

MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

“A Total Wetlands Experience “

June 21, 2011 Activity Report #33

Updates the February 2011 report

See www.mwdi.net for prior reports

2011 Preliminary Nesting Observations

Nest inspections are actively underway. Public sites now total 75 vs. 70 last year. Functional boxes should exceed 1,900 vs. 1814 in 2010. Based on very limited data and assuming various active nests conclude as expected, the 2011 hatch could be moderately (10-20%) above the almost 7,000 ducklings recorded in 2010.

MWDI is aware of more than 100 new boxes that private program sponsors have installed for the 2011 nest season. Since 2004, MWDI has assisted similar programs in obtaining more than 1,500 boxes and a substantial number of predator guards. The scope of Maryland' private nesting program is not fully documented but it is substantially larger than MWDI's.

Early season habitat was superior although drought like conditions now evident will challenge mid-late season brood survival in certain habitats. Project specific results still seem very mixed as 2010 data indicated in various projects where large swings in nesting and productivity were experienced. In some cases, this seems to help productivity as nest dumping and strife are reduced but in other areas, utilization has simply dropped off for unexplained reasons. Project maturity has slowed or not occurred in several smaller projects as has been typically experienced. Hooded mergansers seem to have enjoyed the early excellent habitat conditions in Maryland and a continuation of last year's rebound is expected. The first Hooded nests were also confirmed in Queen Anne and Dorchester Counties. Hooded's also returned to Cecil Co. this year after our Maryland fist observations last year.

As time permits, I hope to examine USF&W's harvest, population and nesting pair estimates for Maryland based on banding recoveries and their interpretation methodologies and assumptions against known and estimated artificial nesting results in Maryland (public and private programs). The 3 bird harvest level has had an impact but its significance is not clear. It does not appear to have caused a sustained and incrementally negative impact but this is personal conjecture.

Outreach & Education Activities

MWDI continued its youth oriented activities with the help of various teachers, volunteers and mentors. Maret HS (Washington DC) again assembled boxes at its Community Service Day. The Indian Head Elementary School assembled boxes and initiated an 8 box project along the Mattawoman in Charles Co. The Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Center in Charles initiated a 4 box program. A presentation was made to the Sudlersville Elementary School and a 3 box sub-project associated with the Upper Chester River project was started. Presentations were made to the Howard and Caroline County Bird Club Chapters and at Maryland DU's annual meeting. In July, a seminar session for Gifted & Talented Students at the Harford Glen Research Center will be conducted. Box assembly events are also planned for DNR's Fishing & Hunting Day (September) and the Chestertown Wildlife Exhibition (October). MWDI will also once again coordinate the Tawes School box sale in late September.

Your continued interest and support is most appreciated. Thank you. *Cliff Brown*