

Deering Conservation Commission 2021 Hatch Season-Wood Duck Box Report

The Deering Conservation Commission (DCC) now maintains 43 Wood Duck nesting boxes throughout the town, primarily on its many conserved lands. Nesting boxes supplement available nest cavities in trees. Competition for these tree cavities from other animals reduce cavities available for the wood ducks: European starlings, owls, kestrels, raccoons, etc.

PROGRAM UPDATES:

One box had been vandalized and was repaired. Because this is the 2nd box vandalized, the Commission felt having a plaque on the boxes that says "Deering Conservation Commission" may help. These were ordered and nailed on the side of each box. Also, Gary will send a letter to any landowners with boxes on their property, to explain the program.

The old box that was found at Central Rangeway was found on the ground, so it was replaced with a newer box located nearby.

Mike and I drilled 2 holes in the ice using an ice auger, both at Black Fox. 2 boxes were relocated off the shore by pounding pipes in the mud and mounting boxes on the pipes. A predator guard was added to a box at Black Fox that did not have one.

2 boxes at Lead Mine were repaired, 1 with a roof and 1 with a bottom.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

This winter every box was checked, and fresh wood shavings placed due to help from most Conservation Commission members, and a few volunteers. 16 boxes were used of the 42 boxes which is a 38% rate of use. There was dumping at Cobbett's Marsh (#14 had over 20 eggs), and at Central Rangeway (#7 had 10 eggs). Trum-Hunter's pond had no usage for the 1st time in years. 5 new boxes have been placed on the pond that are unmarked and have no predator guards. We haven't been able to find who placed these there, but a letter was left in one of the boxes. It is felt that 10 boxes are too many for a pond this size, and this may be why none of the 10 were used by ducks. This is NH Forest Society land, and they are OK with us taking down these boxes, if we decide to.

It was noticed that all boxes without predator guards had lots of pine needles in them. (The one at Black Fox and the 5 at Trum-Hunter's that are not ours.) They seem to have been used by some type of birds, not ducks. 1 of the relocated boxes at Black Fox was used. This was good news after no usage there for several years.

LOOKING AHEAD:

One metal post is leaning quite a bit in the water in Pleasant Pond and hopefully it can be straightened when the ice melts. Waders will be needed.

We are considering placing 2 more boxes on poles in the water next year, based on results.

We will be replacing 4 boxes that are borderline acceptable, with newer ones.

Next year we have 43 boxes to check.

CONCLUSION:

The ice was very thick and safe this year, and no one went through the ice.

38% usage is less than last year, but still good.

There is a loose-leaf notebook at Town Hall with more information and also an album of pictures of each site.

Sincerely,

Dennis Sawyer