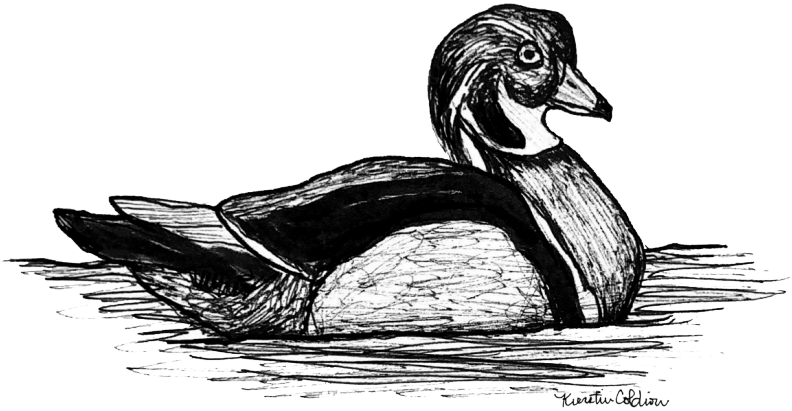


WOOD DUCK HOUSE



Most ducks are not perching birds, but several species of ducks regularly nest in trees. The wood duck and hooded merganser are among them, along with the common merganser, bufflehead, common goldeneye, and barrow's goldeneye. These ducks commonly nest in tree cavities, which makes them good candidates for man-made nest boxes. The wood duck and hooded merganser each breed April through June; their nests are made of wood chips and lined with feathers from the female's breast.

Ducks are incapable of excavating a cavity to live in, as a woodpecker might, so they search for an existing large hole. Acceptable cavities for these ducks are fewer than ever, making them quite dependent on man-made nest boxes. Nesting material is necessary for both insulation and keeping eggs from rolling around. A bag of wood chips is provided for this purpose, and it will be important to renew them before each nesting season.

A common predator of these ducklings is the raccoon. One way to eliminate this threat is to locate the nest box over water, placing it on a post or pole near a lake or pond about 4' to 6' above the water's surface. If the nest box is located over land, it should be 10' to 20' high. A baffle should be used to prevent access by raccoons.

MOUNTING YOUR DUCK HOUSE

- 1.** To mount the nest box, put a heavy screw or nail into the side of a tree or post, leaving the head sticking out about 1/4". Place the loop of the metal hanger bracket over the head of the nail or screw. Secure the nest box with a second nail or screw through the pre-drilled hole at the bottom of the back panel, then empty the bag of wood chips into the house. After a year or two, when the tree has grown a bit, you may need to back the screw or nail out a bit, or it may disappear into the bark of the tree and the nest box may come down.
- 2.** Angling the nest box slightly forward will help the ducklings climb out when the time comes. It should be located away from any branches that could obstruct the entrance.
- 3.** Over time, the nest box will weather, darken, turn gray, and eventually blend in with their environment. Birds prefer an inconspicuous nest box. The most important thing you can do to preserve the long life of this nesting box is to clean it out after each nesting cycle. The right side panel tilts out in two sections: the top one for observing without disturbing the nest, and the bottom for easy cleaning after the young have left the nest. A latch at the bottom secures each panel in place.



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