



Best Practices For Mounting and Placement of Your Wood Duck Shack

There have been many methods used in mounting wood duck boxes with varying rates of success over the years. The below mounting practices are ones we have found to work reasonably well in providing the nesting hen with a safe, reliable place to lay her eggs. No particular mounting practice can guarantee 100% nesting success, but the following will increase the odds that your Wood Duck Shack produces broods year after year.

Wood Duck Shack Placement

Ideally, you want to place your Wood Duck Shack in close proximity to a clean wetland that will provide ducks with plenty of aquatic insects and vegetation to eat. Wooded wetlands are preferred as they provide cover for the birds as they mature. Boxes can be placed up to a mile away from a wetland, but try to make it so that the ducks don't have to cross a road to get to water. The closer to water, the better.

Your Wood Duck Shack should face in a direction that prevents wind and rain from getting inside as much as possible. For example, if prevailing winds are from the east, you would ideally have your nest box facing west. Nest boxes should face the water when possible and should be placed in areas where flying ducks will notice them.

Mounting Over Water

Mounting your Wood Duck Shack over water presents some pros and cons. On the positive side, it reduces the number of predators who may try to enter the box and eat the eggs. Raccoons, squirrels, skunk, and others are not a problem with a box mounted over water. Mounting over water insures that the ducklings will drop right into the water after they hatch, giving them immediate access to their food supply. The negative side of mounting over water is that it can be difficult to place the pole and pound it securely into the lake bed. You also have to be concerned about changing water levels and poles being damaged during "ice out" (if you live in the north). That said, here are the



steps necessary to install a Wood Duck Shack over water.

1. Find a pole to use for mounting. We have found that 10 foot sections of 1” electrical conduit are the most cost effective solution. They can be purchased at any local hardware store. Other options include ½” black or galvanized pipe, steel poles similar to those used to hang stop signs and other highway signs, certain fencing poles, and even treated 4x4 timbers. (NOTE: WoodDuckShack.com sells mounting hardware for poles up to 1” in diameter. Please check out the selection on our website.)
2. Select a suitable location to place your Wood Duck Shack. The best time to install a pole is in the winter, when the ice is thick enough to support your body weight. If you live in the south, you will have to use a boat or wade into the water and use a ladder. Be careful when doing this!
3. Using a post driver or sledgehammer, drive the pole into the lake bed several feet. The pole should stick out of the water by 2 feet or more. Be sure that waves or rising water levels will not reach the Wood Duck Shack.
4. Mount a predator guard on the pole. Placing the box over water will prevent many predators from getting in the box, but a predator guard also prevents snakes, mink, and others from climbing the pole and destroying the nest. (NOTE: Predator guards are available for purchase at www.woodduckshack.com.)
5. Mount the Wood Duck Shack on the pole. Using a mounting bracket, you can place the Wood Duck Shack directly on top of the pole. Make sure the box is facing in the direction you desire and tighten the bracket to the pole so that the nest box does not spin.
6. Place wood shavings into the box and monitor regularly!

Mounting Over Land

Mounting your Wood Duck Shack on land near the waters edge provides some advantages over mounting the nest box over water. First among them is the ability to monitor your Wood Duck Shack without using a boat or waders. One drawback is that you now have to protect your box from land based predators, most notably squirrels and raccoons. This can be done through smart placement and the use of predator guards. Below are the steps necessary to mount a Wood Duck Shack over land.

1. Find a suitable pole for mounting. You can use any of the poles described above, but we’ve found that an 8 ft, 4x4 treated landscape timber works best and is very cost effective.
2. Dig a two foot hole in your desired location. (Remember that squirrels can jump several feet from trees onto the top of your nest box.) Place the timber into the hole and refill with dirt. Tamp the dirt tightly into the hole so the timber is secure. *If using a steel pole, you may be able to pound the post into the ground without digging a hole.*
3. Install a predator guard on the pole. (NOTE: If you haven’t already, you can purchase a predator guard on our website, www.woodduckshack.com. We even offer predator guards that mount directly to 4x4 timbers!)
4. If using a timber, mount the Wood Duck Shack using the predrilled mounting holes on the back of the nest box and two decking screws (or similar fasteners). If using a steel pole, a mounting flange will be necessary. Your nest box should be at a height that allows you to monitor it on foot. Setting it up so that the hole is approximately 6 feet off the ground seems to work best.
5. Place wood shavings into the nest box and enjoy. Checking the box regularly is both a rewarding and educational experience!



Mounting On Trees

When many of us think about wood duck nest boxes, we envision a box nailed to a tree near a swamp or river. But studies over the years have shown that this mounting method is among the least effective. This is due to the fact that many critters can crawl up and down trees to reach the box and eat the eggs. There is really no way to “predator proof” a large tree. If a tree is your only option, there are a few things to consider.

1. A dead tree is better than a live one. If you mount your Wood Duck Shack directly to a live tree, it will continue to grow. This growth could cause the box to split if the tree grows quickly. Also, live poplar and birch trees are favorites of beavers and should be avoided.
2. A dead tree in water is better than a dead tree on land. The water provides protection against land based predators. Make sure that the dead tree is stable and will not fall down in the near future.

Other Considerations

Putting up a Wood Duck Shack is a long term commitment. The success of birds in your nest box depends on your annual maintenance. Make sure to clean it out each year after the nesting season. Before the next year, you should put a new handful of wood shavings in the box.

If your nest box is not used during the first year, don't get discouraged. Migrating birds in the fall have been known to enter nest boxes and scope them out for the following year. Once you experience success, your chance of having nests year after year increases. Wood Ducks, and other cavity nesting birds, have a strong homing instinct. That means that ducks hatched in one geographical area are likely to return to that area to nest.

Keeping track of your nesting successes (and setbacks) is a great way to learn about wood ducks. Involving children in this process can be very rewarding and present valuable life lessons. Nesting and Observation logs can be purchased on our website, www.woodduckshack.com.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us at info@woodduckshack.com. We would love to hear about your success. We also love to see pictures! Thank you for your patronage.

