

MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

“A Total Wetlands Experience “

May 11, 2010 Activity Report #31

Updates the August 2009 report

See www.mwdi.net for prior reports

I'm sorry it has been 8 months since I cranked out an Activity Report !! Linda Wiley does a great job inserting ongoing developments into the website but I'll summarize a host of things below that have occurred for those who may not be aware. A series of recent presentation slides have also been included on 2009 nesting results.

Outreach & Education Activities

MWDI continued to host youth oriented box assembly events in the fall of 2009. We have 3 planned for 2010 – Maret High School Community Day, DNR's Hunting & Fishing Day and the Chestertown Wildlife Exhibition & Sale. Demand for these events is very high and we are limited to accept requests from those organizations that basically provide the funding for the wood involved. Aaron Ward also made a presentation to 4th graders in Somerset Co. A Harford Co Scout Troop is also assembling 15 boxes and installing them at the Susquehanna State Park in cooperation w/ Jason Schlosser and the Harford Co Du chapter. About 15 students from one of Harford Co's Environmental classes (Connie Cullinan, coordinating) assisted the Harford Glen Environmental Center and MWDI reconstruct their program in April installing 7 new boxes, adding guards to 4 more and removing several, hard to reach boxes. Also in April, Dora Tak, a Charles Co student, assisted Chris Ordiway (project manager) install 8 boxes in a new program at the Alice Ferguson Foundation's Hard Bargain Farm along the Potomac (see MWDI's website for details of these respective outings).

MWDI made 5 presentations by the end of April to The Potomac Valley Audubon Chapter, The Washington County Bird Club, the Southern MD Audubon Chapter, at the Chapman State Park Appreciation Day and DU's Annual State Convention. A radio interview occurred with WCTR and general PR coverage occurred on the Tidewater trader Hunt Issue, the Evening Capital and Ft Meade's post paper.

Administrative

Our limited financial needs have continued to have been met by MD DNR via our Partnering Agreement and by the generous contributions of the Maryland Sportsman's Association, the Maryland Waterfowler's Association, Delta Waterfowl, the Chestertown Wildlife Exhibition, Md National Capital Parks & Planning Commission – PG County Park Rangers and the Queen Anne County Department of Parks & Recreation. The State Highway Administration supports us with used poles from various sites and our admin support from DNR on our website has been superlative. MWDI has predator guards, poles and box kits in inventory to last two more seasons, probably. We have been able to prepare / install most new projects well ahead of the current nest season and are now focusing on improving our site supervision, data monitoring and volunteer network. We have also expanded our site inspections and support for private programs although we cannot handle all the requests.

Private program access to predator guards has continued through Delta Waterfowl although metal prices have risen. Guards are now \$14. Website has ordering details. MWDI will have provided more than 225 cypress wood kits and assembled boxes since the August report once we again sell boxes the Tawes School is making this fall. MWDI also provided 59 cypress blue bird boxes / kits in conjunction with our annual lumber order which lowered our overall delivery costs from South Carolina. I do not believe that MWDI will need to order lumber for public sites next year so if you want boxes, you'll need to get them this fall via the Tawes annual sale. 75 will be offered for something like \$30-32 each.

MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

May, 2010 Activity Report #31

Page 2


2009 NESTING RESULTS

We have pretty much completed our best estimate for the 2008 and 2009 nest seasons. The totals are somewhat better than the 8-12% drop projected in August 2009 but the conclusions are still the same. MWDI's data indicates that there was a noticeable drop in returning hens to MD last season and MWDI's view is that the new 3 bird federal limit may have been primarily responsible. As a cautionary note to this view, 2009 is only one season and the preceding nesting context has been a wonderful growth and productivity response to adopting "best practices" on an increasing number of public sites these past 5 years. Banding recoveries on which harvest estimates are based will not be available until this summer. Last year, band recovery data apparently indicated that the wood duck harvest increased somewhat in several southern states. MWDI will be especially keen to tabulate the 2010 results. Habitat is super everywhere. The empirical nesting data could increasingly reflect the impact of this harvest policy, especially as we gather more of it over time.



2004-2010 Activity Highlights

- * Installed 1,000+ boxes – public sites
- * Private program assistance increasing
 - > 1,200+ new boxes
 - > 800+ predator guards
 - > 100+ site inspections / program advice



Nest Box Profile

	2004	2009	2010E
Public Sites	20	66	71+
Boxes	874	1683	1800+/-
Western Shore	43 sites	993 boxes	
Eastern Shore	23 sites	769 boxes	



Preliminary Nesting Results

Public Lands Wood Duck Hatch

	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08*	'09*
Ducklings	1910	2500	4021	5624	6600	6378
Boxes	874	984	1039	1446	1545	1683

* 2008 & 2009 figures are still being audited & finalized

March 2010



Productivity Profile

	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09
Ducklings/box	2.2	2.5	3.9	3.9	4.3	3.8
2009 Analysis						
		Ducklings	Boxes	Avg.		
Western Shore		3,028	993	3.0		
Eastern Shore*		3,350	769	4.4		

* More extensive brood habitat except Patuxent River corridor



Productivity Variables

2007 Drought hurt brood survival

> Fewer returning hens in 2008

2008 Early spring drought impact ?

> Hooded merganser nests down significantly

> Certain sites – distinctly lower nest use

Fewer hens = less dumping = > hatch

2009 Some drought relief.

> Negative impact of new federal 3 bird harvest

2010 Excellent habitat. Harvest impact ?

MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

May, 2010 Activity Report #31

Page 4

2010 Initial Nesting Results Look Strong

Initial nest inspections are suggesting 2010 will be a strong hatch year although we have yet to start inspecting our largest project sites. I had been pretty gloomy about the 2010 prospects due to the potential harvest impact but it may be that this view is too pessimistic. We'll know by the end of August!

If you have interest to come inspect with us, please contact us with your preferred dates and location. The website has a reasonably up to date calendar but many site inspections are scheduled by the local manager without our knowledge of precise timing details.

Field Operations

New projects involving some 79 boxes for the 2010 nest season have been developed. Data integration and refinement in the large, actively managed Bosley site is ongoing.

- *Bowen WMA – PG Co. 3 boxes on the Patuxent River. Bob Plunkett, Project manager*
- *Kudner / Bennett Point Park – QA Co. 4 boxes. Jamie Beal, Project manager*
- *Anita Leight Estuary- Bosely Conservancy – Harford 50+ program. Byron Bodt, Fred Gillotte, Project managing.*
- *Harford Glen Environmental Center – Harford 15 box program. Connie Cullinan, Mgr*
- *Hard Bargain Farm Environmental Center (PG) 8 box program, Chris Ordiway, Mgr*
- *Pax River NAS (St Mary's), 14 box program, James Swift, Mgr.*
- *Anacostia River – Earth Conservation Corps (DC/PG) 10 box program, Mike Bolinder, Mgr*
- *Cedarville State Park (Charles) 4 box program, Karen Jarboe, Mgr*
- *Ellis Bay (Worcester) 5 box program, John Smullen, Mgr*
- *Federalsburg (Caroline) 10 box program, Happy Maher, Mgr.*
- *Mill Creek (Cecil) 6 box program, Steve , Mgr*

Certain new sites will benefit the 2011+ seasons due to installation timing. Several other sites have had significant expansions – Susquehanna Park (15), Pocomoke River (15 and, Grove Farm(10).

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

Five private program sites have been inspected and assistance provided in obtaining supplies – new and used. Project advice, results interpretation and materials assistance has been routinely provided to more than 25 private programs during the past 6 months.

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

Cliff Brown