

Just for Ducks

By Brian Murphy

Just for Ducks is a Mount Diablo Audubon *Connecting People to Nature* project to enhance Wood Duck populations in urban creeks for people to enjoy.

In 1991 California Waterfowl Association started the Wood Duck project by providing artificial cavities for Wood Ducks to nest in, since most large old trees with cavities for nesting in were gone. CWA has a very nice design for nesting boxes with an oval hole to keep raccoons out of the box. The depth of the box is designed to keep the nesting duck, eggs and chick safe from raccoons reaching into the box!

CWA has been very successful in recovering Wood Duck populations in the valley so we are going to see if we can enjoy the same success in urban creeks.

Wood Ducks are very shy birds tending to like quiet, heavily wooded creeks. Due to high water that flows through many creeks in winter storms, the first boxes were installed along Walnut Creek, downtown along Civic Park above high water flows. The result was one box on San Ramon Creek producing eggs and chick, and three beehives. The box next to Creekside Drive hatched eight chicks. A dead chick found inside the box is now in Lindsay Museum's Natural History collection so everyone can see what a freshly hatched Wood Duckling looks like.

Rent will eventually be collected—from the boxes now occupied by honey bees—for us to enjoy at meetings. This year an Eagle Scout candidate from Tracy provided us with enough Wood Duck boxes to install 12 boxes in San Ramon Creek from Macy's, downtown Walnut Creek, to Creekside



Wood Duck nesting box on San Ramon Creek in downtown Walnut Creek



Female Wood Duck. Photos by Brian Murphy.

Drive. Then install four more boxes in lower Tice Creek and four on Tice Creek in Rossmoor. Three boxes were installed at Heather Farm Park because so many people who visit the park enjoy seeing Wood Ducks in the lake and canal. So the project is all about nesting cavities for Wood Ducks to breed in our creeks so people can enjoy watching them!

If you enjoy projects like this, a membership to Mt. Diablo Audubon helps support more projects. For more information, or to join, go to

www.diabloaudubon.com/index.php