



## *NATIONAL FISH CARVERS GUILD JOURNAL December 2011*

### **Review and Clarification of the IWCA Rules by: Dan Patterson**

***It is said repeatedly that “Ignorance of the law is no excuse”. If you wish to do well in life’s competitions, this is especially true.***

**I**n response to many questions by NFCG members, our Journal this quarter will deal with the IWCA rules and guidelines that our competitors are competing by at the present time. Obviously two different people may interpret a rule two different ways, so for what it is worth we would like to give you our interpretation of the IWCA rules as they stand. When you finish reading this journal I hope that you are more knowledgeable if not enlightened. Whether a competitor or a judge, be aware that we are all human and mistakes will happen in the process.

**NOTE:** *To my knowledge, at the present time, there are three IWCA sanctioned competitions where we fish carvers have the opportunity to compete. Two on the west coast, the **California Open** held in San Diego CA, and the **Columbia Flyway** held in Vancouver WA. The other is the **World Taxidermy and Fish Carving Championships** held at present in St. Charles MO. Although this may be true for IWCA sanctioned shows, virtually all carving shows/competitions in the country utilize the IWCA rules as guidelines for their competitions and if they have divisions for fish, you can enter them.*

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**F**irst in this journal, I will start with the preliminary rules that some carvers overlook then go into the fish carving rules themselves in the order they are listed in the IWCA rule and guideline book. The IWCA website is [www.iwca.com](http://www.iwca.com). All of the IWCA rules can be viewed on this page of their website- [www.iwfca.com/contest-rules/section-03-iwca-categories-and-species.html](http://www.iwfca.com/contest-rules/section-03-iwca-categories-and-species.html)

Sections 01-IWCA Competition Levels and 02-Advancement Rules apply to all carvers that compete in IWCA competitions, including Sections 04-IWCA Judging Criteria thru 07-IWCA Best of Show Judging that explain the desirable conduct that should be practiced by all participants. Sections 15 thru 19 are the fish rules themselves and deal specifically with fish, (what is allowed and not allowed) in an IWCA fish carving competition. I used a format that lists the IWCA rule first in its entirety in red print, then an explanation/interpretation is offered. A few of my own charts are added to help. Let us get started on the next page....



## INTERNATIONAL WILDFOWL CARVERS ASSOCIATION GUIDELINES AND RULES

Approved September 08, 2011

### Section 01. IWCA COMPETITION LEVELS (Applies to all carvers)

- 1.1 Junior—Carvers 17 years of age or under.
- 1.2 Novice—Carvers who have not won two Best of Shows in the Novice level in any participating IWCA Competition.
- 1.3 Intermediate—Carvers who have won two Best of Shows in the Novice level in any participating IWCA Competition.
- 1.4 A carver who has previously won two Best of Shows in the Intermediate level in any participating IWCA Competition may not enter at the Intermediate level after the end of that calendar year.
- 1.5 Amateur—For shows electing to combine the novice and intermediate levels, the term amateur level may be used.
- 1.6 Open—Carvers who have won two Best of Shows in the Intermediate level at any participating IWCA Show or Competition.
- 1.6.1 Open may also refer to a division "open" to carvers of all levels. Typically, these divisions have no Novice or Intermediate levels and are not subject to advancement rules.

#### Section 01 explanation:

There are normally four levels of competition in IWCA shows.

1. Junior
2. Novice
3. Intermediate
4. Open

The above Section 01 set of rules states that you must be 17 or younger to be in the **Junior** level of competition. Upon reaching the age of 18, you are required to move to the Novice level. Additionally, upon winning two best of shows in the **Novice** level, you are required to move to the **Intermediate** level. When you win two best of shows at the Intermediate level you can no longer compete at the Intermediate level after the end of that year and must move up to Open level. Sometimes it is possible for a show to combine Novice and Intermediate and

call it Amateur level. A Show Chairman may decide to do this for many different reasons. In this case, the competition would have only three levels of competition, the Junior, Amateur and Open. So then, if you were normally competing in the Novice or Intermediate level you would then be competing in the Amateur level. This means the Novice and Intermediate levels are competing against each other in the Amateur level of competition. Winning two best of shows in the Intermediate level will move you up into the **Open** level. These set of rules concerning competition levels give you information about each level. They do not tell you what level to compete at when you first start competing. That is entirely your decision and you will know soon enough if you made the right choice. It is advisable to get help with this decision. Fish Carvers who have competed can give you good advice and steer you into the right level of competition. This is further explained in the next set of rules.

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## **Section 02. ADVANCEMENT RULES (Applies to all carvers)**

- 2.1 A carver who wins two Best of Shows in the Novice level at any participating IWCA Show or Competition will be advanced to the Intermediate level at the end of that calendar year. Two Best of Shows only applies when there are 10 or more entries in the division.
- 2.2 A carver who wins two Best of Shows in the Intermediate level at any participating IWCA Show or Competition will be advanced to the Open level at the end of that calendar year.
- 2.3 A carver can elect at any time to move up in level. Once a carver has voluntarily advanced to the next level of competition, that carver may not re-enter at the former lower level.
- 2.4 IWCA will review a challenged carver's level and may revise the assigned level as a result of that review.
- 2.5 A carver's level is the same for birds and fish.
- 2.6 For Decoy Carvers (non-decorative): does not pertain to fish.
- 2.7 A carver may submit a request to IWCA asking to be set back one level, if the carver feels he/she has been advanced to a level in which he/she feels he/she is not qualified to compete. The IWCA determination will be final.

### Section 02 explanation:

The first rule in this Section 02 of Advancement Rules restates that if you win two best of shows in the novice level you need to move to the intermediate level, but it adds that there must be at least 10 entries in that division you won your best of shows in. In other words, you need to beat 9 other entries for best of show in two different shows. Then you are required to count those best of show wins and they will move you up from Novice to Intermediate at the end of that year. On the other hand, if you won two best of shows in two different fish carving competitions and there were in those divisions eight or less entries in both shows, those best of show wins will not count against or for you, and you **will not** be required to move up from Novice to Intermediate.

Carvers that advance themselves voluntarily cannot go back down to the previous competition level, however you may request to be moved back one level by the IWCA if you feel you are not qualified to compete at the level you are in. The IWCA also has the obligation to challenge a carver's level if they feel you are not at the right competition level. The folks in the IWCA are experts at this sort of thing so it is beneficial to heed their advice.

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## **IWCA CATEGORIES AND SPECIES (Applies to fish carvers)**

- 3.2.11 Saltwater Fish—Classes may include up to four types of saltwater fish.

- 3.2.11.1 Tropical reef fish: Includes wrasses, butterflies, angels, damselfish, squirrelfish, groupers, eels, and other primarily reef-dwelling species.
- 3.2.11.2 Offshore game fish: Includes bluefish, dolphin, mahi mahi, mackerels, tunas, dories, jacks, and bullfish.
- 3.2.11.3 Coastal game fish: Includes striped bass, bonefish, tarpon, permit, redfish, sea trout, weakfish, snook, and bonita.
- 3.2.11.4 Miscellaneous saltwater fish: Includes all sharks, rays, flounder, halibut, billed fish, seahorse, etc.
- 3.2.12 Freshwater Fish**
- 3.2.12.1 Game Fish: All bass, pike, Muskie, walleye.
- 3.2.12.2 Pan fish: Sunfish, crappie, perch, bluegill.
- 3.2.12.3 Trout/Salmon/Char: Brown, rainbow, brook, cutthroat, golden, grayling, chars, and all salmon species.
- 3.2.12.4 Miscellaneous Freshwater Fish: Includes all other freshwater fish not classified elsewhere including such species as gar, sturgeon, carp, catfish, paddlefish, shad, etc.

**Section 3.2.11 thru 3.2.12.4 explanation:**

Section 3 above is self-explanatory and deals with examples of categories and species in the groups.

*NOTE: The fish are broken down into two groups, the Salt Water Fish Group and the Fresh Water Fish Group. Each group then has four sub-groups with species examples. The sub-groups give species examples but there is no limit to the different species that the carver can compete with in any given sub-category. I have made this more clear in a chart that follows in Section 07.*

Also note that fish which live the majority of their lives in salt water such as Salmon, Trout and several other species are classified according to the rules to be freshwater fish for entry purposes into the Freshwater Category.

**Section 04. IWCA JUDGING CRITERIA**

- 4.1 The following criteria will be used for all levels of competition and, unless specifically restricted elsewhere, in all divisions. All four criteria are important because they overlap and build on each other. In order for a piece to reach its fullest potential, it must succeed in all four areas simultaneously.
- 4.2 Craftsmanship refers to the technical skills involved in bird carving: sculpting, painting, and finishing techniques. The execution of craftsmanship will be looked for in the subject, any habitat, accessories, and the base itself, if there should be one. Good craftsmanship should be consistent throughout the entire piece.
- 4.3 Accuracy involves the correctness of a piece from a scientific perspective. Size, shape, color, pattern, location, number, are the concepts important here. Anything accompanying the subject must be given the same scrutiny. Accuracy involves the natural history of the whole piece, all of its components, and the appropriateness of those components together.
- 4.4 Essence of the Species involves capturing the 'jizz' or 'gestal' of a species. It involves a thorough knowledge of one's subject and the ability to capture an attitude in wood. Capturing the essence of your subject and giving it the spark that brings it alive.
- 4.5 Artistry of a piece refers to its design and composition. This is where presentation, innovation, and creativity all come into play. There should be beauty in the concept apart from the beauty of the bird itself. Line, form, content, color, mass, and movement should all be working together to create an integrated whole.

**Section 04 explanation:**

This section attempts to explain the criteria for evaluating entries in IWCA competitions. Four different criteria are the basis for evaluation of an entry. Craftsmanship, Accuracy, Essence of the Species, and Artistry.

Notice in 4.2 that reference is made to bird carving only. IWCA, is in fact a Wildfowl oriented organization that has been in existence well before fish carving hit the scene. They were the only international organization at the time when fish carvers got together and wrote the rules for fish carving. They were good enough to sanction and publish the rules for us. So, be aware when you see references in these rules, realize that they apply to both birds and fish.

Of note here are the three criteria, Craftsmanship, Accuracy and Essence of the Species. Some carvers miss the true meaning of the rules concerning these criteria. Just realize that Craftsmanship, Accuracy and Essence of the Species are judged throughout the entire entry. If you add rocks, insects, or other aquatic species along with your fish, they can all be judged using these three criteria! Just some food for thought.

Artistry is the last of the criteria in this section. It is probably the most important of the four criteria listed for without it, that perfect score you receive for the first three criteria will all be wasted if you lack in the Artistry. It is better to have some scoring difficulties in all four criteria than to lack terribly in Artistry.

1. **Craftsmanship:** Decorative or practical objects reflecting great skill and expertise.
  2. **Accuracy:** Correctness and the ability to be precise while avoiding errors.
  3. **Essence of Species:** The quality or nature of the species that identifies it or makes it what it is.
  4. **Artistry:** The creative ability and skill of an artist, or the expression of this ability and skill.
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#### Section 05. IWCA CARVER CODE OF ETHICS

- 5.1 A carver is responsible for knowing and understanding all rules of the contests entered.
- 5.2 A carver is responsible for registration of his/her carvings at the appropriate level of competition (Open, Intermediate, Novice) and must move from level to level as the rules dictate. If a carver deliberately violates this advancement rule, he will be declared ineligible to enter any IWCA-affiliated show for a period of one year.
- 5.3 A carver shall address any questions or problems to the Show Chairman and/or the IWCA Show Representative.
- 5.4 A carver shall not communicate with the judges at any time during the judging process.
- 5.5 A carver shall not display or have a carving critiqued by a judge prior to being evaluated by that judge in competition.
- 5.6 If a carver solicits a judge to critique his carvings after they have been judged, he will accept the judge's comments and criticisms courteously.
- 5.7 Carvings should be the sole work of the contestant.
- 5.8 Classroom entries are allowed at the Novice level only.
- 5.9 Machine-duplicated bodies (blanks) are not allowed.
- 5.10 Cast parts are allowed at the Junior, Novice, and Intermediate levels only.
- 5.11 Carvers should not enter carvings to be judged by instructors or taxidermists from whose work the carving was created.
- 5.12 Carvings can be entered in any one show or competition one time only.

#### Section 05 explanation:

This section deals with the individual carver's responsibilities in competitions. It is positively true that Carvers are responsible for their own conduct at any show or competition. IWCA though reserves the right to declare violators who deliberately enter at the incorrect level (rule 5.2), ineligible to participate for a period of one year. A year is not that long, but consider the bi-lateral fallout that could accompany that action.

The people that carvers go to with questions or problems are the Show Chairman or the IWCA representative on location, not the Judges! It is very good practice and etiquette to stay away from the judges from the moment you arrive until the judging process is complete and the ribbons/awards are finalized. Carving shows/competitions are very social events. Seeing old friends and acquaintances is one of the many reasons for attending. If any of them are judging the particular event then it is a different situation entirely, so use your best judgment. The other observing competitors for example easily arrive at accusations of favoritism.

Accept the judge's critique courteously even though you personally know the judge may be mistaken on a certain point. You personally know in your own mind of the mistake so instead concentrate on trying in the future to eliminate any chance of another judge mistaking your presentation.

One other note on Carver Code of Ethics. You can enter the same carving in different IWCA sanctioned shows, but the following year when those shows roll around again, that same carving may not be entered in any

of those shows again. The carving is retired, although there is nothing that says you cannot enter that same carving in non-sanctioned IWCA shows/competitions.

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#### **Section 06. IWCA JUDGE'S CODE OF ETHICS**

- 6.1 A judge must have a copy of, have read and understand, and judge by the published rules of each IWCA Show.
- 6.2 Judges will examine all entries hands-on before making their selections.
- 6.3 A Judge will not communicate with anyone other than fellow Judges, Assigned Clerks, Show Chairman, and/ or IWCA Representative while in judging area.
- 6.4 A judge is not allowed to enter a carving in the level he or she is judging
- 6.5 Judges will not allow personal feelings or personal contact with the carvers to influence their decision during the judging procedure.
- 6.6 Judges will be fair and objective.
- 6.7 Judges will not judge a relative's carvings or students' birds which he or she has hands-on work experience or given instruction.
- 6.8 Taxidermists cannot judge carvings done from the taxidermist's mounts.

#### **Section 06 explanation:**

Judges are required by IWCA to have a copy of the rules and guidelines with them while judging and judge every carving in that category before making their decision. IWCA judges are not permitted to compete in a Level of competition in which they are judging. They may however, have entries in levels that they will not be judging.

As in the carvers code of ethics, the Judges Code of Ethics requires them not to communicate with competitors while In the judging area. Judges are also required to put aside any personal feelings or personal contact with competitors that may have the appearance of influencing their decisions.

If a judge's relative or student has an entry in the competition, the judge is required to disqualify themselves from that category and division only. As always, an IWCA judge must be fair and objective in their rulings.

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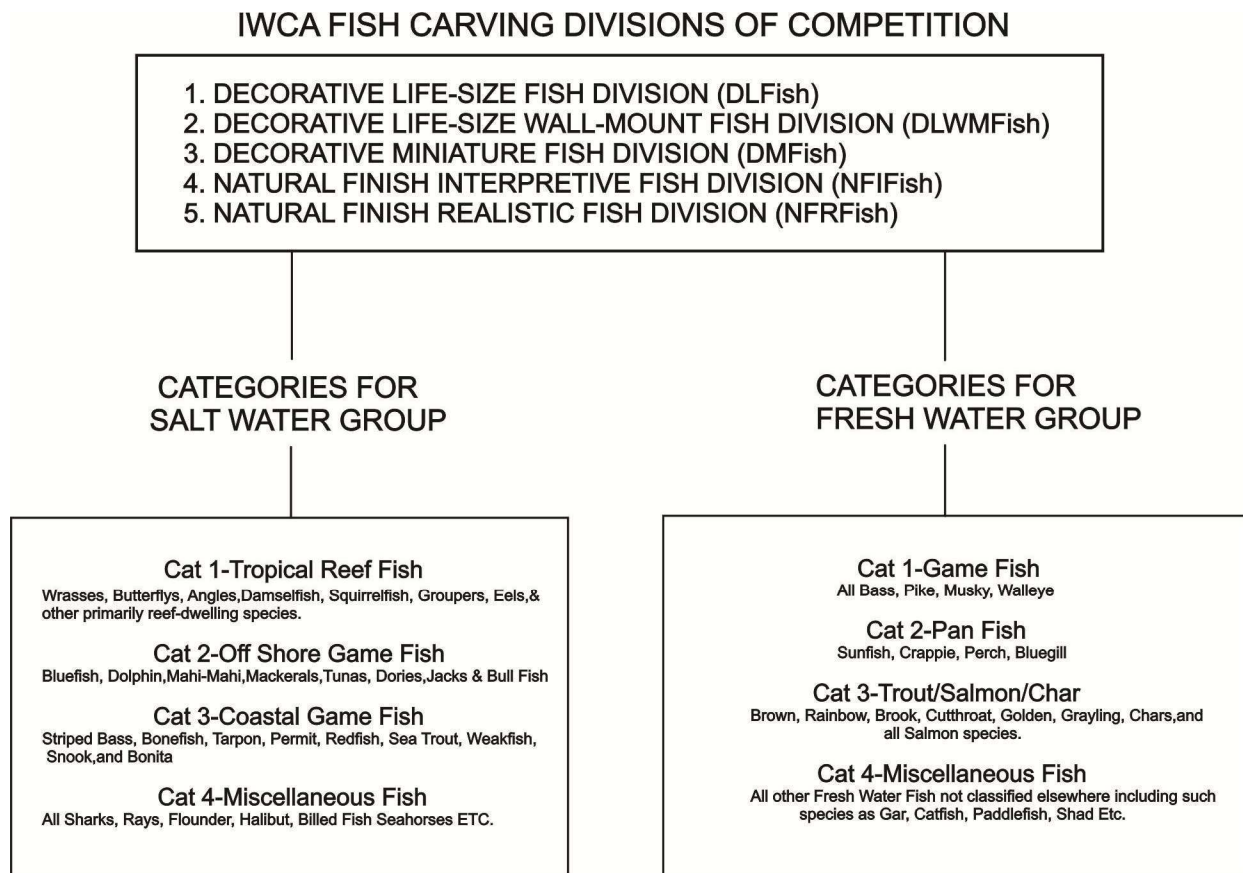
#### **Section 07. IWCA BEST OF SHOW JUDGING PROCEDURE FOR ALL DIVISIONS**

- 7.1 Judges select Best in Category from the first place carving in each species within that category (Marsh, Diver, etc.) When the judges select Best in Category, it will be removed and replaced with the second place carving from the same species, if there is a second.
- 7.2 Judges will then select Second in Category from the group of remaining first place (species) carvings and this second place (species) carving. If the second place (species) carving is selected as Second in Category, it should be removed to the winners' area and replaced with the third place winner from that same species.
- 7.3 Judges then select Third in Category from the remaining first place carvings (species) and this third place (species) carving.
- 7.4 A simple method of judging for the Best of Category is to always replace the carving selected with the next place winner from the same species.
- 7.5 Once the judging is completed by categories (Marsh, Diver, etc.), judges consider the first place carving from each category. They will pick Best of Show from one of these carvings and move it to the winners' area.
- 7.6 They will replace it with the second place carving from that category, and so on. Again, remember to always replace the carving selected with the next place carving from that same category.

7.7 It is the responsibility of the Show Chairman or the IWCA Representative to make sure a judge/chairman meeting is held to familiarize the judges with the rules.

### Section 07 explanation:

First let's look at the divisions, groups and categories in IWCA fish carving competitions. I have created a diagram to help you put the whole thing in perspective. In IWCA fish carving competitions there are 5 divisions. The first box in the diagram shows those 5 divisions. Contained in each of those 5 divisions, are 2 groups, the Salt Water and the Fresh Water group. Also contained in each of those 5 divisions are 4 categories in both the saltwater group and 4 categories in the fresh water group which totals 8 categories you can compete in. The second two boxes show the categories in the saltwater and freshwater groups. It also gives species examples of each category.



*Awards are as follows:*

***Best Of Categories-** Chosen from the best entry in each of the 8 categories in the salt and fresh water groups.*

***Best Of Divisions-** Chosen from each of the 5 division's Best Of Category winners.*

***BEST OF SHOWS-** Chosen from the Best Of Division winner*

## **Sections 15 thru 19, Fish carving Divisions**



*Decorative Life-Size*

**Section 15. DECORATIVE LIFE-SIZE FISH DIVISION**

- 15.1 All entrants must be current members of IWCA.
- 15.2 The entry will be judged using the live fish as a model.
- 15.3 Any fish that may be too large to carve may be carved at a reduced scale. For example, a 12-foot, 600-pound marlin or a 6-foot, 80-pound Chinook salmon would be carved at an appropriate reduced scale so that the minimum size is 18 inches with no maximum size. The reduced scale carvings compete as life-size and reflect the mature anatomy of the life-sized fish.
- 15.4 All carvings must support the total wood carving concept. Those entries composed solely of wood, or those that contain as little non-wood materials as possible, will have an advantage over those entries that contain authorized substitute materials listed below.
- 15.5 No resin or plastic water is acceptable because of the toxic nature of the materials involved.
- 15.6 The use of resins, silicones, or plastics in any form is limited to the construction of artificial teeth, eye sculpturing, joint construction, and inserting fins and tail only.
- 15.7 Allowable items include: artificial eyes, fishing line, fish hooks, and metal for strength and support.
- 15.8 Items not allowed include: plastic, silk, or manufactured plants; cast objects such as rocks, wood, bugs, plants, fins, and gills; real rocks, sand, or manufactured lures. Gravel made with wood/plumber's putty is allowed up through the intermediate level.
- 15.9 Commercial blanks and rough-outs are allowed in the novice and junior levels only.
- 15.10 Judges will place strong emphasis in their evaluations when all elements are carved of wood, however, the following is allowed: (a) In the novice level, found, real driftwood may be used. (b) In the intermediate level, re-worked found, real driftwood may be used. (c) In the open level, all facsimile of driftwood must be carved.
- 15.11 All components used to create the environment for decorative entries must be made by the carver from wood (or metal where allowed when required for strength and support.)
- 15.12 Carved habitat may be coated with paint or paint additives for texturing.
- 15.13 Any carving found to contain non-approved materials will not be eligible for ribbons or awards.
- 15.14 Any method used to emboss, burn, engrave, or carve scales in wood is permitted.
- 15.15 Glass cases or domes must be removed for judging.
- 15.16 The carving must contain the carver's name and date marked on the carving. (The name will be covered with tape at registration.)

**Section 15 explanation:** The first of the actual fish carving rules/guidelines is the Decorative Life-size Division and contains the largest number of rules and most difficult to understand. For that reason, we will discuss each rule individually. After that I have taken what is-allowed and not-allowed in this division and broke them down for you as they apply to the fish or the habitat. **In addition, the rules in this section apply to**

**the other two Decorative fish divisions in upcoming sections 16 (Decorative Wall Mounts) and 17 (Decorative Miniatures).**

15.1 All entrants must be current members of IWCA.

15.1 - Self-explanatory

15.2 The entry will be judged using the live fish as a model.

15.2 - Judges will refer to the live fish, and compare it to the carving. When evaluating a fish carving, the carving should take on all the accurate characteristics of the actual live fish that the carving is representing. No other example except the live fish will be used. Not taxidermy, fish carvings, drawings, diagrams etc. will be used by the judge. Quality photos of live fish for a judge's utilization would be a plus I would think.

15.3 Any fish that may be too large to carve may be carved at a reduced scale. For example, a 12-foot, 600-pound marlin or a 6-foot, 80-pound Chinook salmon would be carved at an appropriate reduced scale so that the minimum size is 18 inches with no maximum size. The reduced scale carvings compete as life-size and reflect the mature anatomy of the life-sized fish.

15.3 - This is a recent new rule that was surely needed and adopted by the fish carvers. It allows fish that are very large in real life such as Billfish, Tuna etc. to be carved and entered for competition under this rule. The standard is eighteen plus inches. The important element in this rule is the "mature anatomy" of the life-size fish must be present in the reduced scale carving. For example, the bulky muscular body of a full-grown Marlin should be reflected in the anatomy of the carving rather than the slim and streamlined body of a juvenile Marlin.

15.4 All carvings must support the total wood carving concept. Those entries composed solely of wood, or those that contain as little non-wood materials as possible, will have an advantage over those entries that contain authorized substitute materials listed below

15.4 - Carvings should be totally made of wood. It says that the more wood, the bigger the advantage in a competition. This rule, I believe was written for tiebreakers. The rule, I assume is saying that whenever carvings score the same in a competition that the carving with the advantage would be the one using the total wood concept. For example, the nod would go to a fish with carved wood eyes over glass eyes in a tie situation. The catch is that the wood eyes need to be just as convincing or better than the glass or all is for naught.

15.5 No resin or plastic water is acceptable because of the toxic nature of the materials involved.

15.5 - Self-explanatory but more so to protect the air in the competition area along with the judge's lungs.

15.6 The use of resins, silicones, or plastics in any form is limited to the construction of artificial teeth, eye sculpturing, joint construction, and inserting fins and tail only.

15.6 - Some examples of resins would be urethane or epoxies which require a catalyst or hardener to be added. Silicones would include bathroom or window caulking or fish tank silicone. Plastics would be substances like Plastic Wood that requires no hardener to be added. These substances can be used to insert your fins or tail, glue in your eyes, sculpt around your eyes or fin bases to hide seams. They can also be used to build your habitat, connecting pieces of wood in order to get the shapes you want. *Note:* They cannot however be used to form an object, cast or otherwise to simulate a carved wood object.

15.7 Allowable items include: artificial eyes, fishing line, fish hooks, and metal for strength and support.

15.7 - You can use glass or plastic eyes. You could even make your own plastic or glass eyes and use them in your piece. You can use real fishing line or real fish hooks for your habitat. Anywhere strength is required to on the fish or the habitat, you can use metal for that support. Examples would be attaching a fish to a rock or other fish using a metal fin. Fine or small weeds or grass in a habitat that supports the carving or part of the carving for strength may be made of metal.

15.8 Items not allowed include: plastic, silk, or manufactured plants; cast objects such as rocks, wood, bugs, plants, fins, and gills; real rocks, sand, or manufactured lures. Gravel made with wood/plumber's putty is allowed up through the intermediate level.

15.8 – You cannot use manufactured plants from the local craft store! You cannot use anything cast from a mold of any kind. Real rocks and sand cannot be incorporated into your habitat or fish. You must hand carve your lures but rule 15.7 insinuates you can use real fishhooks to attach to those lures. Wood or Plumbers putty can be used to make gravel in your habitat scene in all levels of competition except the open level.

15.9 Commercial blanks and rough-outs are allowed in the novice and junior levels only.

15.9 – Commercial purchased blanks are blocks of wood with the top and side profiles pre-cut by the manufacturer. Commercial rough-outs are pre-shaped by machine to resemble the fish species so that the carvers need not rough it out themselves. Not allowed in the Open level only.

15.10 Judges will place strong emphasis in their evaluations when all elements are carved of wood, however, the following is allowed: (a) In the novice level, found, real driftwood may be used. (b) In the intermediate level, re-worked found, real driftwood may be used. (c) In the open level, all facsimile of driftwood must be carved.

15.10 – This rule reinforces rule 15.4, which states the advantage using the total wood concept. It also further explains what is allowed at different competition levels concerning this rule. At the “Novice” level of competition, real driftwood may be used in the habitat. This is wood that you can find yourself on shorelines and beaches. This wood can be branches, trunks or roots from trees or bushes. It can still have the bark on it or not.

In the “Intermediate” level you can use in your habitat, re-worked found, real driftwood. Found driftwood is the same wood as described in the novice level with the stipulation that it must be re-worked. Re-worked means that the driftwood needs to be altered/improved somewhat by the Intermediate carver. This may mean that the bark is removed and it is turned into a “Natural Finish” piece to include in the habitat. It may also be carved on to add more interest or painted realistically with texturing. Whatever the choice, it must be re-worked. In the Open level, there are no options when it comes to found wood. All driftwood must be assembled and carved by the carver except where metal is used for strength. No found wood is allowed at this level.

15.11 All components used to create the environment for decorative entries must be made by the carver from wood (or metal where allowed when required for strength and support.)

15.11 – The only thing this rule does to my knowledge is to re-state the fact that the **habitat** must be made by the carver from wood except where metal is used for strength.

15.12 Carved habitat may be coated with paint or paint additives for texturing.

15.12 – This rule gives you the option of painting your habitat or using additives in your paint such as texturing paste, sawdust, wood shavings etc. for adding texture and more realism.

15.13 Any carving found to contain non-approved materials will not be eligible for ribbons or awards.

15.13 – This rule is self explanatory as written. Using non-approved materials means you will not be eligible for ribbons or awards but does not say that your carving will be eliminated from the show.

15.14 Any method used to emboss, burn, engrave, or carve scales in wood is permitted.

15.14 – Engravers, embossing with homemade tools, burning with a wood burner, or carving on the fish or the habitat is allowed. All these methods can be used to create scales.

15.15 Glass cases or domes must be removed for judging.

15.15 – This rule states the obvious for judging purposes, so all protective glass cases or domes must be made removable.

5.16 The carving must contain the carver's name and date marked on the carving. (The name will be covered with tape at registration.)

15.16 – All carvings must be” permanently” marked with the carver’s full name and the date the carving was completed. Cover your name & date with tape before you check in your carving. This way you can control the type of tape used and make sure the name is covered completely. Certain tapes are not friendly to wood art.

NOTE: As mention earlier, Section 15 has the most rules and guidelines of all the sections that deal with fish carving. To help our overall understanding of the decorative life-sized IWCA rules, I re-wrote them in a more logical and straightforward order. We can better comprehend what the rules above are saying in a format like this. To help further, I separated the fish and the habitat and eliminated the rule numbers. Below you will see the results and makeup of the IWCA’s sixteen rules of the decorative life-sized division, section 15, rules 15.1 thru 15.16. All the rules in decorative life-size are contained here for quick refertence.

### Decorative Life-Size Division (DLFish) section 15, rules 15.1 thru 15.16.

\*All entrants must be current members of the IWCA. The carving must contain the carver’s name and date marked on the carving and glass cases must be removable for judging.

**THE FISH** \*The Standard is to use the live fish as the model and it must be carved from wood.

**Items Allowed:**

- \*Artificial eyes, resins, silicones or plastics in any form is limited to the construction of artificial teeth, eye sculpting, joint construction and inserting fins and tail.
- \*Metal can be used where required for support.
- \*Any method used to emboss, burn, engrave, or carve scales in wood is allowed.
- \*Commercial blanks and rough-outs in Novice and Junior levels only.

**Items Not Allowed:**

- \*Any “Cast” objects such as fins, and gills.

**Note:**

- \*Any fish that may be too large to carve may be carved at a reduced scale. The minimum size is 18 inches with no maximum size. The reduced scale carvings compete as life-size and reflect the mature anatomy of the life-sized fish.

**THE HABITAT** \*The Standard is to use the actual live habitat as it is in nature.

**Items Allowed:**

- \*Real Fishing line, fish hooks and metal for strength and support.
- \*Carved habitat may be coated with paint or paint additives for texturing.
- \*Gravel made with wood/plumber’s putty up through Intermediate level only.
- \*In the novice level, found real driftwood and in the intermediate level, re-worked found, real driftwood may be used.

**Items Not Allowed:**

- \*Resin or plastic water because of toxins.
- \*Plastic, silk, or manufactured plants; cast objects such as rocks, wood, bugs; real rocks, sand, or manufactured lures.

**Note:**

- \*All components used to create the environment must be made by the carver from wood. All facsimile of driftwood in the Open level must be carved.



*Decorative LS Wall Mount*

**Section 16. DECORATIVE LIFE-SIZE WALL-MOUNT FISH DIVISION**

- 16.1 All entrants must be current members of IWCA.
- 16.2 Must be judged mounted on wall.
- 16.3 Must have attachments for hanging.

**Section 16 explanation:** Section 16 is straightforward in that it will be judged as it was meant to be displayed, hanging on the wall and requires a hangar for that purpose. All of the Decorative Life-size rules in section 15 apply to this section.

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*Decorative Miniature*

**Section 17. DECORATIVE MINIATURE FISH DIVISION**

- 17.1 All entrants must be current members of IWCA.
- 17.2 Entries must be one-half life-size or less with a maximum subject length of eight (8) inches.
- 17.3 Entries must be full-bodied carvings.
- 17.4 The live fish will be used as a model for judging.
- 17.5 Unlimited painting and texturing will be allowed.

Section 17.1 thru 17.5 explanation: The decorative miniature section also has a short description, no pun intended. Basically, it gives the maximum length the fish can be carved at as “eight” inches. Additionally, it states that you have the latitude to carve in this division at half the length or less of the life-size fish. For example, a large adult Bluegill can grow to 12 inches. You could carve it at half that, 6” or a maximum of 8”. However, a 36” Northern Pike may not be carved half sized, it must be carved at the 8” maximum. This rule helps keep this a truly “miniature” division. Again, all of the Decorative Life-size rules in section 15 apply to this section 17.

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*Natural Finish Interpretive*

**Section 18. NATURAL FINISH INTERPRETIVE FISH DIVISION**

- 18.1 All entrants must be current members of IWCA.
- 18.2 These entries reflect the carver's concept of movement, design, and composition. Ideally, the entry will be carved out of one piece of wood. Entry can be a carving that represents a fish, regardless of how realistic or imaginative it is. As long as at least one fish is used in the entry, other animals may also be incorporated.
- 18.3 Only transparent stains and clear finishes may be used.
- 18.4 No opaque paints will be allowed with the exception of eyes, where opaque paints may be used in place of glass eyes.

- 18.5 The wood grain must be visible through the finish.
- 18.6 Carved eyes are preferred, however, glass eyes will be allowed in novice and intermediate levels only.
- 18.7 Natural finish fish carvings are to be composed as to enhance the natural beauty of the wood being used.
- 18.8 The carver will be allowed to decide which category best suits the piece.
- 18.9 Bases may be painted or stained.

**Section 18 explanation:** This section deals with natural finish entries that are in fact interpretive. A piece of art when viewed that seems to relate to, involve or provide an explanation of something is said to be “interpretive”. In the case of this section, the viewer needs to be lead to the fish side of the equation. If the judge or viewer cannot see an imaginative fish somewhere in the piece then it may be an undesirable trait.

- 18.2 These entries reflect the carver's concept of movement, design, and composition. Ideally, the entry will be carved out of one piece of wood. Entry can be a carving that represents a fish, regardless of how realistic or imaginative it is. As long as at least one fish is used in the entry, other animals may also be incorporated.

18.2 – This rule flatly states that concept of movement, design and composition will be reflected in the carving. Composition is the way in which the parts of something are arranged, especially the parts of a visual image. Many words come to mind when design is mentioned, in effect, purpose, object, aim, end, point, target, intention and goal. The concept of movement will seemingly always be present in aquatic environments and therefore be reflected in the carving.

It is requested in this rule also that one piece of wood be used to carve the whole presentation. What IWCA is saying is that” if everything were perfect or as desired” it would be carved in this manner. That is what the carver should strive for and it will be obvious in the work whether the artist accomplished this or not. One or more interpretive fish or other animals may be incorporated into the carving.

- 18.3 Only transparent stains and clear finishes may be used.
- 18.4 No opaque paints will be allowed with the exception of eyes, where opaque paints may be used in place of glass eyes.
- 18.5 The wood grain must be visible through the finish.
- 18.6 Carved eyes are preferred, however, glass eyes will be allowed in novice and intermediate levels only.

18.3,18.4,18.5 & 18.6 – Stains and clear finishes are authorized here in these rules. The wood grain must be visible through the stains/finishes. Opaque paints are allowed on the carved wood eyes only. You still have the option to use glass eyes in place of carved wood eyes in the Novice and Intermediate levels only. Glass eyes are not permitted in the Open level natural finish interpretive division.

- 18.7 Natural finish fish carvings are to be composed as to enhance the natural beauty of the wood being used.
- 18.8 The carver will be allowed to decide which category best suits the piece.
- 18.9 Bases may be painted or stained.

18.7, 18.8 & 18.9 – Natural finish carvings in this division will utilize the natural beauty of the wood in its composition. Things such as the visible wood grain, deformities in the visible grain or knots and knotholes may be incorporated into the overall flow/movement, and design of the carving. A knot in the wood for example could represent the eye or the false eye on the tail of a Peacock Bass.

The bases of the carving, if present may be either painted or stained. Additionally, the carver may decide which category best fits their interpretive piece.

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*Natural Finish Realistic*

**Section 19. NATURAL FINISH REALISTIC FISH DIVISION**

- 19.1 All entrants must be current members of IWCA.
- 19.2 These entries are natural finish carvings that closely resemble recognizable fish and contain more details. The entries can be single or multiple carvings, and composed in an artistic setting. The carver may use separate pieces of wood for fins, grass, etc., but all finishes must be natural.
- 19.3 Only transparent stains and clear finishes may be used.
- 19.4 No opaque paints will be allowed with the exception of eyes, where opaque paints may be used in place of glass eyes.
- 19.5 The wood grain must be visible through the finish.
- 19.6 Carved eyes are preferred, however, glass eyes will be allowed in novice and intermediate levels only.
- 19.7 Natural finish fish carvings are to be composed as to enhance the natural beauty of the wood being used.
- 19.8 The carver will be allowed to decide which category best suits the piece.
- 19.9 Bases may be painted or stained.

**Section 19 explanation:** Unlike the previous natural finish interpretive, this division strives for much more detail in the carvings. In fact, the more you include in these carvings the better. Many of the natural finish interpretive section 18 rules apply again here. Interpretive and Realistic natural finish are two of my favorite divisions to view at competitions. In my opinion, they take us into the real world of woodcarving where no paints or texturing hide or add to the natural wood or the raw talent of the woodcarving artist. These two divisions never fail to amaze us with what is actually possible with a block of wood.

19.2 These entries are natural finish carvings that closely resemble recognizable fish and contain more details. The entries can be single or multiple carvings, and composed in an artistic setting. The carver may use separate pieces of wood for fins, grass, etc., but all finishes must be natural.

19.2 – The carving is Natural finish, and looks a lot like the live fish in its natural state in the wild. Much more detail is required and one or more fish in the entry is authorized. This rule states that the carving will be composed in an artistic setting which is a given in any art competition.

The big difference here from the interpretive division is that you may carve pieces of wood separately, natural finish the pieces then attach them to the carving. This affords you the opportunity to achieve more detail and depth to your presentation. Some possibilities for the fish would be the fins, barbells, or even eyes. Habitat attachments would include driftwood, rocks, vegetation, underwater insects etc.

- 19.3 Only transparent stains and clear finishes may be used.
- 19.4 No opaque paints will be allowed with the exception of eyes, where opaque paints may be used in place of glass eyes.
- 19.5 The wood grain must be visible through the finish.
- 19.6 Carved eyes are preferred, however, glass eyes will be allowed in novice and intermediate levels only.
- 19.7 Natural finish fish carvings are to be composed as to enhance the natural beauty of the wood being used.
- 19.8 The carver will be allowed to decide which category best suits the piece.
- 19.9 Bases may be painted or stained

19.3 thru 19.9 – These seven rules are identical to the rules in Natural Finish Interpretive. Just remember, the biggest differences in this Natural Finish Realistic division is much more detail is required and you can carve pieces separately and attach them to add realism.

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*This section 19 is the last of the Fish carving rules. In closing, I am hoping the time I spent laying these rules out benefits you and answer at least a few questions you competitors may have had. Even if you do not compete, it is always more interesting to have an understanding of the rules when at shows and competitions. Visit the NFCG website on a regular basis for news and more Journals in the future. Any other questions you may have on the subject of IWCA fish carving rules can be directed to us through the website's contact page. If we do not have the answer, we can assist you in getting verification from the IWCA.*

*Good Carving,*

