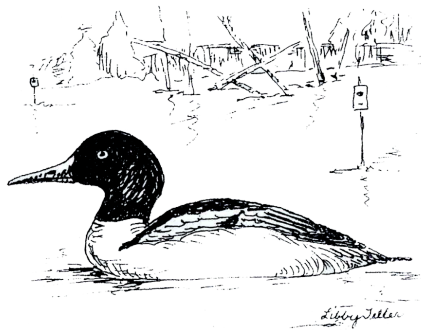


COMMON MERGANSER DUCK HOUSE



Common merganser ducks frequently nest in tree cavities, which makes them ideal candidates for man-made habitats. They are incapable of excavating a cavity to live in, as a woodpecker might, so they search for a large, existing hole. Young forests, and those without woodpeckers or flickers, will not have cavities suitable for ducks. Acceptable cavities are fewer than ever, making common mergansers quite dependent on human benefactors.

The breeding period for common mergansers extends from April through June, and only one brood is raised each year. The female will lay her eggs in the nesting box, and after hatching, the young ducklings are safe from predators only alongside their mother in the water. They will follow the mother around for about two weeks for protection, though they are quite capable of feeding and caring for themselves at birth. The mother's only job is to protect them. Nesting material must be provided for insulation and to keep the eggs from rolling around. For this purpose, the house comes with a bag of wood chips. When nesting season is over, open the side panel and clean out any old nesting material. This will assure that next year's nesters will not have bacteria or parasites to contend with. In the early spring, add fresh wood chips for nesting material.

One common predator of ducklings is the raccoon, and one way to eliminate this threat is to place your duck house over water. The house may be placed on a pole in the bottom of a lake or pond, so that it sits about 4' to 6' above the water's surface. If the house is placed over land, it should be 10' to 20' high. Angling the house slightly forward will help the fledglings climb out. It should be away from branches that may obstruct the entrance. Place a baffle around the tree or post to keep raccoons from climbing up.

MOUNTING YOUR DUCK HOUSE

1. To mount the duck house, put a heavy nail or screw into the side of a post or tree with the head sticking out about 1/4". Place the "loop" of the metal hanger at the top of the duck house over the head of the nail. Secure the house with another nail or screw through the pre-drilled hole at the bottom of the back panel. Empty the bag of wood chips into the house.
2. After a year or two, when the tree has grown a bit, you may need to back the nail or screw out slightly. Otherwise, it may disappear into the bark of the tree, causing the house to come down.
3. The duck house is not painted or stained and will weather to a natural gray color over time to blend in with outdoor surroundings. Should you wish to paint or stain, it is critical to only use water-based stain or paint. Oil-based paints and stains are toxic to birds. It is also important to stay away from dark colors that may cause the nest box to become too hot for nestlings. A light, seasonal, external coating of boiled linseed oil is a highly effective, non-toxic preservative.



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