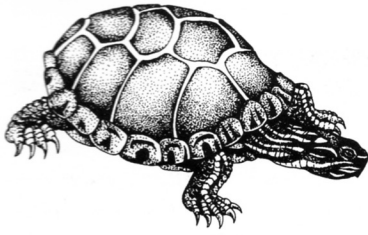


SECTION C - WETLANDS and ADJACENT UPLANDS



Turtle and Duck Loafing Platform

Plan 18 (page 52)

This platform will work very well along sheltered lakeshores and small ponds as loafing and sunning sites for painted turtles, wood ducks, mallards and blue-winged teal. These sites are important because they are relatively safe from predators. Strategically placed platforms can provide enjoyable viewing opportunities at wetlands in parks and nature centers.

Wood Duck

Plan 15 (page 49)

The traditional Wood Duck box has helped the beautiful Wood Duck make a remarkable recovery. Early in this century some people believed the Wood Duck was becoming extinct. Now it is one of our most abundant waterfowl species.

As shown in Plan 15, the entrance hole should be an oval 3 inches high and 4 inches wide. This hole excludes most Raccoons. The hole should be centered 19 inches above the floor. An 18" x 3" strip of 1/4" mesh hardware cloth should be cut out and the cut edges folded back. This should be attached inside the box under the entrance to function as a ladder for the newly hatched ducklings. Sometimes squirrels will tear this ladder loose, so it will need to be checked annually. Or the wood under the entrance hole should be roughened with a chisel to give the ducklings the footholds they need. The roughened area should extend below the entrance hole for 1 foot. At least 3 inches of

chain saw wood chips should be placed in the nest to serve as nesting material. Paired roofing nails with large heads should be used around the top of the box to wire it shut so raccoons can't open the box.

The house should be constructed of wood that is strong and can be made weather resistant. Cedar is good, but expensive. The Game Commission uses 3/4" pine. Do not treat, paint or stain the inside of the box. An exterior finish will prolong the life of the box. The right color will also blend the box into its surroundings and reduce vandalism.

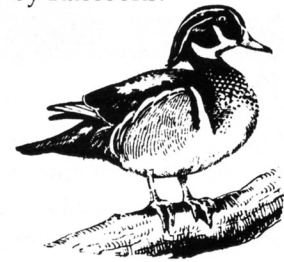
Houses can be erected on an isolated tree, a pressure treated 4" x 4" post or a metal post. Box entrances should be at least 7 feet above the ground or water surface. If trees are on land, boxes should be at least 8 feet high, the higher the better.

The top of the box should be fastened to its support (pole or tree) so that it leans forward a couple of inches. This helps rainwater drain off and lengthens the life of the box.

Females are most actively nest searching in the morning. So placement of boxes to face the rising sun will, in some situations, provide good visibility and help females to find new nest sites. Box entrances near water should face water. Otherwise there is a slight preference for southerly facing entrances.

Place only one box per five acres of brood rearing habitat (wetland, flooded trees). Straight line distances between boxes should be at least 100 yards, or far enough apart so one is not visible from the other.

Competition for scarce nesting cavities (e.g., squirrels, Screech-Owls and starlings) and predation (by snakes and Raccoons) must be considered. Boxes over water are less likely to be used by squirrels. Boxes under tree canopies will reduce use by starlings. Boxes on trees should be 30 to 100 feet away from the water's edge, which is frequented by Raccoons and snakes. Otherwise an aluminum or tin sheet should be nailed around the tree to prevent access by Raccoons.



Wood Duck

Boxes on posts need predator guards (Plan 23, page 57). Though not so effective for snakes, a 3 foot section of 6" diameter PVC pipe placed around a mounting post will deter raccoons.

Place a 4" deep mixture of wood chips and sawdust in the bottom of the box. The inside of the box front (below the opening) must have a wire ladder so all ducklings can leave the nest in a timely manner.

If boxes are cleaned and sealed between nesting seasons, they will last longer, and there will be greater use of the boxes by Wood Ducks. In Pennsylvania, boxes should be ready for occupancy by March 1.

The PA Game Commission has a free brochure titled: *Managing Your Wood Duck Nest Boxes*.

For a copy write to:
Wood Duck Nest Boxes
PA Game Commission
2001 Elmerton Avenue
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9797