



The Curling Chip

July - August 2026

Summer means fewer meetings, but more gatherings – there are plenty of upcoming events to carve and demonstrate at. Volunteers are always needed, and appreciated.

Have an idea for an article? Did you take woodcarving photos on a trip? Please send them to Becky at thewoodwurm@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor: Becky Barnes

Flickertail Woodcarvers
PO Box 7473
Bismarck, ND 58507

<https://FlickertailWoodcarvers.org>

FlickertailWoodcarversND@gmail.com



FlickertailWoodcarversND

2026 Leadership

President: Becky Weisgerber
Past President: Cliff Orgaard
Programs: Eric Gaasland
Treasurer: Warren Schlecht
Secretary: Amanda Person
Librarian: Cathy Lash
Historian: Clara Sherman Yonker
Membership: Doug Smith
Annual Show: Eric Gaasland
Property: Matt Hlebechuk
Publicity: Cliff Orgaard
Buckstop Gallery: Mike Knudson, Doug Emerson, Bob Pedigo, Warren Schlecht, Cliff Orgaard, Todd Engelstad
Facebook: Eric Gaasland
Pinterest: Cindy Roth
Website: Becky Barnes



July 21, 2026
Sertoma Park Picnic

The weather was perfect for the first Picnic of the summer. Around a dozen Flickertails showed up.



Above: Gnomes and Mushrooms and Cacti, oh my!

Below: Fox carving by Bob P., which if you're attending the October show in Fargo, you'll get a chance to carve!



Above: Michaela working on a decorative cross.

Below: One of Becky W.'s Nuthatch comic, come to life.



July 25, 2026
Bluegrass Goes Pink

Cancelled due to building storm damage! From the Cross Ranch State Park Facebook page:

Due to the severe thunderstorm that moved through Washburn last night, tonight's supper and concert have been canceled. The storm caused damage to the Memorial Building, band equipment, and resulted in power outages, making it impossible to safely hold the event.

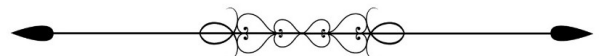
August 1-2, 2026

Capital A'Fair

One of the fun things about the Capital A'Fair carving display table, is as different carvers come and go, the display changes. Each carver has their own favorite subjects or styles to carve, which is part of what makes the group so awesome. There's always something to inspire you.



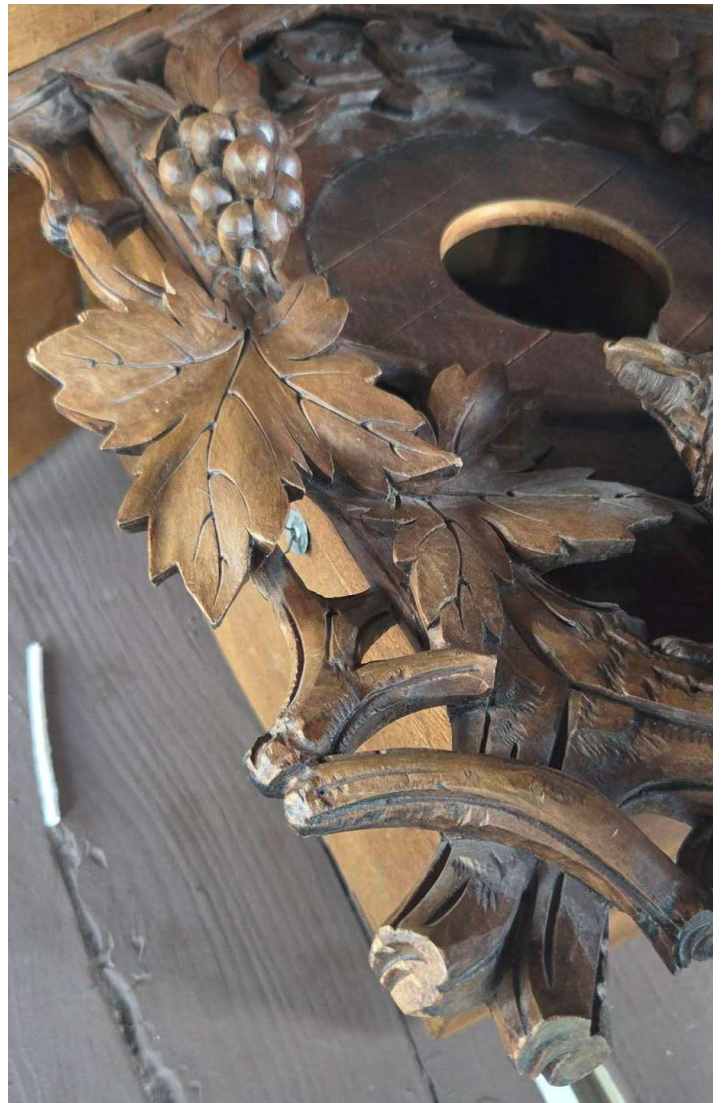
Raffle tickets are printed! See all those yellow rectangles? They're only \$1 each, and help support the Flickertail events. Raising money from raffle tickets or silent auctions also helps new carvers by keeping annual club dues low, and helps us afford to bring in outside talented instructors.



August 19, 2026. Don Eck, 85, a retired instructor at BSC and long time Flickertail Club member passed away. Memorial on Sept. 21st, 10am, at McCabe United Methodist.

August 18, 2026
Sertoma Park Picnic

Another good picnic turnout, with more show-and-tell projects.





Alebrije – Mexican Folk Art



If you've ever entered a gift shop and found small carved animals, often painted with bright colors and patterns, you might have come across an Alebrije. Especially if you notice the animals is more of a chimera, mixing together different creatures of land, sea, and air.

Pedro Linares Lopez, a paper-mache craftsman, was born in 1906 in Mexico City. In 1936 he fell ill, and dreamed of fanciful creatures that called themselves "alebrije." After he recovered, he began making these creatures from paper, cardboard, and paste, then painting them in intricate patterns and bright colors. He passed away in 1992 at the age of 82, but his art has continued on.

When the alebrijes art concept reached Oaxaca (pronounced "wa'haka") in southern Mexico, local woodcarvers took the idea and swapped out the cardboard and paste for hand-carved copal wood. Depending on the size and complexity of the carving an alebrije could take hours to months to create. Copal wood is collected, then carved while still green. The copal tree resin was already important as an incense used for centuries in Mesoamerican culture. Think: Olmec, Aztec, and Mayan cultures.

Some carvings feature a single creature, while others mix and match, calling on the strengths or areas of influence for those animals. Some creatures resonate with the Celestial realm (sky), such as eagles, bats, butterflies, and quetzals. These connect humans to



Below: Armadillo + bird + lizard alebrije, carved and painted by Taller Jacobo & Maria Angeles out of Tilcajete, Mexico.



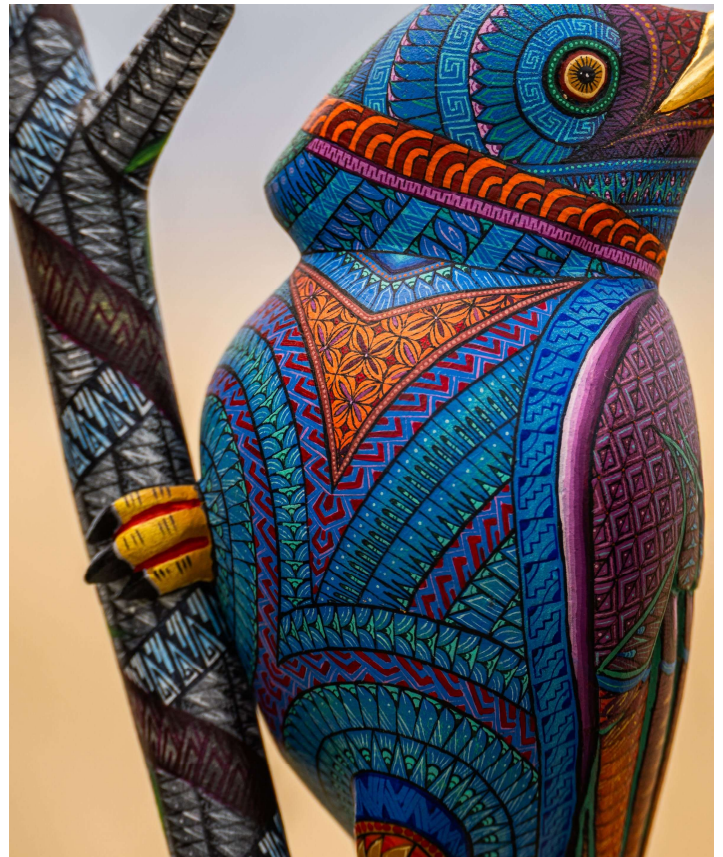
the gods. The Terrestrial realm (earth) focuses more on the cycles of nature, survival, and reproduction, represented by jaguar, deer, rabbits, coyotes, and armadillos. The Underworld is not just death, but rebirth and the knowledge that lay beyond the veil. These creatures include snakes, frogs, lizards, and insects (the creepy-crawlies). A carving that includes features from all three realms is especially powerful – a creature that can move between worlds. So, finding a carving that might include a jaguar with wings, and lizard feet might look odd, but would be very powerful.

The carvings are dried (some quickly in the sun, others buried to slow the process), cracks repaired, and finished. Details like feathers or scales might be added, or it may be sanded smooth. Dimensional features like ears, tails, wings, and horns can be added with pegs and glue.

Painting the figure is the last, often most time-consuming stage of the process. They are given a white base coat, then painted with intricate patterns.

Some patterns are pulled from nature, and others from Zapotec history. Zapotec were the pre-Columbian civilization that flourished in what today is known as Oaxaca. Even the colors used have different meanings – beware of falling down a rabbit hole if you start researching!

The alebrije are similar to another Mesoamerican spiritual belief – the nahual. A nahual is the animal spirit and element bound to a person from birth. What animal and element depended on the ritual calendar (the “piye”), which is divided into 260 days (20 periods of 13 days each). The major difference is that an alebrije was thought of more as a spiritual guide. A nahual is the embodiment of a person themselves, and if powerful enough, could even transform from human to animal and back again (shapeshifters).



Above: A close-up of one of Taller Jacobo and Maria Angeles’ pieces. Intense geometric patterns that would have taken an astounding amount of time to paint.

August 23, 2026

Sign-Carving with Jock Holmen

Eric G. took a road trip to Milan, MN, for a class at the Milan Village Art School taught by Jock Holmen. The school teaches different crafts, including a number of carving forms. They also host an annual Spoon Gathering, for those interested in carving, learning new (or old) spoon techniques, and just hanging out.



Projects Looming

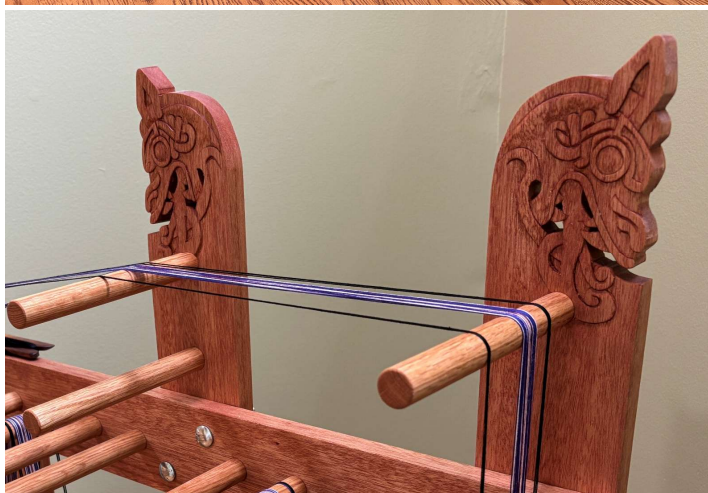
Becky Barnes

I was teaching an ancient form of decorative weaving called "Tablet" or "Card" weaving, when I was asked if I could build the Inkle looms needed. Well, not really *needed*, since you can technically do the weaving with one end wrapped around your waist, and the other attached to a mostly-immovable object like a tree or heavy table... but the loom does make things *easier* and portable!

Thus, the answer was: yes, I can make the small Inkle loom to weave on, as well as the shuttles to wrap your yarn around. I call it the Wyrmling! Smaller than some of the others available on the market, but large enough to still get a decent length of weaving.



What about a really big loom? Something capable of doing many yards? Well sure – it's the same theory, just bigger. But, if I make it bigger... I can make it bougie too! Two of the vertical posts have a zoomorphic dragon carving, with inspiration taken from bedposts recovered from the Gokstad Grave (c. 890), near Vestfold, Norway.

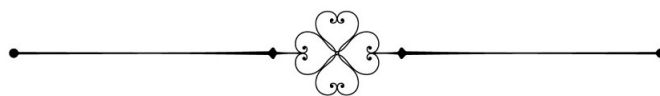
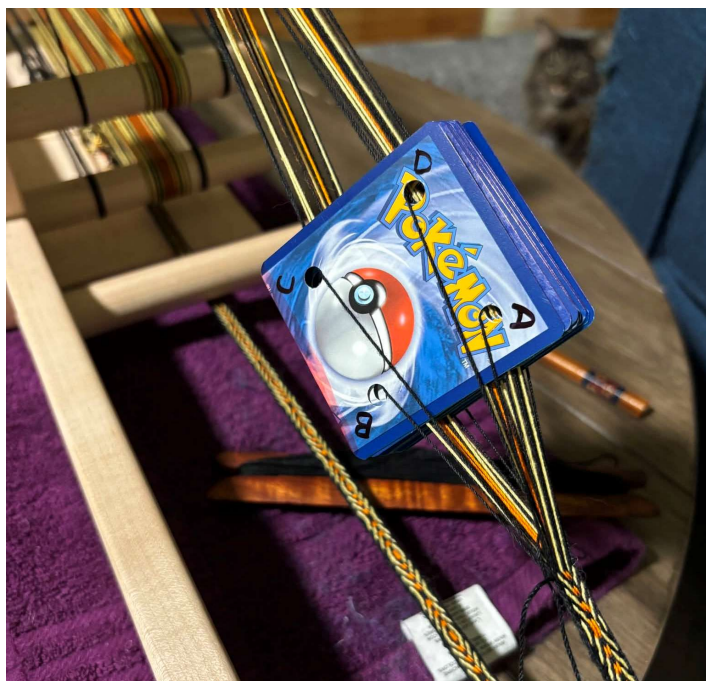


I'm working on wooden cards next, similar to those found in the Oseberg grave find (c. 800) near Tønsberg, Norway. Cards have been found in other graves as well – some wood, some bone or horn. Modern day cards can be anything from cardstock, cardboard – even 3D printed plastic! Although I've found a good size of card for my hand is the same as a playing card.



Above: Wooden cards recovered from the Oseberg grave.

Below: Pokémon playing cards that met with scissors and a hole punch.



Library Display – Caricatures

Make sure to check out the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library entryway! Every few months the library swaps out the display, and for the last few years the Flickertails have been granted a spot to show off member carvings, and also announce the upcoming Fall Show. We've had chip-carving, Spoons, bark-carving, and more, but this fall we're showing off Caricatures. The sign reads:

"Caricature wood carvings are whimsical, humorous wooden sculptures that intentionally exaggerate

human or animal features, such as oversized noses, giant ears, or lopsided grins, instead of aiming for realistic proportions.

Characteristics and Style

- **Exaggerated Features:** Focuses heavily on expressive faces, comical body shapes, and dynamic expressions.
- **Textured Planes:** Often features clean, faceted, or flat-plane cuts left by a sharp knife rather than a perfectly smooth finish.
- **Common Subjects:** Frequently depicts folksy archetypes like old cowboys, hillbillies, sea captains, wizards, Santas, or specific professions."



Upcoming Events

September 5: Monthly Meeting & Whittle-In

September 5-6: South Central Threshing Bee, Braddock, ND

September 15: Whittle-In

September 18-19: Downtowner's Street Fair

September 27: Apple Jam – Buckstop Junction

September 27: Teddy Roosevelt Days, McDowell Dam. Contact Amanda P.

October 3: Monthly Meeting & Whittle-In

October 2-4: Red River Valley Woodcarvers Show, Fargo Air Museum, timed with the Fargo Art Crawl.

October 8-11: Flickertail Annual Woodcarving Show & Classes