



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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WOOD DUCKS RESPONDING TO NESTING BOXES

The wood duck is finally getting some relief from the housing shortage. New methods of locating nesting boxes on cedar poles set in ponds and marshes, rather than in trees along the shore, are creating reserves of wood duck. The new conservation practice was worked out by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation, which utilized funds made available by the Pittman-Robertson Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration Act, the Fish and Wildlife Service reported.

Pennsylvania, Vermont, New Hampshire, Ohio and other states are following suit and are setting up nesting boxes on poles in the water. Boxes are sometimes made from war-surplus shipping crates and ammunition cases. The work of distribution and placement is usually done by volunteer conservationists in the winter when ice on lakes and marshes makes it possible to set up the boxes and poles. Wood shavings or other nesting material must be added.

Reports now coming in indicate that up to 90 percent of the boxes placed in certain areas last year were occupied by wood duck families. Formerly, occupancy was limited to only 16 percent of the nesting boxes -- which had been placed in trees.

The wood duck was so scarce at one time that it was completely protected by law. The wood duck commonly nests in holes of mature or over age trees, and these have been heavily cropped by farmers and lumbermen, undoubtedly causing a shortage of nesting sites.

For some years, sporting clubs and state agencies tried to relieve the wood duck's housing shortage by placing nesting boxes in trees, but this was not too successful.

The wood duck is still protected by a closed season in Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, West Virginia and Wyoming, but populations have increased to the point where one wood duck (bag or possession limit) may be taken in all other states.

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