

Homes For Wildlife

Nest boxes and platforms for use in lakes, rivers, marshes, ponds, and adjacent upland habitats.

Wood Duck

The traditional wood duck box has helped the beautiful wood duck make a remarkable recovery during the past 20 years. Early in this century some people believed the wood duck was becoming extinct. Now it is one of Minnesota's most abundant waterfowl species.

As shown in Figure 14, 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"x3" strip of 1/4-inch 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 mixed sawdust and chain saw wood chips should be placed in the nest to serve as nesting material. The roof should be wired so the box can be opened for maintenance. 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. It can be painted, stained, or treated — on the outside only. The floor should be recessed 1/4 inch up from the lower edge of the sides to prevent rotting.

Houses can be erected on an isolated tree or on a 16-foot long, 4"x4" post that is cypress, cedar or preservative-treated wood. An aluminum or tin sheet should be nailed around the post under the house to prevent squirrels and raccoons from entering. Used aluminum printing plates from newspaper offices can be purchased very cheaply and stapled lengthwise to the 4"x4" post under the nest box. Since wood ducks are not territorial, two or more houses can be placed on the same post.

Vigilant starling control will be necessary in wood duck boxes. Remove their nests and eggs whenever they occur. The top of a wood duck box should be fastened to its support so that it leans forward a couple inches. This facilitates the drainage of rainwater. To strengthen the box, nail a 9 3/4 inch long 1"x2" along the inside top edge of the front. Nail a similar size piece onto the back just under where the roof rests.

Lyle Bradley recommends placing a horizontal piece of slab wood with the bark attached on the front of the box immediately below the entrance hole. This aids the hen in landing and entering the entrance hole.

Boxes placed on posts in water should be about 6-to-8 feet above the water's surface. Wood duck boxes should be placed over water or in woodland habitat up to half-a-mile from lakes, ponds, marshes, and rivers. Wood ducks nest regularly in most of Minnesota except in the far northeastern coniferous forests of Cook, Lake and St. Louis counties where they are uncommon. Since the hen must lead her ducklings to water after they hatch, the habitat between the house location and the water's edge should be free of major obstacles like highways, fences with small mesh wire, and street curbing.

Heights above 20 feet seem to be preferred in trees. Aspens should be avoided. Box entrances near water should face the water. Otherwise, there seems to be a slight preference for south and west facing entrance holes. Ideally, boxes on land should be 30 to 100 feet from the water's edge. The chance of predation by raccoons is higher along the water's edge.

Annual maintenance on wood duck boxes should be completed by March 1.

Compliments of

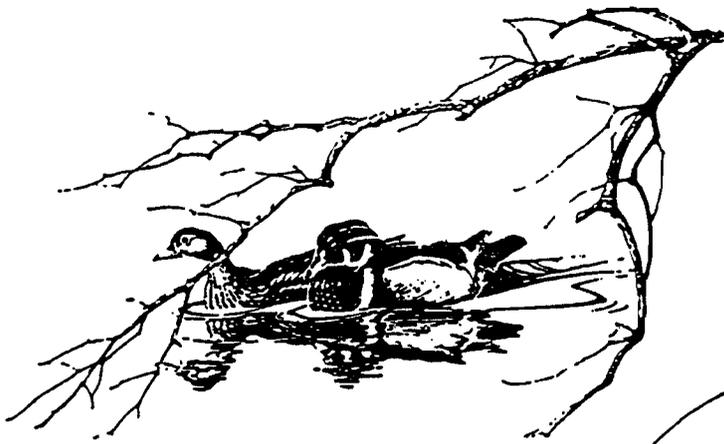


MICHIGAN'S WILDLIFE NEED YOUR HELP.

"Look for the Loon" on your state income tax form and give to the Nongame Wildlife Fund. You can make a direct contribution to the Fund with a check made payable to: "Nongame Wildlife Fund" Mail to: Nongame Wildlife Fund, Natural Heritage Program, P.O. Box 30180, Lansing, MI 48909-7680.

Your contributions are the primary support for critically important work for Michigan's nongame wildlife and endangered plants and animals.

Acknowledgment:
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Nongame Wildlife Program



WOOD DUCK
 HOODED MERGANSER
 COMMON GOLDENEYE
 COMMON MERGANSER
 RACCOON
 FOX and GRAY SQUIRREL
 PILEATED WOODPECKER (?)
 NEST BOX

HOLE SIZE:
 (UP ↑)

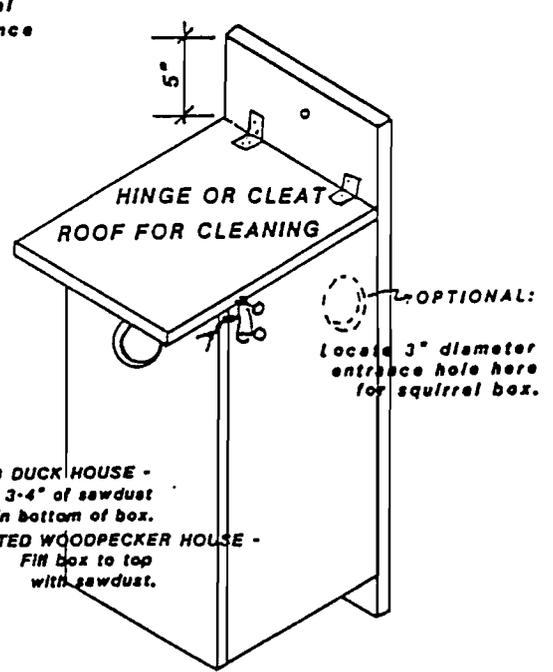
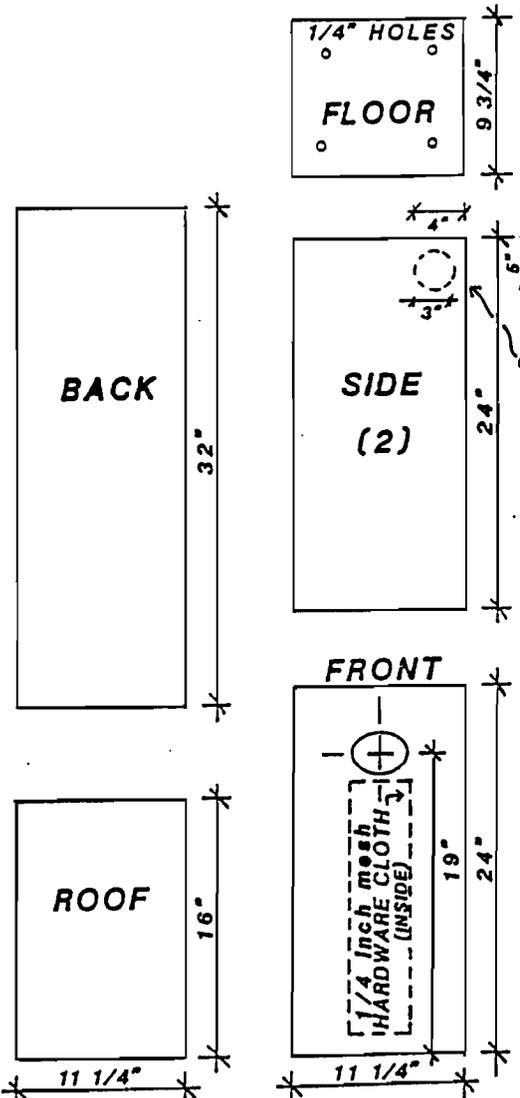
WOOD DUCK and
 HOODED MERGANSER:
 3" high & 4" wide oval

COMMON GOLDENEYE:
 3 1/2" high and 4 1/2" wide oval

COMMON MERGANSER and RACCOON:
 5" high and 9" wide oval

FOX and GRAY SQUIRREL:
 3" diameter round

PILEATED WOODPECKER
 4" diameter round



FOR WOOD DUCK HOUSE -
 Place 3-4" of sawdust
 in bottom of box.

FOR PILEATED WOODPECKER HOUSE -
 Fill box to top
 with sawdust.

LUMBER:
 ONE 1" x 12" x 12' 0"

NOTE: PILEATED WOODPECKER BOX SHOULD BE
 CONSTRUCTED FROM ONE 2" x 12" x 12' 0" CEDAR, AND
 FLOOR MUST BE 8 1/4" LONG INSTEAD OF 9 3/4"
 FOR USE OF 1 1/2" THICK LUMBER.

