

Duck and Cover



Recent legislation has rendered cockfighting a Class C felony in Vermont, punishable by a \$5 fine and up to five thousand years in jail. But after the “sport” was outlawed, the state’s hundreds of thousands of aficionados were not about to channel their blood lust into something more politically correct like decoupage. Instead, they looked to another fowl for their vicarious combat kicks – one equally ferocious, but street-legal: the duck. Duckfighting (a.k.a. “duck and cover”) goes back thousands of years. Crude drawings in the caves of Piltdown Man depict pairs of mergansers brawling with each other. Or at least appearing to squawk a lot. Walt Disney’s original illustration of cartoon protagonist Donald Duck was of a pugnacious warmonger until public opinion persuaded him to tone down his character’s bellicosity. Today, duckfight promoters face a similar dilemma. The image of a soft and fluffy creature viciously engaging its counterpart to the death can be off-putting. That’s why promoters often try to mollify the spectacle by employing comely female duck handlers. Also, they typically schedule bouts on out-of-the-way street corners, far away from the prying eyes of the Law. Say, here’s one about to start now! Those ducklings may look cute ’n cuddly at the moment, but once they bare their fangs, all bets are off.