



How to Help Wood Ducks

A striking, colorful small duck found over most of the United States, the Wood Duck prefers areas of flooded shrubs and water-tolerant trees with small expanses of open water, offering 50 to 75 percent cover. It nests in tree cavities, sometimes in the woods, some distance from the water's edge. You can help Wood Ducks by installing nest boxes and protecting wooded aquatic habitats.

What Wood Ducks Need

Food: Wood Ducks are omnivorous, eating mostly seeds, fruits, and aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates. Their Diet varies seasonally, and includes acorns, maple, ash, and elm seeds; tupelo, watershield, smartweeds, panic grasses, sedges; fruits of blackberry, wild cherry, and muscadine; and vegetable matter from pondweed and duckweed.

Nesting: Wood Ducks nest in old woodpecker cavities or nest boxes close to good foraging areas. Trees offering suitable nest cavities are usually at least two feet in diameter, and include oaks, maples, and ashes, quaking aspen, cottonwood, sycamore, American beech, American elm, bald cypress, tupelo, and black gum. These ducks may use a nest site up to 1.5 miles from water.

Shelter: Mothers lead their young from the nest hole to wetlands after hatching, so they need protective cover below the nest. They often roost on logs near the water, especially when with young.

Other: Requires healthy and uncontaminated aquatic habitats.

How You Can Help

- Supplement existing vegetation by planting oaks, hickory, elm, bald cypress, beech, sweet gum, ash, button bush, maple, black gum, bur-reed, arrow-
arum, wild rice, sedges, smartweeds, barnyard grass, nightshade, cow lily, duckweed, grape, St. John's wort, panic grass, bulrush, pondweed, or water shield
- If a wetland on your property has closed in, consider managing shrub and emergent plants to provide more open water.
- Mount nest boxes at least 20 feet high on a tree 30 to 150 feet from a shoreline. Alternately, mount boxes on a pole in the water, placing the box at least 6 feet above water surface. Boxes should measure at least 12 x 12 inches wide and 22 inches deep, with a 4 inch diameter entrance hole. More information online at <http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/birds/nestbox/woodduck.htm>
- Plant shrubs or grassy vegetation below trees with nest boxes.
- Place logs near water for loafing and sleeping.
- Ensure that small ponds and woodland wetlands have close dense cover along edges for adequate shelter.
- Avoid using pesticides or herbicides near aquatic habitats.
- Protect water quality in ponds and streams by eliminating sources of pollution.