CARVING Comfort Animals

7 Simple Projects for the Beginner



From the editors of
WOODCARVING
ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE

Carving Comfort Animals

7 Simple Projects for the Beginner

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Preface

Humans are tactile beings. Children reach for a favorite teddy bear during a thunderstorm; your friend grabs a mug of coffee before giving you the news; you twist a locket or play with your phone while waiting for a big interview. Whatever your mood might be—antsy, anxious, joyful, or sad—it often helps to have something physical to hold in your hand. With that in mind, the *Woodcarving Illustrated* team has scoured the archives for our all-time favorite comfort carving projects and gathered them in one place for the very first time. Each simple animal project can be carved in one sitting with a minimum of tools, so you can make a whole mess of them to keep or gift to anyone in your life who needs a little extra comfort.

Happy carving!
The *Woodcarving Illustrated* team

About the Authors



Steven Kulp was introduced to woodcarving by his uncle, Norris White, in 1983, and has been carving on and off ever since. Recently, he started competing in local and national carving competitions and has won a few ribbons. Steven lives in Souderton, Pa., with his wife, Elda, and son, Mike, and is a member of the Delaware Valley Wood Carvers. See more of his work on Facebook at S.G. Kulp Carving.

An experienced woodworker, Frank Foust has built projects ranging from children's furniture to his own home. As a volunteer, he's helped repair and rebuild churches in the United States and Central America. Frank sells handcarved comfort birds for $10 each. Please contact him via e-mail for orders or information at mrcarver@windstream.net.





Tom Mellott of Colorado Springs, Colo., remembers carving a hippo from Ivory soap as a Cub Scout in the late 1940s. He also carved neckerchief slides as a Boy Scout. After retiring from a career in engineering, Tom studied and worked part-time as a cooper (barrel maker) at a colonial village for 12 years. A past member of the Bloody Thumbs Carving Club in Roaring Springs, Pa., he's currently a member of the Pikes Peak Whittlers and the First Lutheran Carving Club.

Comfort Turtle

Keep worries at bay with these calming creatures

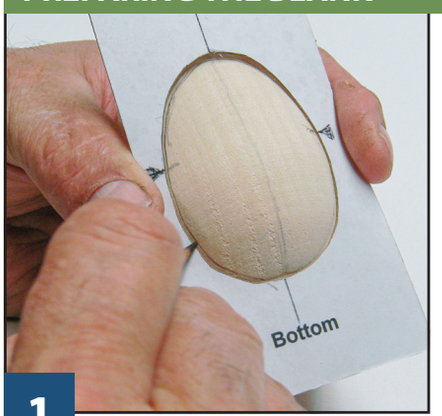
By Steven Kulp

These little turtles are green and serene. The project includes an introduction to a unique painting technique. Make yours as simple or as detailed as you wish.

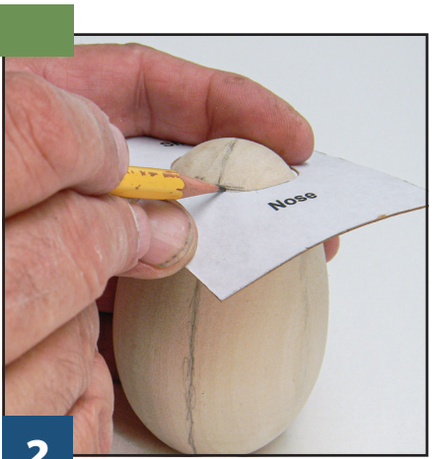
Getting Started

Hold the blank in your hand and locate the straight grain. Identifying a top and bottom will make carving your turtle easier. Draw a centerline from the tip of the egg to the base.

PREPARING THE BLANK

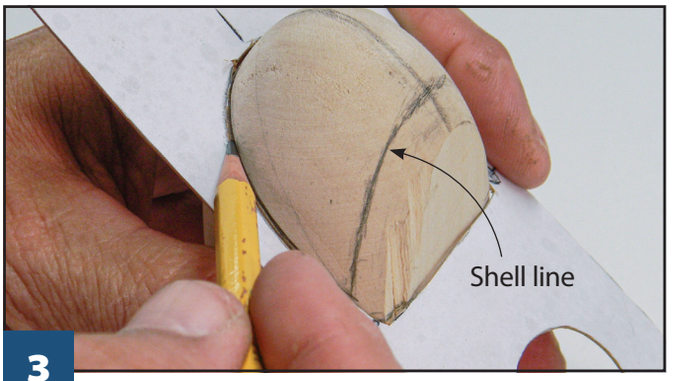


1 **Create the base of the shell.** Place the stencil marked 'bottom' at the base of the egg and match the center marks to your centerline. Trace around the stencil and then mark the outside of that oval at the arrows to locate the shell pattern. Remove the wood inside the oval you traced to make a flat surface for the turtle base. Use a rough out knife.

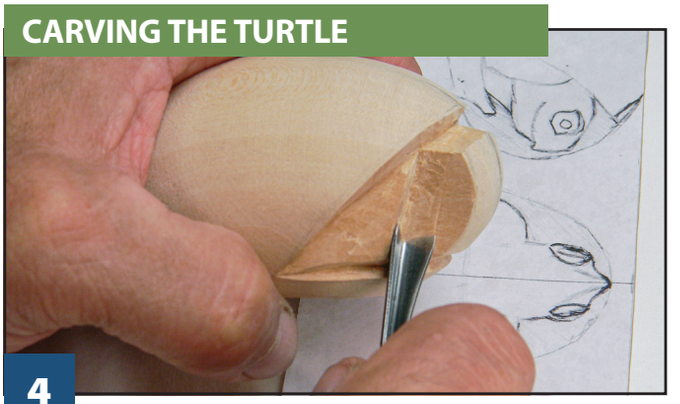


2 **Mark the area for the nose.** Place the stencil marked 'nose' over the tip of the egg. Center the egg in the opening and mark the top centerline where the stencil rests to mark the top of the shell pattern.

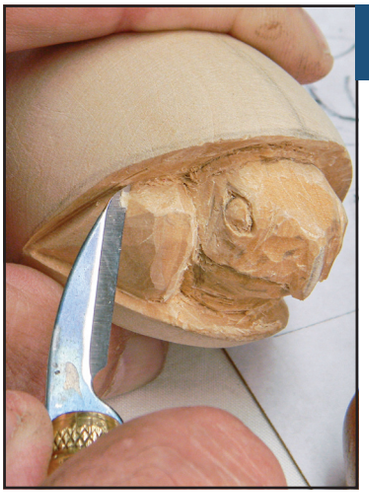
CARVING THE TURTLE



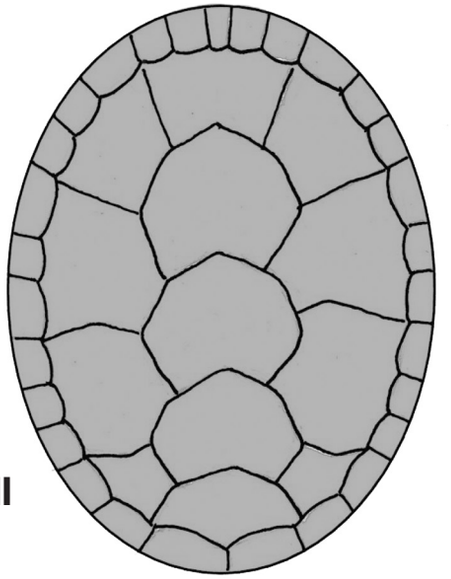
3 **Create the shell line.** The stencil marked 'shell' is a little tricky to use. Lay it over the tip of the egg with the flat edge on the base and the round part on the nose you marked in Step 2. Line up the marks on the base with the arrows on the template and trace around the stencil. Draw a lower shell line about ¼" (6mm) in from the base around the tip of the egg.



4 **Rough out the turtle.** Using a ⅜" (10mm) 70° V-tool, trace around the shell opening, tilting the tool toward the inside of the shell. Measure the width of the head from pattern View B and transfer that to your carving. Be sure to center the head in the shell opening. Remove all of the wood outside those lines with the knife.

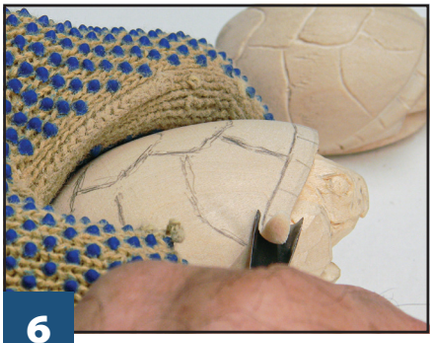


5 **Carve the head.** Use View A from the pattern sheet as a reference. Shape the top of the head, and then carve up from the lower shell cut to form the chin. As you carve, cut toward the center to produce cleaner cuts with sharper edges. Taper the head from the sides in the same manner. Then mark and carve the eyes and mouth. Angle them slightly or carve them straight for more of a cartoonish look. Carve the mouth up from the center of the nose to establish a beak-like shape. Then carve in the lower jaw so the upper jaw appears to overlap it. Extend the mouth line so it goes back beyond the eye and turns up in a slight smile at the corners. Round the arms.



Turtle Shell Drawing

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6 **Add shell details.** Draw a reference line about ¼" (6mm) in from the edge of the shell, all the way around. With a ¼" (6mm) #7 gouge tilted toward the torso, carve around the perimeter of the shell, staying between the reference line and the rim. Then use the drawing as a reference to lay out the shell scutes. Use the ⅜" (10mm) 70° V-tool to deepen those lines. Woodburn along the lines for the scutes with a writing nib.

PAINTING & FINISHING



7 **Prep the carving for paint.** Seal the wood with two coats of clear matte finish. Once dry, lightly sand the entire piece with 220-grit sandpaper. Paint a base coat of yellow over the entire turtle and allow to dry completely. Spray on another two coats of matte finish. Squeeze a small amount of dish soap onto a flat surface and let gel for a few minutes. Using a stiff bristle brush, smear a pattern of soap on the turtle head and on each of the shell scutes (this soap and paint technique is called masking). Let the piece dry overnight.

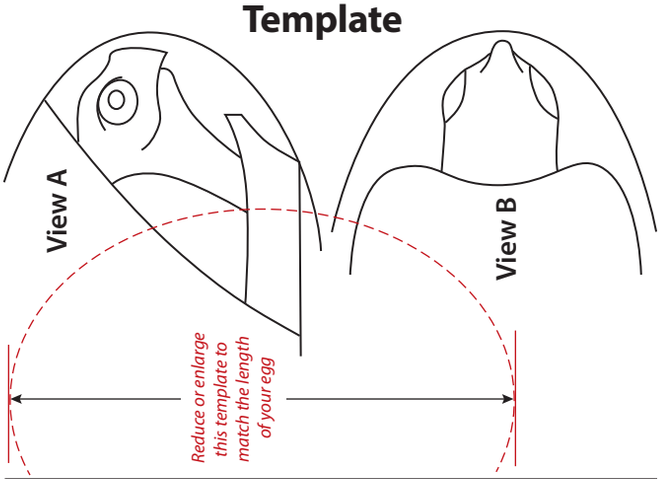


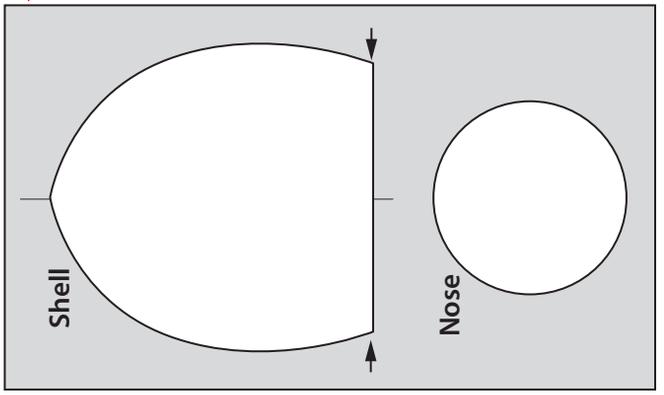
8 **Paint on the shell details.** After the masking has dried, airbrush the turtle in light coats of thinned green paint, leaving the finish slightly blotchy for a more realistic appearance. Let dry. Apply two more thin coats of matte finish. Let dry completely.

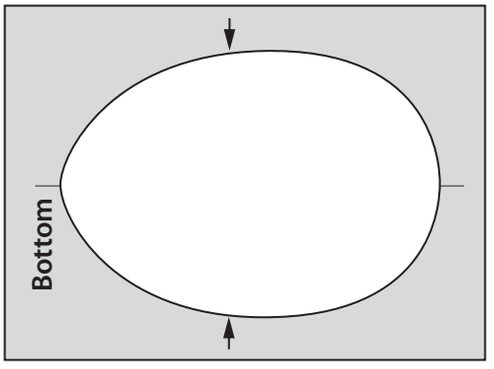


9 **Unmask the turtle.** Use the stiff bristle brush and water to scrub the masking off, revealing the yellow paint beneath the green. After scrubbing, use a softer brush to make sure all the soap has been removed, and then let the carving dry.

Turtle Template







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10 **Add the final details.** After the turtle has dried, paint the eyes and apply a final coat of matte finish.

materials & tools

MATERIALS

- Wooden egg, basswood or butternut: any size you are comfortable carving; I used a hen-sized egg for this article
- Pencil
- Sandpaper: 220-grit
- Finish: matte spray, such as Krylon®
- Acrylic paints, such as Apple Barrel: dark green, orange, yellow, black
- Dish soap

TOOLS

- V-tool: ⅜" (10mm) 70°
- Rough out knife
- #7 gouge: ¼" (6mm)
- Paintbrushes: assorted
- Stiff bristle brush
- Soft scrub brush
- Woodburner with nib: writing
- Airbrush or mouth atomizer

SPECIAL SOURCES

The Alvin TX320 Metal Folding Mouth Atomizer by Alvin is available online at amazon.com.

The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.

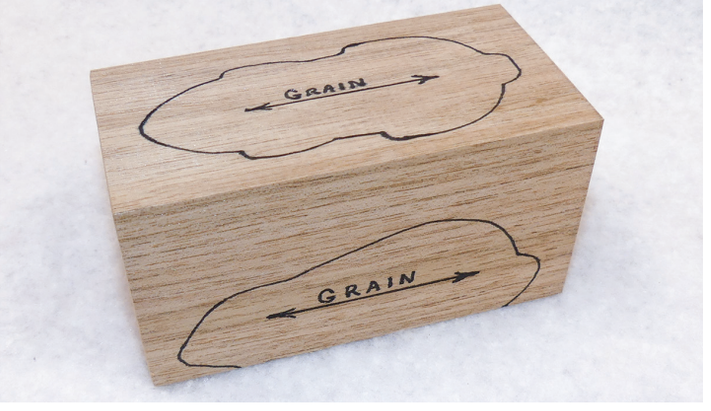
Comfort Bunny



Carve a backyard favorite using just a knife, a gouge, and a block of wood

By Tom Mellott

I designed this comfort bunny after the rabbits in my Colorado backyard. These desert cottontails—a cross between the eastern cottontail and the western jackrabbit—are charming and fascinating creatures. When they sense danger, their first reaction is to flatten to the ground with their ears back, as if to say, "You can't see me, I'm invisible." This is the position I decided to portray. I chose butternut for this project because it's easy to carve with a subtle but beautiful grain pattern.





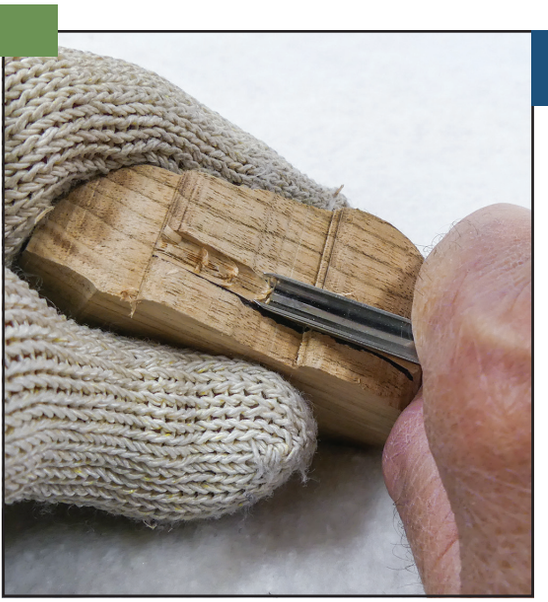
Getting Started

Trace the pattern views on the blank, making sure the grain runs horizontally (from nose to tail). Since the bunny is flat on the bottom, you can take advantage of a flat edge when placing your pattern to reduce cutting time. Cut the pattern views on a scroll saw or band saw.

Draw a centerline down the middle of the blank; this will help keep features such as the ears symmetrical. Note that the ears start close together at the back of the head and fan outward, reaching the edge of the bunny's body right before the point where the back feet begin. Draw a centerline for each ear and then draw the basic shapes of the ears.

ROUGHING OUT AND CARVING





1 **Mark the tops of the feet.** Draw a horizontal line ¼" (6mm) up from the base along the length of the torso on both sides. I used a felt-tipped pen laid on a shim, and moved the blank against it. Then, using a ¼" (6mm) #9 gouge, carve a groove above the line to expose the tops of the feet. Make sure not to carve off the line. The groove depth should match the distance that the feet protrude from the body.



2 **Carve the ears.** Hollow out the insides with the ¼" (6mm) #9 gouge, beginning at the tip of the ear and carving toward the base. Then carve around the perimeter of each ear with the same tool. Be especially careful in the delicate area between the ears. You may have to use a knife as you approach the head, as the space narrows substantially.



3 **Carve the head.** Use the knife. Round it starting at the top, and then move down the sides to the bottom. Taper the head so the nose ends in a blunt point. Then thin the body down to the groove you carved in Step 1, removing material from the ears down to the front feet.



4 **Carve the rump.** Use the same tool. Round the back end, leaving the area around the tail mostly untouched. Shape the thighs so they curve out and then back in toward the feet, sitting as wide as the feet at their widest point.



5 **Soften the bottom edge.** Run around it carefully with the knife, chamfering the entire perimeter.

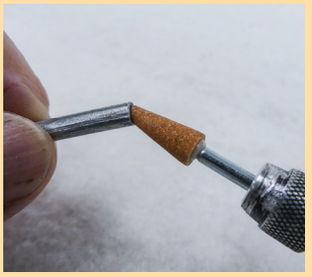


6 **Add the eyes.** I used a 5⁄32" (4mm)-dia. eye punch to press in eyes at the appropriate locations. When using the eye punch, depress the wood gently; if you try to cut it, the eye will pop out. If you do not have access to an eye punch, follow the directions in the tip (at right) to create your own using materials from around the shop.



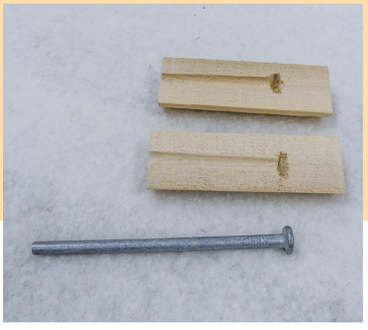
7 **Refine the piece.** You can do this in one of two ways: 1) Lightly sand the entire bunny with 220-grit sandpaper just to remove the sharp edges made by the knife cuts. This will leave all the knife cuts exposed but softened. 2) Sand the entire bunny, starting with 80-grit sandpaper and moving up progressively through the grits until you reach 220. This will create a much more polished look.

Improvising



Make the punch. Purchase one or more 20d common nails. (Most good hardware stores sell them individually or by the pound.) Cut off the tip of the nail using a hacksaw, and file the end flat. Using a rotary tool with a small, tapered-cylinder-shaped stone bit, gently grind a dish-shaped depression in the flattened end of the nail. *Note: Make sure to wear safety glasses.* Then smooth the edges with 400-grit sandpaper, so your punch will compress the wood without cutting it.

Make the handle. Drill a ¼" (6mm)-dia. hole 2" (5.1cm) deep in the center of a length of 1" (2.5cm)-dia. dowel. Cut the dowel in half lengthwise. Then, using a small gouge or knife, carve a recess in both halves of the dowel where the head of the nail will rest. Glue in the nail with two-part epoxy and reattach the dowel halves. Once this dries, shape the handle as desired with a knife and sandpaper. *Note: You can make other sizes of eye punch using this procedure, by using larger or smaller nails.*





Finishing

Finish your comfort bunny by applying one to three coats of clear matte lacquer. Buff with a Scotch-Brite™ pad between coats.

materials & tools

MATERIALS

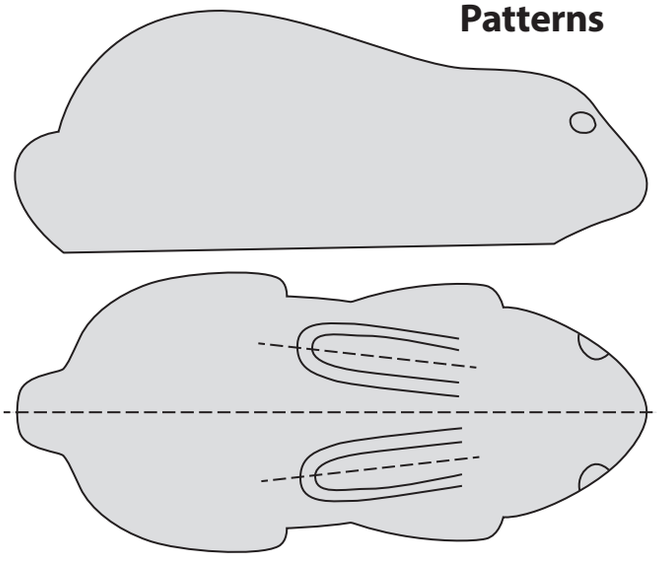
- Butternut or wood of choice, 2" (5.1cm) square: 4" (10.2cm) long
- Felt-tip pen: fine
- 20d nails: 1 or more (optional)
- Sandpaper: assorted grits
- Finish: clear matte lacquer
- Epoxy: two-part (optional)
- Buffing pad, such as Scotch-Brite™
- Dowel: 1" (2.5cm)-dia (optional)

TOOLS

- Scroll saw or band saw
- Carving knife
- Shim
- File (optional)
- Dowel
- #9 gouge: ¼" (6mm)
- Eye punch: 5⁄32" (4mm)-dia.
- Hacksaw
- Rotary tool with bit: small tapered-cylinder-shaped stone (optional)

The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.

Bunny Patterns



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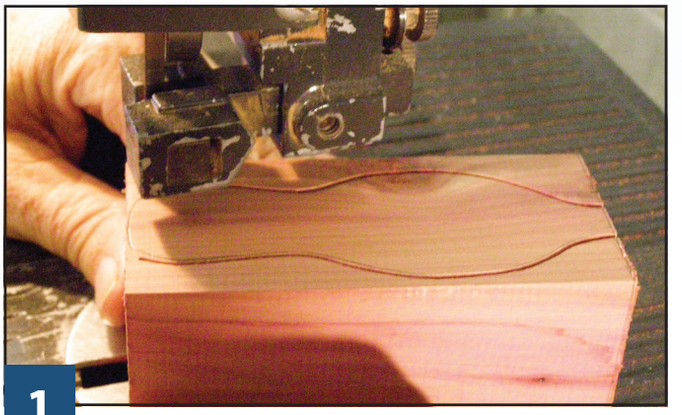
Comfort Songbird



Smooth lines and a polished finish make these little birds a joy to hold

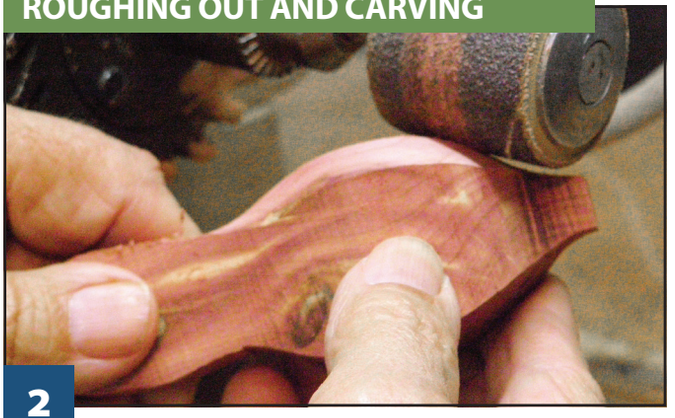
By Frank Foust

Sized to fit in your palm and sanded silky smooth, these birds make a wonderful gift or fund-raising project. Create the birds from any hardwood—I choose mine for the beauty of the grain. I hope you'll make several birds and share them with anyone who needs a bit of comfort.



1 **Cut away the excess wood.** Create templates by transferring the patterns to thin cardboard and cutting around the outline of the patterns. Trace the templates onto the blank and cut the top view of the bird with a band saw. Tape the waste in place, rotate the blank 90°, and cut the side view.

ROUGHING OUT AND CARVING



2 **Rough out the bird.** Remove the sharp edges and rough shape the bird with a sanding drum equipped with 60-grit sandpaper. I use a 1½" (38mm)-diameter drum attached to a radial arm saw, but you can use a rotary-power carver. Shape the neck with a 1" (25mm)-diameter cushioned sanding drum.



3 **Finish shaping the bird.** Use a carving knife to shape the beak. Use a rotary-power carver and your bit of choice to add any desired details and to remove any remaining ridges. Make sure the bird is smooth and flowing, with no hard lines or sharp angles.

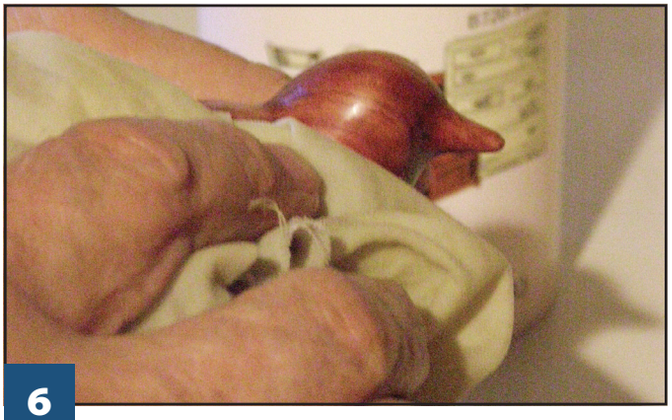
FINISHING THE PROJECT



4 **Sand the bird.** Sand the bird by hand with 150-grit sandpaper. Then buff it with synthetic steel wool until the carving is perfectly smooth. Don't rush the process. Creating a smooth surface is a vital step.



5 **Apply polyurethane.** Insert a darning needle into the bottom of the bird to give you something to hold. Then apply a light coat of polyurethane to the carving and allow the finish to dry thoroughly. Buff the carving with synthetic steel wool, apply another coat of finish, and let the finish dry thoroughly.



6 **Finish the bird.** Rub the second coat of polyurethane with powdered pumice mixed with oil. Remove the oil and pumice, and then apply paste wax. Use a soft cloth to buff the wax to a high gloss.

materials & **tools**

MATERIALS

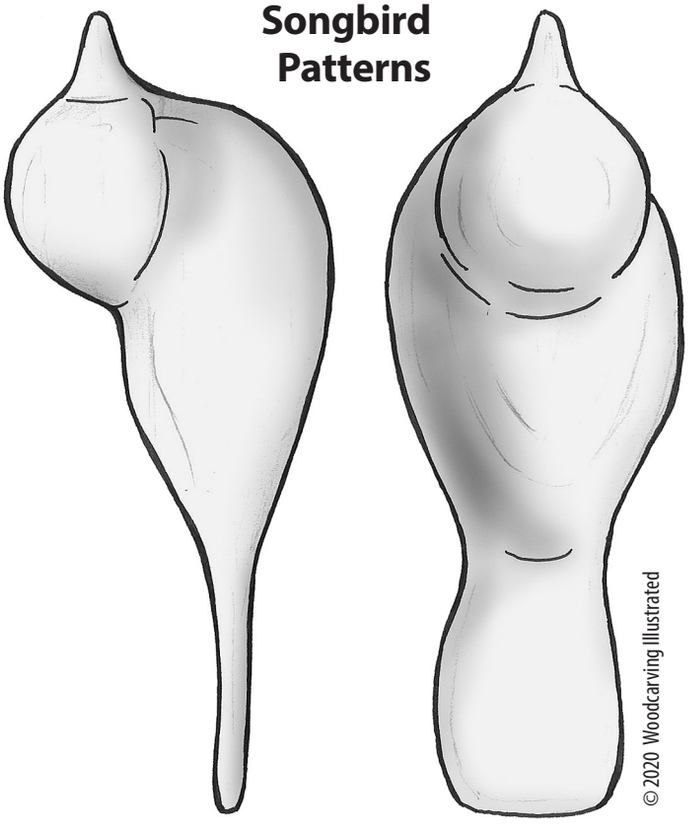
- Hardwood of choice, 2" (5.1cm) square: 4¼" (10.8cm) long
- Tape
- Sandpaper: 150-grit
- Polyurethane: clear
- Powdered pumice
- All-purpose household oil
- Paste wax
- Synthetic steel wool

TOOLS

- Radial arm saw (optional)
- Band saw
- Knife
- Drum sander: 1½" (38mm)-dia. 60-grit
- Cushioned sanding drum: 1" (25mm)-dia.
- Rotary-power carver with small diamond bit
- Darning needle
- Small paintbrush
- Soft cloths

The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.

Songbird Patterns



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Comfort Hedgehog



Comfort critters are easy to make with basswood eggs and a simple template

By Steven Kulp

Basswood eggs are easy to carry in your pocket or pack, and this hedgehog makes a fun trail project. If you don't have an egg, whittle a branch or piece of scrap into an egg, and start carving.

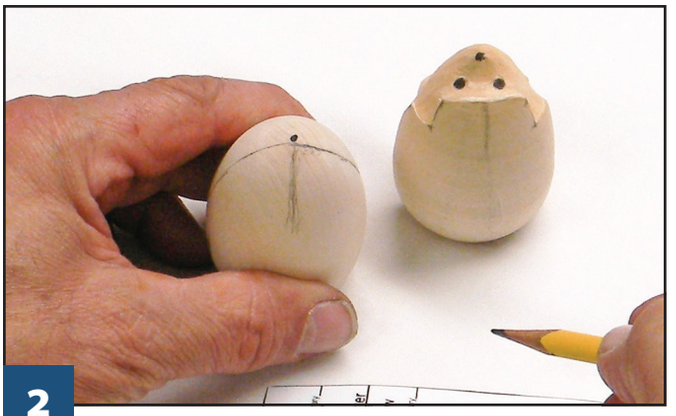
Getting Started

Purchase a basswood or butternut egg made for carving. Use a marker to make a dot on the point of the egg (the nose). You will be using this reference point throughout the carving process, so be careful not to rub the mark off.

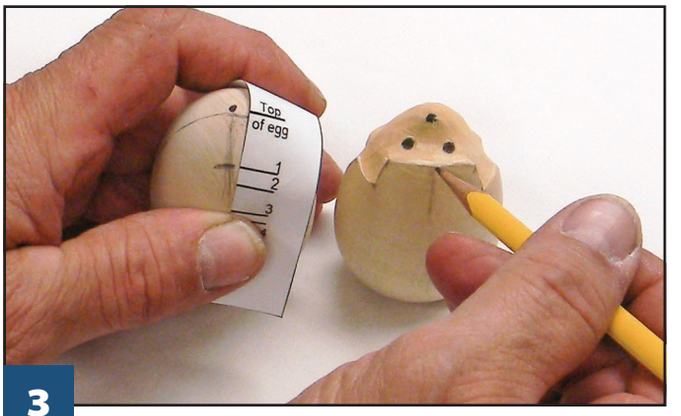
MARKING THE BLANK



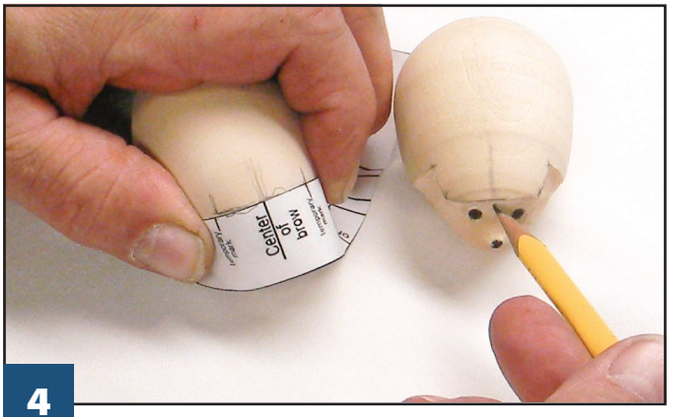
1 **Draw a line from the point of the egg to the edge of the flat spot on the bottom.** Use the edge of the template or a piece of tape as a flexible ruler. The line represents the bottom edge of the hedgehog's spiky coat.



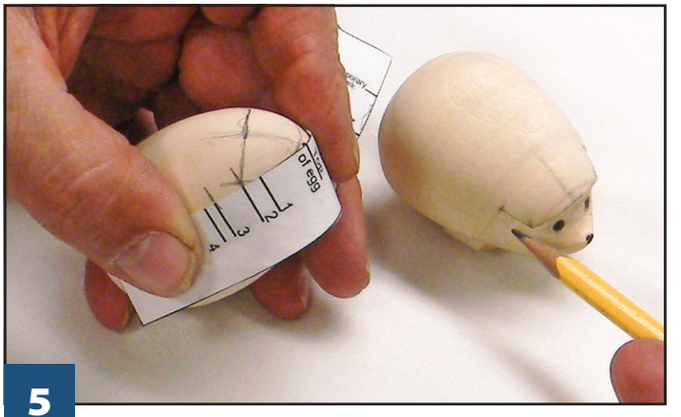
2 **Draw a centerline on the top of the egg from nose to tail.** Use this line to align the template on the egg.



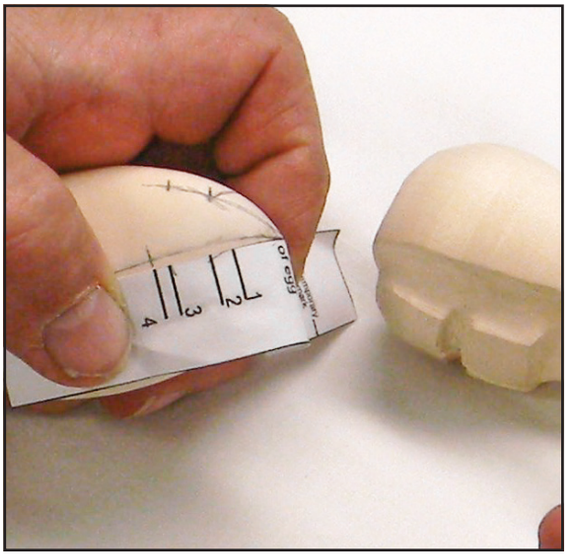
3 **Position the template's Top of Egg mark on the on the nose dot.** Align the template with the centerline and make a mark where Line 1 intersects with the centerline.

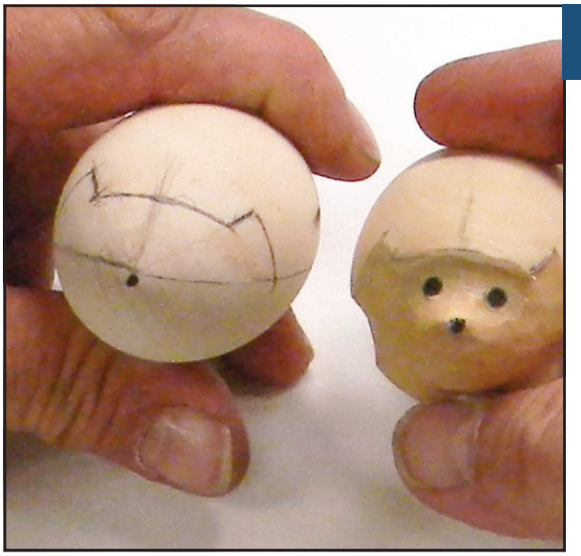


4 **Position the template's Center of Brow mark where the centerline and Line 1 meet.** Rotate the template 90°, draw the two Temporary Marks, and draw a line between them.



5 **Position the Top of Egg mark on the nose dot.** Align the edge of the template with one of the Temporary Marks (drawn in Step 4). Line 2 should align with the Temporary Marks. If not, check the other side; you might be a little off square. Adjust as needed, and draw a line along the edge of the template from Line 2 to Line 3 on both sides.



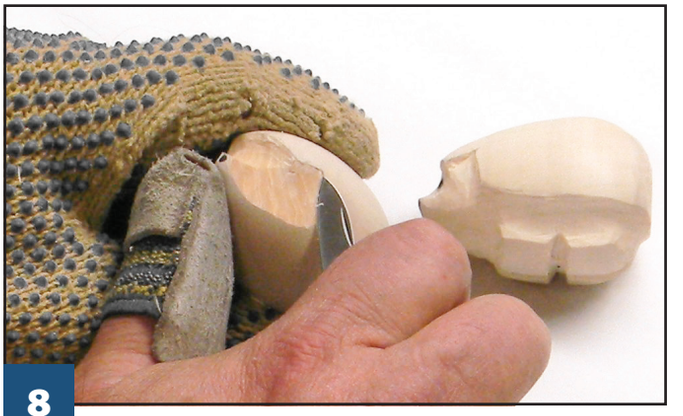


6 **Place the Top of Egg mark on the nose dot.** Align the template with the edge of the coat. Make a mark on Line 4 on both sides. Draw lines between the Line 3 and Line 4 marks to represent the back of the ears on both sides.

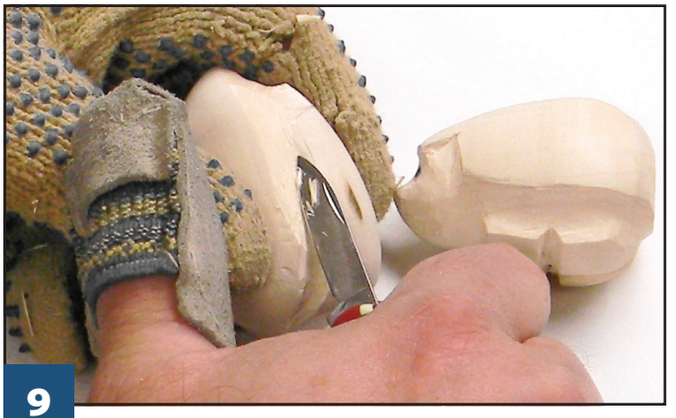
CARVING THE PROJECT



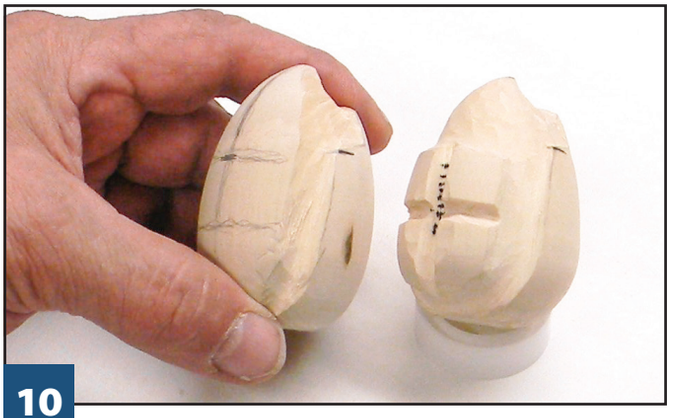
7 **Carve down from the brow toward the nose dot.** Make a scooping cut to give the nose a hook shape. Do not carve off the dot; we will still be using it as a reference point.



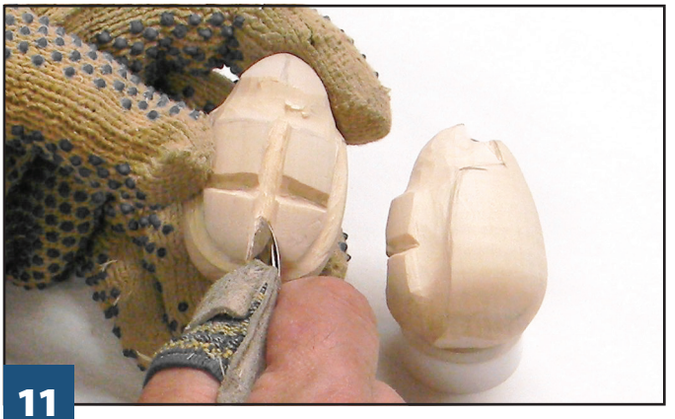
8 **Carve from the ear line toward the nose dot on both sides.** Make a V-shaped groove on the line, and then taper toward the dot on both sides. Keep both sides symmetrical.



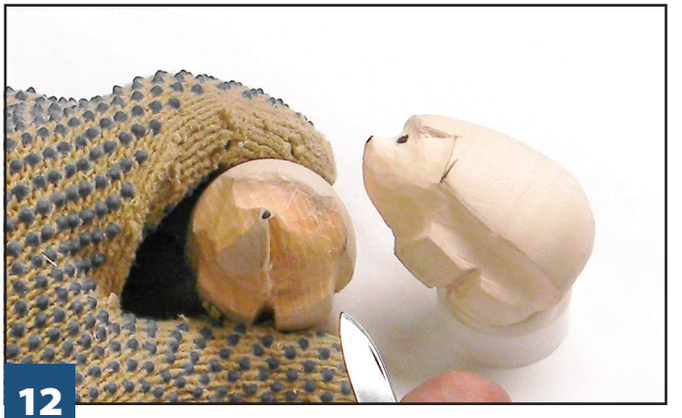
9 **Remove the wood below the spiky coat line.** This forms the outside of the legs. Remove the same amount of wood from both sides, or the hedgehog will lean to the side (which is hard to repair).



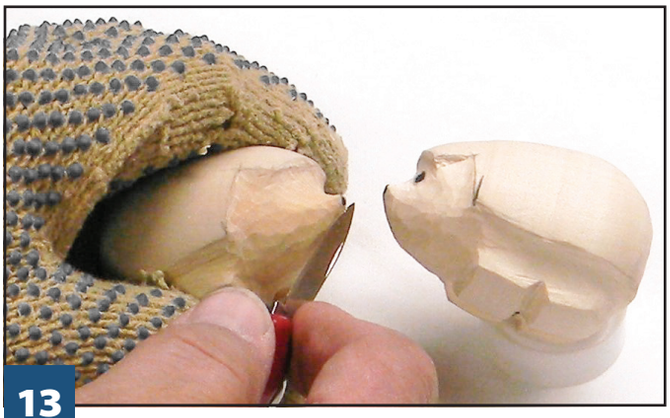
10 **Draw a centerline from the nose dot to the center of the bottom.** This marks the separation between the right and left legs. Draw a line for the front of the feet a little behind the back of the ears. Draw another line halfway between the front feet and the back feet to separate the front and back legs.



11 **Carve from the front of the front legs toward the front of the egg.** Carve grooves between the left and right legs and the front and back legs. *Note: I usually make the groove between the right and left legs wide enough to sign my carving.*



12 **Refine the wood in front of the front legs.** Follow the shape of the egg and create a curved shape. Clean up and round the rest of the carving around the face.



13 **Carve from the bottom curl to the point of the egg.** Create an upward sweep that makes it look like the hedgehog is sniffing around. Round the flat spot on the bottom of the egg and clean up any remaining rough spots.



14 **Add the details.** Stab, paint, or burn the spines. Burn or paint the eyes; they are located halfway between the center of the face and the edge of the brow (a little above the nose). Blacken the tip of the nose with a woodburner or paint. I sometimes drill a small hole and use cyanoacrylate (CA) glue to attach tiny beads for the eyes. Apply a coat of boiled linseed oil to the completed carving.

materials & **tools**

MATERIALS

- Wooden egg, basswood or butternut: any size you are comfortable carving; I used a hen-size egg for this article
- Boiled linseed oil
- Paint: black (optional)
- Beads: 2 each black (optional)
- Cyanoacrylate (CA) glue (optional)
- Pencil
- Tape (optional)

The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.

TOOLS

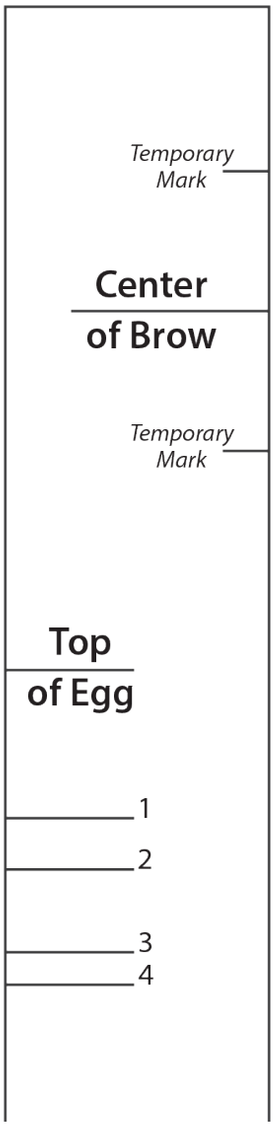
- Knife
- Marker, fine point: black
- Drill bit: small (optional)
- Woodburner (optional)

SPECIAL SOURCES

Hen-sized basswood eggs are available from:

- The Woodcraft Shop, 800-397-2278, TheWoodcraftShop.com
- Chipping Away, 888-682-9801, ChippingAway.com

Egg Marking Template



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Using the Template

This template is for a hen-sized egg. However, due to variations in egg sizes, check that the distance from the bottom of the template to the "Top of Egg" mark matches the distance from the bottom of the egg to its tip when placed next to the egg (not wrapped). Adjust the template as needed.

To size the template for other eggs, decrease it 76% for a pigeon egg 2" (5.1cm) tall or increase it 115% for a goose egg 3" (7.6cm) tall. Then check the template as described above and adjust as needed.

Comfort Tortoise

Carve a simple 8-step reptile using just two tools

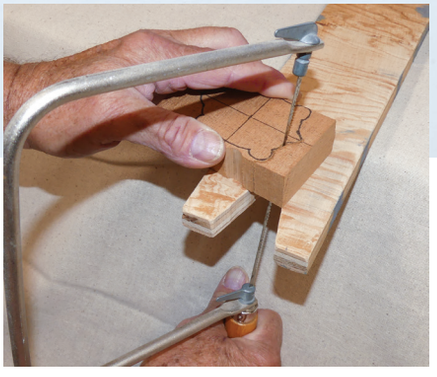
By Tom Mellott







After carving many comfort birds per Frank Faust's songbird project and then designing my own comfort penguins, I started thinking up other comfort creatures along the same lines. This comfort tortoise came to mind. It's a simple little project—you need only one knife and one gouge. Just set this guy on his back in the palm of your hand and give him a belly rub with your thumb; you'll feel calm and relaxed in no time.



Getting Started

Choose a kind of wood; I used mahogany, as it has a solid feel, consistent grain, and carves much like basswood. It also looks good with just a clear finish. If you'd rather use a different variety, try other richly colored hardwoods or even basswood.

Trace the basic shape (the perimeter of the tortoise) onto the wood, making sure the grain runs head-to-tail. Cut out the blank using a band saw, scroll saw, or coping saw. *Note: You only need to cut out the top view, as the other views can be carved easily.*

ROUGHING OUT





1 **Add the basic landmarks.** Draw centerlines on the top and bottom of the blank, one running from nose to tail and one running from side to side. This will help maintain a general symmetry as you carve. Draw a line around the lower edge of the tortoise, a full ¼" (6mm) up from the bottom edge. This defines the edge of the tortoise shell and where the top of the feet and tail are. Then complete the (roughly ½" (1.3cm)-dia.) circles for each of the feet on the bottom of the tortoise. Mark the areas where the tail and head start on the front and back. Draw an oval centered on the bottom to mark the area where your thumb will go. *Note: I like to use a ballpoint or a felt-tip pen instead of a pencil. Pencil graphite tends to rub off and make my carving glove dirty. Don't worry about the ink being permanent, as you will remove it when carving.*



2 **Round the shell.** Using a knife, curve the shell down almost to the line you drew around the perimeter of the blank. Leave more wood in the head, tail, and foot areas, as you'll need to round and shape these, too. Do not carve any shell details at this time; you'll add them later.



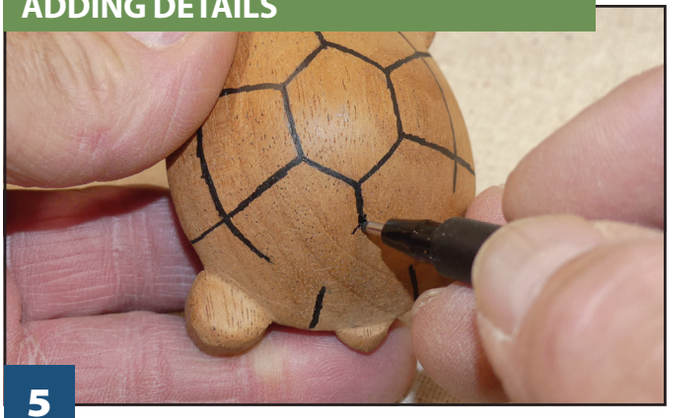


3 **Define the feet.** Carve stop cuts around the feet on the bottom. Then carve up to the stop cuts to separate the feet from the torso. Taper the bottom from the oval up to the edge that meets the top portion of the shell. Shape the head and tail so they appear to poke out from under the shell on the bottom and top.



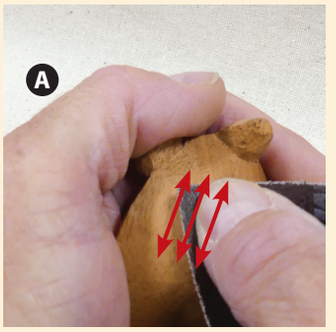
4 **Carve the belly indent.** Use a ⅜" (10mm) #3 gouge. The goal is to create a shallow, spoon-like area to run your thumb across—about half the depth of a soup spoon. Keep testing it with your thumb until it feels comfortable. Then sand the whole tortoise with 80-grit sandpaper, moving up progressively through the grits until you reach 280.

ADDING DETAILS

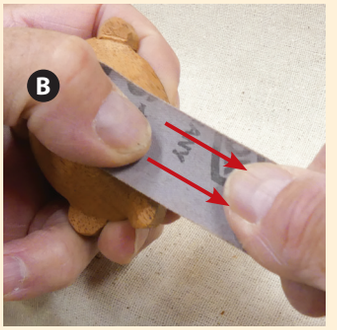


5 **Draw the top shell (carapace) segments.** Refer to the pattern.

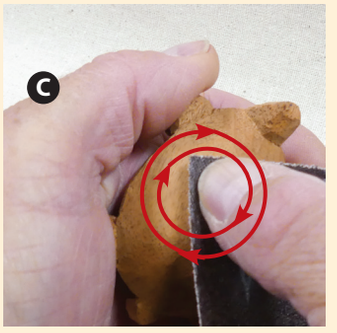
Sanding Methods



A: Traditional Method
Sand back and forth with the grain.

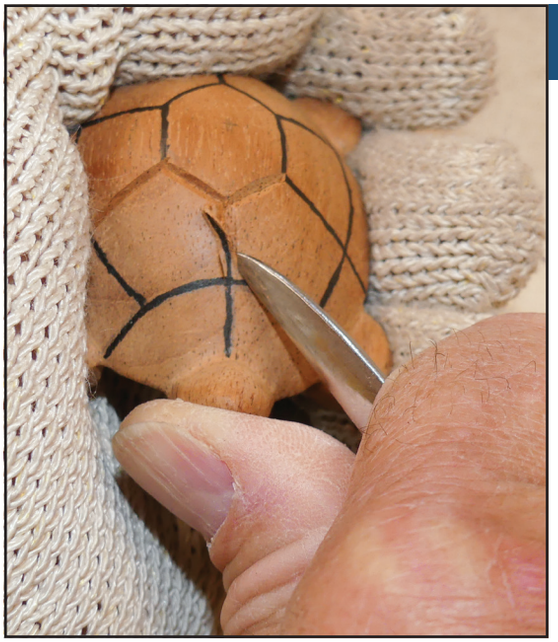


B: Pull Strip
Using a 1" (2.5cm)-wide strip of sandpaper, use your thumb to hold the grit side against the spot to be sanded. With your other hand, pull the strip to sand that spot. Repeat on overlapping areas until you have sanded your project. This method is best for small areas.



C: Orbital or Circular
Hold the sandpaper as you would for the traditional method, but use a circular motion. You will note that this method can remove material quickly, as it is similar in action to a powered orbital disc sander. Try changing directions (i.e. clockwise, then counterclockwise).

For a great sanding job, use all three methods. Don't forget to periodically brush the sanding dust off your project and sandpaper. This will dramatically improve the efficiency of your sanding. I recommend using a stiff-bristled brush.



6 **Carve the shell segments.** Follow the lines you just drew and make two parallel cuts that meet to form a V in the center. Use the knife or, if you prefer, a very sharp V-tool of your choice. When the shell details are to your liking, clean up the grooves and surface with 220- and then 280-grit sandpaper.



7 **Drill the hole for the skewer.** Use a 7⁄64" (2.8mm)-dia. bit to drill a hole under the tail and up into the flesh of the tortoise, just deep enough to insert a wooden cooking skewer. You'll use this to hold the tortoise steady while applying finish.



8 **Remove all fuzzies and dust.** Use a stiff-bristled brush. Then sit the tortoise on the skewer and apply your finish. I used a clear lacquer. Let the first coat dry thoroughly, buff with a Scotch-Brite™ pad, and recoat. Apply additional coats as necessary for a smooth finish. Let dry.

materials & **tools**

MATERIALS

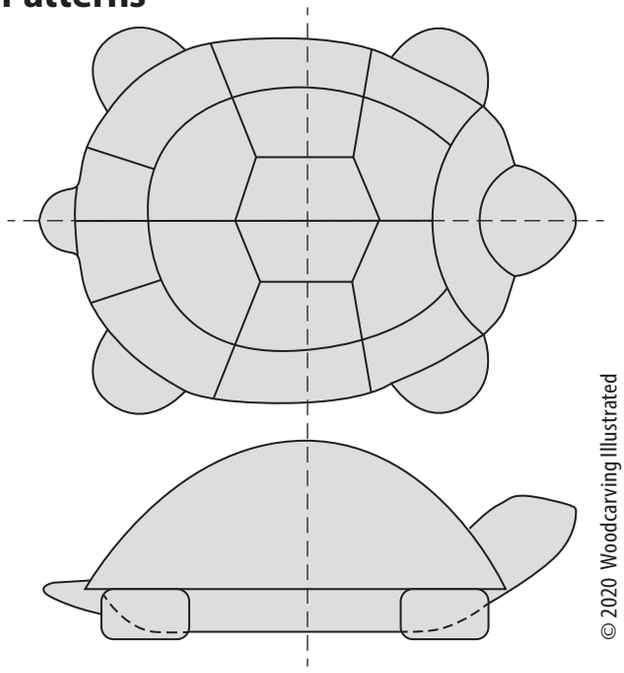
- Wood, such as mahogany, 1" (2.5cm) thick: 2" x 3" (5.1cm x 7.6cm)
- Pen: felt-tip
- Sandpaper: assorted grits up to 280
- Finish: clear lacquer, such as Deft
- Wooden skewer, 1⁄16" (2mm)-dia.: 6" (15.2cm) long
- Hand pad, such as Scotch-Brite
- Pencil (optional)

TOOLS

- Band saw, scroll saw, or coping saw
- Carving knife
- #3 gouge: 3⁄8" (10mm)
- Drill with bit: 7⁄64" (2.8mm)-dia.
- V-tool of your choice (optional)
- Brush: stiff-bristled

The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.

Tortoise Patterns



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Comfort Owl

These watchful egg owls are a hoot to hold and to make.

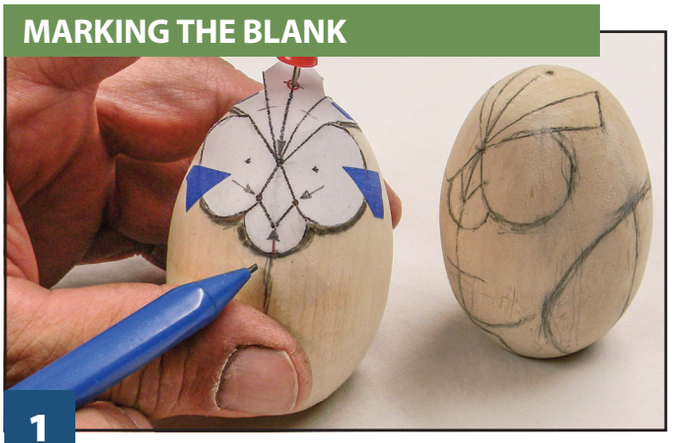
By Steven Kulp

Whether you're packing for a business trip or your next term at Hogwarts, this owl makes a perfect travel companion. Pop a few of these creatures in your duffel and give them out as calling cards at each stop, or wait till Halloween and hand them out instead of candy.

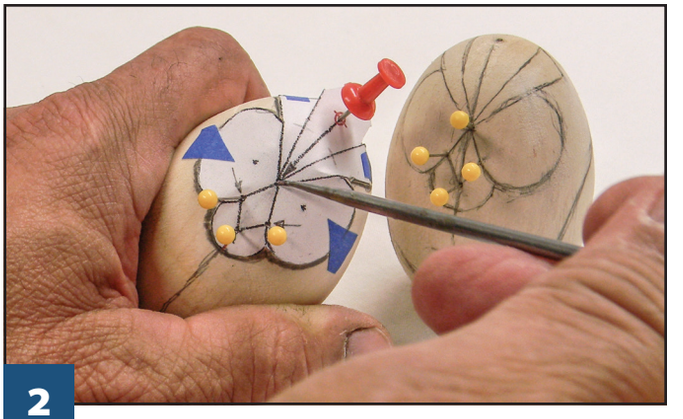
Getting Started

Purchase a basswood or butternut egg made for carving; don't try this with inexpensive turned eggs from a craft store. Photocopy and cut out the pattern.

MARKING THE BLANK



1 **Draw a straight line along the length of the egg.** Start at the top. I draw it down the edge-grain side of the egg because it holds the details better. Push a pin or small nail through the bull's-eye of the pattern into the top of the egg. Align the center mark on the chin with the line, and hold it in place with a small piece of tape.



2 **Transfer the pattern.** Use a knife and carefully stab through the pattern at the corner points of the beak. While holding the pattern flat, trace around the outside. Use the diagram to mark the belly, feet, and wings. Remove the pattern and draw the horn feather lines and beak marks.

CARVING THE PROJECT



3 **Carve around the face and horn feathers.** Use a small V-tool. Make the V-groove just over ⅛" (3mm) deep. Remove the wood between the horn feathers and around the top of the head with a 3⁄16" to ¼" (5mm to 6mm) #8 gouge.



4 **Carve toward the V-grooves around the face.** Use the knife, and start at the outline of the wings. Then, carve from the outlines of the wings to the top of the head in the back. Round the belly and carve a notch between the belly and the top of the feet.



5 **Carve from the wings to the sides of the feet.** Use a ⅜" (10mm) #8 gouge. Remove enough wood so you'll be able to drill a hole through both of the feet or cut a notch for mounting on the edge of a box or cup. Round the top and bottom of the feet, and carve the claws with the knife or the small V-tool.



6 **Carve the details of the face.** Make stop cuts around the beak and between the eye dishes and the bib. Then, carve the bib down to 1⁄16" (2mm) thick with the knife or a skew chisel. Use a ½" (or 12mm) #6 gouge to carve the eye dishes down to ⅛" (3mm) thick. To get clean cuts, carve from the outside of the eye dish in toward the beak.



7 **Carve the beak to a pyramid shape.** Use the knife or skew chisel. Make the top point at the widest part of the beak. Carve the horn feathers down to meet the top of the beak, tapering them back from the center of the head.



8 **Decide how to carve the eyes.** You can make a realistic eye centered in the dish, or make oversized cartoon eyes looking off to one side. You can carve a recess and add small yellow glass eyes or paint them. I woodburn mine.







Finishing the Owl

You can finish the owl several ways. Refer to the diagram and carve, paint, or burn feathers. If you decide to paint, seal the egg with natural Danish oil and let it dry. Then, dry-brush the wings and shoulders with a wash of burnt sienna acrylic paint, and paint the eyes and bill black. If you choose to burn, follow the diagram for the feathers, and then blacken the eyes and bill with a writing tip in a woodburner. Darken the back of the wings slightly with a shading tip. Then seal with a coat of Danish oil.

Displaying the Owl

Use your imagination to come up with a way to display your owl (or owls). To get you started, here are a few suggestions:

1. Drill a 3⁄16" (5mm)-diameter hole horizontally through the feet and perch him on a stick.
2. Drill a hole up from the bottom and have him sit on a pencil or dowel.
3. Notch the bottom up to the drilled hole so he can sit on the edge of a cup or box (a small dowel or push pin may be needed behind the notch to help hold the owl straight up).
4. Set him on his base.

materials & tools

MATERIALS

- Wooden egg, basswood or butternut: any size you are comfortable carving; I used a hen-sized egg for this article
- Sandpaper
- Danish oil: natural
- Acrylic paint: black, burnt sienna (optional)
- Small dowel (optional)
- Tape
- Pencil
- Push pin, several

TOOLS

- Knife
- Skew chisel: 5⁄16" to 3⁄8" (8mm to 10mm)
- #6 gouge: 1⁄2" (or 12mm)
- #8 gouges: 3⁄16" to 1⁄4" (5mm to 6mm), 3⁄8" (10mm)
- V-tool: 1⁄4" (6mm)
- Paintbrushes (optional): 1⁄4", 3⁄4"
- Woodburner with nibs: writing, shading (optional)
- Drill with bit: 1⁄16" (5mm)-dia. (optional)

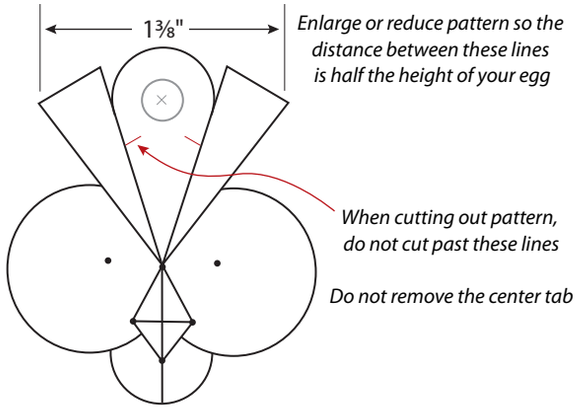
The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.

SPECIAL SOURCES

Hen-sized basswood eggs available from:

- The Woodcraft Shop, 800-397-2278, TheWoodcraftShop.com
- Chipping Away, 888-682-9801, ChippingAway.com

Owl Pattern



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Comfort Penguin



A special ingredient makes these tuxedoed birds as sleek as the real thing.

By Tom Mellott

They may look awkward on land, but penguins are smooth and elegant in the water. I find great satisfaction in watching them glide along under the ice, so I created these comfort penguins; smooth to the touch and a pleasure to hold.

These penguins are also easy and quick to make. I find them relaxing to carve and fun to paint using a variety of color schemes—I even made a pink one. You can carve them from a variety of woods and in a variety of shapes.

In this project, I experimented by adding color with India ink, and it worked very well. India ink can be diluted with rubbing alcohol, so it dries quickly. Apply additional coats (or layers) to build up the density or intensity of the color that you want. India ink is widely available at art stores and comes in a variety of colors, which you can blend to suit your preference.

ROUGHING OUT





1 **Trace the patterns onto the two sides of the blank.** Be aware of the grain direction. Cut one side view with a scroll saw or band saw. Tape the pieces back together with masking tape, and retrace any patterns as needed. Cut the other view. Remove the tape. Draw centerlines on all four sides of the blank.

TIP

LONG-LASTING CENTERLINES

Draw the centerlines with a ballpoint pen. The pen ink doesn't rub off like pencil graphite, and your carving glove stays cleaner.





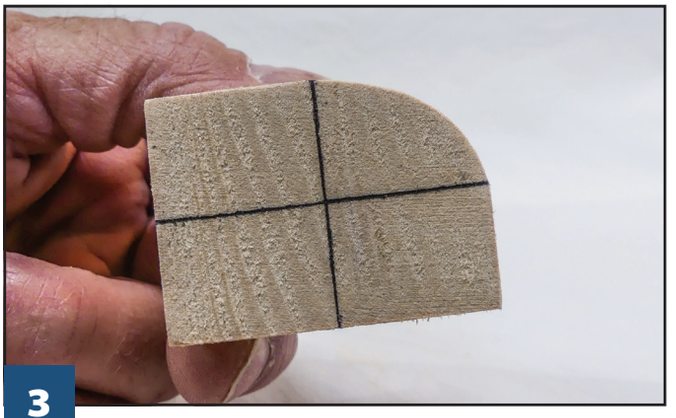
2 **Round the body.** Use a straight-blade carving knife. Pay attention to the grain direction as you work from the head to the feet. Do not carve the beak or wings until the end. Use paring cuts (pulling the knife back toward your thumb guard) and push cuts (using your thumbs on the back of the blade to push the knife away from you).

TIP

MAKING SLICING CUTS

As you're carving, if you feel resistance on your sharp blade, add a little "slicing" (sideways) motion to either paring or push cuts.





3 **Finish rounding the body.** Use the centerlines as a guide. The photo above shows a cross section of the penguin at its midsection. I work on one quarter of the penguin at a time. Hold the carving up to the light to check for the symmetry and general shape, and to identify any out-of-place bumps or protrusions.

ADDING THE DETAILS



4 **Shape the feet.** Use the knife and a ⅛" (3mm) #11 gouge. Make the feet look like smooth, rounded, flat-bottomed boots.



5 **Shape the beak.** I aim for a wide or broad beak, but you may like to make it pointed. Try to keep it somewhat blunt—remember, this is a stylized carving. Then, use 80- or 100-grit sandpaper to smooth the penguin and remove the centerlines.



6 **Cut out the wing pattern on a copy of the side-view pattern.** Place the pattern onto the side of the penguin and trace the wing. Flip the pattern and trace the wing onto the other side.



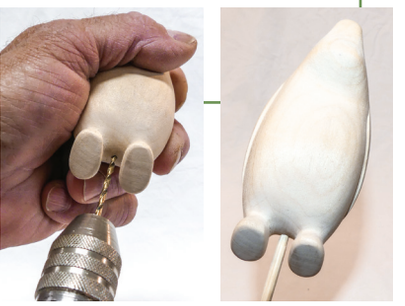


7 **Carve a groove on both sides of the wing.** Use a ¼" (6mm) 70° V-tool. Use the carving knife and a ⅝" (16mm) #3 gouge to remove the wood around the wings up to the V-grooves. Sand everything smooth with 80 or 100-grit sandpaper, leaving the wings raised. Then, use progressively finer grits of sandpaper up to 220-or 280-grit to smooth everything. For a very smooth surface, finish with 400 to 600-grit sandpaper.

TIP

PAINTING STICK

Drill a 3⁄32" (2.5mm)-diameter hole between the legs. Insert a wooden cooking skewer or dowel into the hole to hold the penguin while the ink or paint dries.



Painting and Finishing

I added color using India ink, which comes in a variety of colors, dries quickly (especially when thinned with rubbing alcohol), and allows for control over the intensity of the color. However, it's possible to paint these penguins using acrylic paint sealed with lacquer or give them a natural oil finish sealed with the same.

Put black India ink in one section of a paint palette and rubbing alcohol in another. Use an eye-dropper to dilute the ink by 10% to 20% with rubbing alcohol. For more translucent color, dilute it with more rubbing alcohol. Test the color on scrap wood.

Pick up ink with a ⅛" (3mm)-wide flat brush (shader) or a #4 round brush. Dip the brush in the diluted ink and rub most of the ink off on the side of the section as you pull the brush out. You don't want the brush fully loaded with ink; it should be reasonably dry.

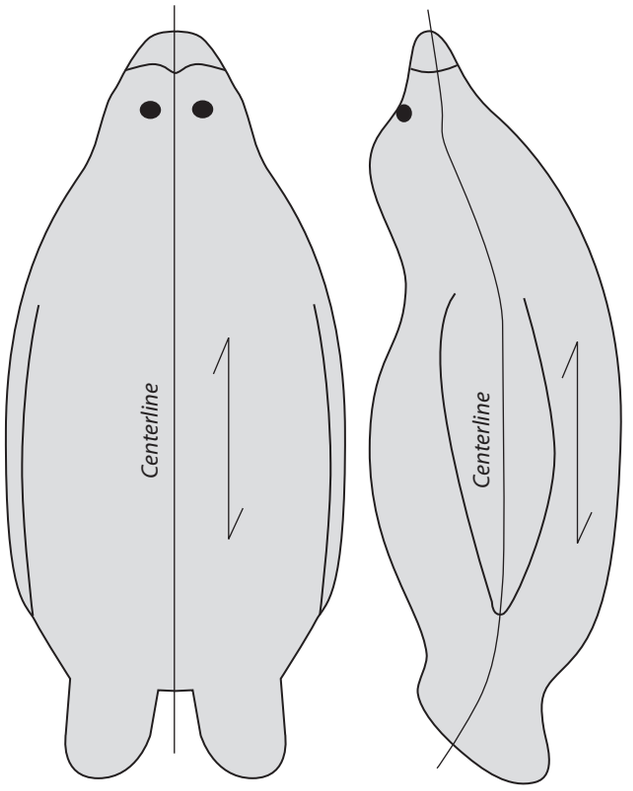


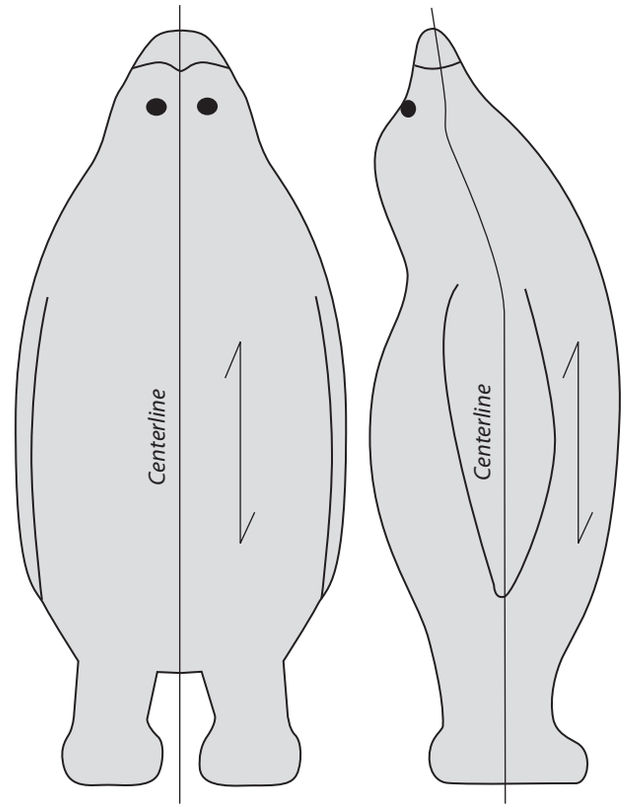
Orient the carving so the area to be colored is downstream of the rest of the carving. That way, if the ink bleeds, it will bleed into the area you're painting. To even out the coloration, brush the ink with just rubbing alcohol or a very diluted mixture of ink.

Use the same process to paint the chest with white India ink and the beak with brown or orange India ink. Use undiluted black India ink and a very dry brush to paint the eyes.

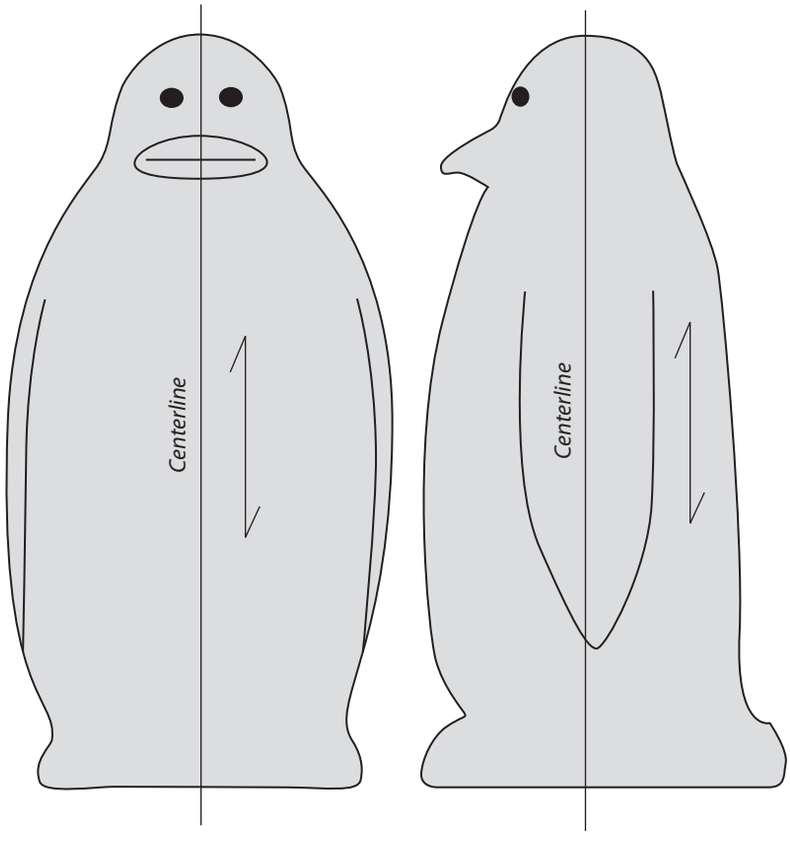
When the ink is fully dry, apply a light coat of Deft clear spray lacquer. The coat seals the wood and raises the grain and any fuzzies. Buff the carving with fine-grit synthetic steel wool, such as Scotch-Brite™. Then apply several more light spray coats of Deft clear gloss lacquer until you achieve the desired finish.

Penguin Patterns





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materials & **tools**

MATERIALS

- Wood, such as basswood, butternut, or walnut, 2" (5.1cm) square: 4" (10.2cm) long
- Scrap wood, 1 piece
- Sandpaper: assorted grits
- Synthetic steel wool, such as Scotch-Brite: fine
- Rubbing alcohol
- India ink: black, brown or orange, white
- Skewer or dowel (painting stick)
- Lacquer, such as Deft gloss spray
- Ballpoint pen
- Tape

TOOLS

- Band saw or scroll saw
- Carving knife: straight blade
- V-tool: ¼" (6mm) 70°
- #3 gouge: ⅝" (16mm)
- #11 gouge: ⅛" (3mm)
- Drill with bit: 3⁄32" (2.5mm)-dia. twist
- Paintbrushes: ⅛" (3mm) flat or shader, #4 round
- Paint palette
- Eyedropper

The author used these products for the project. Substitute your choice of brands, tools, and materials as desired.



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