



Cavity Replacement Program

Background:

As the Red River Valley Corridor became more densely occupied by humans after the 1800's it was modified to meet our needs. We cut and removed trees to use for firewood, make room for homes, and prevent the spread of Dutch Elm Disease. We also, in some cases, felt that it was more aesthetically pleasing to have grass or young trees instead of what we perceived to be misshapen, damaged, or worthless dead trees. So we removed them. In some cases, this had the adverse effect of removing the tree cavities that were used as homes for certain desirable mammals and birds.

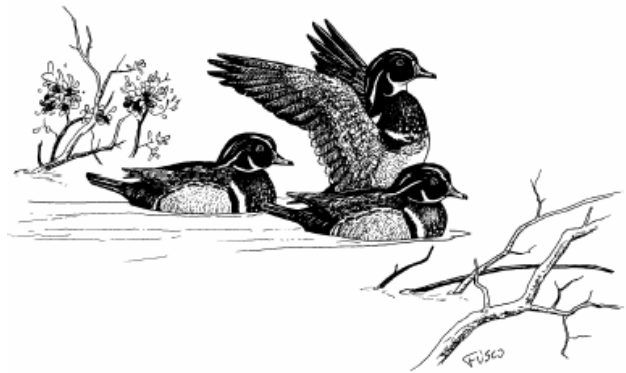
Solutions:

Wildlife managers have over the years proposed several methods to mitigate this damage. One method is the replacement of these cavities by the use of nesting boxes or bird houses. For example, wood ducks were near extinction in the early 1900's. Nest box placement, combined with hunting regulations, has brought about a dramatic rebound in the wood duck population. Other birds and mammals have also benefited from similar programs. In Minnesota alone, there are over 40 bird species that utilize tree cavities.

There are also other benefits in providing human constructed cavities. Wrens and chickadees benefit by using properly constructed bird houses because non-native pest bird species such as house sparrows and European starlings are excluded from the houses. Entrance holes are sized to keep out those pest species.

Wood duck nesting structures are placed where wood duck chicks can walk to the river without having to cross busy streets and highways. Another advantage, less tangible, but perhaps even more important, is the connection that people, especially the young, make with nature when they are involved with the building, installation, and maintenance of such structures.

Providing nest structures does not eliminate the need for preserving and managing wildlife habitat. Replacement of nest cavities is one technique for enhancing existing habitat and adding to our personal opportunities for wildlife observation.



Application of solutions by River Keepers:

River Keepers is managing a program to create 1000 nesting cavities for desirable native species between 1998 and 2002. This replacement program occurs primarily within the Red River of the North Valley corridor and predominantly within the confines of Southeast Cass Water Resource District and Buffalo Red Watershed District. Replacement cavities are placed on public and private land.

Program Maintenance and Continuation:

A database has been developed that tracks location and utilization rates of the replacement cavities to ensure maximum wildlife benefit from this program. If a nesting box or bird house is not being used, it is moved to a more desirable location.

River Keepers utilizes adult and student volunteers, scout groups, landowners, and student interns for the installation and maintenance of these structures. River Keepers' staff coordinates and supervises those activities.

Cavity Construction:

River Keepers researches and provides proper plans for the construction of cavities. These plans specify proper hole size, nest box design, and construction techniques. National, regional, and local experts are consulted to ensure that the latest, most effective designs are utilized.

Materials and fastening systems are specified that should result in a 15 to 20 year structure life.

Funding Partners:

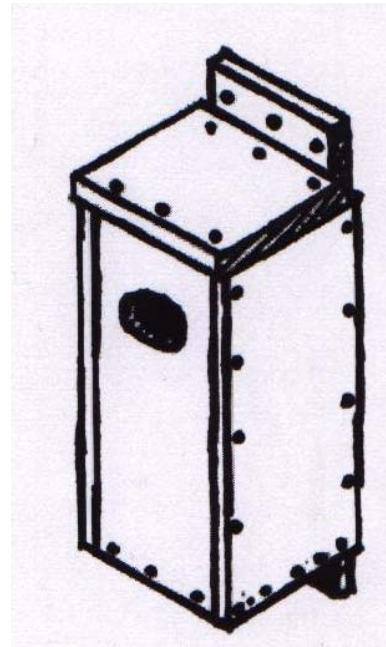
Clarence Schilling Memorial Fund
Cass County Extension
North Dakota Game and Fish Department
Members of River Keepers

Volunteers are needed to:

- ☒ repair boxes
- ☒ maintain boxes
- ☒ maintain database

Donations are needed for:

- ☒ lumber
- ☒ cedarchips



For more information:

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