



Established in 1894, the Elkins Fish & Game Club is the oldest, continuously operating, fish and game club in the state of New Hampshire. Incorporated in 1909, it is also the first chartered fish and game club in the state of New Hampshire.

WOOD DUCKS



The Wood Duck is one of the most beautiful waterfowl species in nature. Its scientific name, *AIX SPONSA*, translates to “Waterbird in Bridal Dress”.



The Wood Ducks nest in woodland areas along lakes, rivers, and vegetated wetland areas.

They are unique in that they are the only water fowl to have claws on their webbed feet, which allows them to perch on branches of trees.

The Wood Ducks are cavity nesters, finding homes in hollowed out trees and rock formations.

The Wood Ducks' range extends on the east coast from Nova Scotia west to the north central U.S. and south to Florida and the Gulf of Mexico. Birds nesting in New England winter in the Atlantic states from the Carolinas southward. Midwestern Wood Ducks winter in the area extending from Georgia west to Texas. On the west coast, the wood ducks' range extends from British Columbia south to the Mexican border. Upper west coast wood ducks will winter in southern California and the Mexican Pacific coast. Southern breeding wood ducks are year-round residents. Fall migration generally begins in October and extends into November. Spring migration occurs during March and April. Wood ducks migrate either in pairs or in small flocks.

FORMER ENDANGERED SPECIES



Wood Ducks are a very common waterfowl species, but this wasn't always the case. Writings from the early 19th century indicate that wood ducks were in abundant supply and very popular for their tasty meat and bright decorative feathers. By the late 1880's, unregulated hunting and destruction of woodland and wetland habitat had caused the wood duck population to decline to alarmingly low levels. By the beginning of the 20th century, wood ducks had virtually disappeared from much of their former range.

In response to the Migratory Bird Treaty established in 1916 and enactment of the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 1918, wood duck populations began to slowly recover. By ending unregulated hunting and taking measures to protect remaining habitat, wood duck populations began to rebound in the 1920's. The development of the artificial nesting box in the 1930's gave an additional boost to wood duck production. Wood ducks eagerly accepted boxes as suitable nesting sites. Conservation groups and individuals helped increase numbers of wood ducks by preserving habitat and erecting nest boxes. The combination of hunting restrictions and habitat conservation and management measures enabled wood duck populations to rebound. These efforts continue today.

WOOD DUCK BOXES



The Elkins Fish & Game Club, along with other groups and individuals, works on the installation and maintenance of wood duck boxes each winter. The club has boxes on Pleasant Lake, Messer Pond, Beaver Pond at Low Plain, the pond at Slope-N-Shore, and the pond on the Kidder property on Mountain Road.

Boxes are built from rough cut pine. They are about 24 inches high, 12 inches wide, and 12 inches deep. The hole is an oval, about 4 inches wide and 3 inches high, located about 18 inches up from the bottom. Boxes are mounted to trees or attached to metal poles and are almost always over water to protect the eggs and ducklings from predators. Boxes have wood shavings on the bottom for nesting material and a clean-out door on one side for maintenance.

Each winter, boxes are cleaned out and new wood shavings are installed. Hatched and unhatched eggs are counted, and the numbers are reported to NH Fish & Game.

ECOLOGICAL BENEFITS

The Wood Ducks are an important part of the health of ponds, lakes, rivers, and wetland areas.

They eat aquatic insects, small fish, and invertebrates, which helps to control their numbers.



Most importantly, they eat aquatic plants such as algae, sago pondweed, watermeal, duckweed and watershield, keeping waters clean and healthy.



QUESTIONS?