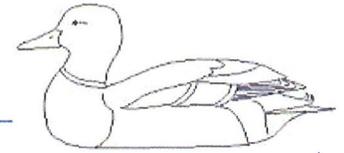


LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

Humane, Effective Solutions to Human-Wildlife Conflicts

A Program of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals



Wood ducks

In cities, suburbs, and small towns across Massachusetts, people are noticing a change in their neighborhoods. Some think it's good. Some think it's bad. But everybody seems to be talking about it: more wild animals are making their homes in and around people's yards and houses, in parks and playgrounds, in business developments, even right on Main Street.

General Information

After wintering in the southern states, Wood ducks migrate north to their Canadian breeding grounds, sometimes pairing and nesting before or during migration right here in Massachusetts.

Wood ducks are considered by many naturalists to be the most beautiful duck in the world. The male Wood duck is known for his brightly patterned, multi-colored plumage and red eyes. The female is gray-brown. Both have long square tails, a distinctive feature while in flight.

Wood ducks are typically found in forested wetlands. They prefer to nest in trees close to water, but if none are available, they will take advantage of human-made nesting boxes or structures.

Wood ducks mate between February and April. The female produces about 10-15 eggs in June and incubates the eggs for 30 days. Sometimes a nest will contain 30 or more eggs, as "egg dumping" into

other nests can occur, out of fear of predation or lack of available nests. Ducklings climb out of their nest within 24 hours of hatching, leaping to the ground or water below to follow and learn from their mother. They begin to fly at 8 - 10 weeks.

Wood ducks are mostly vegetarian, feeding on nuts, fruits, seeds, and aquatic plants. Ducklings, however, also feed on dragonflies, beetles and spiders to obtain protein needed for rapid growth.

Wood ducks molt in midsummer, during which time they are unable to fly, regaining their wing feathers in the fall for their return trip to the southern states.

Possible Conflicts and Solutions

If you find that Wood ducks are making a pattern of nesting in your yard in the spring or enjoying your swimming pool in the summer, removing dead or dieing trees that have useful nesting cavities *before* nesting season is a good preventative measure.

Encourage Wood ducks to move on by doing the following:

- Float plastic balls in all water sites on the property.
- Eliminate/limit shallow water through proper drainage.
- Install a motion sensor on your garden hose.
- Affix scarecrows or Mylar products throughout your yard.

- Clear free-flowing waterways of vegetation to limit insects and plants that Wood ducks feed upon.

If there are ducklings present, exercise tolerance, as mothers may fly off out of fear, leaving their ducklings. The gentle presence of humans should be enough to encourage the mother to move on with her ducklings. Keep pets on a leash and do not allow children to approach the Wood duck family.

If you find a Wood duckling that appears to be orphaned, (grey and yellow with a brown stripe across both eyes and a red tipped beak) know that a duckling has a much better chance of surviving in the wild if it can be reunited with its mother. If the mother does not return from foraging after 24 hours or if the duckling is in imminent danger, gently and slowly contain the duckling in a cardboard box and contact a local rehabilitator or wildlife clinic immediately. Do not try to feed or warm a duckling until you have spoken with a wildlife expert. Ducklings are easily stressed, so noise level, motion, and contact must be kept to a minimum when offering assistance.

Public Health Concern

Wood ducks are susceptible to few diseases and parasites, such as duck malaria and duck enteritis. Their role in transmitting these to humans is uncertain.