

Wood Duck Nest Box

by Dick Vaught

Construction: No man-made nesting device for waterfowl has gone through more design changes than that for the beautiful wood duck. Early types were usually made of wood, while newer models are constructed predominantly of plastics or metal. If nest boxes are to be mounted in trees, they should be made predator-proof. Tack a 6-inch-wide strip of 1/4-inch hardware cloth or screen wire inside the box from the bottom to the hole so the ducklings can climb out.

Installation: Lakes, ponds and marshes throughout the state are potential production sites for wood ducks. We recommend that all wood duck boxes be erected over water, using steel or wooden posts with predator-proof metal cones or sleeves. To be as economical and safe as possible in erecting boxes, we recommend placement in water two to four feet deep. Using this depth as the first criterion, place the mounting posts as far from the shoreline as possible while staying within the suggested depths. The bottom of the box should be no lower than four feet from the water surface, preferably higher if possible. If the water level fluctuates radically during floods or heavy rainfall, the box needs to be mounted above the high-water elevation. Attach the box to the post as shown in the diagram, and be sure nesting material (6 inches of wood shavings or sawdust) has been placed in the box. Boxes may be erected in the winter when ice is thick enough to safely support a person driving the posts. Put all your tools and material on a sled and have at it.

Comment: Although nesting boxes are intended primarily for wood ducks, other species of wildlife will also find them attractive for homes. Possible users include owls, kestrels, woodpeckers, hooded mergansers and even a honeybee swarm or two. All are part of the wildlife scene in the Missouri wetlands.

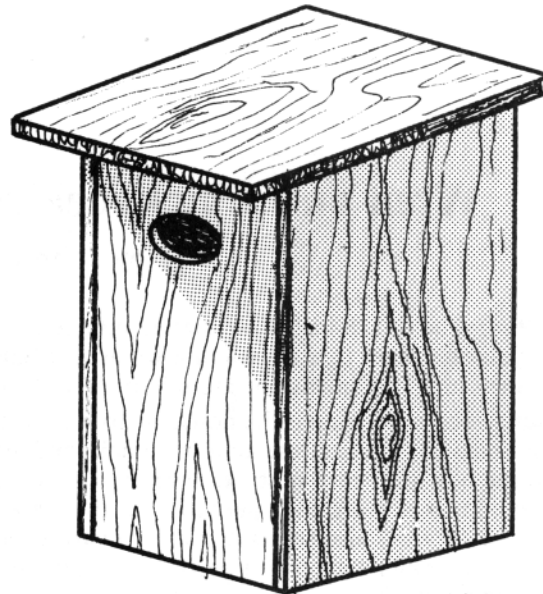
Biology: Wood ducks nest from mid-February to mid-March. A dozen eggs is an average clutch. Incubation is about 32 days. Ducklings leave the box immediately after hatching. Free falls of up to 40 feet apparently do them no harm. First flight is at about nine weeks. One brood per year is normal, but two broods can occur in southern Missouri. Early foods are primarily insects, but later these ducks eat vegetable foods. They winter in the lower Mississippi Valley.

HOW TO BUILD A WOOD DUCK NEST BOX



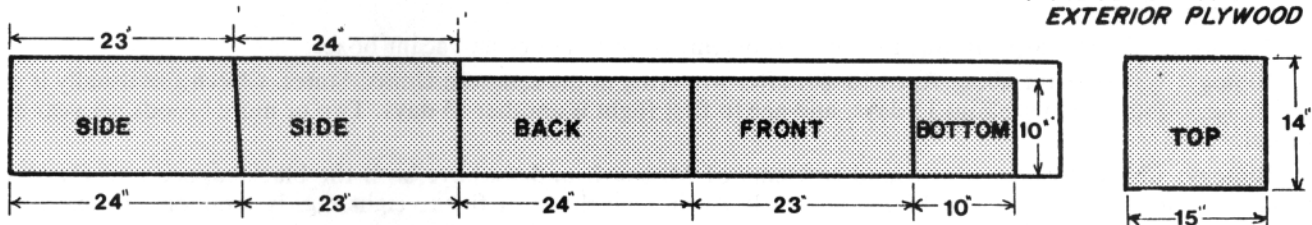
Missouri Department of Conservation

Drawings
by Steve Gum

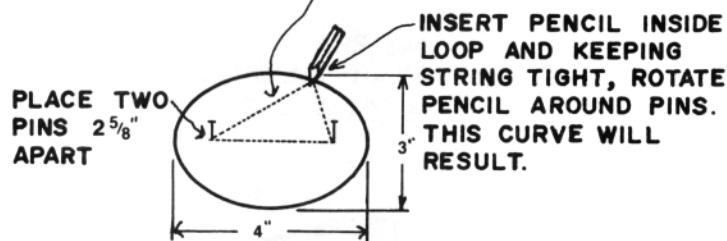


1 BOARD 1"x12"x9' LONG

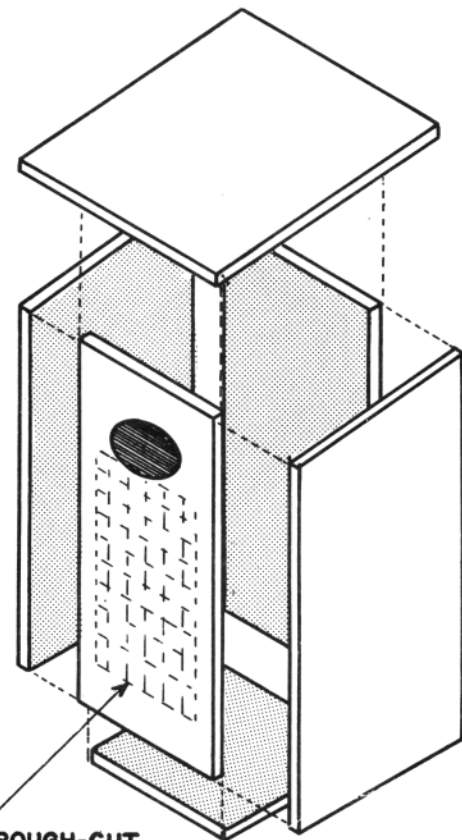
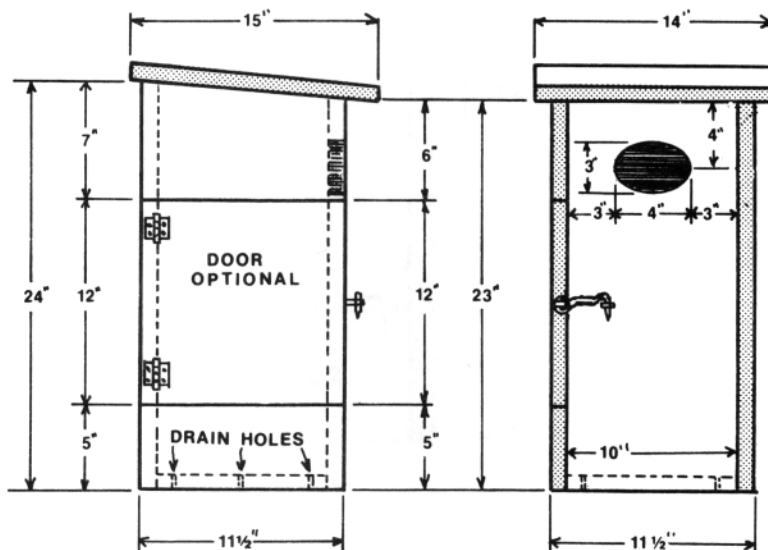
1 PIECE OF 3/4" EXTERIOR PLYWOOD



MAKE A 7½" LOOP OF STRING
AND PLACE AS SHOWN



ENTRANCE HOLE LAYOUT



IF ROUGH-CUT
WOOD IS NOT USED,
HARDWARE CLOTH
OR SCREEN WIRE
MUST BE PLACED
BENEATH THE
ENTRANCE HOLE
ON THE INSIDE.

3"- 5" OF
COARSE SAWDUST
OR SHAVINGS ARE
NEEDED IN BOTTOM