

TECHNICAL NOTES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Boise, Idaho

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

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NEST BOX FOR WOOD DUCKS

Attached is a reprint of an article on Wood Duck Nest Box construction and placement by Roger Seamans for the South Carolina Wildlife Resources Department.

In Idaho the largest concentration of Wood Ducks is found in Northern Idaho. In favorable habitats of Southwestern Idaho they are rated as an occasional summer resident and rated as rare in Southeastern Idaho.

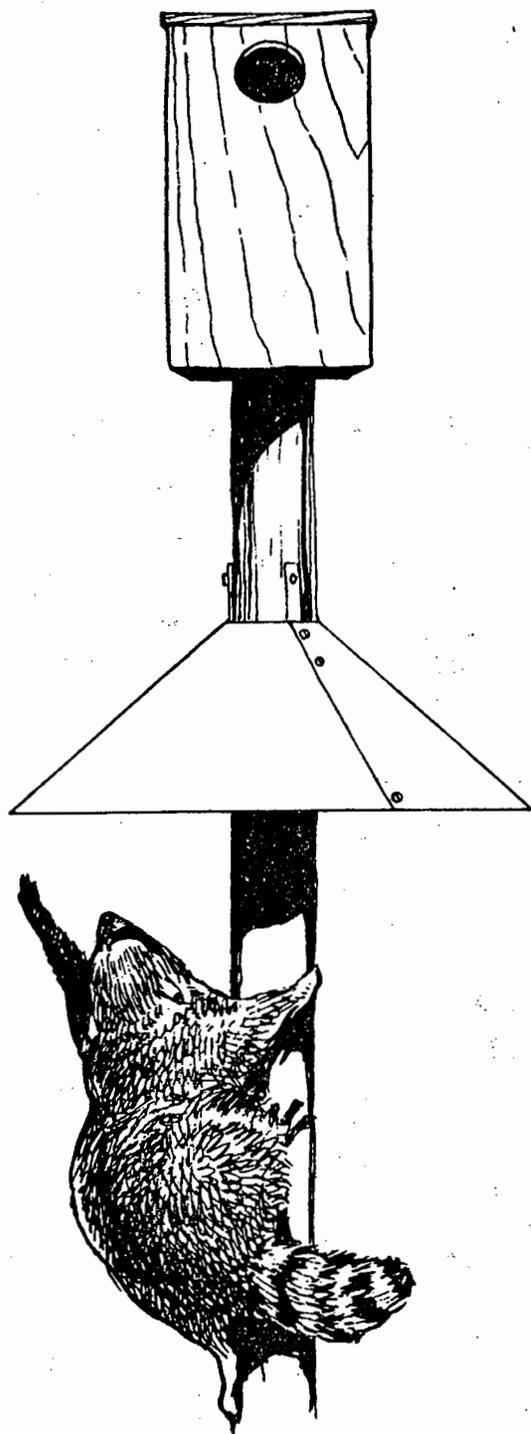
In Southern Idaho individuals interested in Wood Duck Nest Box construction and placement should be encouraged to try placing a few boxes out as an experiment for a couple of years. Then the individual can evaluate his success before considering setting out a number of boxes.

Wood Duck Nest Box construction and placement can be an excellent project for schools, scouts and 4-H groups as well as individuals interested in nature.

See SCS Animal Guide for Wood Duck.

NEST BOX for WOOD DUCKS

By ROGER SEAMANS



Do not even consider building a box unless you protect it from predators, insure it is in a permanent water site and will maintain it each year. Poorly erected and maintained boxes only invite ducks away from natural cavities to where they will either lose their clutch of eggs or be killed while on the nest.

The wood duck, both a migrant and a resident in South Carolina, is often locally referred to as the "Summer Duck."

Boxes may be used if they are a short distance from water, but it is best to start with boxes erected in the marsh or pond. Have them where the duck can easily see the opening and approximately six feet above *high water*. Two boxes may be mounted back to back. Do not paint boxes or use wood preservatives.

Do not erect boxes where post will become convenient anchoring spot for fishermen.

Boxes are attractive to the birds. Starlings will fill them with trash and have been known to build over a partly completed clutch of eggs. Sparrow hawks may use the box, but this hawk does no harm, so welcome it to your area. Fly-catchers and swallows may also become tenants. Bees may find them acceptable also, so beware.

Start with a few boxes first and increase numbers as population grows. It may take several years before the first box is used or it may be taken immediately. Best time to erect boxes is in February.

Wood ducks do not carry any nesting materials into the nest. Place three inches of wood shavings in the box for the nest.

Remember the predator guard is as important as the box itself. Do not erect one without the other. Raccoons offer the greatest problem. No box, regardless of material or construction, is coon-proof, without a suitable guard. Coons will climb pipe, steel posts and have no difficulty entering the three-inch hole or 2 1/2 x 3-1/2 elliptical opening.

Keep boxes away from overhanging limbs or nearby small trees or your box will become a squirrel's den.

Boxes may be erected on wooden posts driven into the marsh or pond bottom. A hand, rotary-type posthole digger can be used for hard bottoms. Be certain the post is securely set so it will not tip over from the weight of the box or blow over. A submerged clutch of eggs is poor conservation.

A small tree, growing in the edge of the marsh or pond, may be used for a box site if it is away from other trees to keep squirrels out. Remember, it too will require the guard.

Make sure the box is vertical, does not tip back or ducklings cannot climb out.

Boxes have been made of many materials but *unplaned* wood is best, inexpensive and available anywhere. Keep it unplaned so the ducklings can climb out.

If any other box construction material is used, be sure to tack to the inside front panel below the entrance hole a piece of fine screening. This will enable the day-old (or less) ducklings to climb out.

All boxes should be checked each February to replace nesting materials, insure posts are solid and tops are on.

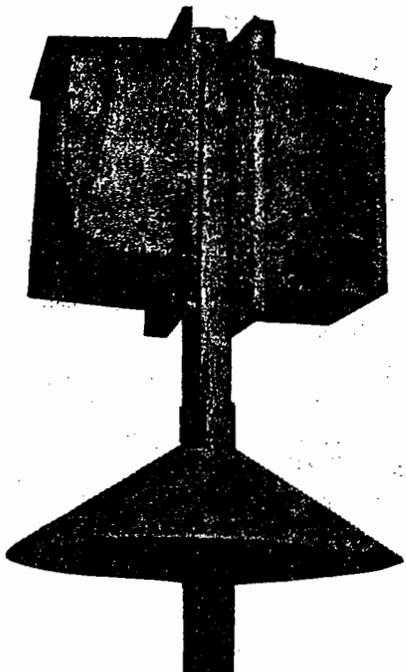


Materials required for one box:

- 1 pc. 1" x 12" x 23" (Front)
- 1 pc. 1" x 12" x 24" (Back)
- 1 pc. 1" x 10" x 40" (Sides--cut in half)
- 1 pc. 1" x 10" x 10" (Bottom)
- 1 pc. 1" x 12" x 14" (Top)
- 1 pc. 1" x 2" x 12" (Cleat--top of back)
- 2 pc. 1" x 2" x 9½" (Cleats for top)
- 1 pc. 1" x 2" x 9½" (Cleats for front above hole)
- 1 3" hook or 2 screw eyes and piece of wire
- 2 3" storm sash screw eyes (Mounting box on post)
- 1 lb. 6d common nails

Assembly of box:

1. Cut sides to give 1" pitch to top.
2. Nail cleat to top of back.
3. Nail sides to back, leaving enough space for top to slide under cleat.
4. Cut 4" hole in front, center of hole 15" from bottom.
5. Nail cleat to inside of front above hole and nail front to sides.
6. Drill ¼" holes in bottom board and nail in place.
7. Nail 2 cleats inside top, spaced so top will slide under back cleat and not slide forward.
8. Install hook or 2 screw eyes.
9. Drill ½" hole at top and bottom of back for securing to post.
10. Erect and add nest material.
11. Fasten top with hook or wire.



Predator guards are made from galvanized iron sheets available from a sheet metal shop. Drill 5/16" holes in sheet for ¼" stove bolts to secure in cone shape after placing around post. Nail three wooden blocks to post to keep guard from sliding down post.

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