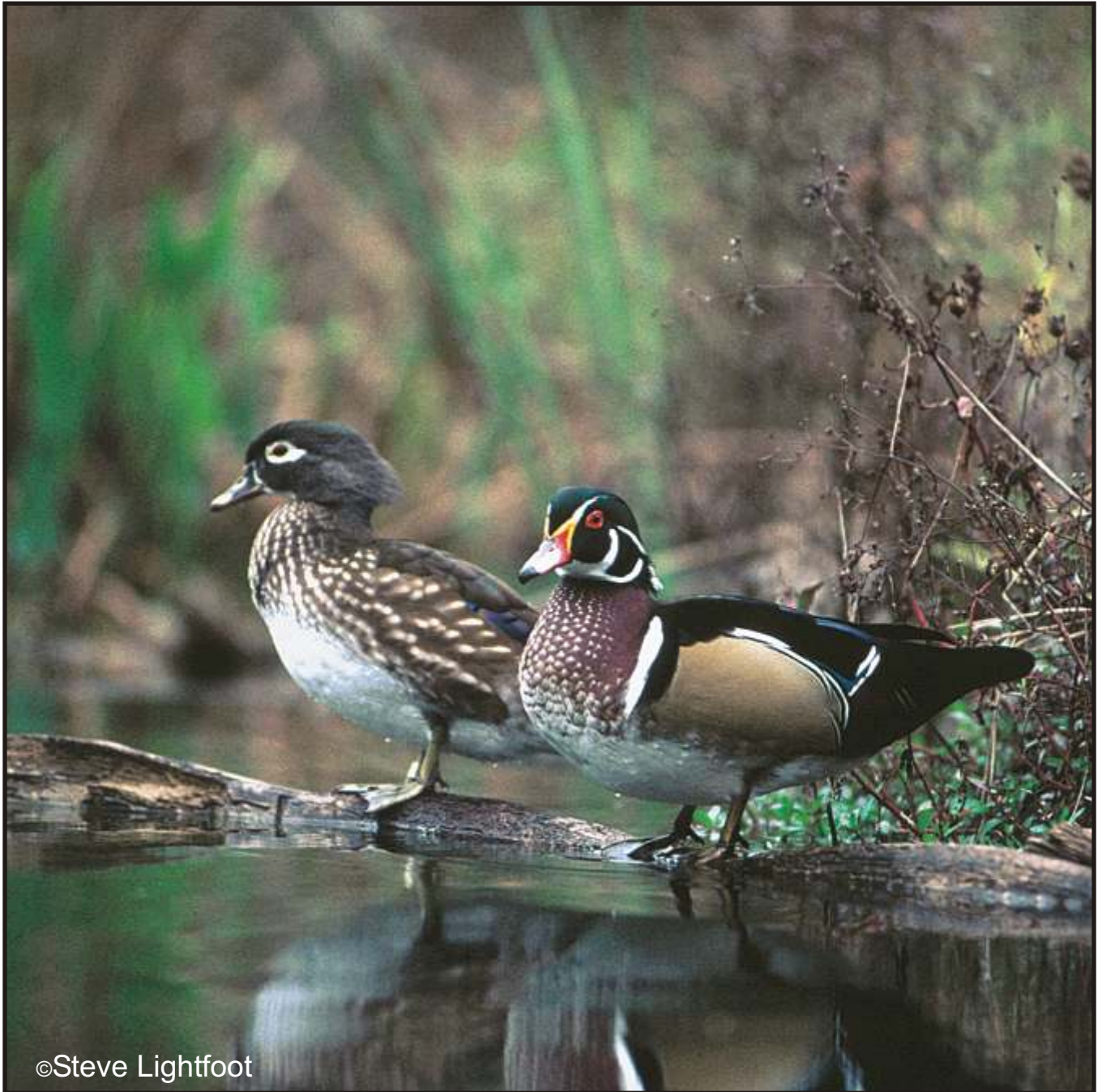


WOOD DUCK

Aix sponsa



©Steve Lightfoot



Range

Wood ducks are some of the most beautiful **waterfowl** in the U.S. Over-harvesting and the loss of habitat in the early part of the century threatened them with extinction. Good management practices and thousands of wood duck nest boxes have helped them make a dramatic recovery!



Birds

WOOD DUCK



Aix sponsa

Appearance

Length: 19 inches

Wing span: 29 inches

Weight: 1¼ pounds

Male wood ducks have green heads and crests streaked with white, red eyes and base of bills, purple breasts, white throats, beige sides and bluish backs. Females are duller with bluish backs and a white teardrop shaped eye patch.

Behavior

Habit: Diurnal, precocial, omnivores

Diet: Seeds, acorns, berries, grains and insects

Breeding territory: 1 pair per 24 acres

Wood ducks choose old woodpecker holes or other natural cavities near water for their nests. Courtship and pair formation takes place in the fall.

Habitat

In wooded swamps and bottom land forests in the eastern and western U.S. and Canada and western Mexico. Year round residents in east Texas but northern populations migrate south for the winter.

Wood Ducks & Man

Humans almost caused the extinction of wood ducks in the early 1900's through habitat destruction and over harvesting for food and feathers. But concerned citizens got together to save wood ducks. They created hunting seasons and bag limits and built and maintained thousands of nest boxes for them.

Life Cycle

Sexual maturity: One year

Mating season: February-May

Gestation: Eggs hatch in 28-37 days. The young leave the nest 1 to 2 days after that.

No. of young: 6-15 usually 10-15. Eggs are 2 inches long and creamy white.

Now You Know!

- Older male wood ducks pair up earlier in the season than yearling males.
- Female wood ducks usually return to nest within a 2 mile of where they were born.
- Baby wood ducks are **precocial**, which means that they are covered with down, can swim and find their own food soon after they are born. They can climb as high as 8 feet to get out of the nest cavity that they were born in using a special tooth on their beak! They have been known to safely jump 50 feet to the ground when they leave their nest!
- Wood ducks prefer nesting over water so that the babies have a soft landing when they leave the nest.

