

Maryland Wood Duck Initiative (MWDI)

Activity Report #2 - October 18, 2004. Update from Sept 28th Report.

Collaborator Status:

MD DNR - Received 1997 USF&W WD Population Monitoring Initiative Report and Wood Duck Habitat Suitability Index. Digesting and conforming to MWDI box profile, nest monitoring forms and habitat designations. Contact w/ USGS (former USF&W) staff now in progress to assist and to define where MWDI's work can supplement the 1997 project in such areas as nest box use for population estimation, hen banding and fall VM roost counts. Also attempting to determine if the database routines developed for nest box profiles and nest monitoring in 1997 are suitable for MWDI purposes.

Toured Millington WMA Oct 6 (Bill Martin and Josh Homyack). Nest boxes will be profiled, spotted and access routes defined or created. Additional boxes will be installed by MWDI before the 2005 nest season and participation in the Kent Co Initiative nest research projects will be defined for certain boxes beyond the minimum "add nest material, check nest result" visit activity. The once had 125 boxes and might have 50+/- now (uncertain). Habitat seems to exist for a substantial increase in boxes at least back to original numbers.

Chesapeake Farms - Toured facility w/ M. Conner Sept 30th. Profiled and located all boxes (46 total, 12 in woods, 34 over water / wetlands). Discussed 2005 nesting plans and research to include starling avoidance work (18 nest boxes have serious issues and dominate box use), screech owl competition (12 boxes in woods are mostly used by owls) and a test of Freon canisters in the woods. Other aspects will also be addressed and some new boxes may be added. Habitat and productivity potential appears favorable. 2 boxes in the woods have been sealed to try and avoid owl use in the winter and thereby "level the playing field" for nest competition in spring between owls and WD's.

Ducks Unlimited - met C. Heaps Sept 30th and had subsequent discussions. DU to assist. Final manner TBD. Minimum assistance will include active identification and coordination of volunteers to adopt WD nest box construction, profiling and monitoring.

#2 supplier of freon canisters defined via DU. Use at a minimum 4-5 different wooded locations around Kent Co and elsewhere in 2005 is now planned for a diverse nesting test to last 2 years in addition to the heat buildup testing.

Eastern Neck Refuge - attempting to complete second tour and profile existing nest boxes and define the 2005 nesting R&D plan.

Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage - introduced MWDI to N. Gerber via email and submitted proposed collaboration discussion topics. Interested to assist and learn more. Meeting likely during week of Oct 25.

USGS - formal collaborator status to be sought per the above comments on former USF&W research work.

Waterfowler.com - online magazine (I am one of the contributing field editors for Maryland). Utilization of this resource is expected to help publicize MWDI and solicit ongoing volunteers.

Habitat Survey / Database Activity:

In addition to the above activities, received March 2004 aerial photo example from Queen Anne EMS. Full Kent County coverage coming in 2-3 weeks. Digitizing will then begin once habitat conventions are refined for draft submission to habitat professionals.

Organizational matters:

Due to the Minnesota WDS adopting a more formal external presence, these efforts will now be conducted as the Maryland Wood Duck Initiative (MWDI). If and when this effort matures to formal non-profit status and when funding might be sought for accelerated or expanded activities, a name change may again occur to reflect the scope of the organization at that time (Wood Duck Institute?). Presently, the goal is to establish and expand project momentum and minimize administration to nominal levels.

Technical assistance for website creation has been obtained. The goal is to have an initial website created when a press release is distributed. The website will consist of mission statement, contacts, specific goals, objectives and timelines explained, specific volunteer requests, nest box profile forms and nest monitoring forms, identification of collaborators and their roles among other things.

November 30th press release timeline is not likely due to the desire to create the website and finalize conform nest box profile and nest monitoring forms. Additional informal grass roots support is also being developed to insure that, once announced, a more extensive "word of mouth" network of advocates can occur.

Volunteer Recruitment Status:

Several individuals and groups have been identified to support MWDI's activities in various counties. Certain of these have already agreed to commit resources once we get kicked off. More info will be provided once the roles are formally agreed and defined. Numerous DU functions will occur this fall and the discussion of MWDI will increase as cocktail talk about as a "pending" development to generate some initial PR, build new leads etc. Discussion of any collaborator status is not sanctioned except in a generic sense that discussions are continuing to help refine the mission and scope of MWDI.

Your continuing assistance is appreciated.

Cliff Brown

Monday, October 18, 2004