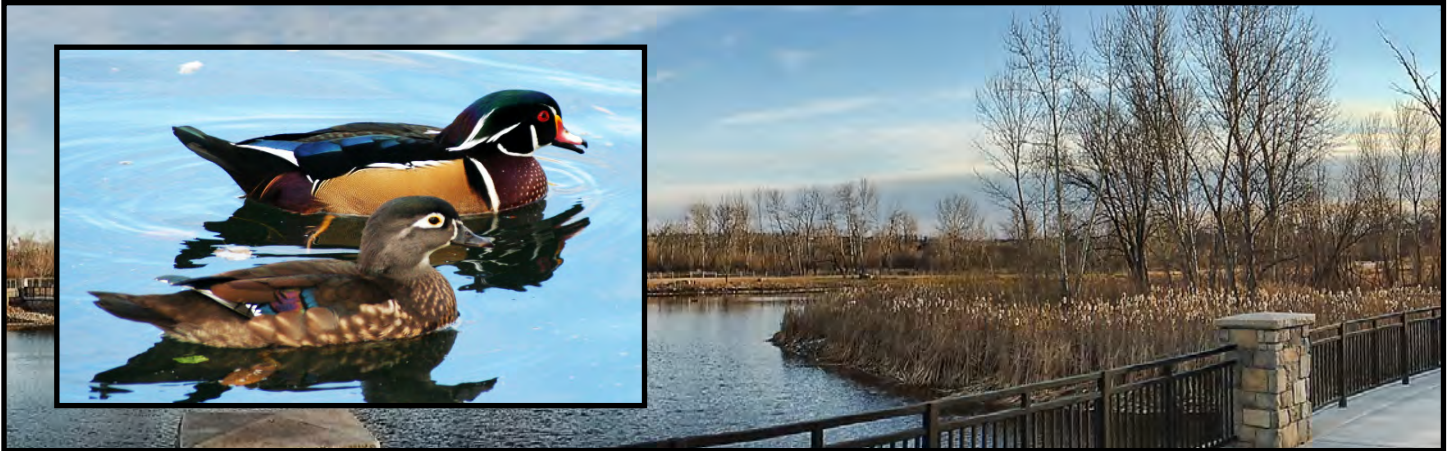


Homes for Wood Ducks



Photos: Wood ducks: Keith Carlson; Williams Pond (above) and cavity tree (below): Jane Rohling

Wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*) are one of the most beautiful birds you'll see along the Boise River and the riparian forests and wetlands here at the park are excellent places to look for them.

These ducks nest in hollow trees or artificial nest boxes. As soon as all the ducklings have hatched, the mom flies to the ground below the box and calls to her brood to take a giant leap. The ducklings have very sharp claws and a hook on the end of their bills to help them climb out of the nest cavity or box. They jump out of the nest hole, tumble to the ground, and follow their mom to the nearest water.

Although they are common now, wood ducks were once brought nearly to extinction by over hunting and loss of their riparian forest habitat. Den trees with suitable cavities were scarce, but artificial nest boxes have been instrumental in increasing populations. Protection and restoration of riparian forests will keep these beautiful ducks around for us to enjoy!

The wooded wetland and cattail marsh next to the open water of Williams Pond provides a variety of food and cover for wood ducks.

Wood ducks eat seeds, fruits, aquatic and terrestrial insects, snails, and other small animals.



Wood ducks can't make their own cavities so they are dependent on those made by other birds such as large woodpeckers. Protecting large dead trees is critical for many species of cavity-nesting birds. They serve as den trees for many other species of wildlife as well.

Below: Ducklings in nest box. Photo: Elaine Walker

