Birdhouse Ornaments
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Baltimore Area Turners
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I first learned to turn Birdhouse Ornaments from Brad Bradford about three years ago at a Chesapeake turners club demo here at our Woodcraft. After I made a few pens, this was the next project I undertook on my newly acquired midi lathe. I found it very rewarding when friends and family opened these gifts at Christmas. I have varied my design from what I originally saw Brad demo and have continued to add more variations and detail throughout the last three years and still find it fun and rewarding to explore new variations.

Tools Required
- Lathe
- Spindle and detail Gouges, parting tools, skew
- Drill chuck with MT for your lathe (It should have a way to lock it into the mandrel. Woodcraft has a nice unit that has a ¼-20 thread in the base of the MT)
- 1” diameter by 1” tall rubber sanding drum
- Lathe scroll chuck and revolving tail center
- 1” forstner bit
- Small “wire” size drills
- Drill Press (optional)
- Wire – for burning (optional)
- Sandpaper, Finish, CA glue

Materials Required
- Roof wood at least 2” diameter and about 2.5” long (I like darker woods black walnut, paduk, etc)
- House wood at least 1.5” diameter and about 3.5” long(I like lighter woods maple, ash, etc to contrast with the roof)
- Brass eye loops and hooks – Available from craft stores such as Michael's, AC Moore, Joann's etc.
- Birds are optional and can be purchased from the same craft stores listed above
- Round hardwood toothpicks (or turn the bird perch)

Making the house
We will start by prepping the house stock. I prefer to drill a 1” hole in the end grain on a drill press. Drill the hole 1” deep centered on the end of the blank.

Mount the drill chuck assembly into the headstock. Cinch the chuck in with a 1/4-20 bolt or all thread and nut from the outboard side of the headstock. Install the rubber sanding drum into the chuck. Expand the drum in the hole in the house blank. Take care to try and line it up straight and then apply the tailstock with a little pressure, DO NOT try to move the blank to hit center on the tail center. When you are turning the finial the tailstock will not add much support and if you moved the piece it will shift and become eccentric when the tailstock is moved away. Rough the piece and mark off your areas for coves and beads. Turn, burn, sand and finish.

Making the roof
Next remove the drill chuck. Mount your roof wood between centers and rough. (you can also do this in the scroll chuck). Make a spigot on both ends of the blank to fit your

chuck. Turn the base of the roof take care to match the spigot on the roof base to fit the 1" hole in the house. (Tip: I make a step halfway on the spigot to test the fit, that way if I go past it I have more room on the spigot to get it right.) When you are ½ finished sand and finish the underside of the roof.

Turn the piece around and turn the top of the roof. After it's turned, burned and sanded, drill a hole in the top for the eyelet. I make a small dimple in the top of the roof with the point of the skew to ease the drilling process. I use a handheld drill chuck to hold the drill bit to drill the hole. Finish the roof.

Drill two holes in the house, one just lower than the 1" deep hole in the end for the perch, and another ½" down from the top for the entrance hole for the bird. These two hole should be in line along the long axis of the house. Brad point bits make the crispest holes for the entrance. Sometimes you may want to sand the interior of the house where the entrance hole is, as there is always tear out.

Assembly
Add a drop of CA glue to the perch and insert the perch into the house. Add some CA glue to the roof where it mates the house, and mate the two. Glue the bird onto the perch with CA glue, make sure it sets before you let go. Thread the eyelet carefully into the top and add the hook.

Advanced Variations
- Add a finial on the bottom of the house from the same wood as the roof.
- Turn the perch from the same wood as the roof.
- Make the house a through hole piece and make a roof and a "cellar"
- Carve or chatter tool textures to the roof
- Experiment!

If you have any questions please email me at coralhound@hotmail.com