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CORPS' HABITAT FOSTERS WOOD DUCKS

[MAHONING CREEK LAKE](#) – Wood duck fledglings have soared to their highest numbers here after nearly disappearing from the lake, thanks to a robust nesting program started by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and supported by local volunteers.

Because of loss of habitat and over-hunting in the early 1900s, the wood duck was nearly brought to extinction. But with good conservation management and thousands of nesting boxes built by concerned citizens nationwide, the wood duck population made a remarkable recovery.

The 2007 nesting season survey revealed that 89 young wood ducks fledged from Mahoning Creek Lake nesting structures, the highest success rate for the young waterfowl since the wood duck box program began at Mahoning in 1991. By comparison, the 2003 nesting season produced 87 wood duck fledglings.

Wood ducks are unique because they are cavity nesters, which mean they nest in old woodpecker holes or other natural cavities created by dead or dying trees located along the shoreline. Mahoning Lake has taken the initiative to enhance “woody” populations by constructing 26 artificial wood duck nesting boxes throughout the project.

Most of the wood duck boxes at Mahoning are the circular metal-type, 30 inches high with a cone point top. Wood ducks prefer to nest over water so that their ducklings have a soft place to land when they leave the nest. Ducklings can fall 50 feet without being injured.

Wood ducks inhabit forested wetlands and pool-laden areas; the Corps' Mahoning Creek Lake provides a perfect habitat for them. Their habitat is wooded swamps and bottom land forests in the eastern and western portions of the United States and Canada, and western Mexico.

Considered the most colorful ducks in North America, the drake, or male, wood duck is unmistakable with its complex face and bold body patterns of iridescent maroon, green, purple, and white. Wood ducks, sometimes referred to as squealers, range in size from 17 to 20 inches in length. They are an average-sized duck that feed on beetles and other insects, and especially like fruits, nuts and other vegetation.

If you would like more information on the wood duck nesting program or activities at Mahoning Creek Lake, stop by the park office or call 814-257-8811. Mahoning is 12 miles southeast of New Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and seven miles northwest of Dayton, Pennsylvania. Follow the brown Mahoning Lake directional signs to the project.

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Adult male wood ducks can be seen along the Big and Little Mahoning Creeks in Armstrong County.

Visit Mahoning's web site at www.lrp.usace.army.mil/rec/lakes/mahoning.htm