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THE **2025** WOOD DUCK REPORT

Another productive year for wood ducks

With generally favorable spring conditions in 2025, much of California once again provided strong breeding and brood-rearing habitat for wood ducks. While water distribution varied regionally, many riparian corridors, managed wetlands and agricultural water sources helped sustain productive nesting areas during the critical early season. As a result, CWA's California Wood Duck Program documented 31,733 wood ducklings jumping from nest boxes this past year — another outstanding production effort supported by hands-on management across the state.

Those ducklings were produced from 5,058 actively managed nest boxes, each one cleaned, maintained and monitored by our dedicated volunteers, partners and staff. The continued investment in nest box upkeep remains essential in landscapes where natural cavities for wood ducks to nest in are limited. Our program's success is driven by people — and in 2025, 374 volunteers contributed their time and energy to building, installing, monitoring and reporting on boxes. Their commitment is what turns habitat into hatchlings.

In addition to maintaining existing projects, CWA expanded the California Wood Duck Program's footprint by distributing more than 1,170 new nest boxes, enrolling over 20 new projects statewide. These new partnerships strengthen local stewardship, increase nesting opportunities and ensure that future generations of hunters and conservationists remain connected to hands-on waterfowl conservation. Demand for participation continues to rise. This year, our box giveaway was capped at 500 boxes, and more than 300 have already been committed, reflecting the continued enthusiasm from landowners, clubs and community partners who want to be directly involved in wood duck conservation.

The Wood Duck Program continues to demonstrate that strategic habitat management paired with volunteer engagement yields measurable, on-the-ground results. Every box maintained, every new project launched and every duckling that successfully reaches the water reflects a collaborative effort to sustain California's wood duck population for years to come.

—Brian Huber, California Wood Duck Program Coordinator



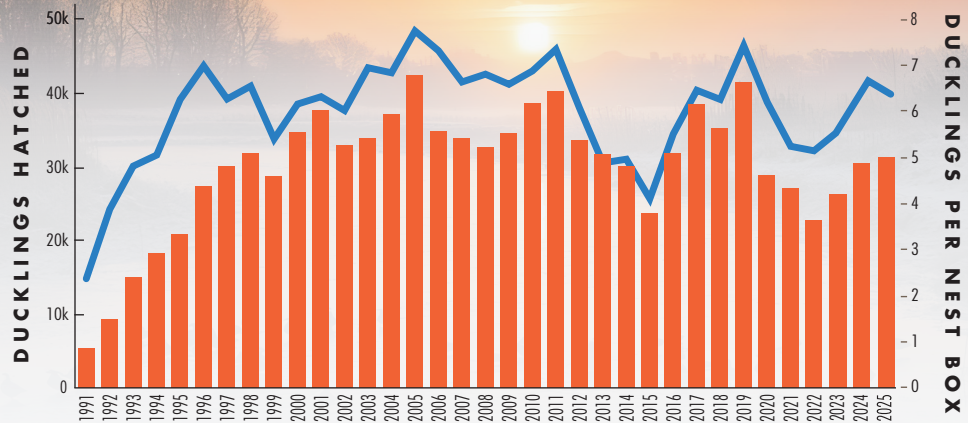
CALIFORNIA WATERFOWL IS GIVING AWAY 500 FREE WOOD DUCK NEST BOXES (up to 10 per project) to support the largest wood duck citizen science program in the country. Since 1991, this effort has helped hatch over 1 million ducks.

Interested? Contact Brian Huber at bhuber@calwaterfowl.org to claim your boxes. Participants are encouraged to report nesting data to help strengthen waterfowl conservation statewide.

To learn more about the California Wood Duck Program, visit calwaterfowl.org/conservation-programs/california-wood-duck-program.

1,053,968

DUCKLINGS HATCHED SINCE 1991



PROJECT NAME	# BOXES	# DUCKLINGS	VOLUNTEERS	PROJECT NAME	# BOXES	# DUCKLINGS	VOLUNTEERS			
District 1, NORTHEAST CALIFORNIA (Nevada, Sierra, Siskiyou, Shasta, Modoc counties). District Manager Craig Ferrari, 530-268-1661.				Butte Creek Island Ranch	17	52	CWA			
Ferrari Farms	13	47	Craig Ferrari	California Department of Fish and Wildlife	87	74	Alyson Cheney, D. Pag, Jake, Marvin, C. White, M. Castaneda, J. Slates			
Golden Oaks	12	14	Craig Ferrari	Casa de Patos/Bird Haven Ranch	196	1,560	Paul & Sandi Bonderson, Andy Atkinson, Rich Pence, UC Davis			
Napoli	6	20	Len Napoli, Gail Napoli	The Clip-Clap Club	10	0	Tony Smeedel, Eric Sheffield			
Nevada Co. F & W Commission	19	229	Craig Ferrari, Lily McCluskey	Closed Zone Farms	20	76	Jesus Gomez, Larry Gury			
Rancho Codorniz	12	60	Maya Shattuck	Cortina Land and Cattle DC	6	48	Don Rolofson, Jim Caito			
Sanders Ranch	19	104	Rick A. Sanders	Cozzolino	15	80	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello			
District 2, NORTH COAST (Del Norte, Humboldt, Trinity, Mendocino, Lake counties). District manager position open. Contact Jim Paroli, 209-993-0808, for information.				Crippled Mallard	24	155	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello			
Camp Sammy	8	12	Paul Baldwin	Fonseco WDP	16	115	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello			
Harpshire	5	0	Kevin Harper	Foraker Brothers Murdock Ranch Trust I	67	315	CWA			
Salt Flat	4	6	Robert Heitman	Foraker Brothers Murdock Ranch Trust II	108	656	Brian O'Connor, Kathleen O'Connor			
District 3, SACRAMENTO VALLEY (Tehama, Glenn, Butte, Colusa, Yolo counties). District Managers Steve Mortensen, 707-592-5545; Matt Meyer, 510-352-4844; John Garriga, 530-815-4998.				Double Down Duck Club	13	121	Guy Delorefice, Lani Delorefice, Capri Delorefice, Paul Sorensen, Levi Sorensen, Ned Hill, Porter Hill			
49er Duck Club	11	101	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello	DC WDP	15	94	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello			
Argo & Vickery Farms	10	83	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello, Celio Melo	Fresh Water Creek	11	121	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello			
Barale Ranch	25	152	David Barale, Pete Barale, Joe Barale, Greg Stiner, Tony Barale, Vinny Barale, Nico Barale, Erik Hora	Gardner Farms	16	143	Dan Erben, Bill Gardner Jr.			
Behring Ranch	325	4,034	Isabelle Romo, Ernesto Jimenez, Janine Grupalo, Aroyeli Rodriguez	Gordon's Pond	22	105	Bruce Billings			
Bens WDP	9	83	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello	Gray Lodge Wildlife Area	326	1,931	Yvonne Agins, Diana Burke-Knapp, Lori Dieter, Donna Dugan, Cal Dugan, Dan Furr, Dorothy Glass, John Royce, Lena Sannar, Kristin Shorrock, Marie Smith, Remy Green, Lane Kuykendall, Tomas Rodriguez, Terry Schmidtbauer, Jim Uhouse, Monica Uhouse, Jesse Urenda			
Broken Wing Duck Club	11	80	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello				Hauge Field 6	6	0	Sten Hauge
Burgard	36	37	Dirk Burgard							
Butte College	75	219	Rick Wittsell, Butte College Natural Resources Management Program students, Brian Huber, Laura Cockrell							
Butte Creek Farms	50	89	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello, Celio Melo							

THE CALIFORNIA WOOD DUCK PROGRAM

PROJECT NAME	# BOXES	# DUCKLINGS	VOLUNTEERS
Hollywood Duck Club	78	585	David Barale, Pete Barale, Joe Barale, Greg Stiner, Tony Barale, Vinny Barale, Nico Barale, Erik Hora
Larry Merlo Youth	115	1,123	Ryley Haugh, Baily Fritter, Rocque Merlo, Mike Felkins
Laughing Mallard	14	60	Keiran Cronin, Bruce Billings
Lone Star Duck Club	8	60	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello, Celio Melo
Mallard Ranch	50	294	Dominic Gillibert
McClellan Bros. Ringnecks	10	82	John Garriga, Doug Garriga, Jennifer Garriga
MVS Fowl Estates	16	183	Matt dePolo, Giovanni dePolo, Anthony dePolo, Vincent Andreuccetti, Luciano Andreuccetti
Nannini Bros.	10	20	Michael Nannini, Jeffrey Nannini, Brian Nannini
North Colusa	3	33	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello, Celio Melo
Opa's Dead End Duck Club	11	79	William Owen
Oroville Wildlife Area	236	414	AJ Dill, Joshua Reed, Alex Fregoso, Camden Dockendorf, Jake Oakley, Jack Enos
Packer Rd	18	161	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello, Celio Melo
Pintail II	7	74	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello, Celio Melo
Pioneer Duck Club	51	795	Matthew Drury, Lindsey Drury
Prime Time Duck, Big Lake Duck Club	63	507	Don Springer, Bruce Billings
Quacker Whackers	13	124	Tom Clark, Dennis Wong
R67 Ranch	18	161	John Garriga, Jennifer Garriga, Doug Garriga
R&R Ranch	28	169	Brenda Bebensee
Rancho Esquon	36	132	Madelynn Schabert
RCE	2	0	Garrett Enos
Riverside Cottage	4	31	Kristin Shorrock, Merrily Stover, Larry Jendro
RJ Finney Rod & Gun Club	50	316	Dominic Gillibert, Rene Gillibert, Dave Ciapponi
UC Davis - Roosevelt Ranch	100	935	Bill Veghte, James Rathjen, Roosevelt Ranch Partners, UC Davis
Sanborn Slough	27	160	CWA
Sebia Duck Club	69	251	Mark Kirsten, Rhys Kirsten, Ryleigh Kirsten, Matt Artz, Ryan Artz, Dan Artz, Anna Artz, Jack Dolan, Doug Farel, Charlie McClung, Clayton Pleyte, Parker Pleyte
Seven Mile Duck Club	23	226	John Garriga, Doug Garriga, Jennifer Garriga, Gary Lechner, Amy Lechner
Silver Bullet Duck Club	31	382	John Garriga, Doug Garriga, Jennifer Garriga
Stone Creek	9	101	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello
Tangle Free Properties	15	0	Doug Foscett, Cory Foscett, Eric Sheffield, Jim Paroli, Jeffery Nannini
Thuis Ranch	6	0	Steve Mortensen, Neal Van Alfen, Pam Kazmeirczak, Dave Howes, Jack Ensley, Noah Riesche, William Potts
Tree Lake Marsh	10	54	Paul E. Spagnoli, Paul J. Spagnoli, Nicholas Spagnoli, Diane Spagnoli, Tony Spagnoli, Chris Spagnoli, Patrick Miller
Tule Honker DC	4	32	Craig Smith, Dave Lohmann, Bruce Billings
Upper Butte Basin Wildlife Area			

PROJECT NAME	# BOXES	# DUCKLINGS	VOLUNTEERS
• Howard Slough	68	411	Laura Cockrell, Matt Manuel, Jepson Manuel, Sibley Manuel, Alex Gonzalez, Sydney Cervantes, Lindsey Beaman, Karina Haddad, Emmett Smallwood, Bodhi Pflueger, Orren Fowler, Joe Dalton
• Cherokee Farms	29	57	Laura Cockrell, Sydney Cervantes, Lindsey Beaman, Karina Haddad, Bodhi Pflueger, Orren Fowler, Austin Beaver
• Little Dry Creek	54	262	Laura Cockrell, Sydney Cervantes, Lindsey Beaman, Karina Haddad, Joe Dalton, Orren Fowler, Austin Beaver, Emmett Smallwood
• Llano Seco	20	14	Laura Cockrell, Sydney Cervantes, Lindsey Beaman, Karina Haddad, Bodhi Pflueger, Orren Fowler, Austin Beaver
Vista Ranch	23	125	Mike Schuster, Ruth Mikkelsen, Steve Mortensen
West Delevan Duck Club	7	73	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello
Willow Creek Wood Ducks	115	1,638	Harlan Albers, Noah Albers, Curtis Amaro, John Amaro, Randy Hansen, Troy Hansen
Woody Lakes	10	49	Todd Brincat, Troy Brincat, Bruce Billings
District 4, NORTH BAY (Napa, Sonoma, Marin, Solano, Contra Costa counties). District Manager Robert Franco, 707-290-3601.			
Arnold Ranch Duck Club	50	517	Mike Lenzi, Sophia Koelher, Oliver Koelher, Gianna Koelher, Kyan Larsen, Annika Larsen, Brielle Cardwell, Emma Cardwell, Pete Peters, Doug Galyen, Chase Peters
B & C Kiser	5	34	Dan Bambury
Grayson Creek	12	0	John King, Jake King, Patrick King, Patrick Gorge, Andersen Keller
Green Valley Creek	8	62	Anthony Iaccarino, Theresa Scopazzi, John Iaccarino
Greenhead Duck Club	24	62	Kevin Brush, Trinity Brush, Malina Brush, Amber Brush
McDaniel	8	83	Gary McDaniel, Joeni McDaniel, Gianna Rose McDaniel, Jared McDaniel
Peaceful Glen	6	103	Steve Mortensen, Bob Brown, Jeanie Brown, Dave Howes, Jack Ensley, Noah Riesche, William Potts
Ryer Island Fin & Feather Ranch LLC	40	44	Bill Hobin, Ignacio Vazquez
The Teal Club	12	13	Andrew Bogan, Tyra Bogan, Candice Gonzalez, Naia O'Hanlon, Linda Cabral, Kyla Bogan
Willow Pond	7	89	Steve Mortensen, Dave Howes, Joann Tomlinson, Noah Riesche, William Potts, Jack Ensley
District 5, SACRAMENTO/SIERRA (Yuba, Sutter, Sacramento, El Dorado, Placer, Amador, Alpine counties). District Managers Greg Damitz, 916-705-4544; Tim Anderson, 707-474-8448.			
Bear River	26	255	Brett Lawson, Hunter Lawson, Mike Moore, Nick White, Jeff Osberg, Steve Mortensen, Ray Cooper, Jack Alaraj
Blough WDP	3	6	Gwen Blough
Boy Scouts Troop 83			
• Elk Slough	69	781	Russ van Loben Sels, Yuuto van Loben Sels, Jeff van Loben Sels, Lyla van Loben Sels
• Babel Slough	21	270	Russ van Loben Sels, Yuuto van Loben Sels, Jeff van Loben Sels, Lyla van Loben Sels
Brown's Valley	4	27	Mike Schuster, Ruth Mikkelsen
Camp Far West	4	38	Brian Huber, Karlie Huber, Wyatt Huber, Eva Huber, Geneva Williams

THE CALIFORNIA WOOD DUCK PROGRAM

PROJECT NAME	# BOXES	# DUCKLINGS	VOLUNTEERS
Cosumnes River Preserve	201	860	Nancy Sage, Jim Dunn, Dave LaMar, Teresa LaMar, Cathy Macias, Mike Savino, Tim Miller, Jim Allan, Jim Levy, Nancy Myers, Beverly Schilling, Sarah Kirschling, Jen Tryggvason, Bob Jensen, Amber Veselka, Morgan Veselka, Brad Frechette, Madeline Barton, Steve Beck, Allen Bacon, Bill Beckett
Footrot Flats	65	227	Mike Cole, Brian Kinney, Cole Damron
Greenberg	8	67	Stu Greenberg, Deb Greenberg
Jeri Langham	17	255	Jeri Langham, Nancy Murray, Bob Jensen, Jim Pompy, Bea Pearson, Joe Ferreira, Cheryl Cobbs, Rich Howard, Sara Denzler
Lab Acres Nesting Pond	7	22	Brendan Hinkle
Lincoln HS FFA/Weigant	44	81	Barret Hess, Ricky Woods II, Natalie Foreman, Kaitlin Leech, Isaiah Herrera, Gabriel Herrera, Annelise Cederholm, Jesse Miller, Elias A. Morales, Aaron Emiliano Cuevas, Dillon Romero, Susanna Paul, Drew Hamilton, Grace Tripp, Kamryn Rhinehart, Anna Soto, Kaitlin Ingargiola, Seamus Oliver, George Wright
LJ Farms	50	317	Nick Iacopi, John Iacopi
Moe	9	5	Rich Moe
Muck Ranch	2	9	T.G. Bookholtz
North Delta Conservancy	202	1,543	John Erickson, Tom Uslan, Laura Uslan, Cliff Feldheim, Chuck Briggs
Pasture Creek	4	45	Josh Holme, Jackson Holme, James Holme
South Lake Tahoe WDP	3	29	Dave Huber, Ginger Huber, Brian Huber, Wyatt Huber, Eva Huber, Karlie Huber, Patrick Rexroad
Spenceville Wildlife Area	74	219	Mark Carroll, Emilia Schmall
Swampy Lane	14	86	Jake Messerli, Tim Anderson
Whitney Oaks	2	40	Ed Price
District 6, DELTA (San Joaquin, Calaveras, Stanislaus, Tuolumne counties). District Managers Jim Paroli, CWDP Co-Chair, 209-993-0808; Eric Sheffield, 925-699-9452.			
Brack Track	6	43	Jim Paroli, Eric Sheffield, Pete Costamagna
Brovelli Estates 2 Tracy Lake	5	23	Dr. Bensch, Jim Paroli, Erik Sheffield
Brovelli Estates 3 Tracy Lake	5	77	Dave Fisher, Jim Paroli, Erik Sheffield
Brush Duck Club	19	52	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello
City of Modesto Training Facility	6	16	Phil McKay
Dos Rios Ranch	27	57	Phil McKay
Eudy	11	19	John Eudy, Robbin Eudy
Mandeville Island	400	1,533	Jim Paroli, Eric Sheffield, Tony Marnell
McDonald Island	103	713	Jim Paroli, Eric Sheffield
Medford Island	20	30	Rigo Sevilla, Peter Ottesen, Seven Partners
San Joaquin Wetland Farms	44	503	Anthony Iaccarino, Theresa Scopazzi, John Iaccarino
Swan Lake	3	51	Bill Keller, Quinlynn Keller, William Keller
Talavera	5	43	Jim Paroli, Eric Sheffield, Tom Zuckerman
Trion Ranch	17	113	Matt Meyer, Dennis Corvello
Tyler Island Habitat	24	154	Eric Sheffield, John Viera, Jim Paroli
Venice Island Owners LLC	60	250	Joe Paper, John Martinez

PROJECT NAME	# BOXES	# DUCKLINGS	VOLUNTEERS
District 7, SOUTH BAY (San Francisco, San Mateo, Alameda, Santa Cruz, Santa Clara counties). District Manager Adrian Espino, 408-691-0630.			
Pacheco Project	13	21	Adrian Espino
Castro Valley Project	5	12	Adrian Espino
San Felipe/ Soap Lake Project	5	0	Adrian Espino
District 8, CENTRAL COAST (Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo counties). District manager position open. Contact Jim Paroli, 209-993-0808, for information.			
District 9, NORTHERN SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY (Merced, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno counties). District manager position open. Contact Jim Paroli, 209-993-0808, for information.			
Exeter Duck Club	12	20	Derek Witmer
Hollister Duck Club/ Los Banos Creek	18	89	Don Alvarado, Sam Alvarado, Erik Hora, Paul Hora
Lonesome Mallard DC	18	0	Scott Kreighbaum, Steve Cronia, William Cronia, Emma Cronia, Adam Parish, Brandon Jordan, Mark Pimentel, Marky Pimentel
Santa Fe Project	10	15	Adrian Espino
District 10, SOUTHERN SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY (Kings, Tulare, Kern counties). District Manager Ken Barton, 818-367-4158.			
California Living Museum	9	29	Andrew Kenyon
Tulare Basin Wetlands Assoc.	18	71	Andrew Kenyon, Ken Barton, Jason Copeland
District 11, INYO/MONO (Inyo, Mono counties). District manager position open. Contact Jim Paroli, 209-993-0808, for information.			
District 12, SOUTH COAST (Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange counties). District manager position open. Contact Jim Paroli, 209-993-0808, for information.			
District 13, MOJAVE (San Bernardino County). District manager position open. Contact Jim Paroli, 209-993-0808, for information.			
District 14, IMPERIAL VALLEY (Riverside, San Diego, Imperial counties). District manager position open. Contact Jim Paroli, 209-993-0808, for information.			
Romona Hunt Club	6	10	Kevin Kelly, Tommy John
So. Cal Wood Ducks			
• Prado Regional Park	40	36	David McMichael, Jenna Carpenter, Alec Mang, Cameron Macbeth, Martha Gonzalez, Luke Willet
• Yorba Regional Park	37	295	Mike Geraci, Rick Spitzer, Bob Drouillard, Rock Schumacher, John Higley, Bob Wooton, Len Malena, Nathaniel Mann, Joe Boyer, Lance Poole, Irwin Vidal
Whelan Lake Bird Sanctuary	25	80	Cy Cutter, Cy Kackstetter, Cutter Clotfelter
TOTAL	5,058	31,733	Volunteer total: 374

If you are a volunteer, and your name or project is not listed or is incorrect, please contact Brian Huber at bhuber@calwaterfowl.org.

District managers are a vital component of the California Wood Duck Program. They often wear numerous hats by helping train new volunteers, gathering nest box building materials, raising money and coordinating field days and banquets. The California Wood Duck Program could not be as successful as it is without the hard work of our district managers.

If you are interested in participating in the California Wood Duck Program, please contact a district manager for your region. If you are interested in becoming a district manager, contact California Wood Duck Program Coordinator Brian Huber at bhuber@calwaterfowl.org.

2025 WOOD DUCK PROGRAM SPONSORS

The following individuals and companies donated in 2025 to the Waterfowl Fund, which supports the California Wood Duck Program and California Waterfowl's other efforts to grow our state's duck populations. Our staff, Wood Duck Program committee and volunteers would like to recognize these individuals for their generosity and financial commitment to wood duck conservation.

Bobby Akbaroff
Michael Arruda
Daniel Brickey
Robert Brown
Michael Canaya
Salvatore Dimercurio
Lyndon Dominguez
Gregg Dunlap

Douglass Eberhardt
John Eudy
Brett Ewing
Eileen Fast
Sten Hauge
Ethan Heilmann
Brittney Kannel
Kelly Foundation

Robert Kocher
Jarrod Lassila
Mike Marshall
Mary McCurdie
Thomas Melohn
Charles Mullen
Dante Nomellini
Dorothy Nunes

Thomas Pedreira
Pratt Industries
Madelynn Schabert
Gordon Steindorf
Thomas Studley
Travis Vining

2025 BELLROSE AWARD RECIPIENT



The California Wood Duck Program recently named Mark Kirsten as the recipient of the 2025 Bellrose Award.

Kirsten's journey with wood ducks began nearly two decades ago, when Steve Mortensen, a district manager with the California Wood Duck Program, invited him to attend a public Wood Duck

101 event in Yuba City. After the event, Mortensen checked even more boxes and invited Kirsten along to learn the basics of nest box maintenance. On that very first outing, Kirsten peered inside a box filled with ducklings (it's rare to catch the duckling stage), saw the hen wood duck nearby and counted eggs in several other boxes. "I was mesmerized," he recalled.

Kirsten's experience left a lasting impression, and he wondered if setting up nest boxes at his own property would work. A lifelong hunter, he formed the Sebia Duck Club in 2007, a large property in Colusa County designed to preserve the hunting tradition for its members, as well as provide waterfowl and shorebird habitat through sustainable, waterfowl-friendly agricultural practices. Using five wood duck boxes and poles that Mortensen gave him, Kirsten installed five boxes along a natural canal on his property.

For the first year or two, nothing happened. Then, gradually, the ducks began using them.

Encouraged, Kirsten installed more boxes. For the first several years, he maintained and checked each one with family help, eventually managing around 30 boxes. Over time, members of his duck club began asking how they could help, and he saw an opportunity to expand the project. Today, Sebia Duck Club has nearly 70 active

wood duck boxes, with multiple members continuing to stay closely involved. Kirsten's wife, daughter and son all love helping, too.

"It's a beautiful way to spend a spring day," Kirsten said. "Take your family and dog and keep involved with waterfowl year-round. Even at the worst, if you don't see a single wood duck, you'll get a great hike and outdoor experience."

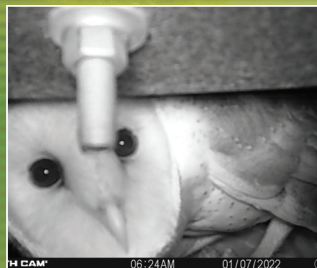
Inspired by the memory of how he was introduced to wood ducks, Kirsten has paid it forward by hosting multiple Wood Duck 101 events at his property to share that experience with others. He's also built around 200 boxes over the years to use at Wood Duck 101 events and for his own wood duck projects, and to donate to wood duck dinners and other nest box projects.

Kirsten's favorite thing about volunteering with the California Wood Duck Program is forming connections with new people, and he especially enjoys bringing along anyone who's never checked nest boxes before. Several people he's mentored have gone on to install their own nest boxes.

For anyone new to nest boxes, he advises them to be patient.

"You can't expect instant success. Wood ducks take a while to start using the nest box, so you might not get any in the first year or two," Kirsten said. "But seeing it build and having a bit of patience is fun, and it compounds when birds start making it their home." 🦆

Dr. Frank C. Bellrose was one of the pioneers of wood duck nesting research. His career-long commitment to understanding wood duck biology began in the late 1930s and resulted in the development of predator-resistant nest boxes. His dedication to waterfowl, especially the wood duck, is why the California Wood Duck Program honors one outstanding volunteer in his name each year.



TRAIL CAM

YOUR WOOD DUCK BOXES

By George T. Kammerer III

Managing wood duck nest boxes is a lot of fun! You can set up a string of boxes without much expense and effort in a single weekend and then have years of enjoyment with minimal maintenance — not to mention the personal satisfaction of knowing you are giving back in a significant way to California’s waterfowl resources that bring us all such great enjoyment during waterfowl season.

During nesting season, checking your wood duck boxes once a week on weekends after school or work is a neat way to monitor the amount of wood duck usage your boxes are getting. It is also a neat way to detect what other wildlife species may be using your boxes. Over the years, I have spotted many birds other than wood ducks at or near my boxes, including kestrels, owls, scrub jays, mockingbirds, turkey vultures and much more. But if you are observing your boxes only once a week or two, or maybe only once a month, you are missing a lot of the action.

What if you could see what was going on at your boxes every day — or even minute by minute? Well, with today’s technology, you now can. Small remote cameras, commonly called “game cams” or “trail cams,” are now small enough and light enough to be installed on a wood duck box without interfering with usage of the boxes or wood duck behavior.

Trail cams are dropping in price all the time. Decent ones can now be purchased for \$15 to \$25 apiece. These are simple cameras to operate, and most of them contain a removable memory card that can be taken out and viewed on your personal computer back in the comfort of your home. Inexpensive memory cards can contain 4,000 to 5,000 photos and be left in trail cams for up to several months when you don’t have time to check them, and they will keep recording all comings and goings at your boxes. And if you want to splurge, more expensive trail cams are available, which use Wi-Fi and can be set up to relay photos and videos in real time to your cell phone and/or your computer in all kinds of weather. These will save you the time and effort of going out and manually swapping memory cards at the boxes.

Set up a trail cam (or two or three), and you will be amazed at the different kinds of wildlife you will see. Additionally, you’ll be able to observe a lot about wood duck behavior and monitor the number and frequency of different wood ducks using your boxes. Give it a try. I am confident it will add a whole new level of enjoyment to your wood duck nesting box project this spring! 🦋