

MARYLAND WOOD DUCK INITIATIVE

“A Total Wetlands Experience “

September, 2016 Activity Report

2016 Hatch Expected to be Comparable to 2014-2015 Levels

Preliminary indications based on ~60% data collection from ~1,800 boxes suggest Maryland public lands wood duck production will be in the 8,200-8,300 duckling range. Several of the larger sites appear to be down modestly – moderately except Jug Bay / Patuxent State Park where a notable increase to almost record levels exceeding 900 ducklings was recorded.

Heavy rains were experienced across much of Maryland in the spring and early summer and despite the July / August heat additional downpours have helped re-charge brood habitat. Casual observations from many sources of woodies, however, have not been “robust” this summer.

MWDI admin & reporting has suffered this year as family weddings and other time demands have required an inordinate effort. Publicity of the ongoing youth box assembly and eagle scout projects has been lax but demand has never been higher. 3 Eagle scout projects are still in progress and the last of our 5 box builds will be completed by early October. Fiscal support for our increased lumber needs has been re-affirmed by the Safari Club’s Chesapeake Chapter and re-imburement of lumber associated with a Discovery Channel community service box build via Patuxent State Park will replenish our kits this winter.

Assembled box inventory is almost depleted as a result of several 4-8 box programs - several in Calvert County, an expansion at Jug Bay and due to various replacements elsewhere. Replenishment to acceptable but minimum levels will occur by early October when assembly events are done. If necessary, we’ll accelerate a box event from January 2017 kits if new box demand exceeds expectations.

Predator guard supplies – thanks to Maryland DNR’s Wildlife & Heritage Service continuing support are in good shape but we can always use more street sign poles (Scott, Jamie, Aaron and Josh - help!!). If the website seems dated – that is all on me – as DNR’s Linda Wiley is dependent on my input. MWDI’s website is now encapsulated within the Maryland DNR website for efficiency & other reasons.

In November, MWDI will again seek other private program sponsors who wish to participate in our cypress lumber order from South Carolina for kits or boxes. These supplies are provided at cost. Lumber and assembled bluebird boxes are also available. Maryland Waterfowlers has also continued to make available predator guards at a reasonable price to private program sponsors.

MWDI has supplies for new public projects if you wish to initiate one. We will review site habitat, assist box location and train volunteers but you must have a project manager identified to monitor the project after installation. As previously indicated, we are continuing to experience a slow erosion in monitoring of certain sites which we need to address. We periodically receive volunteer requests but it is not easy matching such inquiries with geographic and logistical desires. Lately, this process has suffered further due to my time constraints but I expect to accelerate volunteer replacement on certain key sites this fall and before next nest season as we have a modest backlog of willing participants to train.

Thank you for your consideration. And thank you to the volunteers who made these results possible!

Cliff Brown