

WOOD DUCK ATTEMPTS TO ENTER BLUEBIRD NEST BOX

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On 14 March 1991, I observed a female Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) as it investigated a bluebird house and was chased by Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*). I had erected the bluebird box near my home and within about two yards of the shore of a 70 acre lake in the southern half of Jones County, Mississippi. The area around the lake is a mixed pine and hardwood forest that has been logged in the past 10-15 years, so most of the trees are relatively young. There are very few mature hardwood trees in which cavities may develop, so natural cavity nesting sites in the area are scarce.

At 8:15 a.m. the female Wood Duck walked from the water to the post supporting the bluebird box, then flew to the top of the box. As it peered in the box entrance, which is 1.5 in. in diameter, a male and female Eastern Bluebird dove repeatedly at her. The Wood Duck left the post, but then twice tried to fly into the box entrance. She stood about 3 yards from the post and flew to the hole in the front of the box. Each time she would strike the front of the box with her head or bill and fall to the ground. This sequence of events lasted about 30 minutes. A male Wood Duck watched from the water during the first few minutes of this activity, but then joined the female on the ground near the box for the last 10 minutes.

After watching this encounter and the female Wood Duck's persistence, I built a Wood Duck box and placed it within 40 yards of the bluebird box. By 6 April Wood Ducks were incubating eggs in the Wood Duck box and bluebirds were incubating eggs in the bluebird box.