

Mike Holme's visit to Cadillac Chapter of MDAA 1/31/2015

The Carl T. Johnson-Hunting & Fishing Center hosted a "Meet the President" seminar with Mike Holmes, President of the Michigan Darkhouse Angling Association on Saturday, January 31st, 2015.

The Cadillac Chapter invited Mike down to speak with club members and the general public, on spearing related issues and also on decoy carving. The first seminar started at 10:30 a.m. and pertained to the MDAA organization and other spearing related subjects.

Mike is the original founder of the MDAA and has been instrumental in helping to keep the rules and get the season length, that we enjoy today. Mike explained some of the hurdles that come with working with the DNR, the NRC and also with our Legislative process. Saying that this is a lengthy process, is a HUGE understatement. Since Mike is a retired Conservation Officer for the State of Michigan, this has benefitted us all, to a great degree. His past experience and contacts with the DNR, has really been a major asset and has also helped "speed along", in some cases, some of the issues that has plagued the spearing community for such a long time.

Mike also explained how critical it is that we have an "organized" voice, when it comes to presenting issues to the NRC and DNR. Anybody can go before an NRC meeting and voice their concerns, but having an organization with an active membership, has a greater effect when an issue comes before the board. For those of us present, without any political experience, this was a real learning experience on just how the NRC process really works. We're very lucky to have someone like Mike, with his experience, working on our behalf.

Another reason for having an organization like MDAA representing us is.... just because we enjoy the limits and season lengths we have now, doesn't mean that we have them forever. There are always other aspects, individuals and special interest groups, that are looking to take away, or restrict, our way of harvesting Northern Pike and Perch and the lakes that we do it in.

So....if you're wondering what your yearly dues to the MDAA are actually doing for you, this is just a small idea of what is being done, behind the scenes, on your behalf. All of us that participate in the sport of spearing, owe a lot to Mike and the MDAA.

Another topic Mike discussed, was the past problems with the MDAA website. The website had been previously "hacked" into by some Japanese website. In the past, every time that something new had to be added, or maintained, it was a major expense to the MDAA, this being charged from the original company that designed the website. This has now been corrected and is being taken care of, maintained and updated, through a new, better and cheaper source.

So if you have visited the site in the past and had problems, hopefully your next visit will be a much better experience. Stop by and check out the new site at:

<http://www.mi-darkhouse.org>

More exciting news for the MDAA was...We now have a Facebook Page! If you can't find the info from the MDAA website that you're looking for, please stop by Facebook for a look at all of the current happenings, pictures and activities that are taking place, not only within the MDAA, but also within their Cadillac "sub-chapter." I think you be pleasantly surprised!

You can check out the Cadillac site at: <http://mdaa-cadillacchapter.weebly.com>

After the question and answer part of the first seminar, we had a raffle for a set of Ice Tongs that were graciously donated by Brant Higgins, from Higgins Marine Metals LLC. **"Thank You"** Brant, for your generosity!

John Brooks' grandson, Gage Garland was the lucky winner! Congrats Gage!

After the raffle, everybody broke off at noon for a short lunch break, with the decoy carving half of the seminar coming up next and starting at approx. 1:00 p.m.

The second half of the seminar started off with Mike discussing his past experience and how he became interested in the art of carving spearing decoys.

Mikes family has a long history in the art of carving decoys. His grandfather and father both, were carvers. Mike originally got his start by carving duck decoys, but eventually became tired of that pursuit and started looking for another form of decoy to try his talent at. Since his family had past spearing experience, this was just a natural direction, in which to begin.

Mike went thru the layout process of carving and how he goes about getting the blank chunk of wood, to start looking somewhat like a fish. The different types of woods that were best to use, were also discussed. Next came the process of how he weights and balances the decoy. The tips and tricks he explained, will definitely shave off lots of time, for anybody just starting out in this interesting hobby.

Fin material, placement, sizing and attaching to the decoy was also discussed. This part of the discussion is what makes the decoys swim and circle the way that they do. Essentially, this is one of the most critical aspects, along with the weighting, that makes the difference between a working decoy and a paperweight.

We were also blessed to have local carver Dave Kober there, participating along with Mike, throughout the entire carving discussion. What an awesome experience to have both of these great talents in the same room, at the same time, for anybody that follows the world of decoy carving!

Next, Mike also brought in his wood burning tool and proceeded to show how he goes about "burning in" the scale detail on some of his decoys. This is a loooooong and tedious task to perform and explains why, some of these handmade decoys have the prices on them, that some of them do!

Afterwards, Mike and Dave both, stood by and answered any questions, that were asked about any of the aspects of decoy carving. This type of experience and information would cost a lot of money anywhere else. We were truly blessed to have this amount of talent and experience in the room, just for the asking.

A BIG – **“Thank You”** is in order for both Mike and Dave, for taking time out of their busy schedules, to stop by and share their experiences in the art of decoy carving! This could have been an all day seminar in itself! Thanks again, Mike and Dave!

Another big **“Thank You”** goes out to Ed Shaw, of the Carl T. Johnson-Hunting and Fishing Center, for letting us host this event at their facility! The Center not only hosted this event, but also lets us use their facility for all of our club activities and monthly meetings. Take some time and stop by to **“Thank”** them and visit their displays and aquarium. Lots of neat things to see and do! Thanks again Ed!

For a list of their events and classes go to:

http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10369_46675_58936---,00.html?source=govdelivery

and click on their **“Weekly Events Schedule at Carl T. Johnson”** link.

And last, but not least...a big **“Thank You!”** goes out to Dean Botek.

For any of you that don't know Dean, he is our **“Facebook”** guru. Dean takes time out of his busy schedule to photograph and post all MDAA & Cadillac Chapter events and activities to the Facebook page. Stop by and check out his work. He does an awesome job! Thanks again..Dean!

This concludes the activities that were held for the day. Thanks to all that came and participated!