

Chickadee Christmas Bird Ornament Handout by Mike Peace

Inspired by an article by Chuck Ruby in Nov 2015 *More Woodturning Magazine*

My [Video tutorial](#) is on my YouTube channel



1. Mark centers on both ends of some spindle stock measuring 2 ½" x 2 ½" x 4 ¼". Mount between centers on the lathe and use a SRG to turn to a 2" cylinder. Turn a chuck tenon on one end of the spindle.
2. Mount the spindle into the chuck using the tenon. Use a Forstner bits to drill a 1 ½" diam. hole - ¼" deep. Next drill a smaller hole 1 5/8" deep to simply reduce the weight. A 1" diameter hole is ok, but I have a 1 1/8" I use for making threaded glue blocks which leaves the walls even thinner and makes the bird lighter. Next drill a ½" diameter hole- 2 1/8" deep. Lighten further by removing more wood with a spindle gouge if desired. You want to keep this down to no more than 2 oz and lighter is better!
3. Measure from the bottom of the body and mark with a pencil at ¾" and at 2 ½". Use a 3/8" spindle gouge starting at the ¾" mark and turn a curved taper down to a 1 5/8" diameter toward the 1 ½" diameter hole.
4. At the 2 ½" mark, use a ¼" parting tool, cut a slot about 1/2" wide in the spindle to a ¾" diameter. Use a ¾" open-end wrench as a gauge or calipers.
5. Using a 3/8" spindle gouge, cut a taper from the 2" diameter to the recently cut 3/4" diameter slot.
6. Part off the body at the 2 ½" mark using a thin parting tool. Set the parted off body aside.
7. Use the remaining waste wood still in the chuck and create a tenon 1 ½" diameter by ¼" deep. Use this tenon as a jam chuck to attach the body for finish turning.
8. Attach the bird body to the jam chuck. Finish turning the top of the body and sand the body.
9. Lay out a ¼" diameter beak hole 1 ¾" from bottom, angle the hole upwards, 25 degrees from the center line. Next lay out a 1/8" diameter tail feather hole ¾" from the bottom, angle the hole upwards 25 degrees from the center line. Cut a 25 deg angle cardboard template to guide the drill. Drill ¼" & 1/8" using brad point bits. While still on the jam chuck, drill an appropriate hole for your eyelet hanger. I use a pin vise since my drill will not hold a drill bit this small.
10. Finish with friction polish on the lathe or finish on or off the lathe with your choice of rattle can spray finish like clear acrylic, shellac or lacquer. Remove the bird body from jam chuck. Use a 1/16" parting tool to part off the jam chuck. This piece will be used as a cover plate on bird body bottom.
11. Mount a ¼" dowel in a ¼" collet chuck or glue in a dowel into a 1/4" hole drilled in remains of the jam chuck still on the lathe. Mark the dowel ¾" & 1 ¼" from end of dowel. Cut a taper from the ¾" mark to end, making a taper 1/32" diameter at the end of the dowel. Next part the dowel off at the 1 ¼" mark. I use a skew chisel to cut the taper and a 1/16" parting tool to cut off the dowel.
12. Cut a 1/8" "dowel - ¾" long with a pair of wire cutters. I use a bamboo skewer because they are cheap and come in handy in the shop.
13. Lay out the tail feathers on a piece of ¼" x 1" x 2" wood. Saw out the feathers with a fine precision pull saw or scroll saw.
14. Lay out a 1/8" dowel hole in the back of the feather block and drill a 1/8" hole - 3/8" deep. I find sanding the back on my spindle sander at a bit of an angle gets the profile very close to matching the body without a gap.

15. Paint the beak & tail feathers with black acrylic paint.
16. Attach the beak, tail feathers, bottom cover plate and hanger attachment to the bird body with glue. I like to use carpenters glue since I avoid using Cyanoacrylate unless I really have a need.
17. Finish painting bird body by adding its dark head with the same acrylic paint for the beak and feathers. Paint in the eyes and sign the bottom cover.

