

Maryland Wood Duck Initiative

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ACTIVITY REPORT # 10

July 27, 2005 - Updates June 3, 2005 report

1. Organizational Status- not much change. Field work priorities.

501 (c) 3 status, website, standardized nest box profile & monitoring forms will be finalized this summer / early fall. Priorities continue to finalizing implementation of the 2005 Kent Co programs, MD WMA nest box inspections & 2006 box programs. Admin of formal launch, website will occur in parallel as possible at a “measured” pace.

2. MWDI / DNR Partnering Agreement – Moving forward.

See the June 3rd report for Agreement details. Meeting mid-August.

Millington WMA inspections & reporting are finished. Route mapping and monitoring protocols are still being developed. 2006 replacement & expansions are being proposed as a result of excellent year one results. See below.

Other WMA’s are being evaluated and certain groups have been contacted to adopt them at appropriate times. Work programs will be established after early fall inspections, repair & maintenance activities.

3. State wide data base

Increased contacts planned for fall once website set & standardized forms are available for box profiles and nest reporting. (Actually, format we use now is available if interested!) Additional box programs have been identified especially in Montgomery Co. in conjunction with the evaluation of McKee Beshers WMA.

4. Kent County Initiative

This is MWDI's field template to use in other areas where statistically significant nest data can be obtained, analyzed and resource management altered to maximize productivity.

Final nest results comprising approximately 58% of the boxes in Kent have now been compiled. In 2004, an estimated 338 ducklings were hatched at Eastern Neck, Millington WMA, Drum Point Farm & Chesapeake Farms from 99 available nest boxes. This year with 215 total functional boxes and a "best practices" focus, 1,018 ducklings were hatched. Final Kent Co figures to include other programs will be provided in due course. Specific results for these key programs are reported below:

MD DNR – Millington WMA

Awesome results. 2004 estimated duckling production was 20 from perhaps 10 functional boxes. In 2005, of the 114 functional boxes, 54 were used (47%) & 40 successful hatches occurred (74%). Total eggs laid = 521 yielding 372 ducklings, an overall 71% hatch experience!

Poor condition boxes (rated as "C or D" quality) had much lower use rates (39%) than "A/ B" quality (52%). Productivity was even lower hatching only 47% versus 83% for the better condition boxes. A copy of the detailed report is available via email to anyone who wishes it. The need for decent quality housing could not have been clearly demonstrated. Significant productivity gains are expected next year as boxes are upgraded among other factors. This is exactly the type of productivity enhancement that can be substantiated with good data !

Chesapeake Farms (Dupont conservation property)

Production of 328 ducklings (from 953 eggs) occurred from 50 functional boxes. 2004 production (122+ ducklings) was assumed from the old 43 boxes except where multiple clean outs occurred in 2005. These efforts partially thwarted starling competition and allowed several successful hatches for re-nesting and late nesting WD. Nest dumping & strife as well as starling competition are key challenges. Nest utilization is very high @ 126% for the water located boxes and egg production high but overall hatch efficiency at 34% is about ½ of what it might be. Favorable increases in productivity are expected in subsequent years by replacing & increasing nest boxes, by re-locating boxes and by ongoing starling deterrence as practical.

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East Neck Refuge

Production increased to 159 ducklings from an estimated 89 in 2004 (assumes old boxes produced last year as this year). Total eggs laid were 209 with hatchability at 76%. 14 boxes used of 32 available, 44%. Successful hatches occurred in 11 of the 14, 79%. Old box use was 22% whereas new boxes were used 60%. Placement in flooded water areas was readily accepted. In 2006, 6-10 more boxes will be installed in similar areas. The first Maryland hatch out of a freon canister occurred here.

Drum Point Farm

Production increased to 159 ducklings versus 107 in 2004 from the same 19 boxes. Eggs laid were 225, down from 268 but hatchability was higher at 71% versus 40%. 11 success nests occurred, up from 7 in 2004. Less dumping and nest strife was observed.

Kent County – Eastern Neck, Chesapeake Farms development

The Chestertown Wildlife Exhibition (CWE) Board of Directors has agreed to fund ongoing WD program materials for Eastern Neck Refuge and Chesapeake Farms. The Wood Duck Alley Sportsman Educational Center (WDA) will also collaborate by assisting with box construction and other aspects. MWDI will arrange ongoing repair, monitoring, box construction and installation. The host entities will also assist in these areas as defined and will allow CWE and WDA to place a sign depicting their support along their respective tour routes while financial support continues.

4. Research

Final Freon canister test results are 5 of 6 used. 4 hatched. One abandoned clutch was due to ant infestation. Heat testing has not indicated a problem if placed in the shade and if air vent holes are used. Ladd Johnson's' plastic telephone nest box did also not record challenging temperatures (in shade, no vent holes). More testing is needed next year. More field use is planned in all areas. If you wish to make a Freon nest canister, I can give you the uncut cans and plans from Rock hall or as mutually arranged.

Please continue to provide referrals of nest box programs and nest results !! The sooner you check nests, the more accurate the results observed will be. Your continued input is appreciated.

Cliff Brown