

## A Note From A Wood Tinker

A very good book for a beginner in bird power carving is "**Power Carving Manual: Tools, Techniques & 16 All-Time Favorite Projects**," published by Fox Chapel Publishing. This is from The Best of Woodcarving Illustrated series and has a collection of articles, resources and projects from various authors.

A while back this basswood beginner was struggling with texturing feathers and club member Mike R. suggested this book. Of course, it's more than feather texturing, it provides a very good introduction to carving with rotary power tools. The 8 1/2 x 11 inch softcover book is divided into three sections: Getting Started, Techniques and Projects.

Section (1) "Getting Started" is 16 pages on Safety, and Tool Selection and Accessories.

Flexible Shaft machines are briefly discussed with overviews of Foredom, Pfingst, Master Carver, and Wecheer models. A surprising omission is Dremel. While Foredom appears to be a favorite among power carvers for removing a lot of wood fast, many beginners already have and are familiar with Dremel rotary tools. Dremel too has a flexible shaft option and excellent customer service. Nine different micromotor machines also have short reviews. Air turbine machines, woodburners, angle grinders and reciprocal carvers are mentioned in passing.

This first section has a nice introduction to bit types, sizes, profiles, and cleaners. More experienced carvers will likely want more detail. Accessories discussed include holders, cradles, lighting, magnifiers, sanding mandrels, bit stands and accessory trays.

(2) "Power Carving Techniques": For beginners learning to carve birds this section is worth the price of the book. Its 27 pages include Frank Russell's three articles on The Basics of Power Carving; Texturing Feathers; and Creating Hard Feathers. Russell provides detailed instruction on terminology including feather groups for birds and feather layout along with wood burning tips. Lori Corbett contributes "Texturing Strategies for Bird Carvers" which covers making stiff, soft and intermediate feathers using multiple layout, grinding and burning steps. One takeaway was the caution against using too high of a temperature on burning feathers. Two articles on Safety Tips and Power Bits are also presented by Jack Kochan.

(3) Projects: The final section presents 8 beginner projects: a Santa caricature; primitive loon decoy; a wizard cypress knee; maple leaf earrings; a Kildeer; three habitat projects - Dogwood leaf, twig and mushroom; and a project of making a telescoping rod to hold a flexible shaft tool; 4 intermediate projects: a walking stick with wizard head; a maple leaf (group of 3) pin; and a woodcock which uses 11 bits and two woodburning tips; and a relief carving of a whimsical house; and 3 advanced projects: a cardinal; a black bear; and chipmunk leaf debry habitat.

At 151 pages with drawings, and hundreds of color photographs, the **Power Carving Manual** was published in 2009 by Fox Chapel Publishing at a list price of \$19.95 (\$18.61 Amazon; \$11 and higher used.)

This is a good book for beginners and perhaps intermediate carvers, but not a definitive power carving manual. It has a taste of power carving and enough meat to get a beginner going and advance their skills.

Take it from this would be whittler, this is a worthwhile introduction to power carving for someone new to power carving, and especially bird carving. Check Amazon's "Look Inside" to see samples of pages from the book.



Now for a tyro tunes, twin spin, book review. Not all good carving books and magazines are still in print. A few years ago at our club show I found a gem of a book from Wildfowl Carving Magazine entitled "**Basic Bird Carving**". Published in 2002 this excellent magazine style book is hard to find, but maybe if you are lucky you can snare a copy from a used book vendor at a carving show. This 64 page introduction to bird carving has hundreds of drawings and photographs with separate articles on: pattern making; choosing wood; bandsawing; sanding (by Don McKinlay (DMcK)); power carving tools and techniques (by Frank Russell); burning tools (DMcK); feet and legs (DMcK); texturing individual feathers (by Greg Ladenberg); preparing the surface (for painting) (DMcK); a painting primer (by David Mohrhardt); color notes (on mixing colors and creating a blend chart); and finishes with a 21 page Black Capped Chickadee Project written by Laura Lucio. In my best neophyte opinion, this is THE best printed introduction to Bird Carving from picking wood through bandsawing, carving, burning and painting. It is sadly out of print. Good luck to my fellow novices in finding a copy. Ladenberg's valuable tips on texturing feathers using a woodburner include:

- Never burn straight. Keep a mild arc or S - shape to your burn lines.
- Keep your lines at the proper angle. They are closer to being parallel to the quill than at right angles to the quill.
- Always start and end your burning line in motion. Never go straight down, burn and pull out.
- Don't burn deeply. You won't fill your texture with paint or sealer as long as you apply them evenly. Ladenberg has had floating decoys where he claims to have "put on four coats of sealers and eight or more coats of paint and never lost a trace of texture."