

MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

“A Total Wetlands Experience “

January 6, 2009 Activity Report #27

*Updates the September 12th report
See www.mwdi.net for prior reports*

See the 2008 Preliminary Nest Box Survey Report

1. External Affairs & Education

The Maret High School AP Environmental Class project is well underway. After an initial presentation by MWDI, 18 students have completed their first drafts on various wood duck informational topics for prospective use on the website after a two week research period. The students also fabricated 33 nest boxes on November 6th and a field installation / repair trip is being planned in late February in Kent Co.

Other box building & youth activities completed or planned are as follows:

Sept 27 - MD DNR's National Hunting & Fishing Day. Bridgeton, MD. The National Wildlife Federation (NWF) provided the lumber. NWF and the Maryland Waterfowler's Association provided volunteers to assist MWDI sponsor this event.

Sept 27th – Jason Schlosser, Harford Co DU Chairman, included MWDI's activities and WD nest program “best practices” in a presentation at the Mason Dixon Outfitters youth event.

Oct 18 – Chestertown Wildlife Exhibition & Sale (CWE). Chestertown, MD. Youth event associated with the wildlife show.

November – Boy scouts completed assembly of the 10 box kits the City of Federalsburg purchased for their wetland walk project to be installed for the 2009 season. Special thanks to George “Happy” Mayer, City Administrator.

Courtland Lilley's Transportation Technology class at The James M. Bennett High School (Wicomico Co) will again transform recycled Freon canisters into nesting boxes for use on the Lower Shore. 10 fully completed nest boxes are planned. A summary of Freon canister nesting results is being compiled.

The J.M. Tawes Technology & Career Center finalized construction of 50 cedar boxes of MWDI design for sale to private program sponsors. MWDI and the Maryland Waterfowlers Association assisted Tawes sell the boxes and coordinated delivery in November. The boxes sold out 3 times over in two hours ! Special thanks to the students and instructor Tommy Laird for his mentoring. An expansion of the program is being considered given the demand. MWDI may also order lumber for kits this spring and solicit private participation as in the past. Details to follow.

The Friends of Chapman State Park have expressed an interest in potentially having some of its members become involved in various facets of MWDI's activities and they have agreed to circulate information in their forthcoming newsletter to that effect. Special thanks to Bob Lukinic, President, and Carol Ghebelian, Friends of Chapman State Park, for their assistance in these efforts.

MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

Page 2

January 6, 2009 Activity Report #27

In November, MWDI participated in PG County's Department of Parks and Recreation's initial discussion forum on their 2010 and Beyond strategic planning project. MWDI's pitched its 2 cents on integrating school curriculum into the outdoors and the preservation and recreational / educational use of county wetlands of all sizes.

In the November 23rd issue of The Baltimore Sun, Candy Thomson wrote a nice article about MWDI's efforts in conjunction with the Conservationist of the Year award recently received from Maryland DNR's Wildlife Advisory Committee.

MWDI will provide a display booth and attend for DU Queen Anne Co dinner Feb 3rd. Dave Gough, chapter chairman, is attempting to get more members and their kids involved which we appreciate. DU has also recently passed out MWDI flyers at its Annapolis and National Capitol Chapter functions.

Photo Contest Winners

The final award of two additional Jim Taylor's Autumn Glory framed prints were made to Col. Bob Shaw (Manager, Ft Meade project) and Tim Ward in the youth category. Check out the website for the winning photos. Thanks again to Jim for his support and congratulations to him on his very competitive finish in this years' Federal duck stamp contest.

2. Field Operations – fall 2008

All sorts of installation supplies have been received from DNR to support 2009 nest box installations, guard mounting and inspection efforts including 2x4's, nails, staples, paint, bolts and related, mesh for box ladders and more lethal wasp killer products among other things. Special thanks to Hutch Waldbridge for obtaining and delivering.

Approval by the Baltimore Port Authority and Maryland Environmental Service was received for a new project at the artificially constructed Hart Miller Island 100 acre wetland complex. Assisted by Brent Evans, DNR and Rich Mason, USF&W, MWDI met with MDE staff, Amanda Penafiel. We inspected the wetland and installed 12 boxes. Still need some nest material but we've placed them in a variety of spots to try and avoid starling competition. An additional 200 acres of wetlands will eventually be created. Discussing ongoing nest monitoring with representatives of the Maryland Ornithological Society (Gene Scarpulla). Thanks to Cassie Carr & Maura Morris of MES and USF&W's Rich Mason for their assistance in obtaining all necessary approvals.

McKee Beshers WMA – completed some final nest checks, repairs and box replacements w/ Greg Raymond, Project Manager in late September.

EA Vaughan WMA - MDWFA's Aaron Ward and son, Tim, finalized inspections.

Eastern Neck Refuge – final inspections completed w/ Phil Poux, Manager, and Ray Taylorson. Conducted tour of program w/ new refuge manager, Jonathon Priday, and USF&W's Chelsea Corcoran.

Lake Rowland, Robt E Lee Park – Hank Russ has undertaken a second phase renovation of this neglected program and now has 11 relocated & functional boxes and predator guards in this Baltimore City habitat.

MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

Page 3

January 6, 2009 Activity Report #27

Fair Hill NRMA & Nature Center – Jordan Kane initiated this program in upper Cecil Co along the Elk River. DNR's Park Manager, Wayne Suydam, and Holly who runs the active youth educational program were very supportive. Jordan will remove several dilapidated boxes w/ no guards to get rid of the negative education element! 2 new boxes are installed with a 3rd one planned. The nesting activity / results will be integrated into the overall educational program. Jordan previously initiated the Elk Forest State Park 4 box program in 2008 with great results

MNCPPC's Ben Sweet and his Ranger colleagues in PG County completed inspections on 18 boxes in the Cheltenham, Lake Artemesia and Schoolhouse Pond projects. Productivity, in terms of nesting efficiency has leapt following the relocation of certain boxes and the utilization of new nest capacity in their 2nd year. During the last 3 nest seasons, box capacity grew from 10 to 18. Utilization went from 9 to 11 with 11 hatches versus 8 in '06. Eggs laid went from 120 to 51 but duckling production went from 44 to a conservatively estimated 47, a pretty incredible efficiency gain. Given the likelihood that additional ducklings were hatched from certain nests where membrane data was almost absent, the gains were even more noteworthy. Nesting demand may have been off generally in 2008 to help retard some nest dumping and strife but the relocation of boxes and new habitat placements have definitely made a difference.

Along the Anacostia River in PG County, MNCPPC Rangers have begun to install boxes in the wetland mitigation site being constructed as required as part of the large waterfront development just below the Wilson Bridge on the Potomac. 4 boxes will be installed along the river itself as a way to also help monitor and "publicly" demonstrate the health and restoration of the river's wetlands. More on this project in the next report.

In addition to the projects above involving some 30 new boxes, capacity increases of at least another 73 boxes are now planned in Dorchester (Taylor's Island - 4 boxes), Cecil (approximately 18 boxes in several expansion projects and on the new Wright Farm WMA), Talbot (1 box at Sheehan Sanctuary), Lower Eastern Shore projects – 25+/- boxes, Harford (20 boxes at Susquehanna State Park and proximate areas), Wicomico (Nanticoke River – 5 boxes), 50-60 replacement boxes are planned in 7 sites. Box closures and removals are also planned for the Chicamicomico North site. The scope of 2009 activity has not been finalized. Total new capacity will exceed 100 boxes with total new box installations will exceed 150. The net public lands capacity increase will be offset by box removals and closures elsewhere.

A calendar of volunteer opportunities and project contacts will be published shortly. Work schedules can be adjusted for many projects to fit the time availability of volunteers.

Winter rains have helped certain wetland habitats but there is still a significant water deficit to overcome before favorable nesting conditions are achieved across the state.

Your continued interest and support is most appreciated. Thank you.

Cliff Brown