

Volunteers across the Island are attempting to increase local Wood Duck populations by maintaining Wood Duck nest boxes. Approximately 200 boxes have been erected across the province by the P.E.I. Department of the Environmental Resources, the P.E.I. Wildlife Federation, the Fly Fishers Federation, Holland College students, and private citizens. As part of the wetland stewardship initiatives of the Department of Environmental Resources' Eastern Habitat Joint Ventures program, volunteers are enlisted to maintain these boxes. Nest boxes can be checked from September 1st until March 31st without disturbing nesting birds. Maintenance is also crucial. Each year, old nest material must be replaced with clean dry wood chips to keep the boxes attractive for nesting Wood Ducks.

The Wood Duck is one of four waterfowl species that are cavity nesters in the Maritimes. Common Goldeneye, Common Mergansers, and Hooded Mergansers are also cavity nesters, however, only the Wood Duck and the Hooded Merganser are known to nest on Prince Edward Island, and the Hooded Merganser only very rarely. Wood Ducks usually nest in a hole in a hollow trunk created by either broken limbs, lightning, logging, or by woodpeckers including Common Flicker. The nesting cavities are lined with down from the breast of the female to cushion the 8 to 15 eggs. Upon hatching in early June, the young use their sharp claws to climb up the inside of the nesting cavity to the entrance, jump to the ground, and follow the female to an adjacent pond or river which may be some distance away. The young ducklings can fall 20 meters from the nest without injury.



Wood Duck populations are limited by the availability and quality of habitat and nesting sites. P.E.I. has considerable quality habitat available to Wood Ducks but lacks large cavity nesting sites. Therefore, nest boxes can be quite successfully used if properly installed and maintained. Wood Duck nest boxes come in a variety of designs including both wood and plastic construction. Boxes should be rough inside to allow chicks to climb to the entrance. Pieces of burlap or mesh wire can be stapled to the inside if necessary to make this task easier. Nest boxes may also be predator proofed by wrapping the supporting post with sheet metal. We have found that boxes erected on posts over water are more successful than on land sites.

ASSISTANCE WANTED:

- o Loon surveyors for Deroche Pond
- o Shorebird surveyors for selected concentration sites on Bedeque and Malpeque Bays.

Contact Rosemary Curley at 368-4807.