

WOOD DUCK NEST ON A MUSKRAT HOUSE

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Abstract.—A Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) hen was found nesting on a muskrat (*Ondatra zibethica*) house in central Wisconsin in 1987. The nest was destroyed by a predator.

AIX SPONSA ANIDA SOBRE UNA MORADA DE RATA ALMIZCLERA

Resumen.—Una hembra de *Aix sponsa* fue encontrada anidando en una morada abandonada de rata almizclera (*Ondatra zibethica*) en una localidad de Wisconsin en 1987. El nido fue destruido por un depredador.

On 13 May 1987, the senior author discovered a Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) nest on a muskrat house in Kellog Pond within the city limits of Antigo, Wisconsin. On 15 May, 29 May, and 2 Jun. the nest contained 7 eggs and down. We were unable to photograph the Wood Duck sitting on her eggs at this very unusual nest site.

Kellog Pond is a 13 ha flowage created approximately 50 yr ago by a small dam owned and operated by the city of Antigo. Nine ha are treated annually with chemicals to control emergent vegetation. The remaining 4 ha are left undisturbed (70% cattail [*Typha latifolia*]). The inactive muskrat house containing the nest was approximately 0.5 m high by 1.2 m in diameter. The nearest trees were 15 m away.

Wood Ducks normally nest in both natural tree cavities and nest boxes. Unusual nest sites include chimneys, which resemble open-topped snags (Bacon 1983, K. Mello, pers. comm., Stewart 1971), a rock fissure (Audubon 1840 in Bent 1923), on a cliff (Carleton 1971), and on top of a leaf and twig nest built by another creature (Hall 1969). More unusual are Wood Duck nests found on the ground in the open (Mason and Dusi 1983, Zipko and Kennington 1977). Muskrat houses are commonly used for nest sites by ground nesting waterfowl including Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*), Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Redheads (*Aythya americana*), and Canvasbacks (*A. valisineria*).

Even though there is only 1 nest box on the flowage, a brood survey counted 13 Wood Duck broods totalling 93 ducklings on 15 Jul. 1987. Apparently suitable natural nest cavities are available nearby. The circumstances that lead to initiation of Wood Duck ground nests require further study. On 2 Jun. McIlquham found the nest destroyed, as was the nest reported by Mason and Dusi (1983). By nesting at ground level

a Wood Duck is subjected to an increased probability of nest predation than when nesting in tree cavities.

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