

**Deering Conservation Commission  
2014 Hatch Season - Wood Duck Box Report**

The Deering Conservation Commission (DCC) maintains dozens of Wood Duck nesting boxes throughout the town, primarily on its many conserved lands. The boxes were installed with the intention of providing suitable nesting opportunities. Annually, DCC members fan out across town to locate the boxes, see if they've been used, record the results, and refresh them for use during the coming nesting season.

**PROGRAM UPDATES:**

During the fall of 2014, the DCC installed three boxes at Central Rangeway Pond, an abandoned site from many years ago. The site was rarely used, despite its otherwise excellent siting. One new box was also installed at Wilkin's Cemetery. Wilkin's once boasted several often-used boxes supported by two beaver dams however, both dams recently let go. It's uncertain if the marshy area that remains will support even one duck box. The experiment continues.

**SUMMARY OF RESULTS:**

Thus far during the 2014 cleanout season, the DCC has checked 29 of 40 active boxes with a 34.5% use rate. The use rate is just above the 33.2% 21 year average, and well ahead of the 21.6% rate the prior year. There are two larger locations that will be checked in the coming days, including Hunter's Pond (6 boxes) and Poling's Marsh (2); both of which are usually quite active.

There were a few dump nests and many failed nests. I always wonder what happened... No flying squirrel boxes were found this year either. We had one fall-in off North Road up to the thighs, but it wasn't all that cold out and the car was close-by. No harm done. Stay off moving water! ☺

Pleasant Pond Road had a new box installed near a beaver dam during the 2014 clean-out. Both it and the remaining box on a pole in moving water were used—awesome! Pattern Marsh received a new box on the beaver dam pond during 2014, which was also used.

At the Lead Mine ponds, our lost box saga continues. This year on the upper pond, we replaced a box we lost during the 2013 hatch season which we replaced the prior year to loss, only to find one box we installed during the 2014 clean-out season had been lost. Why is this upsetting? The one remaining box was used. Also, dragging boxes up there every year is a bit of a pain. The lower pond has four boxes, all intact, with no hits. Next year, we'll relocate a box from the lower pond to the upper pond.

Johnson's Pond was a bust this year, despite active use in previous years. Reservoir Marsh and Fulton Pond were both duds, consistent with prior years. These two should likely be abandoned.

The two Audubon spots had 50% use rates during 2014, including a new installation on the smaller tree frog pond. Black Fox Pond had seen little use recently, though three boxes were used last year. This is good news, despite our strong suspicion these are Merganser boxes.

**LOOKING AHEAD:**

I don't believe a new batch of boxes is necessary for next year, though I have spare parts available to work on some of the older boxes in need of new parts.

**CONCLUSION:**

It was a good use year, though not a high hatch success rate. And on we fiddle.

Cheers,  
Aaron Gill  
March 2015