

El Dorado County & Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation Districts

(530) 295-5630

WOOD DUCK HABITAT PROGRAM OF EL DORADO COUNTY

(Not affiliated with the California Waterfowl Association)

The large number of year-round and seasonal ponds in El Dorado County make it a great place to promote waterfowl habitat. Consequently, your local Resource Conservation District has adopted the program started by the California Waterfowl Association for promoting wood ducks. This program is consistent with the RCD goals to promote natural resource conservation, including habitat, within its boundaries.

We are promoting the installation and maintenance of boxes across the county, consistent with the goals of the CWA program. In addition to the statewide program, our local efforts will also include regular mailings throughout the year to encourage box maintenance and to disseminate up-to-the-minute information on the program. If you or someone you know would like to participate by helping us "run" boxes, make boxes, or by placing a box on your property, please call us at (530) 295-5630



CALIFORNIA WATERFOWL ASSOCIATION

4630 NORTHGATE BOULEVARD • SUITE 150 • SACRAMENTO, CA 95834
(916) 648-1406 • (916) 648-1665 FAX

"Preserving California's waterfowl, wetlands, and outdoor heritage... since 1945."

reprinted

The California Wood Duck Program

The wood duck is considered by many to be the most beautiful waterfowl in North America. The beauty, reclusive nature, and peculiar nesting behavior create an irresistible curiosity that is seldom experienced with more obvious waterfowl species. In the 19th century, wood ducks were nearly driven to extinction by uncontrolled forest clearing and market hunting. The wood duck completely disappeared from some of its original habitats. In the 1930's, it was discovered that wood ducks will successfully use human made nesting structures. The combination of large scale nest box programs, hunting regulations, and a decline in habitat destruction lead to a remarkable comeback in wood duck populations. Today, wood ducks are the most abundant waterfowl species in many parts of the eastern United States.

In California, wood duck habitat has been drastically reduced. Only 10% of historical forested wetlands remain in California's Central Valley. The Central Valley is believed to be the most important wintering and nesting areas for wood ducks in the Pacific Flyway.

The California Wood Duck Program (CWDP) was initiated in 1991 to increase the nesting population of wood ducks in California through the placement and maintenance of nest boxes. The program is essentially a volunteer program in which volunteers install, maintain, and collect valuable information from nest boxes placed in suitable habitats. California Waterfowl Association (CWA) biologists provide instruction to volunteers on a variety of wood duck topics including nest box placement, habitats suitable to wood duck program in the Pacific Flyway. The program is funded from the sale of wooden nest boxes, private donations, and state and federal agencies.

In 1994, 5,400 nest boxes and nearly 700 volunteers were enrolled in the CWDP. Wood ducks nesting in monitored CWDP nest boxes produced 19,000 ducklings in 1994. Since enrolled in the CWDP.

Thank you for your interest in the California Wood Duck Program. If you would like to become involved in this exciting and rewarding program please fill out the enclosed inquiry form and send to CWA.



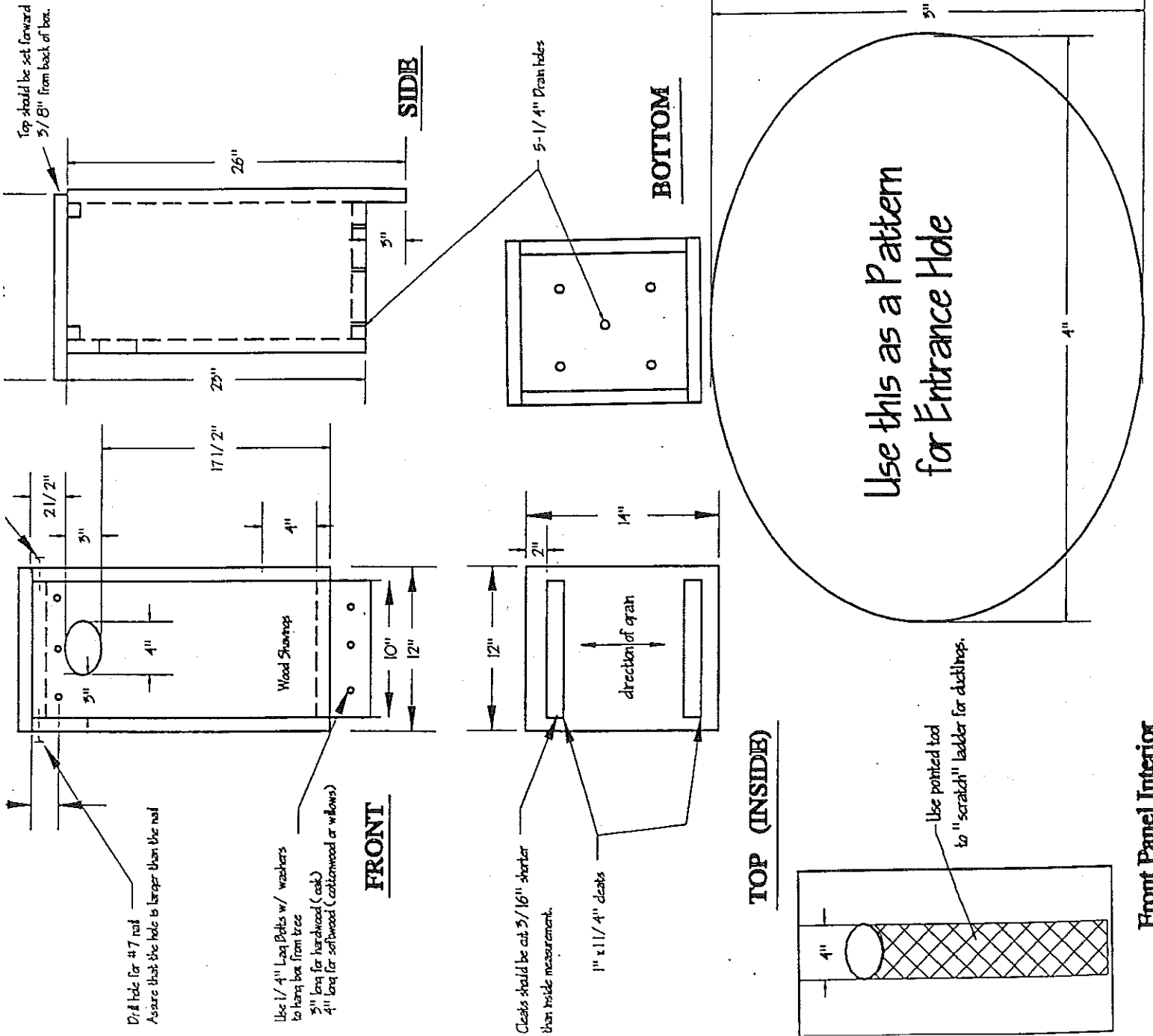
El Dorado County & Georgetown Divide
Resource Conservation Districts
100 Forni Road, Ste A, Placerville, CA, 95667

Construction of a Wood Duck Box

All measurements may vary slightly depending on the dimensions of solid lumber. However, there are 3 important aspects of this nest box design that should be followed.

- 1) The entrance hole should be a 3" X 4" elliptical shape. This dimension allows sufficient room for the hen while keeping large predators out.
- 2) The box depth (measured from the bottom of the entrance hole to the bottom of the box) should never be less than 17 1/2". If less than 17 1/2", a raccoon may be able to reach the hen and her eggs.
- 3) The inside box dimension should not be less than 9" X 9". If less than 9" X 9", the hen may reject the box.

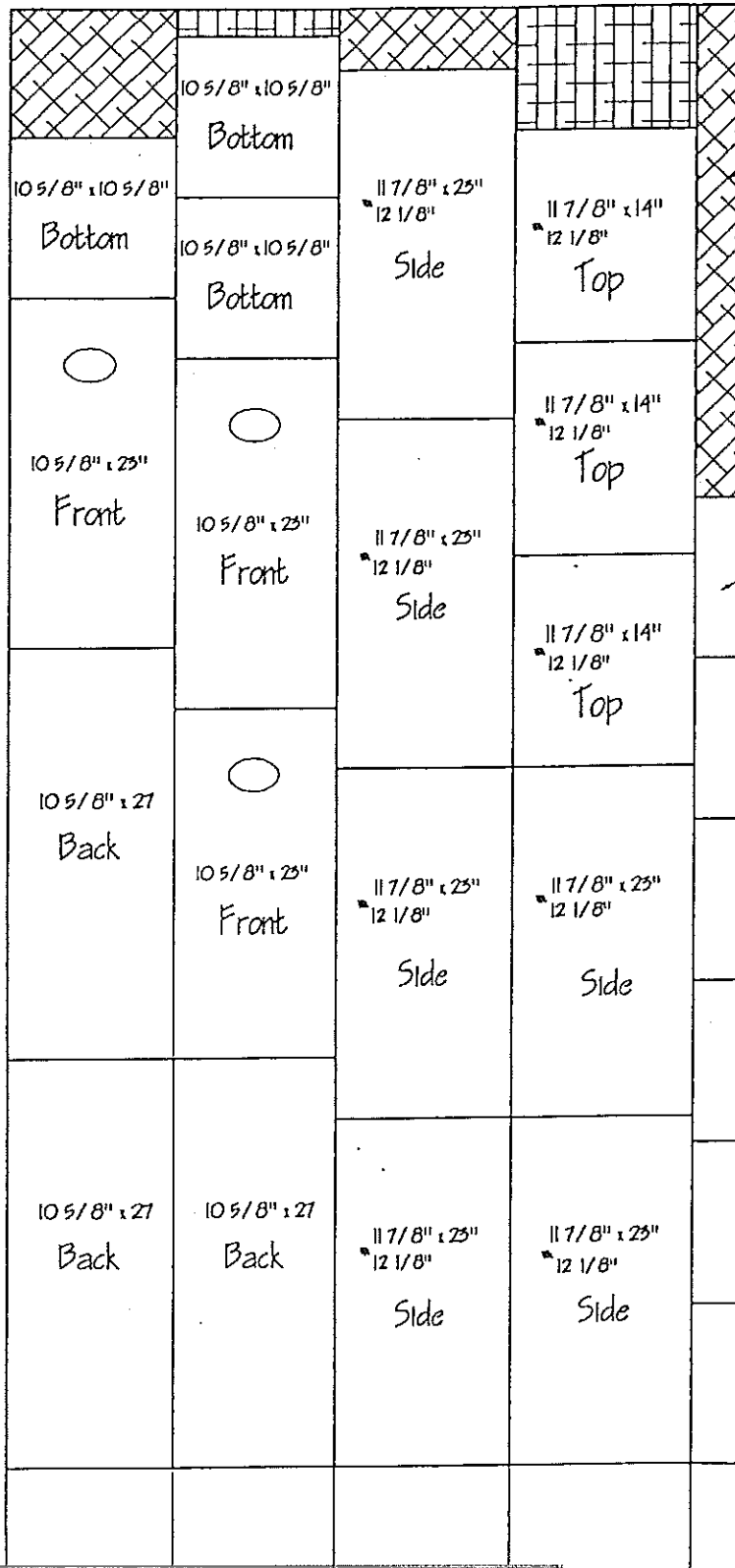
The construction of wood duck boxes takes time, effort and the use of power tools. If you are unable to acquire the use of tools or do not have the time available to build wood duck boxes -- don't despair! Completed wood duck boxes, built to these specifications are available by contacting: The California Waterfowl Association, at (916) 648-1406.



CALIFORNIA WOOD DUCK PROGRAM

WOOD DUCK NEST BOX DIMENSIONS

4' x 8' x 5/8" Exterior Plywood

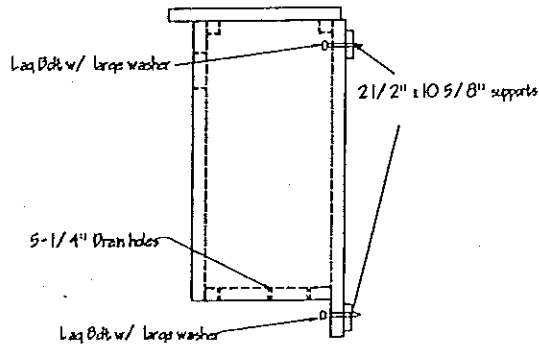
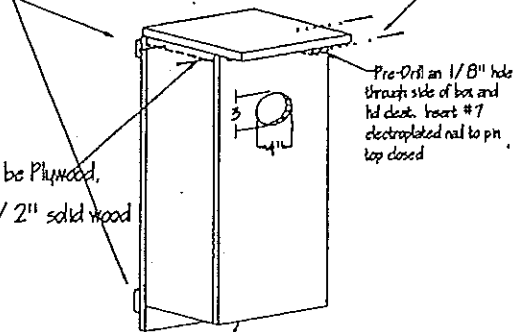


Waste

If at all possible, assemble boxes with 1 1/2" galvanized staples, Dry wall screws and nails can be used, but will cause some splitting of plywood.

Cut 6- 2 1/2" x 10 5/8" pieces for lag bolt support

Removable 2 1/2" x 10 5/8" supports



CALIFORNIA WOOD DUCK PROGRAM

Nest Box Information Sheet

DESIGN:

Important features of a wood duck nest box:

- Wood construction: Wood simulates the material of natural nest places (tree cavities) and is easy to assemble.
- A 3" x 4" elliptical entrance hole: The hole is just large enough for hens to enter the box but excludes large predators.
- A Removable lid: This allows easy access for maintenance of the nest box.
- An Inside "ladder": Either rough sawn lumber or a ladder of 1/4" mesh hardware cloth attached below the entrance hole on the inside of the box.
- Nest material: There should 3" to 4" of wood shavings in the bottom of the box. This needs to be loosened up or changed each spring.

PLACEMENT:

- General: Boxes should be placed where they can be easily reached for maintenance. They may be mounted on trees or on poles and should be serviceable with a short ladder.
- Over water: Boxes should be placed above the high water mark, but only 3-6 feet above the water.
- Over land: Boxes are usually placed 8-10 feet above the ground. They may be placed closer to the ground in areas where predators are less of a problem.
- Habitats: Wood ducks boxes can be placed in or near a variety of spring/summer flooded wetlands, especially where trees are present nearby. Central Valley wetlands, especially those with emergent vegetation (i.e. tules, cattails); rivers, creeks, sloughs and other natural waterways throughout the Central Valley. Many of these systems contain dense stands of oak, willow, cottonwood and other trees. Deciduous trees provide food (nuts) and cover for both adults and ducklings, and are preferred sites for nest boxes. Sites near managed wetlands particularly attractive to wood ducks. (NOTE: Trees need not be present at managed wetland sites to install nest boxes. Boxes can be mounted on posts near emergent vegetation).

*Nest boxes are available from the California Waterfowl Association. Please contact Jody at CWA (916) 648-1406 for details about obtaining boxes.

MAINTENANCE:

Maintenance of nest boxes can greatly improve the success of a nest box program. Other animals often compete with the wood duck for boxes (e.g. starlings, owls, flickers, bees, etc.). Nest boxes should be serviced at least three times each season to maintain reasonable duck production. Following is a suggested schedule:

January - Preseason check

Inspect and repair for the upcoming nesting season. Replace old wood shavings with new shavings. Approximately 3-4" of shavings should be present in each box.

Mid-April to early June - Mid season check

Although at least one check should be done, monthly checks and servicing will increase local nesting woodies.

July/August - End of season check

Check nest boxes after last duckling has left. Record biological data on CWA nest check cards and submit the cards to CWA Sacramento. We will record the information on the computer and return the cards. At the end of the season you will receive a production report for the entire program.

Contact Jody Gallaway at CWA (916) 648-1406 to obtain wood duck nest check cards.

BIOLOGICAL RECORDS:

- Accurate records of your observations will assist waterfowl biologists in better understanding and improve the management of California's wood ducks.
- All information should be recorded (even if a box is not used) for each visit.
- Following the nesting season, please send your observations to:

California Wood Duck Program
c/o California Waterfowl Association
4630 Northgate Blvd., Suite 150
Sacramento, CA 95834

