

WOOD DUCK DISTRICT MANAGER THINKS OUTSIDE THE BOX

by **KATIE MCCARTY**, DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

Life Member Robert Franco has been a part of California Waterfowl for nearly 25 years. Over the years, his passion for wood ducks has led him to volunteer as a District Manager for the California Wood Duck Program (CWDP), serve as the Chairman of the Wood Duck Dinner committee, and become a certified bander. Franco personally monitors approximately 60 nest boxes and travels all over the state to band wood duck hens and help others with their boxes. His commitment to wood ducks, conservation, and outdoor education for youth has inspired him to leave his own legacy with the CWDP after he is gone.

In his early years as a California Waterfowl member, Franco saw a magazine article about building nest boxes and decided to construct 10 with some extra wood he had. "I'd never seen a wood duck before, but I thought they were pretty," remembered Franco. He contacted the California Waterfowl office and was sent to Mandeville Island to put the boxes up. "Now, 20 years later, there's an established wood duck project there, and I've gotten to band hens using nest boxes I helped put up," he reflected. "I'm seeing the rewards come full circle."



>> Passionate about working with youngsters, Robert Franco shows these young conservationists the duck bands before placing one on a hen. | PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBERT FRANCO

Franco will continue his conservation legacy even after he has banded his last hen. A clause in his will leaves all of his sporting goods and outdoor equipment to be used or sold exclusively for the California Wood Duck Program. "I'm passionate about the Wood Duck Program and want to ensure it's continued by the next generation," he noted. Not exposed to the outdoors until he was a young adult, Franco sees the importance in helping wildlife and teaching our youth about conservation. He considers himself a conservationist and an educator and has spent hours in the field showing youth groups and other young volunteers how to monitor the wood duck boxes. "If we can start them from the beginning and show them the process it takes to create a duckling, then they will understand the importance of conservation work."

Despite the announcement of his future financial gift, Franco has no intention of "retiring" from his wood duck work anytime soon. He considers volunteering equally important to his financial contributions. "Having the privilege to work with an exquisite species and sharing that experience with others – especially youth – that's the legacy I want to leave. I want to inspire future generations to step up and do this. We have to educate the next generation to maintain this resource (wood ducks) or it could all be lost. If we continue the CWDP this way, we can ensure this species will never decline again."

For more information on the California Wood Duck Program, visit www.calwaterfowl.org. If you'd like to talk to somebody about planning a legacy gift that fits your unique conservation passion, contact Development Specialist, Katie McCarty, at (916) 648-1406 or kmccarty@calwaterfowl.org.



PASS IT ON

Join California Waterfowl's
Heritage Fund.



Alex Gonsalves knows it takes a lot to get a kid started hunting. His legacy gift will help ensure the hunting heritage is passed on for generations to come.

**For More
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