

Wood Duck Report 2025

By Dave Youker

This is the fifth year that the water level at Harwood's Mill Reservoir has remained approximately four feet below normal levels due to reconstruction of the dam. However, the lower water levels do not appear to have an impact on the breeding success of the Wood Ducks. While all the boxes are now on dry land, there has been no increase in predation, primarily Rat Snakes, due to the installation of sufficiently large baffles.

The initial check of the Wood Duck boxes occurred on March 24, 2025, with two boxes already having eggs. By mid-April, all seven boxes were supporting active nests with a combined total of 123 eggs. Similar to last year, three nests were abandoned and the 55 eggs had to be removed. Two of the nests were subsequently used for follow-on nestings. Most boxes remained active throughout May and June, with one continuing into late July.

All seven boxes were used by Wood Ducks this year, but only six produced fledglings. The one abandoned nest without subsequent activity was the only exception. Three boxes had a second nesting. Total Wood Ducks fledged this year was 119, which is below the average of 128 for the last nine years.

Thanks to Newport News Parks and Recreation for their continued support of this project.