

MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

“A Total Wetlands Experience “

May 4, 2009 Activity Report #29

Updates the March 19th report

See www.mwdi.net for prior reports

1. External Affairs & Education

MWDI is moving (albeit at a “measured” pace) towards finalizing video footage of various wood duck activities for web site display, general presentations and as teaching modules. We plan to aggregate and integrate the data into several different length and topical features. Dave Godfrey has prepared a video with narrative. Roger Strand of the Wood Duck Society has provided DVD footage of ducklings departing the nest and has in progress conversion of substantive VHS “in box” recorded data to DVD format. Scott Jasion has canvassed UTube / internet published material and has sent several “clips” that focus on hatching, nest exit and hen strife. Stay tuned but be patient!

On May 2nd, 20 kids assembled and profusely decorated 20 wood duck boxes at the Delta Waterfowl – Decoy Museum’s Waterfowler Days Exhibition in Havre de Grace. Special thanks to Scott Jasion and Greg Raymond for their assistance and to the Upper Bay Chapter of Delta Waterfowl for their funding of the cypress utilized for these boxes.

Maret High School’s AP Environmental Class project continues with a May 13th nest monitoring outing at Chesapeake Farms. 16 students and 2 teachers will join Josh Homyack, MD DNR, Rich Mason, USF&W and Phil Poux, Ducks Unlimited and me to inspect about 65 boxes.

Bass Pro will sponsor a youth box assembly event at the Arundel Mills store August 16th. Certain proceeds generated will be provided to MWDI for our next wood purchase. Bass Pro will also install a wood duck box and guard in their store front pond. Appropriate signage is also being considered. Special thanks to Bass Pro’s Norb Wagner for his support.

2. Field Operations – Spring 2009

Nest inspections are occurring in earnest. Site inspections for potential projects are also continuing as are site inspections and advice to various private nest programs. Our next lumber order date is not set yet, possibly January 2010. MWDI does not have boxes or predator guards to sell.

Recent new projects and key project expansions for the 2009 or 2010 nest season have been developed or completed as follows:

Patuxent River Naval Air Station (St Mary’s) – 12+/- box program. James Swift, Program Manager.

St Mary’s Lake (St Mary’s) – 6 box program. Bob Boxwell, Southern MD Audubon, Program Manager.

Grove Farm WMA (Cecil) – 15 boxes installed. Mark Hooper, DNR, and John Sturgill managing.

Susquehanna State Park (Harford) – 12 of the 20 boxes were installed. Chris Todd, Jason Schlosser and Harford DU Chapter managing.

Nanticoke WMA (Wicomico) – program expanded by 5 boxes to 16. Garrett Sheller, managing.

MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

May 4, 2009 Activity Report #29 Page 2

2. Field Operations – Spring 2009 continued

Lower Eastern Shore (Somerset, Worchester) – 33 replacement and new boxes were installed in the Shad Landing, Pocomoke River North, Nassawango River, Cypress Swamp and EA Vaughan sites. Aaron Ward and Maryland Waterfowler's volunteers managing.

Taylors Island (Dorchester) – 4 box program installed. Buzzy Abbott, managing.

Cedarville Park (Charles) – 6 box program on Zekiah Swamp installed. Special thanks to Bill Moffat and Kenny Hartman, DNR and the Maryland Conservation Corps.

Furnace Bay (Cecil) – habitat and site selection planned May 12. Installation of a 6+/- box program planned May 27th. Harford Glen Ed Center (Chris Burle) and Town of Perryville sponsors.

Urieville Lake (Kent) – 6 boxes installed. John Notorangelo will manage.

Lake Victoria & Anacostia (PG) – MCNPPC Rangers (Ben Sweet, coordinator) have installed 4 boxes at Lake V. and up to 12 are planned at the Anacostia River wetland mitigation site.

Greenwell State Park and Point Lookout Park were inspected and habitat seems limited. Replacement of boxes at North Park in Have de grace will be evaluated in May.

The Piscataway (PG) project will probably be abandoned. The local manager died and only one box was active. MWDI can provide supplies for a moderate program if interest exists as habitat is favorable. A shallow draft boat & motor is needed.

MWDI seeks new public lands or river projects where ongoing nest supervision is provided. Boxes, poles and predator guards as well as installation assistance and training are available.

3. Early Nesting Perceptions – Mixed Results

Spring rains have followed late winter rains to recharge wetlands and brood habitat has been favorably enhanced. Early nesting perceptions are mixed. More hooded merganser nests have been observed at McKee Beshers but at Patuxent Wildlife, they are way down compared to 2008 levels. Wood duck nest use, on very limited data through April, appears comparable to modestly up from 2008 levels in several areas, uncertain in others. Nest starts seem moderately later in most areas and down overall in others. Thus, it is hard to be very definitive at this stage. Nest dumping does not seem high or rampant in certain projects that have this problem and early information suggests that average clutch sizes are moderately lower but the somewhat later nest starts and partially completed nests may account for this. Last year, lower nest “demand” actually helped productivity in these sites even though average egg count was down, hatch success was up. Apparent nest strife and nest failures were down, allowing for higher productivity overall. I'm waiting to get more band recovery data to see if the 3 bird limit might be having an impact. Once I finally get all the 2007 and 2008 results sorted into various sub-analyses, it will be interesting to compare the data with 2009 nesting results to see if certain nesting patterns or trends are indicated.

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

Cliff Brown