Hi Joyce, If it's useful use it if not don't worry I just wanted to contribute something after you asked as I understand how difficult it is to get audience participation. The links to the videos I used are below and the picture attached. Best Richard.

Greetings fellow carvers,

I hope this message finds you well. I must extend my sincerest apologies for my absence in our recent gatherings since the memorable snake carving session at the Manassas library last year. Balancing meetings, work, and family life has proven to be quite the juggling act.

This year, I embarked on a new project, inspired by the vibrant presence of the Northern Cardinal, a bird that graces our Virginia landscapes, adorning signs, license plates, and logos alike. My journey into carving this state bird was greatly aided by the wealth of tutorial resources available. Notably, Doug Linker's instructional video on carving a cardinal using a dowel, and Gene Messer's insightful response, offering an alternative technique with a 1x1 basswood stick, were instrumental in guiding my efforts.

Unfortunately, my initial choice of dowel proved unsuitable, a challenge Doug had highlighted in his tutorial. Despite this setback, the experience underscored the importance of material selection in carving, reminding me to test wood softness before commencing.

Gene's emphasis on the indispensability of a well-sharpened knife resonated with me. Although I possess a wet stone, my primary sharpening tools have been a leather strop and honing compound. My journey with knives began with Mora knives, which I found challenging to sharpen to my satisfaction, leading me to explore other options. A budget-friendly set from Amazon introduced me to a knife with an unusually curved blade that, surprisingly, suited my carving style, and a detail knife that, while effective for undercutting, tended to remove large chunks of wood unexpectedly. Insights into knife expectations and maintenance would be invaluable to me at this stage.

The contrasting carving styles of Doug and Gene, from Doug's brisk pace aimed at maintaining viewer engagement to Gene's methodical approach, have both been enlightening and enjoyable. Their differing patterns for the cardinal, with Doug opting for a turned head and Gene a forward-facing pose, presented unique challenges and aesthetic outcomes. I experimented with both, finding that each orientation offers distinct advantages in terms of carving dynamics and visual appeal.

Carving, for me, is more than a hobby; it's a grounding practice amidst the rush of daily life. It allows me to engage in a tangible, tactile activity that contrasts with the cerebral demands of my professional and personal responsibilities. I've learned to deconstruct projects into manageable steps, assessing the complexity of each and maintaining multiple projects to accommodate varying levels of focus and energy.

The cardinal's eyes, particularly as demonstrated by Doug, posed a significant challenge. His technique of carving an octagonal shape before refining the eyes was very helpful. While Doug's pattern does not emphasize the wings' contours, Gene's detailed approach offers a more defined separation between the body and wings, though this detail may be less visible from the front.

In conclusion, this journey of carving the Northern Cardinal has been both challenging and rewarding, offering valuable lessons in technique, material selection, and the therapeutic benefits of carving. I look forward to sharing more of my experiences and Warm regards,

Richard Smith <https://youtu.be/fLbghQByfOw?si=jKX3qMir4B2JyK9t>

<https://youtu.be/HkpZFrENZ2k?si=0cF2ImaR4ngSps_i>



