

October 12, 1970

### WOOD DUCK NESTING BOXES

If you live within a half mile of a substantial stream, lake or swamp in Iowa you may be able to attract wood ducks to your nesting area. Highly urban situations are unfavorable, but suburban situations can be very acceptable.

The box can be easily made by anyone who is handy with simple wood tools. Preferred material is rough unplaned 1" cypress which will last 25 years and weathers to an attractive gray. The outside dimensions of the box are 12" X 12" in horizontal section with a height of 24" at the front and 25" at the back. A lid is made out of material 12" wide X 13" long so that it projects about 1" at the front - must be flush at the back so that the box can be mounted securely against a tree trunk. The lid should be equipped with reinforcement about 9½" square so located as to fit inside the box. The lid should be held in place by two screen door hooks to prevent predators from removing the lid.

An entrance hole, oval in shape, 4" wide X 3" high, should be located about 3" below the lid, of course, on the front of the box. This oval entrance will keep out racoons which are serious nest raiders and may even kill the adult hen duck. A series of 1/8" deep saw kerfs at 1" intervals across the inside face below the entrance hole will greatly assist the day old ducklings to reach the hole when they are ready to leave home.

The box should be assembled with rust-resistant nails, zinc coated or other suitable type, of about 8D or 10D. At least four 1/8" drainage holes should be bored in the bottom of the box.

The simplest way to hang the box is to insert a 3/8" X 5" long hanger bolt into the tree trunk, allowing a projection of about 2½". A 1/2" or 5/8" hole should be bored in the back of the box directly behind the entrance hole. The bolt is to pass through this hole. The box is to be held in place with lock washers and

wing nut. It is important to relieve the pressure of the growing tree by readjusting the wing nut annually, otherwise the tree growth will pull the washers right through the back of the box on a fast growing tree. The box should be hung about 15' above the ground on a tree trunk of substantial size with the opening so located that it is visible from your observation point.

About 4" or 5" of rotted wood or sawdust should be placed in the bottom of the box. This should be checked and renewed annually as necessary. This feature is essential. It is advisable to inspect the boxes in early March each spring to remove squirrel nests and to make needed repairs.

The ducks carry no nesting material. They add only the down which is picked from the breast of the female bird.

Bear in mind that Wood Ducks are secretive shy birds. Keep out of sight to avoid flushing them during the period of nest selection and egg laying. Try to make at least a weekly inspection of the boxes during April and May so that you will know whether nesting is in progress. Just seeing a bird enter your box does not necessarily mean that you have a nest. Such inspections should be made during the afternoon or evening since eggs are generally laid in the morning. The nesting pair will be off in the swamp somewhere during the remainder of the day. Remember that the first 6 to 8 eggs are buried in the litter, so reach down and feel whether you have buried eggs before deciding that the box is empty.

If you hope to see the exodus of young ducks, try to establish the date on which the last egg is laid. This is not difficult when you bear in mind eggs are usually laid at the rate of one per day. Approximately 30 days after the last egg is deposited, your ducks will be hatching and will leave the nest the following morning.

If you have further questions, I will be glad to try to assist you.

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