



# Wood Duck Nesting Boxes

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Sudlersville Middle School's students have been erecting, maintaining, and checking wood duck boxes in our area waterways for 9 years. Every year we consistently follow sound ecological practices and then document the results. We have nesting success data for each of the years this project has taken place. **Best practices:**

**Best Practice 1:** What recognized community need was met by your project? Our project meets an environmental need. We live in a rural area. Local wildlife biologists and publications about wildlife in our area informed us about the need to create habitat for a declining native species of bird in our region.

**Best Practice 2:** How was the project connected to the school curriculum and curricular objectives? All of the seventh graders (120) in our school participate in this project. All of their teachers teach some aspect of ecology to the students as they perform the various stages of service-learning and carry out all of the steps of this project. Outcomes are met especially in the science, social studies, language arts, and math as the students study maps, predict flyways and migration patterns, write about their experience, measure and cut out pieces of wood, and assemble the pieces to build the nesting boxes. All parts of this service-learning project reinforce topics and skills already in place in our school system's curriculum.

**Best Practice 3:** How did participants reflect on their experiences throughout the project? Students were guided by their teachers and community volunteers in the reflection aspect of this project. Their reflections are written, discussed, and saved as documentation.

**Best Practice 4:** How did students take leadership roles and take responsibility for the success of the project? Students worked together throughout all phases of the project. They planned together, carried out all of the work tasks, and kept documentation. Together they reflected on which nesting boxes were the most successful at attracting wood ducks and producing the most successful clutches of eggs. Student leaders and groups helped decide which boxes in the past were the best producers thereby enabling them to predict the best locations for future nesting boxes. Next year's data will test their predictions.

**Best Practice 5:** What community partners were worked with on this project? This project has seen donations provided by: Schauber Sawmill in supplying free lumber; Chesapeake Bay Trust in supplying funding for materials; parent volunteers to help with aspects that require power tools and in supervision; and the Afterschool Program local partnership who has provided tools and other supplies.

Best Practice 6: How did you prepare and plan ahead for the project? Our school has developed an annual routine under my leadership. Past experience has taught us to establish a calendar and a schedule so we know when to carry out each segment of this annual project. It has always been successful in the past.

Best Practice 7: What knowledge and skills did students develop through this project? Students learned much about mapping our region, compiling data, analyzing that data, using measurements accurately, predicting amounts of materials needed, using tools, working together, learning how to help others, appreciating the talents and needs of others, and many other skills.