
NOTES and LETTERS

A BREEDING RECORD FOR WOOD DUCK (*AIX SPONSA*) IN CENTRAL SASKATCHEWAN

HAROLD FISHER Nisbet Banding Station, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan
email: hfisher@skyvelocity.ca

I maintain a set of 100 nest boxes as part of a study on Northern Saw-whet and Boreal Owls in the Prince Albert area. Extensive flooding during recent years has placed some of these boxes over water, making them less attractive as nesting choices for small owls and has created some issues for nest inspection.

Nest box #20 is located 13 km SE of Prince Albert in a 30 ha woodlot of Trembling Aspen surrounded by cultivated farmland. The nest box is on a 25 cm (DBH) aspen at a height of 5.2 m with the nest opening facing SE. The area was dry when the box was erected in 2008, but with the flooding of recent years the tree now stands in 1 m of water.

On 5 June 2013, the landowner, Jim Helm, and I waded out to the nest box and tapped on the tree. A duck immediately emerged from the box and paused in the opening. Jim immediately recognized the bird as a female Wood Duck. Although I was unable to photograph the bird at this time, I had my nest inspection

camera with me, so was able to photograph the nest contents. Photographs showed the nest to contain at least 11 eggs (Fig. 1)

I needed a photo of the bird, so Jim and I returned to the nest box on 12 June 2014, this time with chest waders and I was able to get a photo of the female leaving the nest. The photograph clearly shows the characteristic white eye patch of the female Wood Duck (Fig. 2).

I did not return to the nest site and cannot comment on the outcome of the nest.

The breeding range of the Wood Duck in North America includes most of the eastern half of the United States, including the Mississippi River basin and the west coast to southern California. In Canada its range includes portions of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, southern Ontario, with isolated records north to Lake Nipigon, The Pas in southern Manitoba and Cedar Lake in western Manitoba.¹

In Saskatchewan the range of the Wood Duck has been limited largely to the wooded rivers of the extreme eastern regions where it is a rare to uncommon resident.² There are scattered breeding records from the Pasquia Hills, the Souris, Qu'Appelle and Assiniboia River systems and Greenwater Park. In May of 1999, a nest containing 9 eggs was found south of White Bear, although this nest was later found to be abandoned. On 17 June 2008 a brood of 13 fledglings was observed by R. Marchigiano on Wascana Marsh, Regina and on July 1 of the same year 4 fledglings were observed by D. Sawatzky and R. Dudragne at Estuary.³

The extreme moisture conditions since 2010 have resulted in large areas of flooded timber in the parkland region of central

Saskatchewan, creating prime habitat for this species. While this breeding record is a single occurrence, it may represent at least a temporary range expansion of the Wood Duck while wet conditions prevail.

1. HEPP GR, and BELLROSE FC. 2013. Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/169>

2. SMITH AR. Atlas of Saskatchewan Birds, Special Publication No. 22, Nature Saskatchewan, Regina, 1996

3. SMITH AR, Saskatchewan Bird Data Bank, 2013

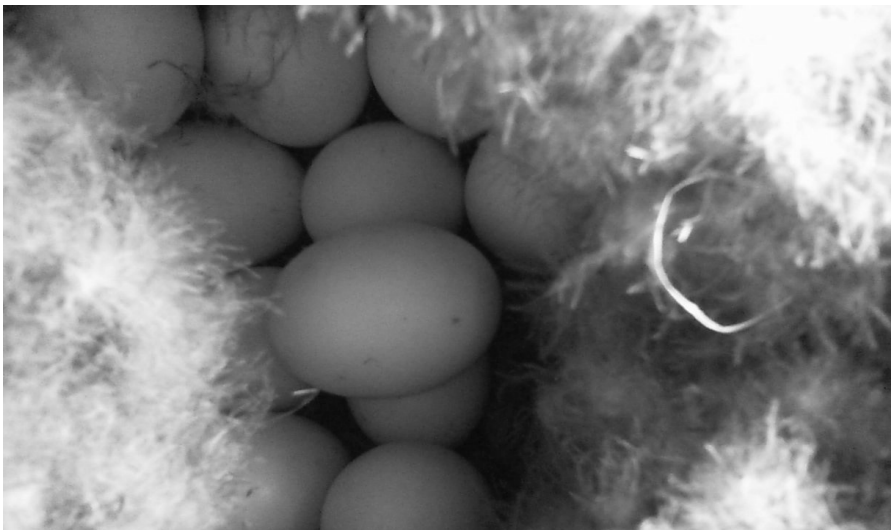


Fig 1 - Wood duck eggs



Fig 2 - Female wood duck leaving nest box

