

**Deering Conservation Commission
2017 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 for Wood Ducks. 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:

One new top was made and installed. A box on a downed tree was relocated. A new box number was made and applied where one was missing. One box was found on land, several feet from the water's edge and was relocated to the water's edge. I made two new boxes that are ready to be installed.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

It is difficult to get to each box every year. This is primarily due to the remote locations of the boxes, and most require frozen water to get to with ease. In the past three winters, the safety of frozen ice, particularly over moving water, where many of our boxes are, was not certain. This provided volunteers with very little opportunity to get to the boxes. This year, we had quite a spell with very cold weather, making it safe to walk on the water, for a longer period of time. With the help of Gary Samuels, I visited just about every location myself, to familiarize myself with the program.

Thus far during the 2017 cleanout season, the DCC has checked 43 active boxes with a 57.0% use rate.

There were a few dump/failed nests, which happens frequently. The DCC has been actively moving boxes over the years so you cannot see one from another in an attempt to stop hens from the practice of dump nesting. No flying squirrel boxes were found this year, and nobody fell in. We did have a family of friendly mice jump on volunteers from three boxes. (One right into Gary Samuels' pocket!) One had two moles living in it.

At the Lead Mine locations, both upper and lower ponds had usage. Four of the six boxes were used. One had 15 unhatched eggs however. (Dumping.)

Lily Pond had its first used box last year since 2011, and had two boxes used this year.

At the Audubon-Tree Frog Pond, there are four boxes, and all are within sight of each other. Two of these had "dumping" as a result and the other two were not used. I would like to remove two or even three of these, since this is such a small pond.

Reservoir Marsh had a 67% hit rate during the 2016 season. One of the 3 boxes is gone, but the two remaining were used this year. I would like to add another box here.

LOOKING AHEAD:

The Duck Box program was passed along to me this year, from Aaron Gill. I appreciate all the work he did marking all box locations with GPS points. He has also replaced over a dozen boxes with new ones. He passed along excellent statistics to me from previous years. I'd like to replace 2 boxes on Black Fox Pond that are in poor condition. I plan to do repairs as needed, and place new boxes where some were lost. I would also like to ask permission to move at least two boxes from the Audubon location, Tree Frog Pond.

CONCLUSION:

Next year I would love to have more volunteers helping out with these cleanouts, especially if the ice season is short again.

Sincerely,
Dennis Sawyer