

# MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

*“A Total Wetlands Experience “*

## **March 19, 2009 Activity Report #28**

*Updates the January 6th report  
See [www.mwdi.net](http://www.mwdi.net) for prior reports*

### **1. External Affairs & Education**

*Website hits rise to 250 monthly; requests for private program advice & assistance also rising. A public site reference map has now been generated by DNR for booth displays, presentations and website use. Eventually, all project details, nesting results and volunteer opportunities will be available online sourced by clicking on a particular map site reference. Continuing kudos to DNR's Linda Wiley and Wade Henry for their special talents.*

*Useful PR continues through an article in Bucks' Wild Magazine, February booth displays at the Queen Anne and Annapolis DU dinners, reference in the winter 2009 issue of Maryland Natural Resource magazine, a March 21 presentation to the DU Annual Maryland State Convention and pending articles in Ruts & Struts magazine and the Maryland Natural Resource magazine. Dave Godfrey, Wye Island project manager, has produced a wood duck video on YOUTUBE ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4MCf\\_VDaEY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W4MCf_VDaEY)) and has also developed a video for box inspections for the Pickering Creek Audubon site.*

*MWDI will host two high school internships during the May 18-28<sup>th</sup> period and we'll keep them active inspecting nest boxes all over Maryland – it'll probably be too early for the exploding egg treatment! J.M.Tawes school (Somerset) took receipt of their South Carolina cypress and will fabricate over 50 boxes for sale this fall. Bennett School (Wicomico) is now fabricating 10 additional Freon nesting canisters. A Wicomico Boy Scout troop will assemble 13 box kits for lower shore projects. MWDI will participate in a Delta Waterfowl event supporting the Havre de Grace Decoy Museum and Decoy Festival May 1-3. MWDI will have a booth display, make a presentation and host a youth box building event. For information [http://www.chesapeake ducks.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=52&Itemid=79](http://www.chesapeake ducks.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=52&Itemid=79)*

*Recent funding for 2010 season boxes has been provided by the Upper Bay Chapter of Delta Waterfowl, the Chestertown Wildlife Exhibition & Sale and for various other supplies by the Maryland Waterfowler's Association. MD DNR has continued their support for supplies including a new 300 predator guard order to be manufactured by the Hagerstown Correctional Facility.*

*Our aggregated lumber order for South Carolina sourced cypress was very successful. Wood for 275+ boxes was obtained and 228 kits were cut on March 4<sup>th</sup>. 312 predator guards were also received from Minnesota and distributed to various private program sponsors. Special thanks to DNR's Millington crew – Josh Homyack, Bill Martin and Edmund “Cheese” Cook for allowing the use of their facilities and to equipment suppliers /volunteers Mark Stevens, Scott Jasion, Bill Askins, Ron Kuipers, Jamie Caulfield, Josiah Morin, Steve Senigen, Aaron Ward and Ray Price . There was no Davis' Pub in Massey like in Annapolis so I owe the boys a pop but we did have some wonderful brisket thanks to Jamie C who earned his MWDI hat. In the past four years, MWDI has now cut lumber for more than 600 boxes and it has also helped initiate or assist private program installation of more than 400 other boxes. More than 800 predator guards have also been obtained for private programs.*

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## 2. Field Operations

*The scope of 2009 activity has still not been finalized as several new sites are being developed as project sponsor / managers are being developed simultaneously. Total new net capacity will approximate 125 boxes with total box installations over 150 bringing total public box capacity to about 1,670 boxes, up from 1,545 in 2008 excluding box totals that may exist in the potential Patuxent Naval Station site. This program scope will utilize our entire remaining supply of predator guards. We will likely phase in other new projects without regard to the 2009 nest season as our guard supply is replaced and as our kits are assembled into boxes over the course of 2009.*

*Lake Victoria (PG) is a new 4 box program supported by the MNCPPC – PG Park Rangers. Urieville Lake (Kent) is a potential 6 box program to be managed by John Notarangelo and the Cecil CO DU chapter. Furnace Bay outside Havre de Grace is a potential 6-10 box program on county property (Harford) that may be managed by a local school. Patuxent Naval Station (St Mary's) has an existing program that may be incorporated into MWDI. This site and various other St.Mary's sites will be inspected March 23. Supplies exist for a phase one county program of 9-12 boxes. The Southern Maryland Chapter of the Audubon Society, Friends of St Mary's State Park and Md's DNR have initiated and directly supported the development of these prospective sites – our first in St Mary's. Special thanks to Bob Lukinic, Bob Boxwell and DNR's Bill Moffat for their efforts. Bob will also monitor nest results on the existing boxes at the Chicamuxen WMA (Charles).*

*Lyle Hunger (Friends of Chapman State Park), new manager of the program at Chapman (Charles), has now examined the boxes and we helped extract over 20 tires plus refrigerator doors and barrels from the wetland. Special thanks to Jerry McCarty and the use of his "barge". Nest box monitoring is a much easier task although Jerry did come away with a shark's tooth for his efforts.*

*Certain wetland habitats are still feeling the effects of a lingering drought. There is a significant water deficit to overcome before favorable nesting and brood rearing conditions are achieved across Maryland. It will again be interesting to monitor the level of nesting demand – box use & nest dumping – in specific habitats & programs. Brood survival, harvest "down south" under the new 3 bird limit and localized habitat conditions are dynamic variables, unlikely to be sorted out in one year. However, trend analyses from MWDI's growing data set should have more relevance over time. For example, we saw hatch efficiency & production rise in programs historically subjected to relatively high dumping as a result of fewer eggs laid and lower hen "demand". Other programs that had poor habitat experienced much lower box use and overall productivity dropped but efficiency was comparable....they just had fewer hens. Thus, the productivity gain from programs with historically high use & dump levels caused by fewer hens could be somewhat misleading except to verify that steps to reduce dumping will be increasingly beneficial in a more normal nesting cycle.*

*One early 2009 nest use / inspection discovery has been the confirmation of a hooded merganser nest in Cecil Co by Jordan Kane and his daughter, Rachel. 34 hooded nests were confirmed in 2006 and submitted to the Breeding Bird Atlas Survey – a substantial increase over the 1980-85 survey. 27 of the nests were found on the western shore in Montgomery, PG, Charles, Harford and Baltimore Cos. 7 were found in Kent at Millington WMA. In 2007, Somerset Co joined the list of as a new region where a confirmed hooded nest occurred. Now we have Cecil.*

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

**Cliff Brown**