



Ducks, Etc...



Connecticut Waterfowl Association Fall/Winter 2021-2022 Newsletter

President's Message



First, I must apologize for the delay in getting out the latest CWA newsletter! The past few months have been overwhelmingly busy for both the CWA and the Lewoc household so I am catching up to everything in this new year! Hence this more “robust” CWA newsletter to kick off 2022. I hope you all were able to get out and make some memories in the field over the last few months! My father, two kids, and I were able to take a couple great trips out of the house and into the waders (although the weather never seemed to cooperate) in order to spend some time away from work and the chaos of life for a bit chasing ducks.

It definitely was an “interesting” season to see (and be able to harvest) Wood Ducks throughout the end of December, in Connecticut. Usually, my spots are frozen up or lose activity after Thanksgiving. Similar to what I have heard from many of you, it seems as if the waterfowl numbers were “feast or

famine” throughout much of the season depending on which species you were heading out after. I think we all were waiting for a cold front from up north to push numbers down into New England. Not going to lie but, most recently, I have seen the highest number of geese flying overhead at treetop level than in recent years. Unfortunately, this always seems to occur while I am at work or standing in my front yard on a Sunday morning. They never seemed to be landing into the decoys on a Saturday or a day off from work! But we definitely had some great memories, meat in the freezer, and a couple bands to add to the lanyards between black ducks, mallards, and woodies.

The CWA also had a very busy fall; hosting both the annual Sporting Clays event in September as well as the annual Fundraising Dinner in November just a few weeks away from each other and a little different than our typical offering. Both had a great turn out and were a refreshing experience to get out of the house and see people in person after having to postpone opportunities over the past few years. More on both of those items as well as the dates for the 2022 events will follow below.

On another note, I also wanted to update the group and pass along well wishes to Chris Zins, our current Vice President and head of the Mentor/Mentee program. Chris recently had the chance of a lifetime to take a job opportunity out of state and will be moving to Arizona in the next few weeks. Chris has been pivotal in taking over our Mentor Program and helping build back the opportunity to get new and interested mentees out in the field. Obviously, with Covid guidelines over the last few years this has been an uphill battle organizing, planning, and trying to coordinate the many individuals reaching out to be a mentee. Given the distance, we don't know to what



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degree Chris will still be involved with the group. I want to take this opportunity to thank him for all of his hard work and wish him the best of luck on his endeavors!

All in all, I have to admit, this was one of my first seasons in a long time where I was able to take a step back and truly appreciated the ability to spend time outdoors with those important to us. Even for the few days in which I came home empty handed this season; waiting too long for a group to commit, passing on shots with hens, or letting a large group of tight mallards go by instead of accidentally shooting over the limit. I came out of the woods with a full soul and clear head. Walking back to the truck or over breakfast and a cup of coffee with my father we had a chance to swap stories about our experiences outdoors. Plus, I was also able to experience duck hunting for the first time through the eyes of a kid again watching my little guys see a mallard land into decoys, hearing a giant group of hooded mergansers call to each other in the dawn light, or having a blue heron land just yards away from us before the sun was up. As frustrating and loud my new hunting buddies are in the blind, looking for snacks or scaring every living thing away, I wouldn't give it up for anything in the world. **The picture above was from the 80's when my dad probably had the same experience with me as a kid!** Hopefully, the next generation and those to follow will enjoy the experience in time as much as we do now.

For those of you still headed out in the final days of the season, I hope you get to experience the fun and excitement - just like you all are kids again. Don't forget to buy your 2022 license and State stamp featuring our CT Junior Duck Stamp winner! With the weather now turning bitterly cold and ice

appearing for the first time, don't overlook the fundamentals of boating and water safety. Taking the time to plan ahead and being prepared with clothing and the right equipment, saves lives when the weather changes suddenly or in the event of an emergency. Watch out for one another and Good Luck with the rest of the season!

As always, stay safe, clean up your spent shells, and take a kid outdoors!

Tom Lewoc Jr. (TJ)
President
ctwaterfowlers@gmail.com

Please Renew Your Membership!

I wanted to take a moment to reach out to all past and current members, as well as individuals interested in becoming new members to consider updating your CWA membership this year! We have over 4,000 waterfowl hunters in the State of Connecticut and yet our CWA membership is a very small portion of that number! Our group is not made up of only hunters but also carvers, collectors, and individuals willing to support the efforts of our mission. We need your help to get the word out and reach those who have not joined or don't even know about the CWA just yet.

Obviously, we understand that the last few years have seen changes to individuals' income, occupations, and what they can give. While, we also completely realize that there are other national organizations such as DU and Delta who have many Connecticut residents as members within those programs.



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The CWA however, is the ONLY non-profit waterfowl organization where the funds raised by our members, dinners, and fundraising events STAY in the State of Connecticut and benefit the preservation and conservation of Connecticut wetlands!

We are always working on benefits and opportunities for CWA members and trying to increase our impact across the State of Connecticut. However, we need the continued support and presence from all of you to keep our association going!

Our renewal timeline begins in April, where there are a variety of levels that an individual can participate in! For only \$25, the basic membership helps us run the programs, plan the events, and fund the initiatives to help continue the work of the CWA. Thanks to those of you who have already renewed your membership as well as those contributing and life members who have joined up this year!

We try as hard as possible to keep our records updated and reach out to those whose memberships have lapsed ahead of time. Over the last few years, we have seen a drastic change in our membership numbers and taken both positive and negative feedback from both old and new members as to why they didn't rejoin or know about the CWA programs. Our communication is only as good as the information we receive from you. If you have changed your email or mailing address, please let us know so we can update our contact information. To begin or renew your membership online. <http://www.ctwaterfowlers.org/memberships.html>



I wanted to reach out and thank Connecticut native Jim Muller, president and founder of MÜLLER CHOKES, for his very generous donation for a number of choke gift cards and barrel decals to the CWA. We used these products as raffle and auction items at both the sporting clays event as well as our annual fundraising dinner. These were both popular items for our raffles which had a great turn out for ticket purchases, as well as some disappointment amongst the crowd for those who didn't win!

I had seen the chokes used at many of the DU and other sporting clay events over the last few years and never realized Jim grew up on the Connecticut coast and was an avid waterfowl hunter. Nor did I realize there was also a specific line of waterfowl chokes in production as well. Everyone I spoke with at the shoot who had the U1 or U2 tubes swore by the chokes for sporting clays and encouraged me to consider the switch.

Jim reached out to us earlier this year on his own behalf to express his interest in supporting the CWA and donated the gift cards for us to use. After speaking with some of the winners on how their patterns improved with the choke, the timing could not have been any more perfect for me! I was in the market for a new waterfowl choke after my disappointment over the last couple of seasons trying out a number of chokes and shell combinations. I ended up purchasing a passing choke to support the company after Jim's donation, wanting to see if they truly were as great as everyone described. I can



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honestly say that I am more than impressed with the product and for the entire season had no cripples and a number of harvests using only one shell. This was all from the same semi auto I have been having trouble with over the last few years! Again, thanks to Jim and his continued support of the CWA. Take a look at his product line at:

<https://mullerchokes.com>

registration, lunch setup, raffle, and cleanup these guys did a ton of work! This includes: Joe Alix, Rick Boucher, John Capotosto, Tom Enwistle, Mike Gregonis, Tom Lewoc Sr., Pete Revicki, Chris Samor, and Steve Silva.

CWA Sporting Clays - Past and Future



On September 19, 2021 we had over 70 shooters register and compete at the **Annual CWA Sporting Clays Event!** Big Thanks, as always to Dave Tarducci and the folks at the Guilford Sportsmen's Association for all of their help and hard work providing us with an amazing opportunity and enjoyable experience. Thanks must also be given to our CWA board members and volunteers who took care of all the behind the scenes items to make the shoot run smoothly. From the setup early that morning, to the team



We had some top-notch shooters participate in the event as well as some individuals new to shooting



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sports come out for a beautiful day in Guilford. Not to mention, there was a great lunch and some amazing raffles!



Throughout the day we received a great amount of positive feedback as well as some things to consider for the future, in the attempt to make the event that much better. Even though the purpose of the shoot is

to raise funds for the organization, it also served as a fun and supportive environment for those new to the shooting sports. The trappers at all stations worked patiently and safely with the new folks to provide them a positive shooting experience that will last a lifetime.



The group/team format of around 5 individuals and outdoor course set up through 16 stations on the GSA property allowed for a variety of challenging shooting conditions and fun time for all without much delay between the stations. Thanks to all who participated, especially Dieter's Patchogue group, to help make it a great experience. We raised over \$2,000 when all was said and done to help support conservation and preservation initiatives right here in the State of Connecticut!

Hope to see you all at our next shoot. Save the date of April 3rd, 2022!

After all of the positive response and feedback from the November dinner we decided to swap the usual dinner and shoot dates so that we'll now hold the sporting clay event in the spring and the dinner in the



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fall. Soon we'll have the information and registration setup on the [events](#) page of our website.

Beretta Raffle



Continuing with the idea of the sporting clays event, that is the date when the winning ticket to the current **CWA Beretta A400 Xtreme Plus Bottomland Camo raffle will be randomly selected!** There are only a total of **200 tickets** being sold for this raffle and at this time there are still some tickets left. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased via the [CWA Raffle webpage](#).

If the winner is not present at the Shoot, they will be contacted with next steps in terms of the transfer as well as their name posted online via our website.

Annual Fundraising Dinner November 7th, 2021

After a long hiatus we were finally able to host the CWA annual fundraising dinner at the Elks Club in Westbrook, Connecticut. Thanks to all of you who came out to make the dinner such a success! After

two years of stockpiling raffle and auction items it was great to see an awesome turn out and be able to catch up with supporters of the event. Kudos to Chris Samor who took the reins for the planning and coordination of the event and all of the raffle and auction items. We had everything from Yeti Coolers, to hunting gear, a large number of collectible prints, decoys, both collectible and working, books, clothing, and much more. Not to mention a couple firearms from Mossberg to help round out the night. From the silent auction, live auction, bucket, and high-end raffles we were happy to pull everything together and get the event back into books again. The timing of the event between the 1st and 2nd waterfowl openers allowed for a great Sunday afternoon catching up on old times.



The Westbrook Elks was again a great location that allowed for us to have ample space to accommodate a large crowd. The staff was great throughout the day as well as the family style buffet food of beef medallions, chicken marsala, and stuffed shrimp left no one hungry at all of the tables! Thank you also to Tom Reilly, our auctioneer for the evening that always helps liven up the event! As well as Min



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Huang from the D.E.E.P for an update on the status of CT Waterfowl and populations.



Finally, I'd like to thank the CWA Board Members and Volunteers for the help in the setup, management, and running of the day! This included: Joe Alix, Matt Babb, Dieter Bromkamp, John Capotosto, Greg Chasko, Rich Chmiel, Mike Gregonis, Pete Revicki, Chris Samor, and Chris Zins. Hope to see you all at this year's dinner again in November.



Junior Duck Stamp



After a successful program last year the State of Connecticut Duck Stamp Committee has again agreed to use the "Best of Show" from the Junior Duck Stamp contest as the winning artwork for the Connecticut Migratory Conservation Stamp. For those of you that choose to receive the physical stamp when purchased for hunting purposes, you'll see the winning artwork from Sophie Archer's wood duck, the winner of last year's contest.

This year, we are again looking for help and support getting the word out to all art teachers, private art programs, student groups, home schooled students, or any other grade K-12 in the State of Connecticut interested in submitting artwork. The deadline for submissions is March 15th, 2022 All items must be postmarked by that time. Items must follow the [Federal Junior Duck Stamp guidelines](#) and include species from the chosen listing. Submissions must include the [Junior Duck Stamp Entry Form](#) and can be sent to our state coordinator:

Christopher Samorajczyk
29 Bowers Hill Rd
Oxford, CT 06478



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“Lessons of Geese and Men in a Morning Field”

Far too often, we see in both print and electronic news media “hunters” and “hunting” seen in a negative light. Thus, I wanted to thank one of our former Presidents, Greg Chasko, for his time and effort in working with reporters from the Connecticut Examiner to show much more into the world of waterfowl hunting along with the time, effort, and energy that goes into a hunt. Greg had the chance to take out a few individuals to show them it is not just about the blood and guns, but the comradery, anticipation, dedication, and even the food that goes along with the harvest. Take a look at the article below showing a positive light on waterfowl hunting reproduced with permission from the author Steve Jensen of the Connecticut Examiner.



Greg Chasko sets Canada Goose decoys in a hayfield (CT Examiner)

BY STEVE JENSEN - OCTOBER 15, 2021

NORTH FRANKLIN – The pre-dawn sky is just starting to brighten above the mowed hayfield where five camouflaged men go about their silent business.

Some guided by headlamps, they plant perhaps a hundred Canada Goose decoys in the soft ground, hoping they’ll be an irresistible lure for live members of the species to fill the skies above their cornstalk hunting blind.

By the time the first deep orange sun rays spread across the bright green cover crop of rye, the men have taken their stations in the blind, eyes to the sky and shotguns at the ready.

The array of decoys widely scattered in front of the blind is designed to mimic a flock of feeding geese, serving as a giant breakfast invitation to birds above. “If you don’t have the decoys out, they have no reason to come to this field,” and leave the adjacent cornfield where they have been feeding, explains Greg Chasko, a state waterfowl biologist for three decades and part of the group of retirees who mainly had careers in wildlife and waterfowl biology and management, as well as botany.





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The group chats before entering the blind behind them (CT Examiner)

They've been through this drill countless times together, going back 30 years for some, and in far-flung places such as North Dakota and Saskatchewan.

On this morning, they're hunting a field they've leased from a local farmer for several seasons.

Offering a 360-degree view, the field sits in the middle of seemingly-endless stretches of farmland, one of three such properties they're renting this season in eastern Connecticut.

"We're waiting for the geese to get up off their roost pond and fly into the field to feed," Chasko says shortly after sunrise. "They usually start flying around 7-7:30," a.m.

Sunny blue skies portending a balmy day are just taking over when the men notice a group of geese flying in the distance.

"Here they come – on both sides of the tree line," says Steve, the tallest member of the bunch, wearing a camouflaged facemask and positioned at one outside edge of the blind. "There's some down in the valley on the right and there's some down in the valley on the left. But it looks like they're staying in the valley."

"Yeah, that's a bad flight line," offers Chasko, of East Haddam. "They're not coming here. This field ain't on their agenda today."



Packing up at the end of the day (CT Examiner)

Chasko is on the board of directors of the Connecticut Waterfowl Association, which offers a mentoring program he created to get newcomers, and especially younger people, involved in bird hunting.

The program is designed not only to pass on the tradition to new generations, he said, but to counter the steadily-declining number of people hunting overall.

"That's the future. Hunters are the ones that pay for conservation," he said, referencing license fees and taxes paid on guns and ammunition that are directed toward conservation efforts.

"As the number of hunters dwindles, the dollars for conservation dwindle."

Each time one of the group spots another flock of birds, Chasko grabs a wooden goose-call hanging from his neck and blows a series of rapid, reedy, high-pitched honks.



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“When you call you try to sound like a whole flock of geese, not just an individual one,” he explains.

Chasko also deploys what he calls The Flapper, a black-fabric outline of a goose attached to a rod that he waves out the front of the blind as birds approach.

“Might as well try everything we’ve got,” he says with a hint of frustration at the lack of geese flying within shooting range so far.

The geese they seek are a mix of “residents” that are here year-round, and migrants that just started arriving from northern areas such as Labrador and Newfoundland on their journey to overwinter here or as far south as North Carolina.

“They roost on a waterbody overnight – free from predators,” Chasko said. “And they get up in the morning and fly out and feed. By midday they’re back on the pond and then especially when it’s cold they feed in the afternoon before roosting for the night.”

So if the birds haven’t flown over their field by mid-morning, he said, chances are they’re not coming.

Whether or not it will be a successful day dominates the banter in the blind, which also consists of a substantial amount of good-natured teasing and what in sports is known as locker-room humor.



Greg Chasko waving a device designed to mimic a landing goose (CT Examiner)

Each man has a nickname, which some inexplicably preferred to use as identification for this story.

“There’s Bonehead, Weeniehead, Truckstop and Chigger,” recites Chasko, a.k.a Captain Quack, prompting a chorus of wisecracks from his companions.

They all say they eat every bird they harvest. And with no real hunting action by 7:30 a.m. or so, botanist Bonehead breaks out a plastic container of his homemade corned duck breast, cut into hors d’oeuvres-sized slices for the group.

Not to be outdone, Captain Quack passes around his signature “goose sticks” – a rolled, spicy goose sausage.

The snack-time conversation, naturally, turns to hunting.

“I like hunting over decoys where the challenge is bringing these birds into close range so you can get a



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nice humane kill,” Chasko said. “Anyone can shoot a rifle accurately. But putting a string of shot out there and intercepting the bird in flight is a challenge. What’s the sport in shooting a literal sitting duck?”

Goose and duck hunting season started the previous weekend, and some of the group had already been out twice. A few days earlier, they quickly reached their daily bag limit of two when a flock of perhaps 700 birds drawn by their decoy imposters landed in a field they lease in Pomfret.

But today, their luck seems in short supply.

Hundreds of birds are spotted – over the nearby big willow, or the white house on a distant ridge, or near this or that tree line.

But sighting after sighting proves a false alarm, as each graceful line of geese angles out of shooting range.

“Something from the east would be nice – we just need them to come up the hedgerow,” Chasko says as 8 a.m. approaches.

“All these birds are just flying by like they’re migrating,” chimes in Chigger.

More bad news is the noticeable rise in temperature that has been creeping up all morning.

“It’s too warm too early,” Chasko bemoans. “The warmer it is, the less the geese need to eat to keep warm.”

Before long, the main conversation in the blind is when to pack up the decoys and go home, mixed with

a few waning attempts at optimism when birds were spotted in the distance.



Preparing to fire as geese approach the blind (CT Examiner)

Connecticut has long had a problem with goose overpopulation and the spoilage they can bring, leading to the first-ever resident goose hunting season in the country in 1986.

But the omnipresent species that is so attracted to Connecticut’s landscape of lakes, ponds, fields and golf courses would not be reduced by a single member on this day, by this group.

By 8:30 a.m., the hunt is over, without a shot fired.

“It’s disappointing, but that’s just how it goes,” Chasko says as the men load their decoys and shotguns and other equipment back into their vehicles. “You get up in the middle of the night to get ready and then you don’t get to snap a cap. It happens.”



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But the beautiful sunrise, the spotting of a kestrel and a peregrine falcon, and especially the camaraderie of the group, Chasko said, made it all worth it.

As he pulls his SUV out of the field, Chasko describes how hunting with his father as a young man in coastal Maryland taught him the transformative impact these excursions can have on those who pursue them, beyond enjoyment of the sport itself.

“My father and I had a very antagonistic relationship,” he recalls with a chuckle. “And the only time we got along was when we were hunting and fishing. Other than that, it was out and out warfare.”

Information about the mentoring program may be found at <http://www.ctwaterfowlers.org>

Reprinted courtesy of the CT Examiner

CT Conservation Advisory Council Summary from CWA Representative Greg Chasko

*DEEP Bureau of Natural Resources Update:
Provided by Bureau Chief Rick Jacobson*

Fisheries

- Second round of CARES Act relief is underway for commercial fishermen, for-hire sector, and fish processors. \$1.8M in the first round (already distributed) and \$3.0M in the second round. To make up for documented losses in business income due to covid. DEEP and the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commissions (ASMFC) are administering.
- ASMFC has completed a stock assessment for tautog (blackfish). The regulation changes put in

place in 2018 have succeeded. The species is no longer being overfished and has had spawning success. The population has partially rebounded (not yet to 1980s and 90s levels). Regulations will remain as is.

- Regulations for striped bass and black sea bass are likely to stay status quo. It's unclear what will happen with fluke and scup regulations. May need to reduce harvest of scup and may be able to liberalize the harvest of fluke. Will be determined during meetings of the ASMFC and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council in December.

- New commercial regulations on whelk (5.5" length limit), horseshoe crabs (closed fishing periods), lobster, and sport fishing regulations requiring circle hooks (for striped bass) will be on the agenda for a public hearing in December.

- A number of CARE events with hands-on fishing were held.

- Kokanee salmon brood stock collection was done on West Hill Pond, East Twin Lake, and Lake Wononscopomuc. Over 200,000 eggs were taken. Most from fish collected at West Hill Pond. ~90 large brown trout were captured at East Twin Lake.

- Walleye stocking was completed. Catfish sampling was done in Maltby Lakes to assess the population. Fall night electrofishing was completed on 18 lakes to monitor fish populations.

- A Wild Trout Management Plan was presented to the public and four dates were announced for Zoom meetings to take comments and engage in discussion with the public.

- The Inland Fisheries regulation package that includes all the changes necessary to implement Public Act 21-12 (eliminating closed seasons on trout) is moving slowly. Required getting opinions from the AG's Office and making revisions. Now in the process of submitting to the AG's Office and



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OPM for approval. Likely will not be in place until early June.

Wildlife

- A CT Coalition to Protect Bears has been formed. Five groups are involved: Humane Society, CT League of Conservation Voters, Friends of Animals, CT, Votes for Animals, and CT Wildlife Rehabilitators Association.
- The Wildlife Division has put in a request with the Safety Office to get approval to hold an in-person pelt tagging day in the spring.
- There are discussions underway with the Safety Office on resuming some in-person indoor CE/FS classes. If not approved the last classes will be in November.
- Have had to cancel ~25 CE/FS classes (~600 seats) due to lack of interest. Seems like demand has decreased.
- Deputy Commissioner Trumbull has extended the moratorium closing Norwalk parks to waterfowl hunting (2nd extension) through June 2022.
- The proposal to allow the use of snap traps for weasels has been pulled from the Wildlife regulation package that is under development. The proposal was pulled because more supporting information is needed.
- Questions about mowing in Goshen WMA and Robin's Swamp WMA were addressed.

Waterfowl Parasite Program

Erica Ebbs (Erika.Ebbs@purchase.edu)

Recently, I had the opportunity to reach out to Erica Ebbs, a Professor at Purchase College who is studying parasites that live within waterfowl and move within the ducks migration patterns. Inadvertently, an incorrect email address from a

Facebook post (passed onto me) opened the door to a conversation and research program that I am hoping CWA members and other waterfowl hunters can support! Erica's research is driven by the data collected from the internal organs of ducks and geese left over after the edible meat is taken from a duck or goose. This research however, is only driven by the sample data that they can collect and the only way really to obtain a large number of samples are from hunters willing to donate these items post hunt. She is reaching out to Waterfowl hunters across the State of CT for help in collecting samples.

There might not be too much we can do for this waterfowl season but, I am hoping next year we can have CWA members support (or even coordinate a pick up and/or storage) of viscera to support her program. (Federal guidelines for labeling of the carcass with the hunters name and date taken can be seen in the migratory hunting guide). Please consider supporting Erica's team next year. She can be contacted at the email address above. Here are some excerpts from our conversation:

What they are researching:

"Most of my students right now are focused on trying to characterize the parasite communities associated with different species of North American waterfowl, and evaluate how they vary across different flyways and over time."

What they are looking for:

"We have several different projects going on, so we can make use of pretty much any waterbird that comes our way. The species that we are most focused on are Northern Shovelers, Blue Wing Teal, Lesser Scaup, Merganser and American Wigeon. I have an



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interest in expanding to sea ducks, which I haven't been able to get a good sample of in the past. But really ANY duck would be great. Geese are fine too, but tend to have less parasites so they usually fall to the bottom of the wish-list."

How we can help:

"For storage - it is most important that they (viscera) are frozen or examined as quickly as possible (~few hours), which isn't always easy in the field or for hunters. What I usually ask for hunters who are only interested in the breast meat, if it is possible to breast the bird and keep the viscera intact, then the whole bird can be frozen. Or if it is coordinated so that I am present to take the bird that I can examine it immediately. For hunters that are interested in more than the breast meat, I take the heart, intestine and liver. These can be frozen in a zip lock back and labelled with the species, collection site, and date."

"I live in CT and am happy to drive anywhere to pick up birds, or meet hunters in the field".
(Erika.Ebbs@purchase.edu)

Wood Duck Boxes

Unfortunately, due to Covid numbers and State restrictions, the Wood Duck box building day may again be canceled. Over the years, the CWA has partnered with the DEEP in the construction of Wood Duck boxes for installation across the State.



Biologists and volunteers monitor and track the use and production levels of waterfowl and other animal) using the boxes in the spring. Mergansers, Buffleheads, and even owls use the boxes as a location to lay eggs and rear their young. The good news is that there is still a supply of boxes left from the last build and if there is any member who knows of a location that currently does not have a box or noticed an "old" box falling apart or needs replacement there are still some available for installation. Please reach out to the CWA emails address: ctwaterfowlers@gmail.com and we'll arrange to get a box for you.