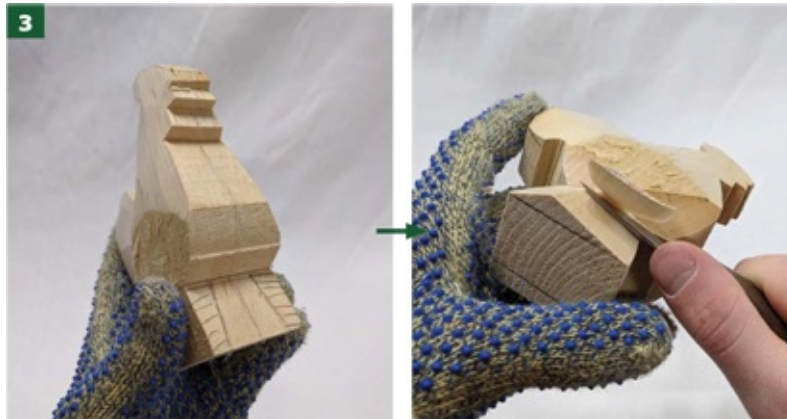
Sketch the side view pattern onto an appropriately sized block of wood. Using a band saw or coping saw, cut all the way around the perimeter.



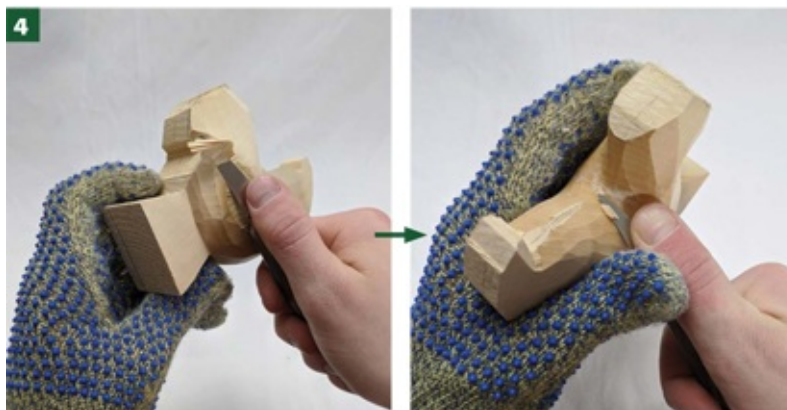
Prepare the blank. Before diving in, take a moment to sketch a centerline all the way around the figure. Then, divide the areas on either side of the centerline in half with two additional centerlines. You can sketch in additional details, but they will get carved off right away.



Rough in the general shape. This is a good time to practice making large, bold cuts. Remove the corners all around the rooster's body and begin to narrow the neck and tail. If you find yourself worrying that you may be going too thin, remember: this is an abstract rooster!



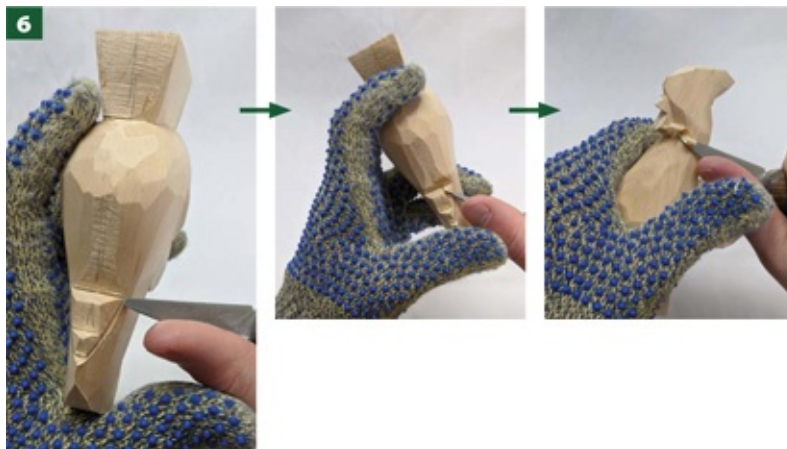
Define the base. The base can be as thin or wide as you'd like it to be, but having its width differ from that of the rooster's body will add visual interest. On the front, bottom, and back, mark the areas you plan to remove. Separate the base from the body by making a stop cut from the side into the top of the base. Then, carve up to that stop cut from the bottom of the base. Repeat until you've shaped the base to your liking.



Round the bottom and back. For a stylized figure like this, I like to curve my cuts to follow the shape of the figure. I suppose you could still call this flat-plane, though, since the cuts are flat from side-to-side. Make sure your rooster is not blocky.

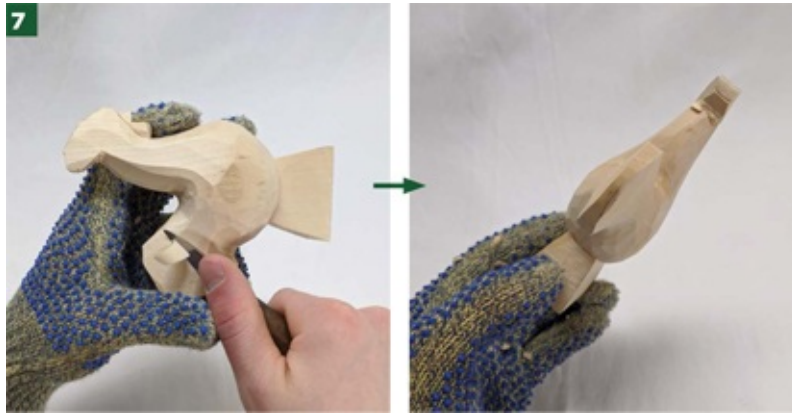


Thin the neck and tail. It is good to avoid making a carving look blocky, but it can be even better to go one step farther by making the overall shapes that make up the carving bold and interesting. Make the neck around half the width of the body and the tail thinner yet.

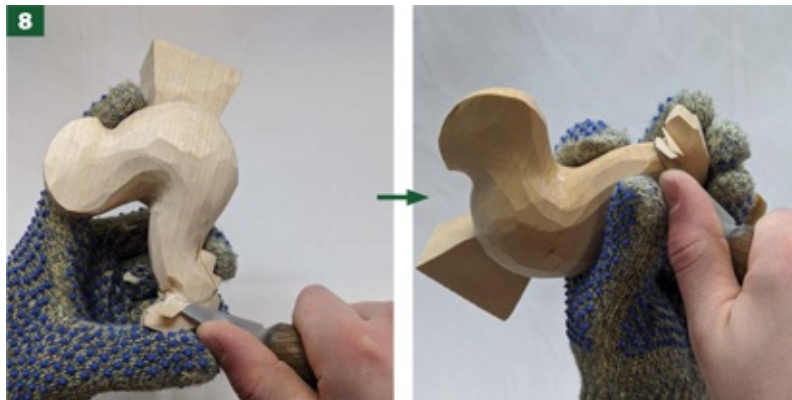


Separate the beak and wattle from the body. Slide the tip of your knife downward through the side beak. Then, continue that cut from the bottom of the neck, carving upward. Complete the triangular chip by coming in approximately 90° from the front of the wattle. Thin the beak and wattle

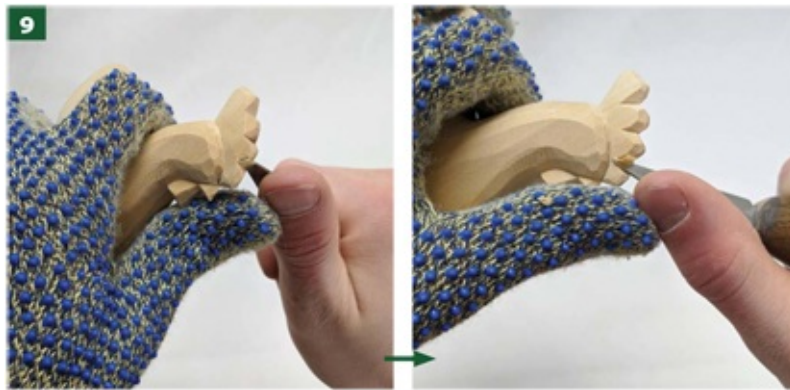
so the cheeks taper down to them. After some trial, error, and cleanup, the wattle will emerge.



Thin the tail. Sweep your knife out from the body and through the tail to continue to thin it. When you thin the bottom half of the tail, you may have to carve downward to avoid carving against the grain.



Shape the comb. First, separate the comb from the head with a series of stop cuts that curve from the beak to the back of the head. Thin the comb by stop-cutting all the way from the top to the head.



Finish the comb. Make a stop cut along the comb line, and carve up to it from the face to make a V-groove. Thin the comb toward the V-groove, shaping and rounding it until you are satisfied. Add the comb details by making two to three small V-shaped cuts across the top. Inspect the piece, rounding the base, body, and head details to their final shape.



Paint the base colors. Cover the entire carving with a wash of dark paint diluted so thin that, if spilled on newspaper, the print would be easily legible. Then, using a wet brush and full-strength paint, paint the colors

for the body, base, wattle, comb, and beak. Let dry.



Add details. Use fine paintbrushes and a toothpick to freehand whatever patterns and motifs feel appropriate to you. The key for this type of painting is repetition. Make sure to allow each layer of paint to dry before adding the next.



Stylized Horse

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Base body color: burnt sienna
 - Body accents: ivory

Carved wooden horses were commonplace throughout Scandinavia, but their value apparently extended beyond that of a decoration or toy. There are accounts of carved horses being used as a form of currency in Sweden, and some even believe the origin of the Swedish Dala horse (those vibrantly painted horses seen in all Scandinavian gift shops) revolves around pagan religious traditions. After all, the horse was a common symbol of fertility. This horse, inspired by a wooden horse from Telemark, Norway, aims to honor these old traditions that paved the way for the popularity of today's Dala horse.

Though today's Dala horse has a standardized shape, many of the older carved horses emphasized different interesting qualities of horses and varied widely from maker to maker. Knobby knees or straight legs, tails or no tails, dramatically arched or stiff necks, and

more or less facial details were all possibilities. This design favors a bit more leg structure than that of the Dala horse, and a neck that seems to reflect the characteristic look of the Norwegian fjord horse. The painted details are also kept simple to ensure a more approachable project. Feel free to adjust the form to be as simplified or realistic as you desire.



Adding paint dots with a toothpick is all you need to decorate this horse.



STEP-BY-STEP

GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: 5¼" high x 5½" long x 2" wide (13.4 x 14 x 5cm); grain along height

Sketch the front and side view patterns onto an appropriately sized block of wood. Cut between the legs in a method you are comfortable with. I set the height of my table saw and adjust the fence to position the blade in the center of the block, then carefully run the block through with its grain running perpendicular to the table. This has the potential to be dangerous, so consider using a coping saw or band saw to cut between the legs after cutting the profile. I chose to not saw out the rest of the front view shape. Using a band saw or coping saw, cut all the way around the perimeter of the side view.



Prepare the blank. It can be tricky to saw out the front view of such a narrow and long figure as this, but tapering the neck a bit and sawing between the legs can alleviate a lot of work later on. Once the blank is cut, sketch in some guidelines to make sure you know how much wood you can remove while keeping things more or less symmetrical.



Rough out the piece. Round the back and neck with long cuts that follow the curves of the silhouette. See how long of a cut you can make by starting at the hips and slicing forward and up through the neck.



Tuck the belly. This piece is all about curves, so make sure the belly has a nice upward curve as it connects to the legs. Make bold stop cuts as the facets connect to the legs. Since the legs curve away from the belly, use the tip of your knife to pull wood down the legs away from the body.

4



Expose the tail and shape the back of the legs. First, press the edge of your knife into the tail from the back as deep as you can without adding much force. Then, meet that cut at a 90° angle from the sides. Finally, curve the back of the hind legs by carving a curve in two parts: up from the hock and down from the top of the rump.



Separate the legs. Start by separating the legs where they connect to the body. Stop-cut a large V-shape for the back legs, but separate the front legs entirely from each other by about $\frac{1}{4}$ " (0.6cm). Then, use the tip of the knife to draw chips down away from the belly toward the hooves.



Curve the sides. Give the hips, haunches, and belly some life of their own by sweeping out curved cuts away from the belly on both sides. Once you've completed this step, the horse will have numerous curves from every angle.



Shape the hooves. Define the ergot, the little knobby part that sticks out above the back of the hoof, by making a simple stop cut underneath it and cutting down at an angle toward the base. Do this for all four hooves.



Decorate the tail. This braid is inspired by horses from old Scandinavian

tapestries. At the top of the tail, carve three slanted stop cuts tilting one direction, then one small one emerging from the bottom of those cuts sloping in the opposite direction. Finally, with your knife positioned vertically, carve several vertical lines with V-grooves of various lengths to give the appearance of long hairs.



Narrow the muzzle. To give the face some shape, sweep in around where the cheeks would be out through the end of the muzzle. This curve doesn't have to be dramatic, since your eye will naturally be drawn to the face anyway.

10



Separate the jaw area from the neck. With the tip of your knife, trace the shape of where the jaw meets the neck. Then, meet that incision from below to tuck the neck into the jaw.



Carve the eyes. Start by carving the top half. Incise a shallow crescent shape, mirror that shape for the bottom of the eye, and then carve in from the insides of the eyes going out to round them. Deepen these cuts and clean up the eyelid area.



Detail the mane. Carve a series of V-shaped cuts around the sides of the mane, making sure they are angled in a visually appealing way. Try to make each cut perpendicular to the part of the outline it connects to.



Decorate the horse. Red, blue, and white are among the common traditional Dala horse base colors, but feel free to go wild with the painting. I chose to make a very simple dot pattern composed mainly of a five-petal flower motif.



Cod

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Belly, side stripe, lips: white
 - Eye light reflection: white
 - Body: melted chocolate, English ivy green, burnt sienna
- **FolkArt paints:**
 - Eyes: yellow ochre
- **Delta Ceramcoat paints:**
 - Inner mouth, gills: flesh tone

If you have heard of Scandinavia, you have most likely heard the term *lutefisk*. You have maybe even heard tales of its wretched stench. Here in the Midwest, local churches with Scandinavian roots often put on “Lutefisk Dinners” around Christmastime. So just what is this fishy phenomenon? Lutefisk literally means “lye fish,” and it is traditionally made in a process that includes soaking codfish in lye (a cleaning agent) and hanging them out to dry. In modern Norway, the

lutefisk tradition lingers on in an evolved state, in which bacon bits are added into the mix. That may help with masking the scent, but my favorite solution is to make lutefisk swim in butter.

While codfish often tend to be rather wide and plump, this figure was designed to make use of thinner wood—in fact, the thinnest of any in this book. Thus, you will be able to display it in tighter spots, such as windowsills. If you would like to make a more juicy cod, simply start with a thicker piece of wood, perhaps around 1½" (3.8cm) thick. Either way, the main challenge will be thinning the fins gradually with the knife, as they may be wider than the length of your knife. You will often have to thin the fins by slicing down toward the body while curving the slice toward the head or tail. Fortunately, there are enough fins to ensure plenty of practice!



Focus on necessary textures instead of getting caught up in carving each scale.



STEP-BY-STEP

GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: 3" high x 7" long x 1" wide (7.6 x 17.8 x 2.5cm); grain along length

Sketch the side view pattern onto an appropriately sized block of wood. Using a band saw or coping saw, cut all the way around the perimeter.



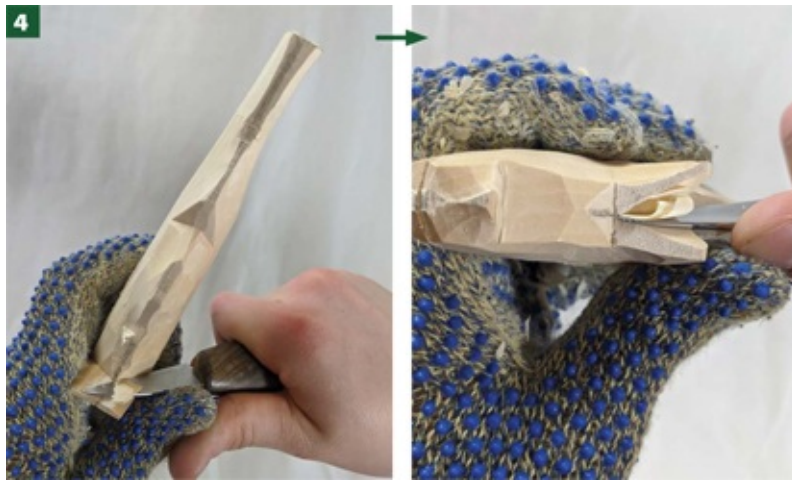
Put the fish on the cutting board—I mean, drawing table. Sketch the perimeter of the body, the pectoral fins, and the mouth. These lines will help you avoid taking away too much wood from the body and allow you to thin the fins appropriately.



Round the outside. Gently round the body of the cod, and curve the fins up to a narrow width. Make sure to leave the front two bottom fins (pelvic fins), which are currently conjoined at their full width, mostly untouched for now.



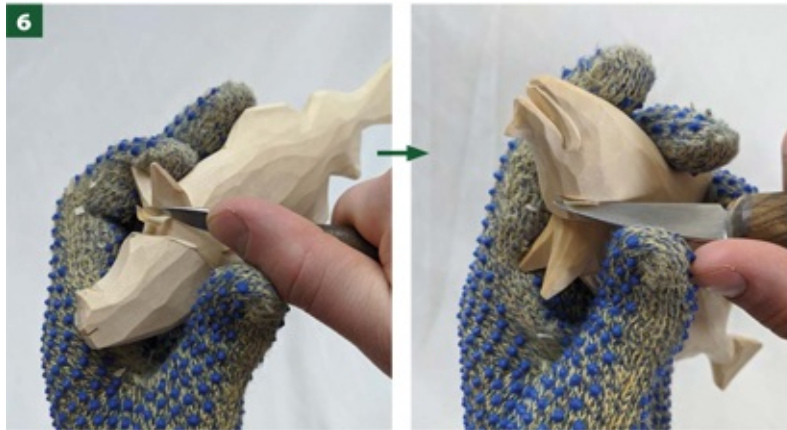
Thin the bases of the top fins. Cut downward from the tips of the fins toward the body, and sweep wood out and away. I chose to not stop-cut around the fins in order to keep things a bit more simplified.



Separate the pelvic fins from the belly. Carve from the belly to the backs of the pelvic fins, rounding the front of the belly in the process. Then, carefully part the pelvic fins in the middle, and widen the separation, being careful not to snap the delicate areas.



Define the pectoral fins. Stop-cut around the pectoral fins with the knife, and then relieve the areas around them in all directions so that they protrude slightly from the sides of the fish.

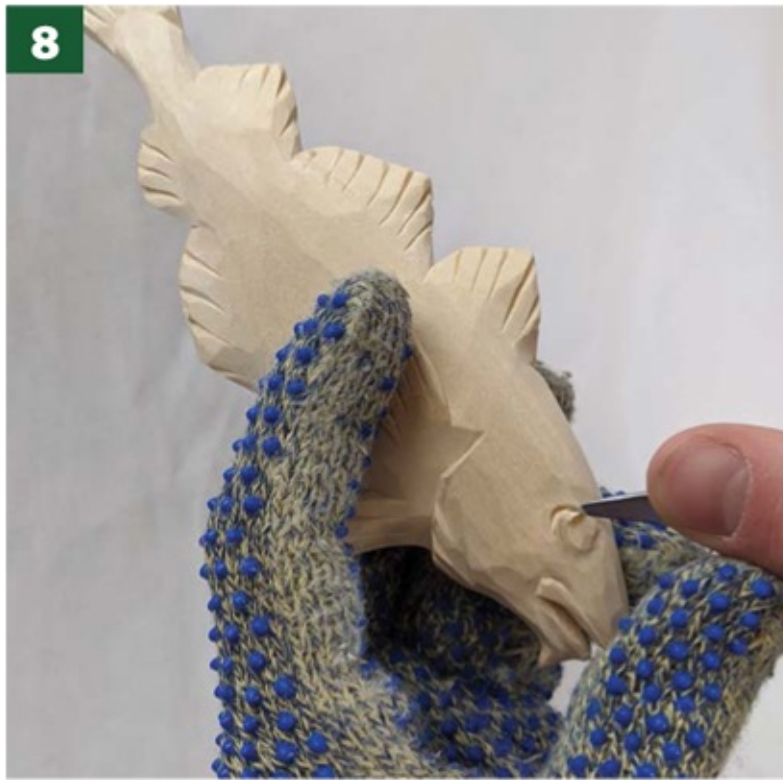


Carve the head and face. Make a stop cut along the edge of the face to bring out the jaw, and then cut in toward that first cut at an angle following that of the pelvic fins to add some gill detailing. Incise around the mouth to form some fish lips, making sure the nose area extends a little over the top lip. This will give the piece a uniquely cod-like appearance.



Detail the fins. Use the tip of your knife to carve out similarly spaced thin

grooves from the fins to simulate their spiny nature. Fan the tail out if you would like it to appear expanded. If you prefer the fish-out-of-water look, curve the end of the tail inward.



Carve around the eyes. For this piece, since the eyes are so naturally prominent, you do not need to stop-cut all the way around the eyes. Make crescent-shaped stop cuts behind the eyes to add depth, and simply sweep wood away from the front of the eyes.



Paint. Apply the base coat wash, and, while it is still wet, blend in the base colors. Let the piece dry, then drybrush white on the belly and face. Add the final details with a fine brush or toothpick.



Ram

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Body: black, ivory (drybrushed), burnt umber, melted chocolate, pewter gray
 - Front of face: white
 - Nose, mouth: flesh
 - Horns: toffee, black, nutmeg brown
 - Grass: English ivy green
 - Rocks: pewter gray
- **Delta Ceramcoat paints:**
 - Grass: jubilee green

While Scandinavia does not actually have wild mountain goats, they do have animals like this Old Norwegian Sheep. Although animals with such impressive-looking horns may appear dangerous, these animals are just as playful as you would expect a little fluffy sheep to be, and they can be found zooming happily around areas of pasture and hopping to and fro. Their horns, along with those of

domesticated goats, are used to create an instrument known in Norwegian as *bukkehorn*, or goat horn. Such instruments are known to emit loud, deep, and eerie tones, but I have also heard some jazzy tunes played on them. Like any instrument, they are as versatile as the musician who plays them, and they still have plenty of potential to rise to greater fame.

Unlike the preceding projects, this design plays heavily with the concept of negative space; that is, the space around and between parts of the sculpture. Compelling negative space does not necessarily require additional carving overhead, but it can require some different approaches. For example, a large portion of separating the horns from the head actually involves carving from the *back* of the head. This may seem counterintuitive at first, but it will help you to become more comfortable with using your knife in creative ways.



Support the curved horns on both ends while leveraging compelling negative space.



STEP-BY-STEP

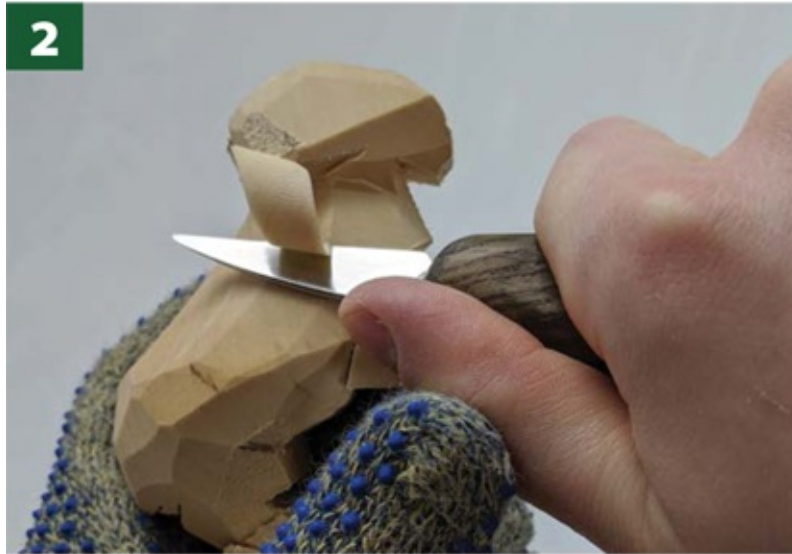
GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: 4½" high x 4" long x 2" wide (11.4 x 10.2 x 5.1cm); grain along height

Sketch the side and front view patterns onto an appropriately sized block of wood. Using a band saw or coping saw, saw the front view, leaving little tabs of wood between cuts so that wood does not fall off at this point. Saw between the ears. Then, saw all the way around the perimeter of the side view pattern. Remove all waste wood.



Sketch the important details. Pencil in the legs, horns, and a centerline.



Round the back. Carve up from the back, narrowing the overall width a bit as you progress forward. End the cut just below the horns. Round the back of the horns.



Separate the thighs and shoulders from the body. Use the edge of your knife to curve in the belly wool. Begin to bend the front legs with an almost-horizontal V-shaped cut. If your knife is sharp, the chip should pop out cleanly.



Separate the front legs from each other. The woolly knee areas should almost come together, but the hooves should be a bit farther apart. Thus, cut more wood away between the hooves.



Chamfer the base. To buy yourself some space to carve the legs, remove wood around the top of the base. Do not worry about making the base pretty or uniform at this point. At any point later on, if you are having trouble reaching things under the ram, feel free to take off more wood from the base. Its main purpose, after all, is to make sure the ram stays upright.



Shape the back legs. Now that you have room to maneuver your knife, carve up from the back hooves into the crook of the knees. Round all the way around the back legs, keeping in mind you will have to carve upward in the front and downward in the back.



Refine the back hooves. Clearly separate the hooves from the base, and give the dewclaws some space. Swooping your knife down from the dewclaws instead of stop-cutting under them will help give the ram a more in-motion appearance, like he's standing poised to jump.



Begin to separate the horns from the back of the head. You will take off more from here later, but for now, just do this to get a sense of how thin the horns will be and how they will be placed. Once you lock in their placement, move on to the next step.



Carve the inner curve. Trace the inner curve of the horns with the tip of your knife, then gradually carve in toward that line at an angle to release the chip and create a groove. Do not forget the ears! Cut around the ears, and in doing so, further accentuate the horns.



Round the neck under the horns. This is where the magic happens. As you gradually bring the neck in forward, you will eventually poke through to the cuts you had been making for the horns. When you do so, continue to expand the hole. If you make sure to round the neck sufficiently, the horns will stick out pretty much on their own. Be especially careful at this stage, as the horns can easily snap.



Carve the eyes. This ram needs to see what he is doing, so we will keep those eyes open. Carve in the eyes and make a couple stop cuts underneath to carve some bags under the eyes. This ram has been through a lot, and we should reflect that.



Texture the horns. Roll out tiny shavings all the way around the horns to mimic their ribbed appearance in real life. Then, reflect on the shape of the figure. Make any adjustments as you see fit.



Add final details. Give the wool a more rugged appearance by combining rolling sweep cuts and long stop cuts along the beard and belly. Make these stop cuts fall almost straight down from the belly, but take gravity into account by angling the lines downward slightly.



Paint the ram. Apply the base coat wash over the entire carving, then blend in the base colors with a wet brush dipped in full-strength paint. Let the piece dry, then drybrush white around parts of the body and face. Use a fine brush and a toothpick to paint the facial details.



Elkhound

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Body: black, white, flesh, pewter gray
 - Legs, tail, belly: country tan
 - Eyes: melted chocolate, white, black
- **Delta Ceramcoat paints:**
 - Tongue: fuchsia

Elk are large North American deer with long, pointy antlers and hairy necks. North America also has moose, even bigger deer with bowled antlers and bulbous snouts. Before European settlers came to America, the word “moose” did not exist, but “elk” did, and “elk” was used to describe what we now call moose. Thus, in a simplified version of history, European settlers came to America, saw the large deer with pointy antlers, and said, “Hey, those look like elk, right?” And the name stuck. Later, these settlers saw the larger deer with the bulbous muzzle and had to come up with another name for it. So, the elkhound, or *elghund* (“moose dog”) is a Norwegian dog breed bred to bravely track down moose, and has been around for thousands

of years, including during the Viking Age. So, once you carve an elkhound companion, make sure to watch your temper. You might start to feel like a Viking!

Like other Scandinavian dog breeds, an elkhound has a thick neck, and its tail curls onto its back. Its coat comes in two variations: gray, as shown here, and black. Feel free to paint your elkhound in the color scheme you prefer. As far as notable carving areas, the mouth is the most unique element this project offers. Getting the tongue to hang just right is important in order to avoid a limp, unhealthy appearance, and carving along the sides of the tongue involves some patience as you slice deeper and deeper with the tip of your knife. Any tongue-related mishap can be circumvented by simply keeping it inside the mouth. No mistake in carving has to stay a mistake!



Blend paints together to smoothly transition from one color to the next.



STEP-BY-STEP

GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: $3\frac{3}{4}$ " high x 5" long x $1\frac{3}{4}$ " wide (9.5 x 12.7 x 4.5cm); grain along height

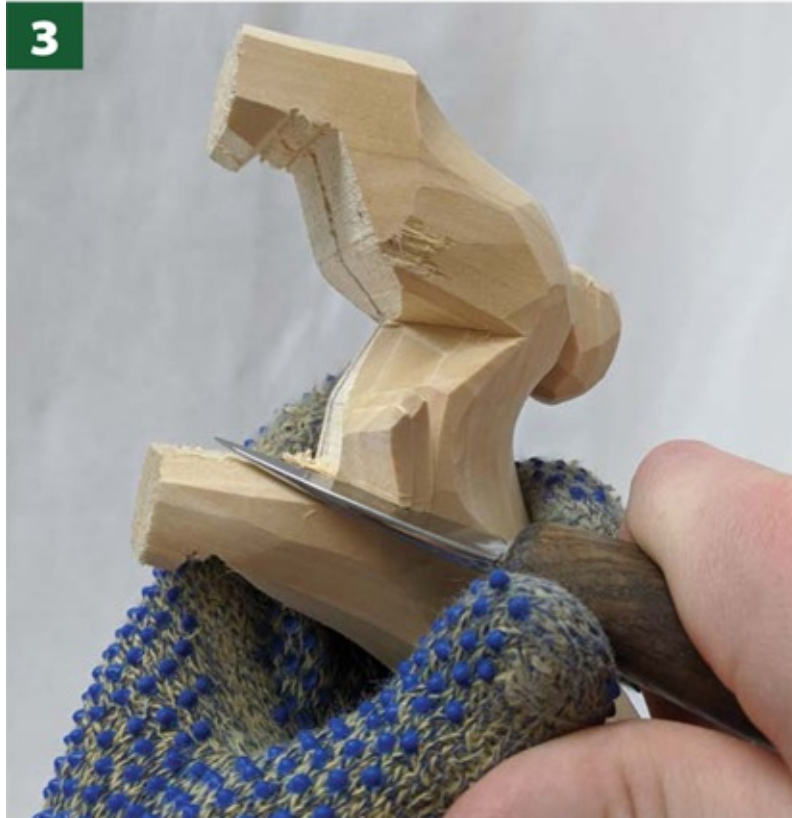
Sketch the front and side view patterns onto an appropriately sized block of wood. Cut between the legs in a method you are comfortable with. I set the height of my table saw and adjust the fence to position the blade in the center of the block, then carefully run the block through with its grain running perpendicular to the table. This has the potential to be dangerous, so consider using a coping saw or band saw to cut between the legs after cutting the profile. Using a band saw or coping saw, saw between the ears. Then, turn the block over on its side and saw all the way around the perimeter of the side view.



Design your dog. Sketch a centerline all the way around the blank. Sketch in the width of the head and the shape of the ears.



Round all the way around. Ride the curves and angles of this figure with your blade with bold, sweeping cuts. To give the ears their proper busy mass, do not stop-cut behind them, but rather form them with the same cuts that you use to round the neck.



Define the haunches. Make a V-shaped cut to separate the back leg from the belly, and another to separate the chest from the front leg. Once the stop cuts are deep enough, continue by rounding the belly and rounding down the legs.



Separate the ears. Eklhound ears are big and triangular, so this separation can be quite pronounced. Keep working this area until the ears are completely separated from one another.



Shape the legs. The back legs curve back and then down to the feet, whereas the front legs are angled forward. The back of the front legs can be shaped with a series of downward strokes, while the front of the front legs and back legs have to be carved both upward and downward, with cuts meeting in the middle.



Define the sides. Carve a scrunched up fur “collar” around the neck with a few simple V-shaped cuts. Then, sweep from the hips to the shoulders. Proud-looking dogs such as the elkhound appear to have more mass toward the chest than the rump, so remove wood a bit more liberally toward the rear end.



Flop the tail onto the back. A unifying characteristic of several Scandinavian dog breeds is the tail that curls up onto the back. Choose a direction to flop the tail over to, and make sure it leans in that direction. Finally, carve around the end of the tail to complete the look. Add a few sweep cuts and stop cuts along the back and sides to give the coat a bit of an oversized look.



Rough in the facial shape. The top half of an elkhound's face is surprisingly triangular. Slope the sides of the face dramatically inward, and narrow the muzzle quite a bit, carving out from the nose on each side to create two distinct planes for the eyes (and, in so doing, defining the bridge of the nose). Open up the mouth with two angled cuts that meet in the center, and remove the chip.



Waggle the tongue. Define the nose with simple angled stop cuts, separate the top lip, and continually deepen cuts around the tongue so that it can be seen all the way in from both sides. Round the tongue as it comes out of the mouth instead of having it fall sharply down to ensure a lifelike appearance. Groove the tongue slightly in the middle.



Carve those puppy eyes. Make sure to give the eyes their puppy-like almond shape. That is, make the eyes taller and rounder toward their inner edges and pointier toward the sides of the head.



Texture parts of the fur. Where the fur should look bushiest, add rolling sweep cuts to texture these areas. The rump, neck, and tail appear to be some of the bushiest areas. Leave the rest of the facets as-is for textural contrast.



Paint the fur coat. Start with the dark wash base coat, then darken the appropriate areas by blending in additional black paint. Next, blend in gray, light tan, and finally white paint to highlight certain areas.



Add the final paint details. Paint a narrow strip of black down the center of the head over top of the lighter paint. Next, sharpen a toothpick. Use it to paint the tongue light pink, the small “eyebrow lines” black, and the eyes brown and black. Finally, as always, paint a tiny white dot in the back corner of each eye.



Raven

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Body: black, pewter gray
 - Eye light reflection: white
- **Delta Ceramcoat paints:**
 - Additional body tones: blue velvet, royal plum

The Norse god Odin was associated with several animal companions: a fast eight-legged horse, two hungry wolves, and two ravens, Huginn and Munin, whose names mean *thought* and *memory*. These ravens would fly all over the Nine Realms, gathering information about all that happened to report back to Odin. In effect, Odin became essentially all-knowing. This dynamic alone is a strong statement of the value Scandinavians have always placed in animals—not only domesticated animals like horses and dogs, but also those of the wilderness.

As simple as this project is, it was among the most challenging for me to design *because* it is so simple. Ravens have such a variety of poses and can appear anywhere from pristine to ruffled, so pinning

down a set form while simplifying it in the nature of the flat-plane style meant figuring out how to make it look like a raven instead of a crow or some other bird. So, I drew upon the ideas of wildness, wisdom, and ancientness that surrounds the animal to decide upon a hunched stature, ruffled feathers, a scraggly beard, and curved talons. I encourage you to use the same thought process as you simplify this natural wonder in wood.



Carve out some wood underneath this piece to complete the look of curved talons.

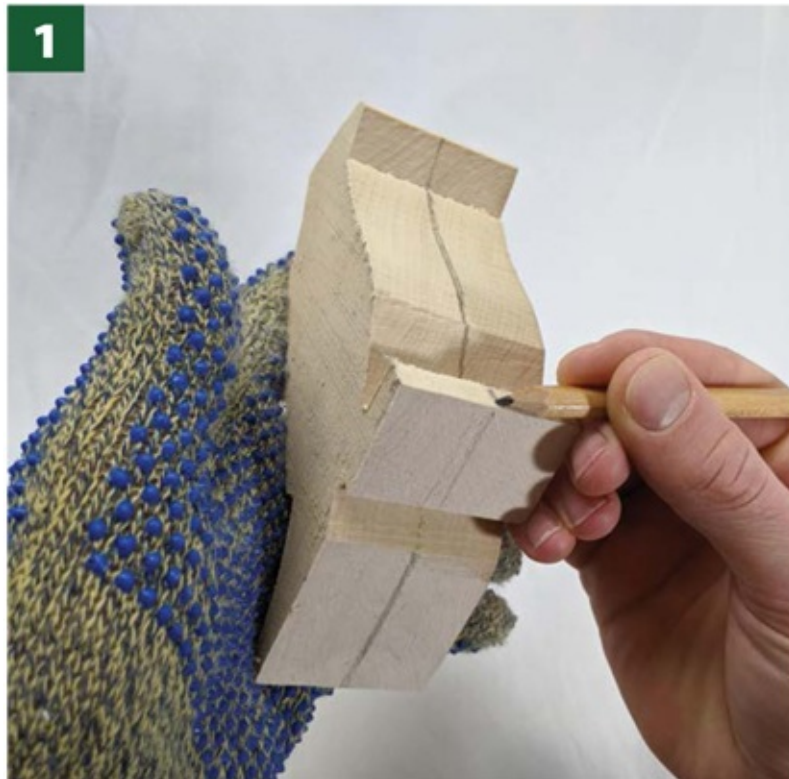


STEP-BY-STEP

GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: 3¾" high x 5" long x 2" wide (8.3 x 12.7 x 5.1cm); grain along height

Sketch the side view pattern onto an appropriately sized block of wood. Using a band saw or coping saw, cut all the way around the perimeter.



Plan the raven. There aren't many major details to lay out for this project. Sketch a centerline around the entire figure, and visualize how the shape will evolve as you begin to carve. Draw the basic shape of the tail.



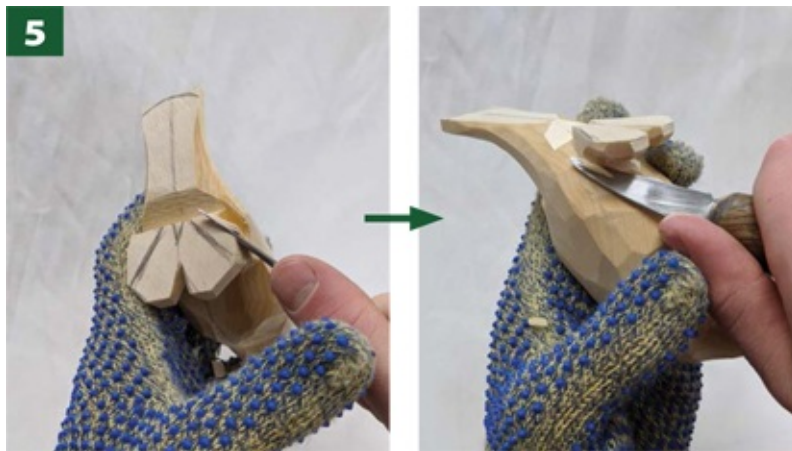
Remove excess waste. With large, confident strokes, round the entire body of the raven, leaving the feet square for now. Taper the sides in a bit as you move up toward the head. Overall, the general shape of the body (excluding the tail) will resemble an elongated egg.



Boldly separate the body from the feet. This figure won't have limbs sticking out or a prominent distinction between the head and body, so thoroughly separating the feet from the body is important. Carve down from about the bottom third of the body toward the feet, and meet that cut almost straight in from the tips of the talons.



Ruffle those tail feathers. Separate the tail from the folded back wings with V-shaped cuts that start at the corners of the tail. Carve up to those cuts from the bottoms of the wings. Try not to hold back from making the wings stick out too much—ravens often have a ruffled, wild look to them.



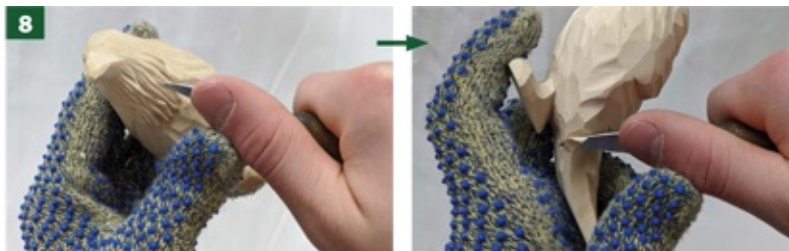
Rough in the feet. Angle the feet, but keep as much of the wood as possible. Cut in straight up from the bottom of the wood, and make a somewhat sharp-angled stop cut to sever the chips at the top of the feet. Do not worry about detailing the feet at this point. Rough in the general shape and free up the raven's belly for additional shaping.



Carve additional layers of feathers. To make the wings look convincing, try to familiarize yourself with a general understanding of how wings are shaped. Notice how I'm exaggerating the shapes at the back of the wings more than the parts that touch the sides, since those parts blend in more.



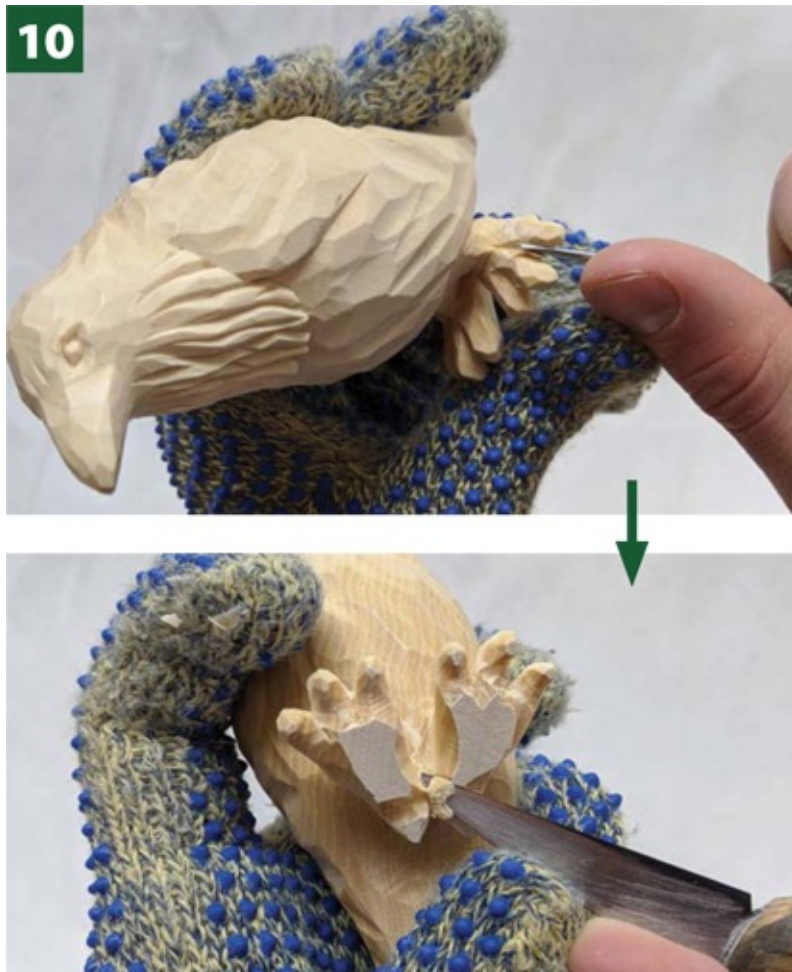
Shape the tail. Make it most narrow in the middle, but avoid making it less than about $\frac{3}{4}$ " (1.9cm) wide. Shape the top of the tail with four main planes: two curved planes off to the side, one triangular plane coming out from under the wings, and one roughly flat plane at the end.



Add textures. Detail the scruffy bird beard with knife-tip incision stop cuts. Suggest the rest of the feather textures with quick sweep cuts all over. Angle these cuts to follow the direction the feathers would be angled.



Carve the eyes. Stop-cut around the eyes and round the eyes themselves, bringing them into the head a bit. The rear cusps of the eye sockets can be extended back a little to add additional shape.



Detail the talons. Nothing says “bird” more than a good pair of talons. And since the rest of the figure already says “raven,” this will be a good final carving step. Carve up from the front third of each talon, removing a half-moon slice before you swoop back down to define the tip of the claw. Add a little hook to the back of each foot as well.



Paint the raven. Apply the base coat wash over the entire piece. Then, lightly blend in full-strength blue and purple paint mainly to parts of the wings and tail. Apply black paint with a wet brush. Cover the carving in black paint, still blending the paint in so the grain shows through. Finally, drybrush gray on the beak and lightly add a dusting of white just so that it highlights some of the borders of the facets.



Red Squirrel

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Belly, facial accents, eye light reflection: white
 - Iris: melted chocolate
 - Pupil, ring around eyes: black
 - Body and tail: country tan, burnt umber, pewter gray, burnt sienna, pumpkin orange

Everyone knows that squirrels eat acorns, but in Scandinavia, squirrels *are* acorns! Well, the word for squirrel in Scandinavian languages sounds suspiciously close to how we say “acorn.” The Norwegian word for squirrel is *ekorn*, yet the two words amazingly do not share a common etymological ancestor; in other words, the name overlap is a historical coincidence. Furthermore, the Norwegian word for “acorn” is *eikenøtt*, which translates literally to “oak nut.” If you like how much sense that word makes, I would recommend learning a Scandinavian language. Such descriptive simplicity is commonplace.

In the spirit of simplicity, this squirrel design features a compact and symmetrical body, is looking straight ahead, and is empty-handed.

Unlike North American squirrels, those in Scandinavia have tufted ears, which can be represented in wood as simply longer ears with some vertical V-grooves carved in. The tail offers plenty of practice with V-groove texturing as well, and, like many aspects of carving, benefits from a repetitive pattern that can differ a bit from real-life details. Before getting caught up in the fine details, focus on the characteristic curvature of the back. Notice how the back is a gentle arc until right above the arms, where the neck curves the silhouette in the opposite direction. In any case, the bushy tail will make it very clear that your project is a squirrel!



Take note of the tufted ears and hunched stature of this little guy —they are what make him unique.



STEP-BY-STEP

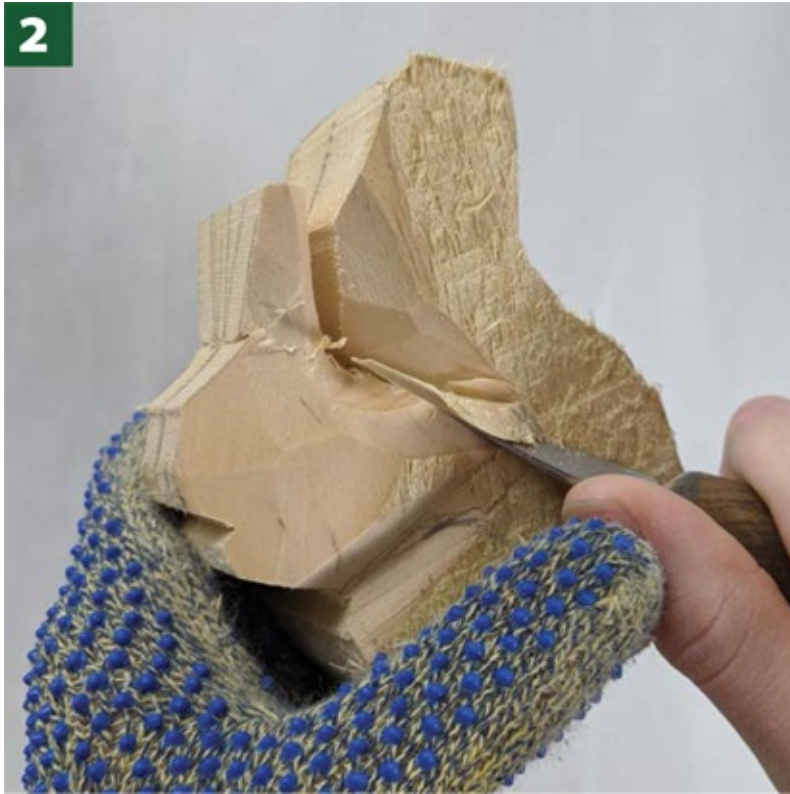
GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: 4¾" high x 3¾" long x 2" wide (12.1 x 9.5 x 5.1cm); grain along height

Sketch the side and front view patterns onto an appropriately sized block of wood. Using a band saw or coping saw, cut all the way around the perimeter.



Lay out the squirrel. Unlike the previous projects, the squirrel, being in a compact pose, benefits from a good deal of additional sketching. Sketch the curve of the hind legs, the bottom of the head, and where the back meets the tail. Notice the high angle of the back, which is quite important in making the squirrel look like a squirrel.



Separate the tail from the body. This is one of the only figures where I will not round the entire piece first. Since the tail is such a big and separate part of the squirrel, defining it right away will greatly aid in ensuring a squirrel-like shape in the end. Roughly round the tail on all sides without removing too much wood.



Cut in other major separations. Remove wood where the head meets the arms, the arms meet the legs, and the legs meet the feet. The most prominent cuts will be between the arms and legs. While cutting down from the arms, also taper the arms in together toward the middle.



Divide the arms. Draw the tip of your knife down from the hands toward the belly. At the belly, cut up into the separation between the arms to further bring them apart. Round the arms slightly and define the elbows.



Add a suggestion of separation between the legs. There is no need to stop cut between the legs since the fur of the belly blends them together. However, a slight inward curve at the bottom of the belly can go a long way toward defining the legs a bit, and it can further help separate the feet.



Remove wood between the ears. Start by making vertical stop cuts, angled down toward the center of the part between the ears, then transition to slicing up from the base of each ear once you have the space to do so. At the end of the roughing process, you will be able to cut horizontally across the top of the head to completely bring the bases of the ears apart.



Round the tail. A squirrel's tail is overall a bit like a rounded rectangular box that narrows toward the bottom and curves as it goes up. To accentuate this shape, do not over-round the tail. Rather, make it comprised of bold, almost blocky flat planes that curve as it does.



Carve the eyes. Now that the squirrel is starting to look like a squirrel, further put the details and proportions in perspective by carving the eyes, nose, and mouth. The nose is formed by two shallow V-shaped cuts that meet in the center to form a Y, and the mouth is cleft at the top lip and curls up into a slight smile at the sides.



Texture the tail. Sharpen up your knife and get ready. First, consciously think about which direction the fur should be flowing. Then, sketch some lines for fur direction all over the tail. Finally, go to town making a series of V-shaped cuts all around the tail. You'll probably also have to hone your knife in the process.



Add final details. Carve between the toes (though you can leave the hands un-textured) and around the ears. Define the insides of the ears with two curved incisions, and texture the ear tufts similarly to the tail. Texture the fronts of the legs slightly by rolling your knife through the wood to create some levels and movement.



Paint the squirrel. Apply the base coat wash over the entire carving. Blend in the colors of the body, then let the paint dry. Finally, drybrush white on the belly and add facial details with a fine brush and a toothpick.



Beaver

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Eyes: black, white, chocolate brown
 - Tail: pewter gray
 - Lips, nose, ears: black
 - Body: black, white, burnt umber
 - Body blended accents: country tan, pumpkin orange
- **Delta Ceramcoat paints:**
 - Tail: royal plum
- **FolkArt paints:**
 - Teeth blended in color: yellow ochre

Beavers, the woodcarvers of the river, may not come to mind when you think of Scandinavia, but they are indeed native to this region. They have rich fur so beautiful that they were once hunted nearly to extinction throughout Europe. Later, after the discovery of abundant beaver populations in America, some North American beavers were introduced in Scandinavia to help populations recover.

These two visually and behaviorally similar species cannot interbreed, so if resources become scarce, they will have to compete against each other. Fortunately, for now, they appear to be coexisting in perfect harmony!

The pose of this design depicts an interesting beaver behavior: slicking their fur with a substance secreted from the base of their tail called *castoreum*, which is also used by humans as a vanilla flavoring. To do so, they sit right on their tails and spread the oil all around. To emphasize this behavior, your beaver's hands could be placed on different parts of the belly, but the symmetrical pose helps ensure the arms stay the same length. The thin, long feet and tail are conveniently attached to provide support. To distinguish the tail from the feet, notice how the tail is slightly raised up, and its end was undercut to provide a bit of shadow. On a carving with so little fine detail, such tricks can help enhance the overall appearance.



Small eyes and ears help emphasize the large nose and prominent buck teeth.



STEP-BY-STEP

GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: 3½" high x 3" long x 4½" wide (8.9 x 7.6 x 11.4cm); grain along height

Sketch the side and front view patterns onto an appropriately sized block of wood—the front view goes on the 3½" x 3" (8.9 x 7.6cm) face and the side view goes on the 3½" x 4½" (8.9 x 11.4cm) face. Using a band saw or coping saw, saw the front view, leaving little tabs of wood between cuts so that wood does not fall off at this point. Then, saw all the way around the perimeter of the side view pattern. Remove all waste wood.



Figure out the beaver and its pose. Beavers are often pictured with their tails positioned behind them, but this pattern depicts the beaver in a different way. Since this beaver is sitting on its tail, you'll need to make the pose convincing by sufficiently curving the back, undercutting the belly, and positioning the feet.



Round the beaver. Hog off wood from all the way around the block, leaving the tail and feet portion largely untouched for now. This beaver should look chunky, but not blocky, by the time you're done with this step.



Remove excess wood around the head. Round and narrow the head, and make deep stop cuts underneath it. Toward the top, tightly sweep wood away from the head, making sure to leave a little room for those tiny ears.



Separate the arms from the body. With a few simple, long V-shaped cuts, remove wood from above and below the arms. Bend the arms slightly in the middle by angling the top portions of the arms a bit more vertically than the forearms.



Separate the tail from the feet. Cut straight into the body from the end of the tail, eventually causing the top of the tail to be comprised of two large flat planes meeting in the middle at a slight peak.



Define the ears. A beaver's ears hardly stick out from the head, but they still have a good amount of mass to them. To reflect this, remove wood with the tip of your knife around the ears. To clean up the adjacent head portions, sweep up and away.



Give the arms additional shape. Shape the hands by sweeping out curved woodchips at the wrist area. A little asymmetry helps here to make the hands look like they are moving around, spreading their scent fluids.



Suggest back legs. Simply make one big V-shaped cut on each side to roughly define the thigh area.



Carve the lower facial features. Cartoon beavers are often portrayed with large, prominent buckteeth, and for good reason! Make stop cuts under the nose and between the top lip sections, then carve up to those cuts to give the beaver a deep smile and rounded cheeks. Then, carve some teeth into the bottom lip. Carve out a small V in each ear.



Carve the eyes. Make shallow little stop cuts in the shape of an eye on both sides of the head. Then carve in toward those cuts to give the impression that the eyelids and under-eye bags overlap the eyes slightly. Make sure you can clearly see both eyes from the front of the head, although they should primarily face off to the sides.

11



Carve between the toes. Beavers have five toes, but only four are visible on my beaver. If you feel that there is enough room on your beaver, feel free to display the extra toes.



Paint the beaver. After applying the base coat and the main colors, apply black paint to the nose with a fine round brush. Then, use a toothpick to paint the lips and separation between the lips black. Use the same versatile tool to paint the teeth a yellow-ish off-white.



Mountain Hare

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- All basic items described on (here)
- Pattern on (here)
- Apple Barrel paints:
- Base coat: ivory + black
- Body: white
- Pupils and rings around eyes: black
- Irises: melted chocolate
- Backs of ears, muzzle: pewter gray

The hares of the Scandinavian mountains may appear cute and rabbit-like, and, to some degree, they are. But they are more than that! Mountain hares, which exist throughout Northern Europe, are faster and leaner than rabbits, with longer legs and extremely long hind feet. While rabbits are known for being rapid breeders, mountain hares do not make things so easy. When an interested male approaches a female, he is met with a violent response often described as a boxing match. Both hares rear up on their hind legs and spar with their front paws in a rapid flurry of jabs. Combine this with high-speed sprints around mountainsides, and you are left with a few fewer kits per year than rabbits produce. By carving this hare, you can do your part in helping hares keep up!

Carving out the area between this hare's four legs can be challenging, especially with just a knife. However, once you complete this area, you will be more proud of what you can do with just a knife than ever! If you would like to carve a hare but avoid the challenge of the compact leg pose, you could either leave the in-between area solid or even make the hare stand up on all fours. Such a pose is used by these animals to look bigger to rivals, but to us, with the rabbit-like body and surprisingly long legs, it looks more cute than intimidating!



To ensure lifelikeness, angle the ears apart and rotate them so they do not face straight forward or to the sides.



STEP-BY-STEP

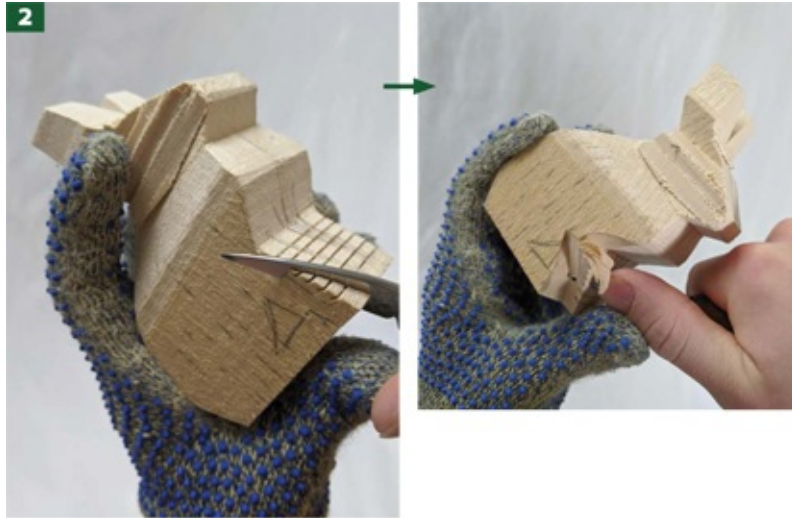
GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: 4¼" high x 3¼" long x 2" wide (10.8 x 8.3 x 5.1cm); grain along height

Sketch the side and front view patterns onto an appropriately sized block of wood. Using a band saw or coping saw, saw the front view, leaving little tabs of wood between cuts so that wood does not fall off at this point. Cut between the ears. Then, saw all the way around the perimeter of the side view pattern. Remove all waste wood.



Pencil in the major details. Sketch in the head and legs. One very important detail to notice with this figure is that the hind paws overlap the front paws a bit. Because of this, we will start cutting in this area first.



Separate the hind feet from the front legs. We normally start by rounding the entire figure, but due to the relatively complex way the legs are interacting here, separating them first helps avoid potential amputation. First, press your knife into the end of the back foot. Then, meet that cut from the front. Finally, sweep down from the chest to curve the front legs in.



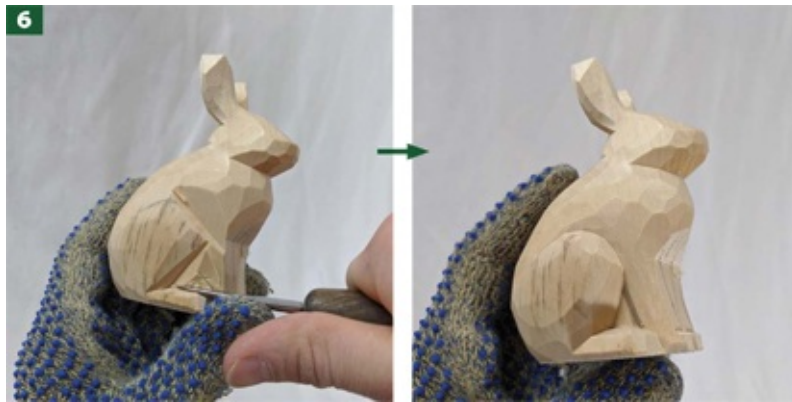
Round the figure. Make big cuts all the way around the rabbit. Be especially aggressive on the back and rump area. In the front, round down into the stop cuts we made in the previous step, but do not take wood away from the hind paws.



Make a horizontal stop cut under the head. Then, carve up to that cut to separate the head from the chest. As you do so, round the chest up to this cut. Do not worry much about the angle at which the head sticks out from the body. Hares can vary a bit in facial shape, especially considering that they can turn their heads up and down.



Shape the ears. Slice up from the base of the ears. Switch from one ear to another until there is a curved region of the head between them. Once there is a sufficient separation, give the ears some basic shape. Mountain hare ears are widest toward the middle, so shape accordingly. Angle the ears backward slightly—they don't sit perfectly vertical—and cup them toward the front.



Define the hind legs. Begin by making crude V-shaped cuts with the edge of your knife around the hind legs and feet. Gradually make additional cuts that follow the curve more carefully. Finally, round the hind legs up to these cuts. Extend the cut that separates the hind legs from the paws almost to the bottom of the blank.



Cut between the front legs. Stop-cut all the way from the bottoms of the front paws all the way up to the chest on both sides. The front paws start together but widen apart toward the shoulders. These cuts should be relatively straight, with a slight outward curve.



Dig out the area between the hind and front legs. Refer back to the pattern to see that there should be a gap between the front and back legs. Continually stop-cut over and over, going deeper and deeper, from both sides and also from the front. To speed this process up, feel free to drill a hole or holes in this area. However, I demonstrate here that the same effect can be achieved with just a knife.



Angle the hind paws. Add the final shape to this compact leg area by shaping the hind paws from the bottom. Incise into the bottom with your knife, following the shape of the hind paws, and cut deeper and deeper until you cut into the negative space between all the legs. Once you do so, round the tops by finding an angle at which you can stick your knife into this area from the sides.



Detail the toes. Now that the hard work is done, gently stop-cut between the toes. Mountain hares have four toes on the hind paws and five on the front, but only four are visible in this pose. In other words, cut three fine vertical stop cuts into each paw. Curve the cuts onto the tops of the paws.



Clean out the ears. Follow the curve of the ear detail with the tip of your knife moving upward. Then, start at the bottom of that incision from the opposing angle, and slice straight up to the tip of the incision. Deepen this cut until it has a bold and intentional look and the facets are clean and smooth.

12



Start carving the face. Before carving in any details, make sure the head is shaped like a hare's head rather than a circle, oval, or something else. Sweep in a bit from the sides of the face so the muzzle bulges out a bit and the head is thickest at the cheeks. Then, stop-cut a V for the nose, a vertical line underneath, and connect that to the mouth, which is angled down from this line.

13



Carve the eyes. To finish the face, carve in the eyes by tracing them with the tip of your knife and then relieving wood in and around them.



Paint the hare. Unlike all other projects in this book, start with an ivory-colored wash with just a hint of black added in. Cover the entire carving. While the paint is still wet, use a fine brush to add black tips to the ears, gray inside the ear details, and some faint gray around the nose. Let the piece dry before drybrushing pure white paint all over. Finally, use a toothpick to paint black around the eyes, brown irises, black pupils, and a white dot near the back corner of each eye.



Wood Grouse

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Hand drill (to attach feet)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - “Eyebrows”: red spice
 - Chest: Christmas green
 - Throat, tail: black
 - White splotches near “armpits” and on tail feathers: white
 - Wings, feet: nutmeg brown
 - Skin around eyes: flesh
 - Eyes: white, black, melted chocolate
- **Delta Ceramcoat paints:**
 - Beak: crocus yellow

The wood grouse, also known in English as capercaillie, is a Northern European bird few Americans seem to have heard of. These large birds are essentially the European equivalent of the

turkey, but their behavior is quite distinct. Whereas male turkeys puff out their chests, press their necks back, gobble, and slowly strut around like the coolest guy in the forest, wood grouse take a different approach. They puff out their neck feathers, angle their beak straight up, emit a bizarre series of grunts and clicks, and zoom around like little robots on wheels. Like turkeys, they also fan out their tail feathers in the process.

For the very reason of those prominent tail feathers, this design offers a physical challenge that the other projects in this book do not: keeping the piece balanced. If, near completion, you find that your wood grouse is tail-heavy, remove some wood from the tail until the piece can stand freely. If that still is not enough, you can take the easy route that I took: attach it to a base! Bases also help protect the feet of a carving, so you can use them for any project you want. Fortunately, wood grouse naturally have thick legs and feet compared to most birds, so a base is certainly not necessary if you are careful enough with the balance!



Layer feathers and add basic painted details to create an impressive display.



STEP-BY-STEP

GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: $4\frac{3}{4}$ " high x $4\frac{1}{2}$ " long x 4" wide (12.1 x 11.4 x 10.2cm); grain along height

Sketch the side and front view patterns onto an appropriately sized block of wood—the front view goes on the $4\frac{3}{4}$ " x $4\frac{1}{2}$ " (12.1 x 11.4cm) face and the side view goes on the $4\frac{3}{4}$ " x 4" (12.1 x 10.2cm) face. Using a band saw or coping saw, saw the front view, leaving little tabs of wood between cuts so that wood does not fall off at this point. Saw between the legs. Then, saw all the way around the perimeter of the side view pattern. Remove all waste wood.



Prepare the blank. Due to the uniqueness of this bird, it is probably best to familiarize yourself with it before diving in. Photographs and videos are great resources, and even though it may seem like such an unusual animal, plenty of content can be found online. Sketch in the major details.



Rough in the body shape. Make massive slices as you narrow the body away from the fanned-out tail. You will want the tail to really stick out dramatically from the body.



Round the fanned tail. The tail should not be perfectly flat, but should arc a bit out toward the sides. However, each feather will be straight along its length, so do not round the top of the tail.



Remove excess wood from the back of the tail. If you are using a blade much shorter than 2" (5.1cm), now may be the time to upgrade! My knife had just enough length to be able to successfully scoop wood out from the back of the tail. Follow the curve you formed from the front.



Slice a bend in the wings. This bird is strutting around, or, perhaps more accurately, zooming around, so he needs to look macho. This will help create that wings-back, “I’m cool” kind of look.



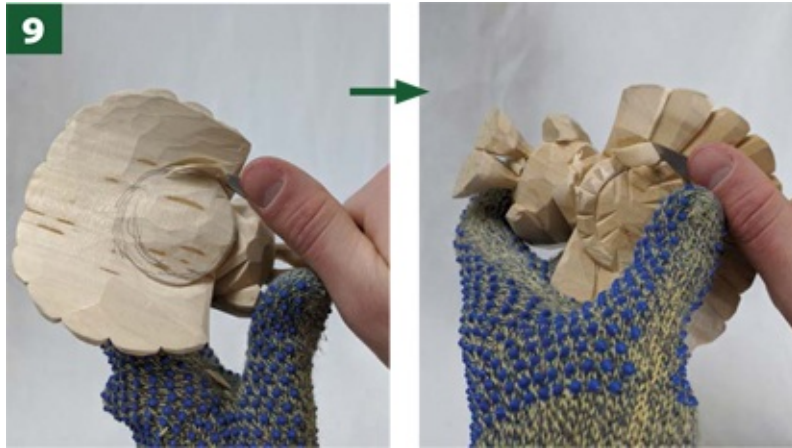
Separate the wings from the body. Slice along the bottoms of the wings, and remove the corresponding excess from the part of the body that touches them.



Bring out the section of the neck that will be ruffled. Stop-cut around this region of the neck, and carve up to these cuts so that the neck part overhangs the body.



Begin defining the front of the tail feathers. Carve the long feathers that make up the top portion of the fanned tail, but leave the bottom feathers until after you work on the back to make sure you do not cut too deep.



Carve the back of the tail feathers. Match the lines you cut in the previous step from the back to complete the scalloped look, and add a round section at the base of the tail where the feathers form yet another interesting pattern. This pattern is a circle of feathers that stick out all the way around its outline.



Finalize the front of the tail feathers. Start at the center and work outward to adjacent layers by making stop cuts along the feather details and then carving down to them from the outer layers. (This is why it's essential to start at the base; if you started at the outer fanned layers and worked inward, you would have to carve off most of your work every time you carved a new layer.)



Carve the beak. Shape the outside of the beak first. The top portion appears somewhat eagle-like, but rather stumpy, and the bottom portion curves downward instead of up toward the top portion. Then, carve out the separation by arcing the tip of your knife in toward the corners of the “mouth.”



Erect the neck feathers. Start by carving numerous horizontal stop cuts. Then, break up these cuts organically by defining tons of small feathers that are rounded on their bottoms. Toward the back of the neck, where the feathers do not stick out as much, simply sweep a few horizontal rolled cuts to suggest some ruffling.



Carve the eyes. First, sweep wood away from those neat eyebrow areas to define the eye mounds. Then, stop-cut the eyes in with the tip of your knife and round the center of each eye.

14



Separate the talons. Interestingly, the feet of a wood grouse look pretty simple. They lack the curved claws exemplified by birds such as the raven, and are instead rather flat and chunky. In other words, they are perfect for a flat-plane carving.



Paint the wood grouse. Apply the base coat wash over the entire carving. Blend in the colors of the body, and let the paint dry. Then, drybrush an arc of white paint partway down from the outer tail feathers. Add additional detail by dabbing white paint onto this area with a smaller brush. Paint around the smaller tail feathers as well. Paint the facial details with a fine brush and a toothpick.



Seal

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Body: black, white, pewter gray
 - Whisker dots: black
 - Muzzle accent: toffee
 - Eyes: black, white

Seals, like this harbor seal or common seal, inhabit the Scandinavian coastline. Since Norway takes up most of this real estate, seals have left their biggest impression upon Norwegian culture, especially in the northern parts of Norway, where they were once highly valued for their meat, leather, and fat. Excessive hunting, a tendency to get caught in fishing nets, and a low placement on the food chain all came together to cause the European Union to ban the trade of seal products not long ago. In response, the Norwegian government unsubsidized their seal industry, effectively removing it from their national portfolio. Today, harbor seals are making a comeback because of these timely policies.

The pose of this figure is typical of a harbor seal; they are often

seen sunning themselves on rocks or beaches just like this, with their feet lifted up off the ground. I recommend a vertical grain direction simply to keep the face-carving process straightforward and similar to most of the other projects. The feet should be stable enough like this, but a horizontal grain direction would certainly offer additional support. Take note of the orientation of the feet: one foot is on top of the other. When viewed from the top or bottom, though, they almost appear to have an extra set of feet! This is because a harbor seal's feet are shaped very differently from other mammals—they are shaped like tailfins, with the longest toes on the outsides and the shortest in the middle.



The neck rolls on this seal add a little shape and a whole lot of personality.



STEP-BY-STEP

GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: 2½" high x 5¾" long x 2" wide (6.4 x 14.6 x 5.1cm); grain along height

Sketch the side view pattern onto an appropriately sized block of wood. Using a band saw or coping saw, cut all the way around the perimeter of the pattern.



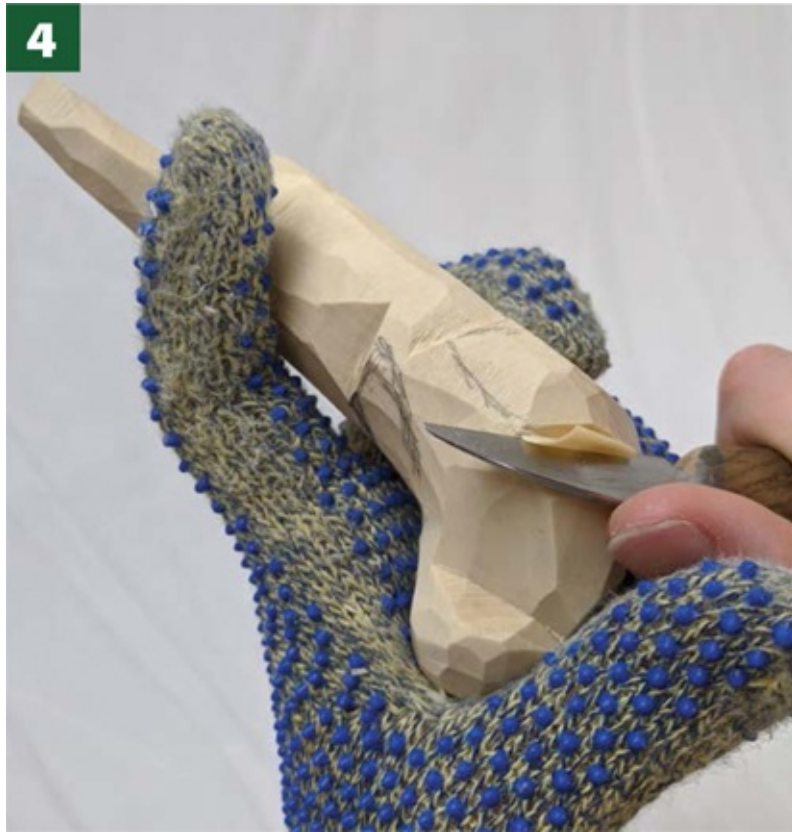
Sketch the seal. The shape is pretty simple, but unless you are particularly familiar with seals, you may have to sketch it on anyway just to make sure it will become a seal rather than a wonky gourd. The centerline is particularly important here, as it guides the entire shape. Notice how it curves at both ends.



Round the entire body. Carve away the excess you identified in your sketch, then remove all corners. There are no ears or horns sticking out anywhere, so there is nothing to be afraid of here.



Bring out the muzzle. Make a wide stop cut underneath the muzzle, then carve up to it to make it stick out from the body. Extend this cut and round it slightly around the sides.



Rough in the flippers. Begin by boldly stop-cutting through the ends of the flippers and on top of the bottom flipper, and then carving up to those fairly deep cuts. Stop-cutting farther out than necessary here will ensure your flippers have enough thickness to look useful in the wild. After all, this seal needs those flippers to get around!



Refine the flippers. To refine any shape while carving, all you can do is keep carving. If a cut went a little too deep into some part of the seal, carve it off. If there are some fuzzy bits where you tried to stop-cut something, keep stop-cutting until they are gone. Do so here around the flippers until they are clearly shaped and defined.



Add a neck roll. Seals are just like us—if we pose the wrong way, we get a bit of a neck roll. Reflect that fact of life here by adding an additional curved series of stop cuts under where the existing muzzle stop cuts are.



Scoop out the eye sockets. Since this block of wood is becoming seal-like, start to suggest a seal-like face by scooping wood out from above the muzzle. Angle these eye sockets down a bit toward both sides.



Scoop out wood above the top shoulder. A seal's flipper is its hand, and the rest of the arm is in there somewhere. To convey this, simulate a gouge cut by rolling your blade above the top flipper. Do this several times until the flipper proudly stands out from the body.



Shape the end of the tail. Narrow the tail or leg area of the seal, making the rear flippers fan out a bit. Then, carve a V-groove into the end of the rear flippers. Keep in mind that this groove is NOT the separation between these flippers, but rather a separation between the toes of each flipper.

10



Increase the neck roll count. If one neck roll just does not look like enough, add some more. The rest of the seal does not have much detail, so these additional neck rolls help spice things up.



Separate the toes. Each flipper should have five toes. Carve the middle toe in the center of the notch. This might look uncomfortable, but if you examine photographs of real seals, that is just how they pose. They have their preferences, and we have ours.



Carve the facial features. Start by carving out a triangle for the center of the mouth, and work your way up the smile on each side. Then, carve the nostrils and eyes. Notice how the eyes are not deeply set, but rather protrude from the head slightly. To do this, stop-cut around the eyes as normal, but then sweep wood away from around the eyes so they protrude slightly.



Paint the seal. After applying the base coat wash, blend in full-strength gray paint to add the main coloration and toffee around the muzzle. Let the piece dry before drybrushing white paint all over the belly and, more lightly, the entire carving. Finally, add the facial details with a toothpick.



Lynx

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Spots, ear tufts, whisker dots: black
 - Beard, facial accents, eye reflections, ear insides: white
 - Additional facial stripes: country tan
 - Nose: flesh
 - Belly: ivory
 - Body: black, nutmeg brown, pumpkin orange, burnt sienna, toffee

As discussed on (here), the Norwegians of the last century who decided to make the lion their natural symbol—along with the many Scandinavian craftsmen who attempted to recreate lion likenesses in paintings and carvings—had likely never seen a real lion before. Yet, although lions have not lived natively in Scandinavia for thousands of years, one of their relatives has: the lynx. Lynxes are Scandinavia's only wild cat, and they are stealthy, medium-sized

felines that prey upon rodents, birds, and even small deer. They have V-shaped beards, tufted black-tipped ears, striped faces, and coats that are speckled on the back and sides.

The body of this project is somewhat similar to some of the previous projects, but, like with the seal, there is a dash of asymmetry: the entire head is turned to the side. Gaining experience with poses like this can help lead you into greater comfort with natural poses. The body is kept symmetrical to allow you to focus on just turning the head. Have fun carving this predator, but make sure to keep it away from your carved roosters!



Whiskers not included, but rather suggested. Such is the flat-plane way.



STEP-BY-STEP

GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: 4½" high x 3¼" long x 2" wide (11.4 x 8.3 x 5.1cm); grain along height

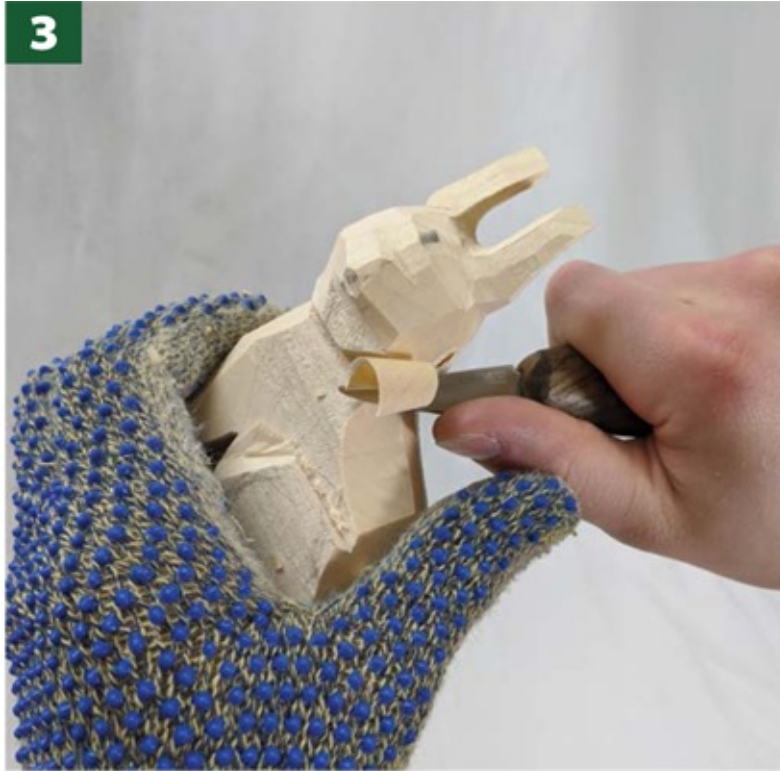
Sketch the side and front view patterns onto an appropriately sized block of wood. Using a band saw or coping saw, saw the front view, leaving little tabs of wood between cuts so that wood does not fall off at this point. Then, saw all the way around the perimeter of the side view pattern. Remove all waste wood.



Sketch the main details. NOTE: The pattern displays the head at a 90° angle for clarity, but I have angled the head ever-so-slightly toward the front. If you'd like to do so as well, just make sure to leave some extra wood around the ears so they do not become too narrow. To commit to tilting the head, simply sketch the centerline down the head in the appropriate angle.



Round and remove. Knock off the back corners with bold, sweeping cuts. Then, grasp the figure by its head and narrow the front legs so that the hind legs are clearly visible when viewed straight on.



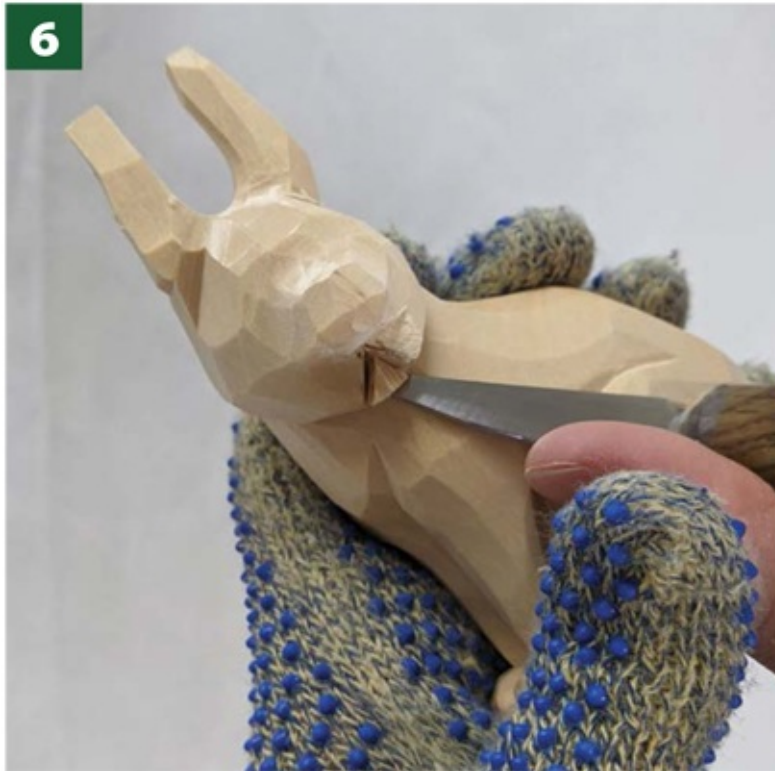
Let the head breathe. Round the head and begin shaping the ears. Give the head some space by carving up from the back to what will be the beard. Make stop cuts around the beard to define it, making it curve to make the face appear roughly circular. Carve up to the cuts you just made.



Cut around the back legs. Hold the piece upside down and find a comfortable (or at least secure) angle to define the back legs with a series of V-shaped cuts. Due to the sitting pose, you will have to curve the perimeter of the legs dramatically up and toward the back. Remember that there is a knee in there somewhere under all that fur.



Separate the front legs. Make V-shaped cuts with the tip of your knife all the way from the paws up to the chest. At the chest, split the legs with a wide V. This shape denotes that the legs do not protrude together from the center of the chest, but rather off to the sides a bit.



Part the beard. Chop a V out of the center of the beard to create the classic lynx look. At the bottom of the V, make sure there is no trace of the previous bottom of the beard. You may have to slice off some additional wood here or press the fibers back together with the back of your knife.



Portray the hind paws. Stop-cut around and between the hind paws, and do the same for the tail while you are at it. Leave the tail quite short and stubby, and just wrap it slightly around the rear.



Refine the shape of the ears. The ears of a lynx are adorned with narrow black tufts that often stick straight up and curve in slightly at the tips. Whittle the ears accordingly, and feel reassured by the vertical orientation of the grain that they will have enough strength to stay together.



Detail the beard. Slice in a few evenly spaced V-grooves on each side of the beard. Try to cut as few grooves as possible while still making the beard look like it is comprised of many fine hairs.



Reflect on the overall shape. Take a moment to take a good look at the entire figure. Does anything look out of place or blocky? Did you miss a corner or some saw marks? If so, adjust accordingly. You can always take more wood off later, but refining the shape now will help avoid potentially having to carve off details you make later on.



Add the final details. Finely cut in between the four toes of each paw. I aim to make each of these V-grooves a combination of two stop cuts: one positioned vertically at the ends of the toes, and another carved slightly into the top of the paws.



Apply the base coat. Use a $\frac{3}{8}$ " (1cm) paintbrush to douse the entire carving in a mixture of black paint and water. Make sure to get paint in all crevices.



Begin applying colors. While the base coat is still wet, use the same brush to blend in brown paint. If the paint starts to cake up or feel thick, simply dip your brush in water and wipe off excess with a napkin if necessary. Dry your brush and lightly blend in a dusting of white paint to the paws, tail, belly, and beard.



Add color details. Use a finely pointed round brush to paint the spots. Use a toothpick to paint smaller spots, as well as the eyes, nose, and lips.



Brown Bear

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- All basic items described on (here)
- Pattern on (here)
- Apple Barrel paints:
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Iris: melted chocolate
 - Rest of eyes: black
 - Light reflection in eyes: white
 - Muzzle: country tan
 - Body: burnt umber, toffee (toffee is drybrushed on)

There once was a man traveling through a dark forest known to be inhabited by shape-shifting trolls. Worse, these trolls were attracted to the scent of Christians. As he hiked on and on, his eyelids began to droop. His head nodded down, and when his chin hit his chest, he woke up just enough to notice a large brown shape a few yards ahead of him. His eyes focused, and, with a jolt, he realized it was a massive brown bear. *This must be a troll bear*, he thought with growing fear; *only God can save me now*. He pulled out his trusty wooden cross, a known troll-repellent, but then the bear bowed down before him. *Thank the Lord, it's a Christian bear!* he thought to himself. With the threat gone, he began to walk around the bear.

While doing so, he saw that the bear's lips were moving; it was saying:

“And please bless this food as it enters my body, Amen.”

Whether you want to carve a troll bear or a Christian bear, this project will suit your needs. Though many caricature representations of bears are depicted with wide, blocky muzzles, I encourage you to draw more upon their natural form by narrowing the muzzle and tapering it in a bit toward the nose. The blockiness can be saved for the legs of this figure.



Bigger isn't always better—small, deep-set eyes give this bear a large and lumbering look.



STEP-BY-STEP

GETTING STARTED

Wood block dimensions: $6\frac{3}{4}$ " high x $3\frac{1}{4}$ " long x 3" wide (17.2 x 8.3 x 7.6cm); grain along height

Sketch the side and front view patterns onto an appropriately sized block of wood—the front view goes on the $6\frac{3}{4}$ " x $3\frac{1}{4}$ " (17.2 x 8.3cm) face and the side view goes on the $6\frac{3}{4}$ " x 3" (17.2 x 7.6cm) face.

Using a band saw or coping saw, saw the front view, leaving little tabs of wood between cuts so that wood does not fall off at this point. Saw between the ears. Then, saw all the way around the perimeter of the side view pattern. Remove all waste wood.



Concoct a scheme. Even though bears might seem big and scary, this one is actually relatively simple to carve. There are few defining shapes and lines, but that means that each line carries additional weight in

making the bear look awesome. Notice how the front paws are angled opposite to the lines formed by where the legs meet the body. This is just a small trick to add visual interest.



Begin rounding. Chunk away wood from under the muzzle and narrow the face toward the muzzle with some truly flat planes. Let the chips fly!



Round and bend the backs of the legs. While real bears may not visibly exhibit such a pronounced bend in the backs of the knees, complete this step to help balance the level of detail between the front and back. Do not forget the small, stubby tail!



Define the crotch. Round the legs up to a large and bold V-shaped junction. Round the belly into this junction slightly on both sides. Round the legs downward into the feet, and meet this cut from the top of the feet.



Rough in the arms. With the entire edge of your knife, cut long, V-shaped channels around the arms. The tops of the arms can essentially be one nearly straight line, while the bottoms of the arms should curve a bit more as they near the shoulders.



Slice wood away from the sides of the chest. This will help the arms to stand out more from the torso. Further shape the arms and chest, with the top half of your knife cutting up toward the neck as you hold the figure upside down. No matter your grip, make sure to support the knife with both hands.



Rough in the facial shape. Scoop out the eye sockets by cutting in from the muzzle and twisting your wrist to guide the knife out before cutting through the eye sockets. There are a plethora of bear carvings with wide, blocky muzzles out there, but to achieve a more lifelike appearance, try narrowing the muzzle a bit more.



Carve between the ears. Endgrain can be tough to cut across, but with a properly sharpened knife, you should not have too much trouble. If the hardness of the wood makes it a bit too difficult, many carvers use a mixture of water and rubbing alcohol to temporarily soften endgrain. The alcohol helps the mixture evaporate faster so that it doesn't soak in for too long.



Add some scruff around the neck. Although carving is a subtractive art form, it is amazing how sometimes removing wood can seem to add substance to the figure as a whole. Join two bold, slanted stop cuts in the middle of the chest to add a scruffy roll of fur under the chin. Then, carve up to those stop cuts.



Add additional lines to the backs of the legs. A single crease in the legs can look a bit artificial, so add one or two more to further increase and balance out the detail levels between the front and back sides.



Start adding facial details. Carve out simple triangular chips from the ears, carve a horizontal line for the mouth, and add a few nostril incisions so the bear can breathe. Sketch in the eyes to ensure proper placement. Once the eyes are right, make sure the face as a whole appears bear-like.

12



Complete the facial details. If your muzzle was too large, as mine was, narrow it from the sides. Notice how the muzzle is wider at the bottom than the top, and that the bottom lip is narrower than the top. Carve the eyes. The smaller the eyes, the bigger and wilder the bear looks.



Separate the claws. For a simplified figure such as this, there is no need to fret about getting the claws to be shaped in the perfect way. If a simple bear had ultra-realistic claws, the rest of it would look lackluster. Balancing the level of detail will create a more concise and refined overall appearance.



Paint the bear. Like the overall shape, the coloration of the bear is simple, so try to add just enough contrast between the black nose, light muzzle, and brown body to make the piece come to life. Notice the center of the top lip is gray and the inside of the lips are black.



Reindeer

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Hand drill (to attach antlers)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
 - Apple Barrel paints:
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Body: black, melted chocolate
 - White stripes across sides: white
 - Belly: white
 - Eyes: black, white

Unlike other types of deer in Scandinavia, reindeer do not roam free; they are herded. This practice is mainly facilitated by a group of people known as the Sami. Before the Germanic people that often come to mind when we think of Scandinavians moved into the area, the indigenous Sami people had already lived in the northern reaches for hundreds of years, and their culture has long revolved around their reindeer. The Sami people once depended on reindeer for food, clothing, shelter, and transportation, and to this day, a sizable portion of Sami still tend to bustling reindeer herds. Sami handcraft based upon reindeer leather, antler, and bone persists as well.

Carving the body of this project is not terribly different from

carving that of the stylized horse; the main difference is the legs of this mammal are set in motion. Carving such a pose does not offer much more of a challenge than when legs are lined up with one another, but you will want to check to make sure both pairs of legs are similarly sized. This reindeer's neck is angled downward, either to move stealthily or to graze upon vegetation. The antlers are simplified, carved separately, and are supported by the grain orientation, but you will have to be a little careful when drilling the attachment holes underneath. No need for excessive force!



Carving the antlers separately allows you to make them thin and elegant without risking breakage.



STEP-BY-STEP

GETTING STARTED

Body: Wood block dimensions: 3¼" high x 6" long x 1½" wide (8.3 x 15.2 x 3.8cm); grain along height

Antlers: Wood block dimensions (2 blocks): 1¼" high x 3½" long x ¾" wide (3.2 x 8.9 x 1.9cm); grain along height

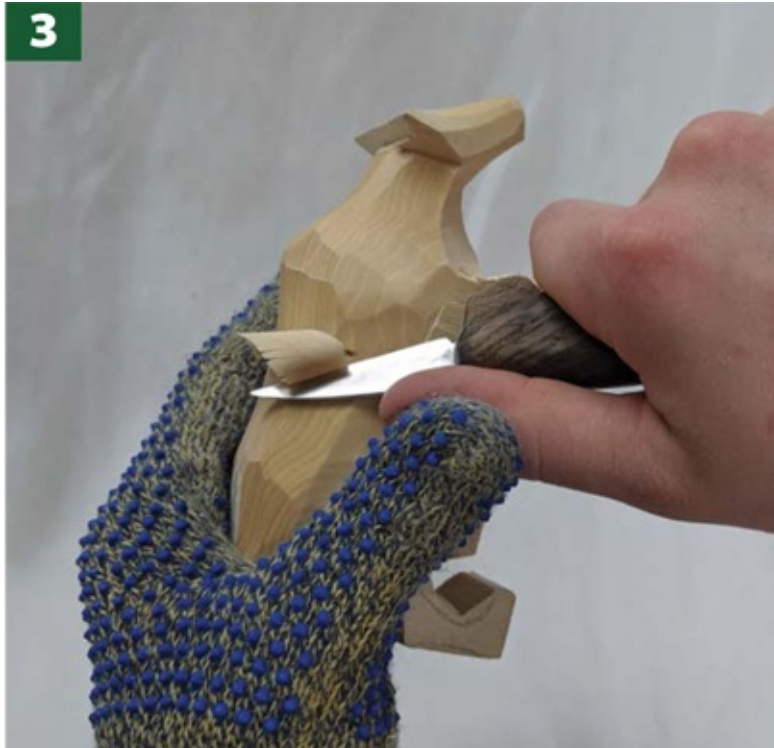
Sketch the side and front view patterns onto appropriately sized blocks of wood. Cut between the legs in a method you are comfortable with. I set the height of my table saw and adjust the fence to position the blade in the center of the block, then carefully run the block through with its grain running perpendicular to the table. This has the potential to be dangerous, so consider using a coping saw or band saw to cut between the legs after cutting the profile. I chose to not saw out the rest of the front view shape. Using a band saw or coping saw, cut all the way around the perimeter of the side view. When you are done, you will have created an eight-legged reindeer blank. This is good! Finally, saw the antlers roughly to shape.



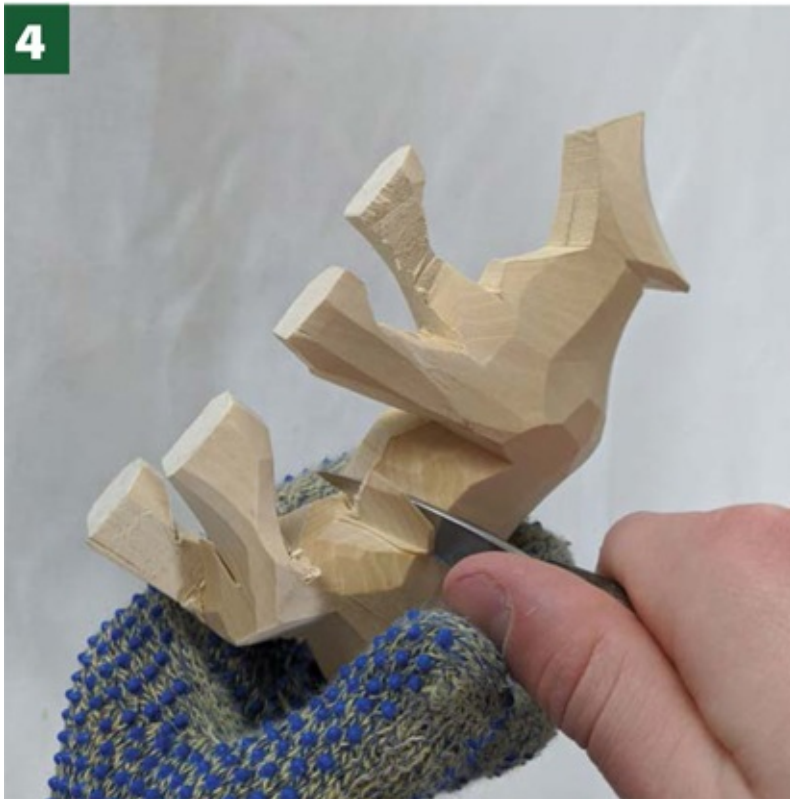
Plan your reindeer. Scribble all over the vestigial legs created from the sawing process so you are certain you are removing the correct ones when the time comes. Pencil in other important details, like the shape of the jaw and where the legs connect to the body.



Hack off the unwanted legs. To avoid extraneous knife wear and tear, simply stop-cut at the bases of the unwanted legs until they pop off. Make sure to not remove any of the good legs!



Round the back. Knock off the corners of the back until the back shape looks reasonable. Once the shape is there, make sure the facets look the way you want them. I prefer making such facets as long as possible, but do not fret about it. The overall shape is what matters most here.



Round the belly and legs. Round the belly into all four legs, always making sure you have a good grip on both the knife and the wood. Where the belly meets the legs, cut down and away on the legs, rounding them in the process.



Widen the shoulders. Distance the two front legs from each other a bit so that they do not form a second hump in the front. In the wild, natural selection takes care of such things, but in the carving world, it is your responsibility!



Define the ears. Carve the ears so that they stick out at an angle (not straight up or out to the sides), and round the head in between them. Round the hump in the back, starting at the back of the head.



Thin the legs. The thighs should be somewhat thin—wider from the sides than they are from the front and back. With all these legs sticking every which way, it can be a bit awkward to find a good angle, but there seems to always be a good way to grip things sufficiently well.



Detail the mouth and hooves. Notch a mouth into the snout, then narrow the bottom lip. Thin the ankles so that the hooves stick out wider than the legs. Reindeer have surprisingly big hooves relative to their body compared to other deer and even moose. Finally, cut a vertical groove in the center of each hoof.



Carve in the eyes. Simply stop-cut the eyes into the head and slice wood away from the perimeter to suggest eyelids. Only about the front half of the eyes should be visible when the reindeer is viewed head-on.



Sketch the antlers onto the antler blanks. To get the antlers to curve away from the head instead of sticking straight out, curve their shape in such a way as to use the entire width of the antler blocks. When viewed from above, imagine the overall shape to be as if you placed a noodle on it that was flush with one side of the antler at the top and the other side toward the bottom; to do this, it has to curve in the middle.



Shape the bulk of the antlers. Cut away the excess you denoted in the previous step, making sure to leave enough room for a toothpick-sized hole in the bottom.

12



Define the prongs. Give each of these antlers two prongs in the front and three in the back. If you would like, you could add more, but this particular configuration establishes a proper reindeer look without becoming too cumbersome.

13



Prepare the antler joints. Using a tiny drill bit, such as a $\frac{3}{64}$ " (1.2mm) bit, drill two holes on the sides of the skull at a slight angle. Then, use the same bit to drill into the bottom of an antler's midpoint. Support the sides of the antler with your fingers, making sure you do not split the wood or drill through. Repeat with the other antler.

14



Insert antler mount pins and apply the base coat. Whittle two lengths of toothpick and insert them into the holes in the head, making sure they are snug. Then, apply the dark base coat to the entire carving. This base coat will slightly expand the wood fibers, further locking the toothpicks in place.



Paint the colors. Paint a base of brown, add black to the hooves and face, and then drybrush white along the neck, the chin, and the center of the belly, plus a strip of white across the sides. Use a finely pointed round brush to paint the white around the eyes.



Glue the antlers on. Apply a dab of cyanoacrylate (CA) glue to the holes in the antlers, and slide them on. Quickly adjust the antlers as you add them to make sure they are at the proper angles before the glue sets.



Moose

MATERIALS & TOOLS

- **All basic items described on (here)**
- **Hand drill (to attach antlers)**
- **Pattern on (here)**
- **Apple Barrel paints:**
 - Base coat: brown oxide + black
 - Eyes: black, white, melted chocolate
 - Legs: white (drybrushed onto brown base)
 - Body: burnt umber, toffee
 - Antlers: ivory, country tan
 - Hooves: black
- **FolkArt paints:**
 - Part of antler base: yellow ochre

During my trip to Norway in 2018, I often took some time to wander mountainsides in the evening. I took in every detail and compared it all to what I was familiar with back home. Much was familiar, but everything had a different feeling. Whether this feeling stemmed from the ghosts of Vikings, Nordic nature spirits, or my own deep admiration for the country, one thing was certain: there were small piles of dry brown capsules all over the place. Each capsule was

somewhere around 1" (2.5cm) long and about half as wide, and they all appeared to be uniformly shaped. The first thing that came to mind was owl pellets, but I doubted there could be so many owls. Later, with constant sightings and growing curiosity, I asked a local what these common capsules could be. The answer? Moose poop. How such large, common, and digestively active creatures can remain out of sight is incredible. Fortunately, while being driven up and down mountains by a Norwegian friend, we had the fortune to spot two moose along the way. To her, it was an unremarkable sight, but to me, it was amazing.

Capture the ethereal beauty of the moose by paying attention to the humped back, elegant legs, massive snout, and tired eyes. While the reindeer has more of a cautious stance, this figure strikes a more proud pose, with legs extended farther apart and one hoof raised up off the ground. Getting the antlers shaped within reason also helps to sell the idea of "moose," but there is nothing wrong with carving a doe if you prefer!



The key to carving those antlers with just a knife? Patience and determination.



STEP-BY-STEP

GETTING STARTED

Body: Wood block dimensions: 6" high x 8" long x 2" wide (15.2 x 20.3 x 5.1cm); grain along height

Antlers: Wood block dimensions (2 blocks): 2" high x 4¼" long x 1" wide (5.1 x 10.8 x 2.5cm); grain along height

Sketch the side and front view patterns onto appropriately sized blocks of wood. Cut between the legs in a method you are comfortable with. I set the height of my table saw and adjust the fence to position the blade in the center of the block, then carefully run the block through with its grain running perpendicular to the table. This has the potential to be dangerous, so consider using a coping saw or band saw to cut between the legs after cutting the profile. I chose to not saw out the rest of the front view shape. Using a band saw or coping saw, cut all the way around the perimeter of the side view. When you are done, you will have created an eight-legged moose blank. This is good! Finally, saw the antlers roughly to shape.



Decide which legs to chop off. Nobody wants to see an eight-legged

moose, but a two- or three-legged moose is a sorry sight as well. To avoid all of these situations, decide and clearly mark from all angles which legs left over from the sawing process should be removed. Then, saw or carve them off.



Round the corners. A four-legged animal has a lot of corners.



Round the underside. Slice all the way from the belly to all four legs, keeping in mind that moose are non-picky herbivores that tend to find plenty of food every day. In other words, do not forget to leave a bit of a curved stomach.



Define the front leg junction. Instead of making the area between the front legs straight and flat, leave a bit of a mini dewlap, or a little peak of fur that points down in the middle. As you carve up to this junction from the legs, curve your knife in from the knees to give them a somewhat knobby appearance.



Bring out the booty. The tail is a small wedge that points directly into the separation between the legs. Widen this gap with repeated slices. Keep in mind that this is not a horse, which tend to have more bulging muscles. Thus, narrow the legs so that they are wider when viewed from the moose's profile than from the rear.



Stretch the extended back leg away from the body. Move the front of this leg farther back than its forward-angled counterpart by stop-cutting a few additional times from where it attaches to the body.

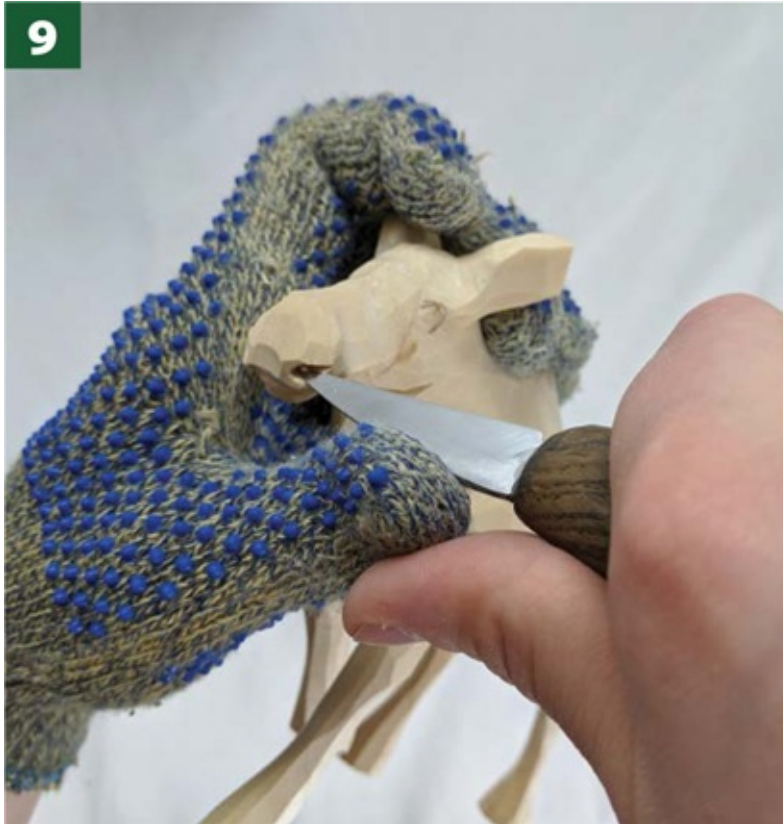


Shape the sides of the ears. Moose have peculiar ears that are widest

in the middle. When viewed from the sides, they are almost diamond-shaped, albeit rounded at the corners. Make sure the ears are not protruding directly out of the top of the head, but rather from the sides.



Shape the ears. Round the top of the head a bit between the ears, and angle stop-cut between the ears and head. Finally, droop the ears down a bit, but not so much as to greatly reduce their structural integrity.



Decongest the nose. Carve out the characteristic moose nostrils with the tip of your knife. First, incise the bottom shape, then meet that cut and trace that shape from above until the nostrils are open wide enough.



Carve around the eyes. With the tip of your knife, trace a circular bulge shape for the eyes to be placed in. Begin to separate the eyelids from the eyes.



Carve the eyes. Carefully stop-cut the eyes in. Like with the brown bear, it helps to make the eyes small in order to make the moose look big.



Carve the dewclaws. Make V-shaped cuts at a uniform distance above each hoof in the back to form the little knobs known as dewclaws. Then, from the back of each leg, roll fine wood shavings from the sides of each dewclaw to give them additional shape.



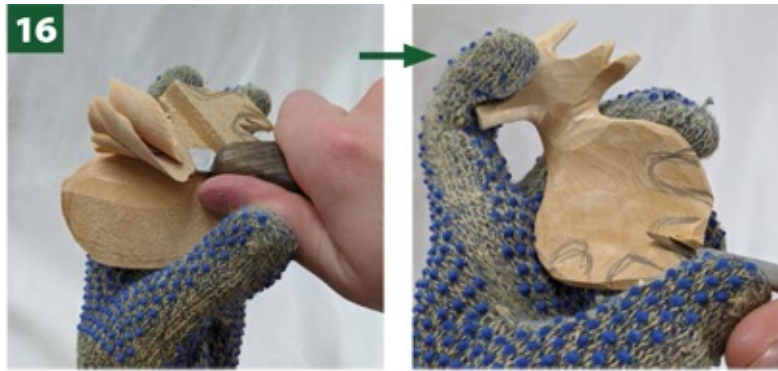
Strategically thin the legs. Make sure the legs are never wider from the front than they are from the sides. In most places, especially for the bottom halves of the legs, a cross section at any given point would be roughly round—or, in our flat-plane representation, roughly octagonal.



Detail the dewlap. Detail the moose's dewlap, or beard, by making V-shaped grooves with the tip of your knife. Curve them in varying directions as you run the cuts down and out of the bottom to give the dewlap a flowy texture.



Detail the ears. Carve a curvy channel into each ear, and meet that cut from the opposing side to form the cartilaginous details of the ears. Deepen these cuts several times until the ear looks like it could be useful in picking up sounds.



Carve the antlers. Hog off excess wood so that the antlers curve upward as they extend away from the base. To achieve this curve, you will have to keep switching between carving the back, front, and prongs in order to angle your knife properly. The two antlers do not have to mirror each other perfectly, but they should match up to some degree.



Attach the antlers. Drill a toothpick-sized hole around $\frac{1}{4}$ " (0.6cm) into the sides of the head and into the base of the antlers. Insert a finely whittled toothpick into both head holes and test the fit. Angle the base of the antlers so that when they are pressed against the head, they butt up against it. Use cyanoacrylate (CA) glue to glue them in after the entire figure is painted.



Paint the moose. Apply the base coat wash over the entire figure (and the antlers), then blend in full-strength colors with a wet brush. Darken the hooves and beard by blending in some black, then let dry. Drybrush white onto the legs. Finally, paint the eyes with a toothpick.

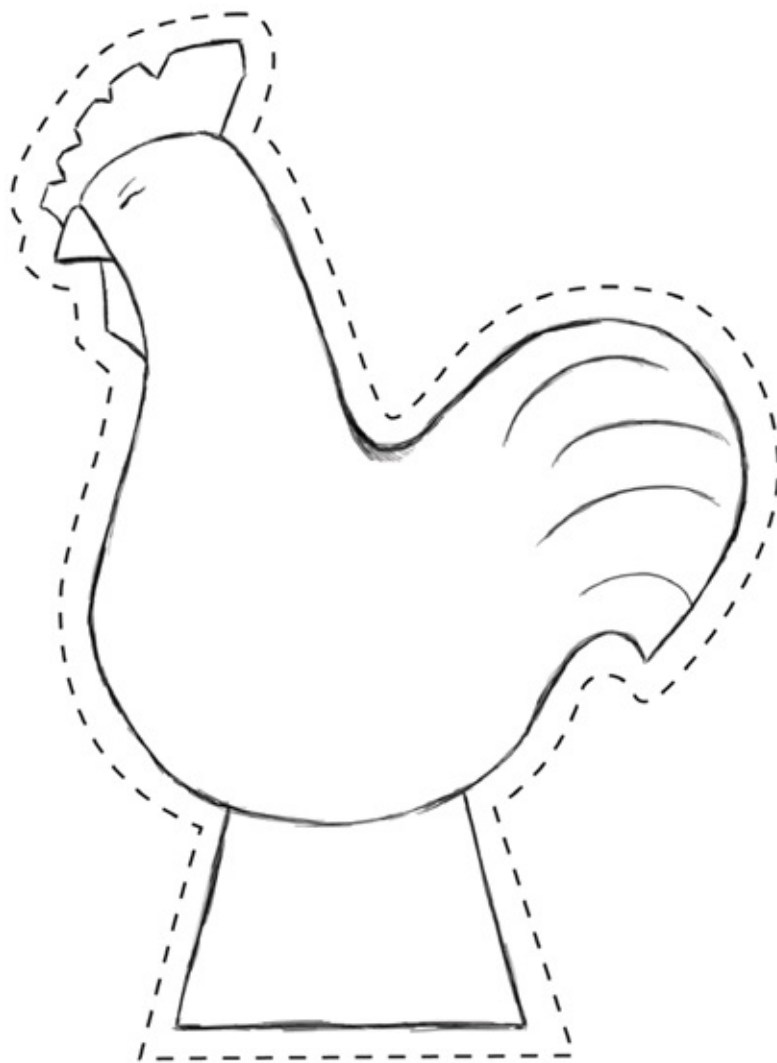


Project Patterns

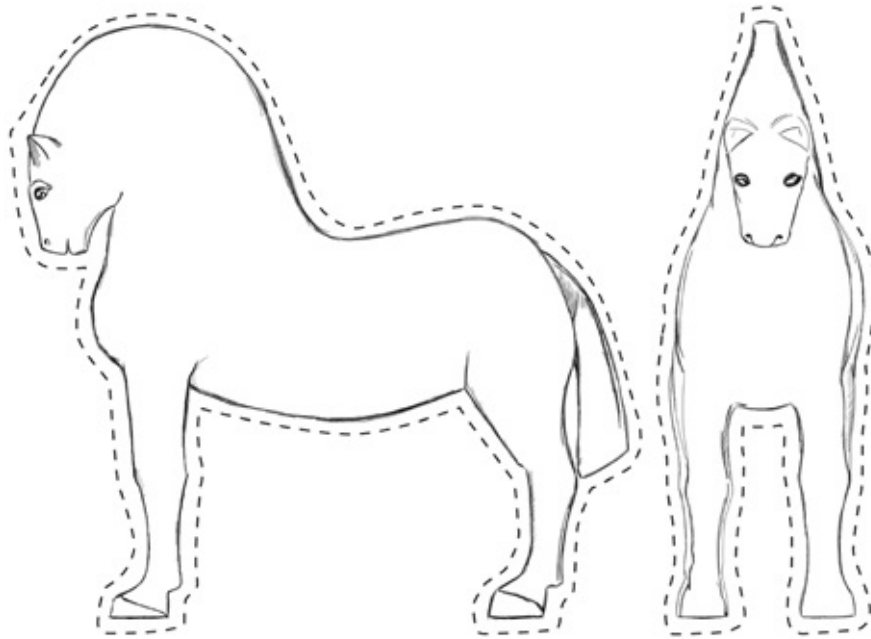
All patterns are full size.

For a printable PDF of the patterns used in this book, please contact Fox Chapel Publishing at customerservice@foxchapelpublishing.com, quoting the ISBN and title of this book, as well as the pattern or patterns required.

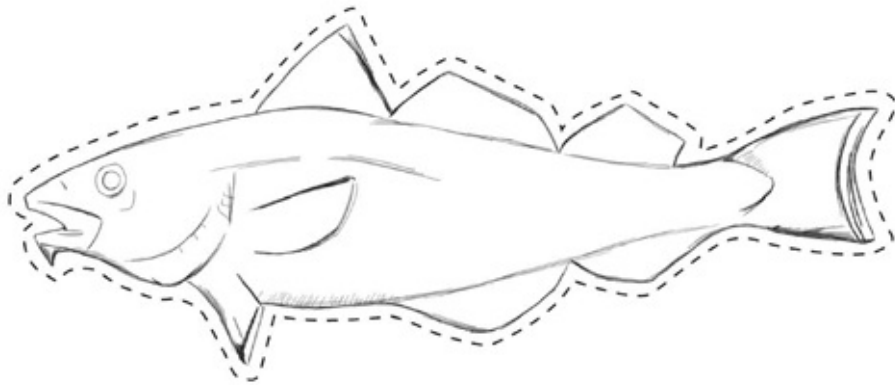
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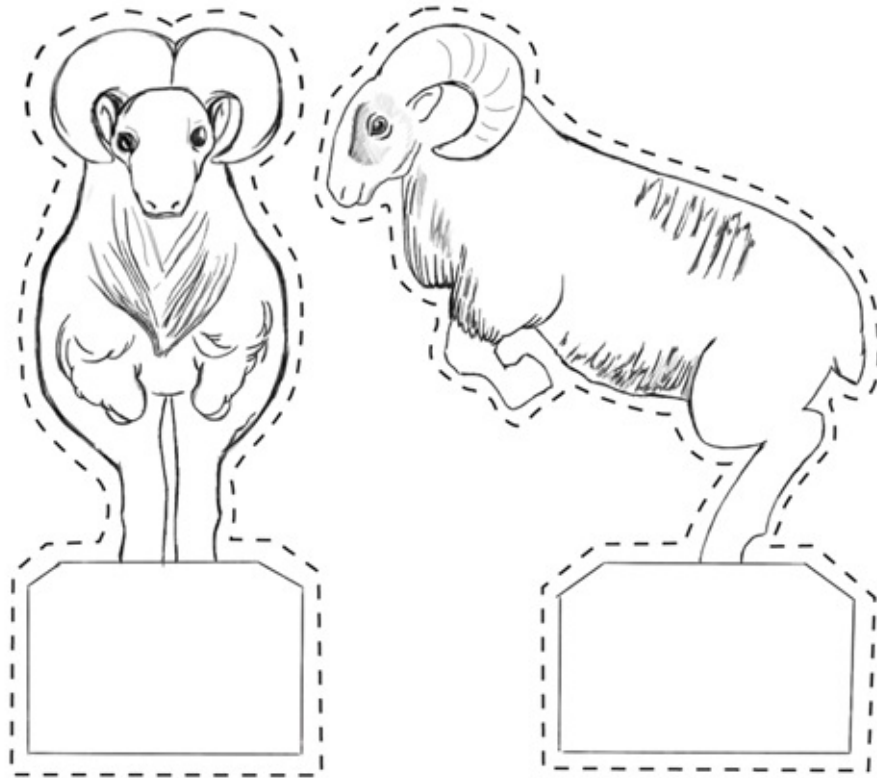
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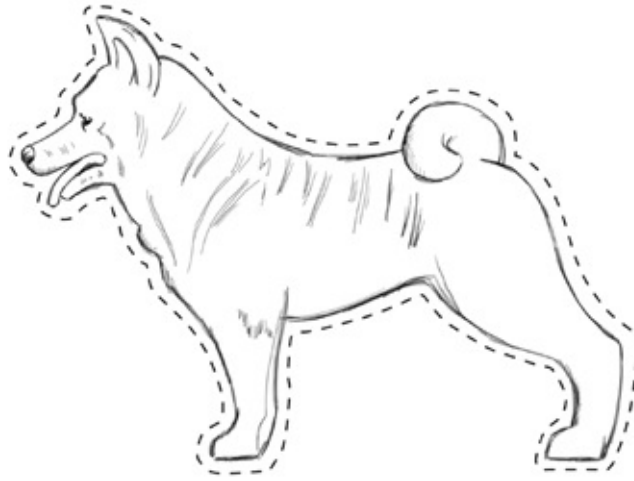
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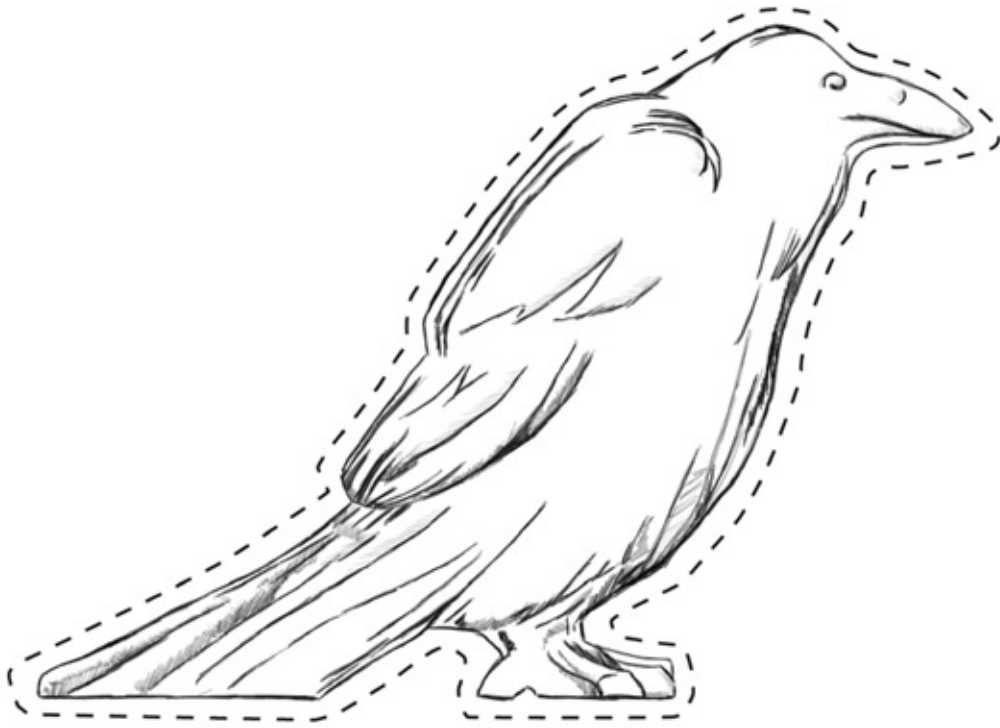
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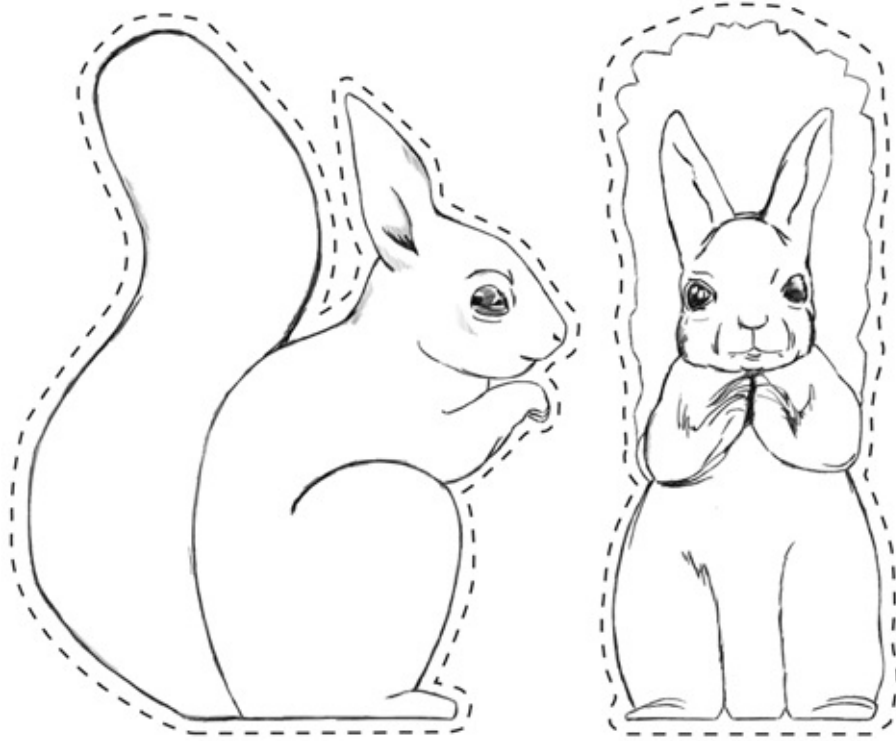
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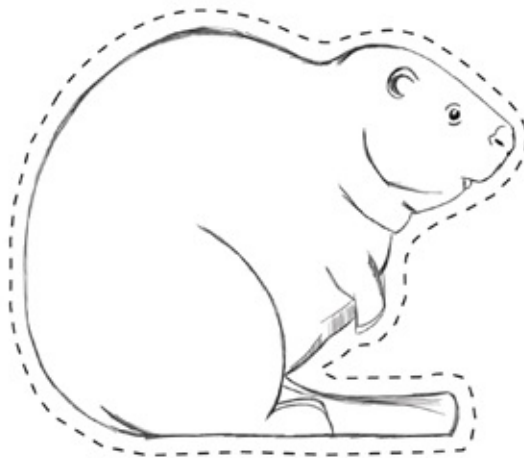
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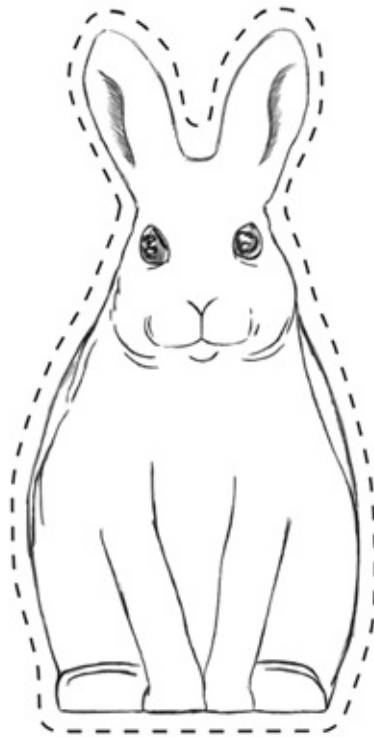
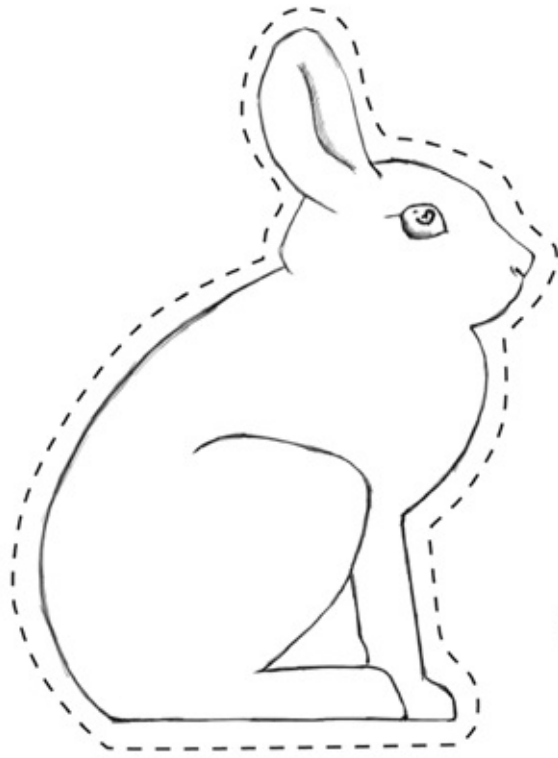
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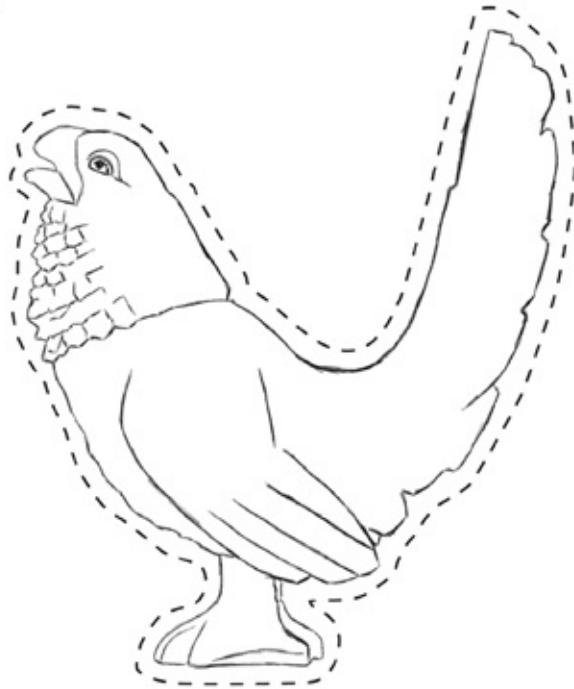
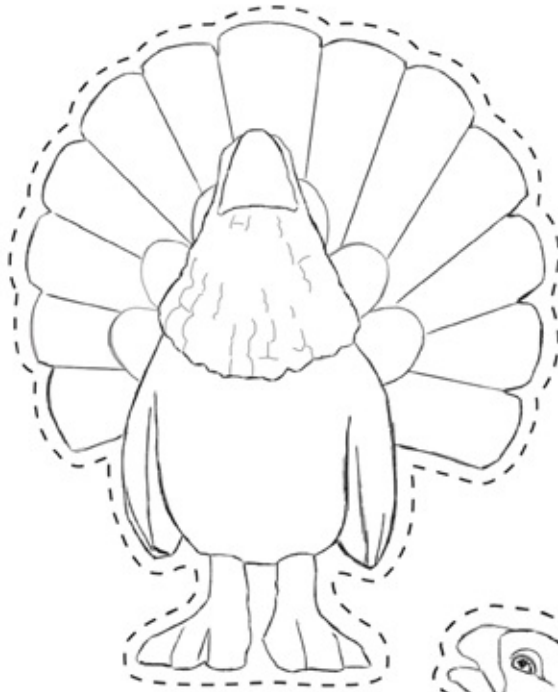
BEAVER



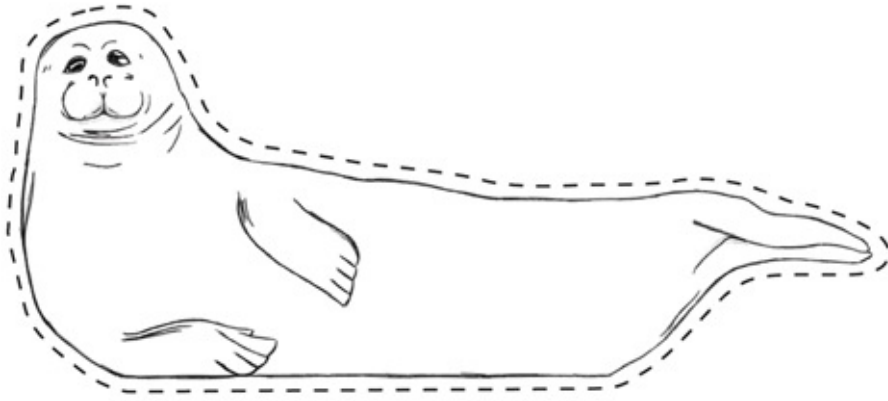
MOUNTAIN HARE



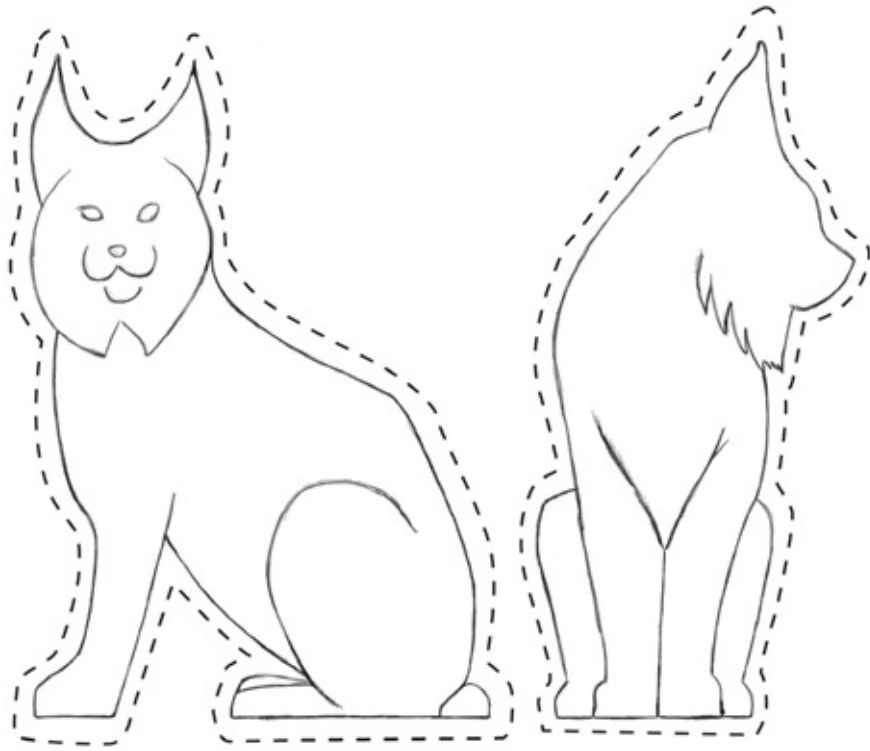
WOOD GROUSE



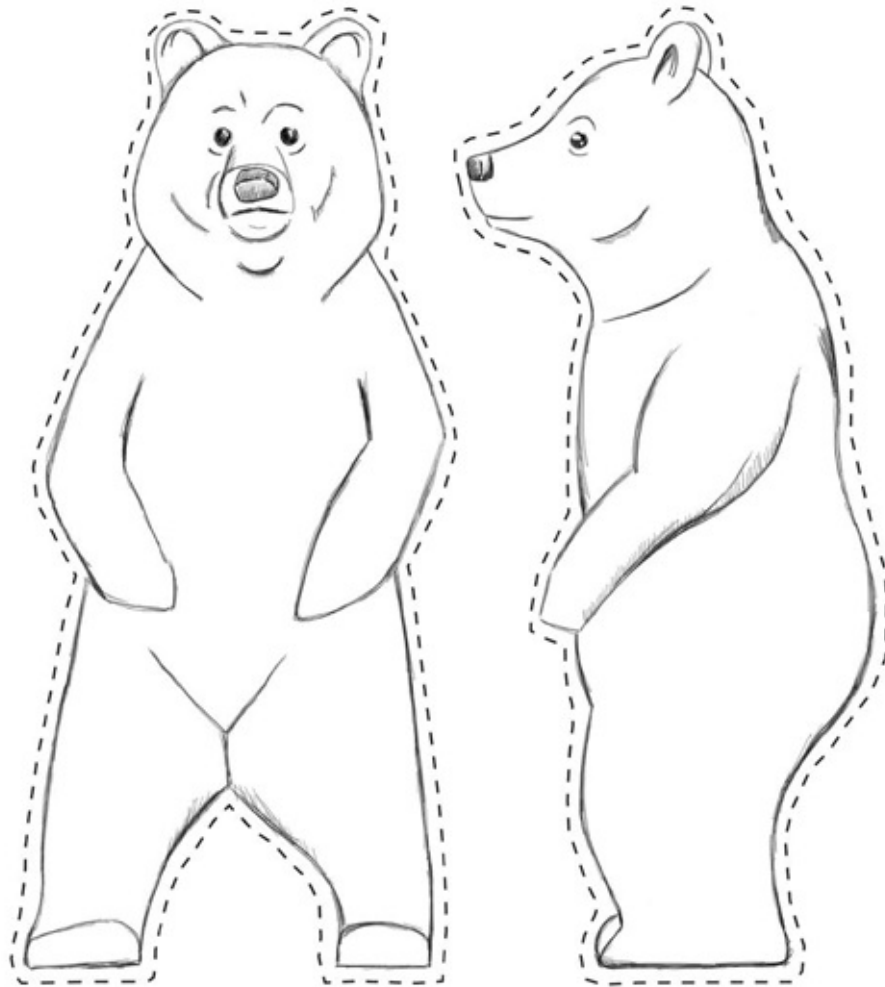
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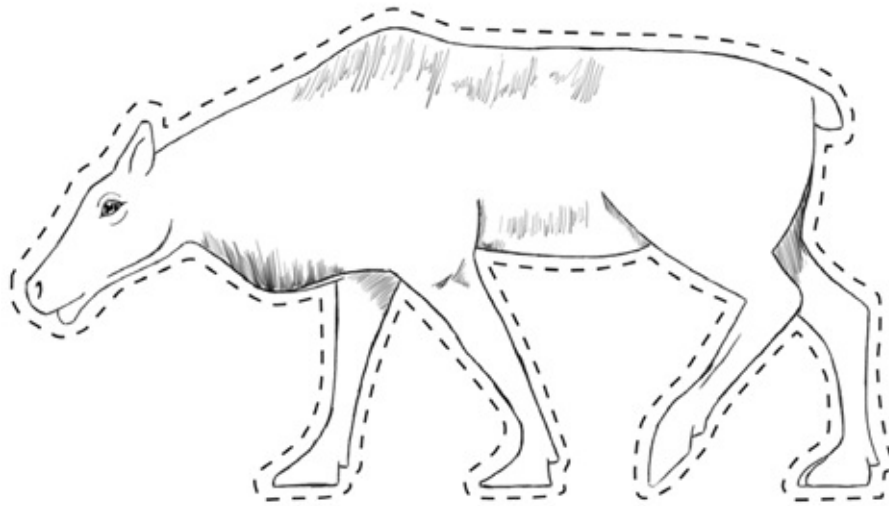
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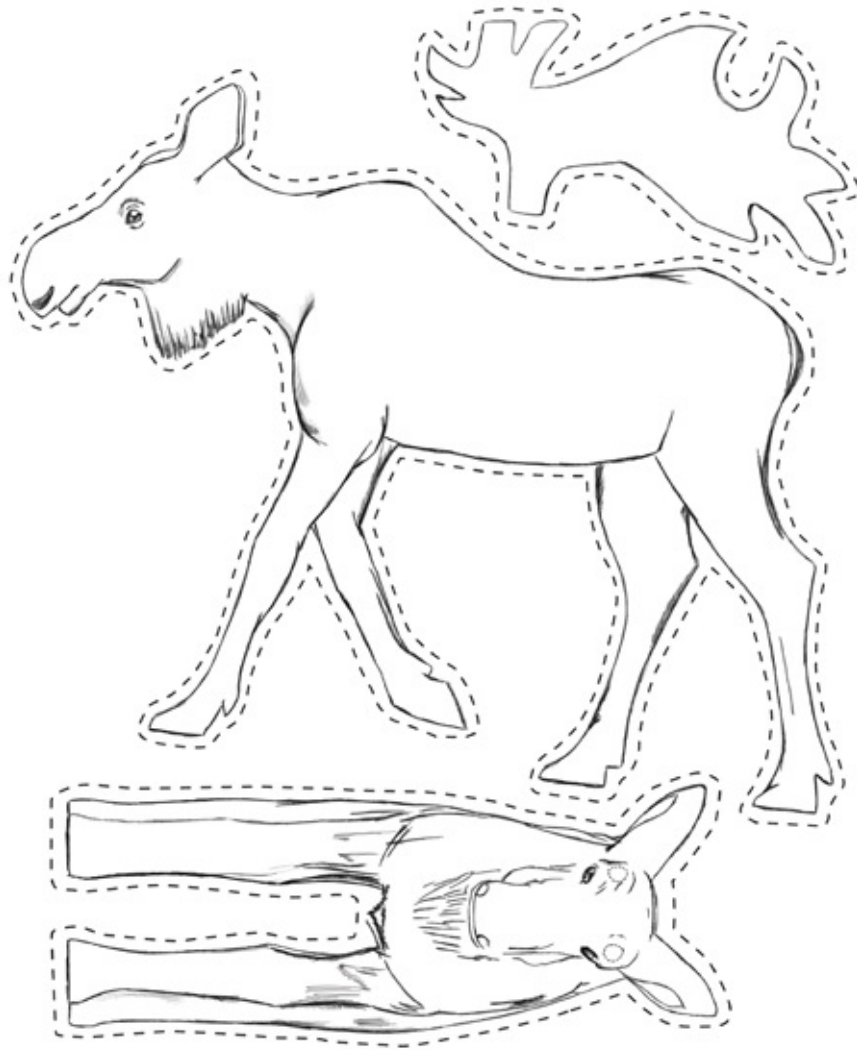
BROWN BEAR



REINDEER



MOOSE



About the Author

James Miller started carving at age 11 under the guidance of a supportive Community Education carving group. The members of this group introduced him to the Scandinavian flat-plane style, which sparked his ever-expanding interest in Scandinavian culture as a whole. This interest, and the support of mentors, family, and friends, has led him to become the youngest Vesterheim Gold Medalist woodworker, teach several classes, and demonstrate in numerous small-town events. In 2010, James' work appeared in *Woodcarving Illustrated* magazine for the first time as part of the Best Carving Design Contest. Several years later, through the encouragement of Harley Refsal, he submitted an article to *Woodcarving Illustrated's* 5th *Whittling* edition. Since then, he has written several articles for the magazine, and in 2018, he traveled to Norway to meet with talented craftsmen and learn their techniques.

When he's not busy with handcraft, exploring the outdoors, or spending time with friends, James is at work developing software, where he also happily faces the same challenge he finds in his woodcarving: simplifying and abstracting ideas in unique ways.

For more of his work, visit www.facebook.com/jrm.woodcarving.



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