*What is Taxidermy?*

Taxidermy is a general term describing the many methods of reproducing a life-like three-dimensional representation of an animal for permanent display. In some cases, the actual skin (including the fur, feathers or scales) of the specimen is preserved and mounted over an artificial frame or form. In other cases, the specimen is reproduced completely with man-made materials.

The word "taxidermy" is derived from two ancient Greek words; *taxis*, meaning movement; and *derma*, meaning skin. Therefore, loosely translated, taxidermy means the movement of skin. This is a fairly appropriate definition because many taxidermy procedures involve removing the natural skin from the specimen, replacing this skin over an artificial body, and adjusting the skin until it appears lifelike.

The modern practice of taxidermy incorporates many crafts, such as carpentry, woodworking, tanning, molding, and casting; but it also requires artistic talent, including the art of sculpture, painting, and drawing. In a modern deer head mount, for example, the only natural parts of the animal used are the antlers and the skin. All of the other organs and tissues are recreated with man-made materials. The eyes are made from glass, and the eyelids are sculpted from clay. The soft tissues of the nose and mouth are sculpted from epoxy or wax, and the manikin or "form" (which incorporates the anatomy of each muscle and vein) is made from polyurethane foam.

Today some taxidermy mounts (most notably saltwater fish) do not contain *any* parts of the animal at all. They are completely re-created from man-made materials. This is ideal for catch-and-release anglers, who can release their game fish unharmed, and can still have a life-sized trophy produced from a good color photo and measurements.

Works of taxidermy are displayed in museums, educational institutions, businesses, restaurants, and homes. There are many different methods for producing mounts (or re-creations) of different species.

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