Why Monitor Birdhouses?

- Cavity-nesting birds are model species for studies in population ecology, conservation biology, behavioral ecology, and population genetics.
- Because there is intense competition among cavity-nesting birds for a limited number of breeding sites, many of these species are decreasing in population.
- Non-native, or "exotic," cavity-nesting birds such as the House Sparrow and European Starling compete with native species for cavities in which to nest.
- Human intervention may prevent population numbers of these birds from further decline, despite the destruction of their natural habitat.
- Participants who monitor, record, and submit their observations are contributing valuable information to an ever-expanding body of knowledge about cavity-nesting birds.
- By providing nest boxes, people can take personal satisfaction in doing something good, both for their fellow creatures and for the environment.
- **Nest boxes provide an opportunity for people to learn about birds and the natural world.**

** Please register your box or boxes with MPRA. We need all the data we can get!

MPRA

Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers Association

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MPRA

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER NEST BOX PROGRAM

LOCAL PARTICIPATION
EDUCATION
CONSERVATION

Sponsored By
Mattaponi and Pamunkey
Rivers Association

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER *(PROTONOTARIA CITREA)*

Also known as Golden Swamp Warblers because of their stunning color and need for damp lowland woods, Prothonotary Warblers breed mainly in the southeastern United States and winter in mangrove forests of Central and South America. This species, which nests in cavities, is threatened by habitat destruction on both its breeding and wintering grounds.

ECOLOGY

Prothonotary Warblers breed in wooded swamps, flooded bottomland forests, and along slow-moving rivers. As the only eastern wood warblers that nest in cavities, the birds often use old Downy Woodpecker nests in dead snags. They will also utilize nest boxes for nesting, which begins in April. The female builds the final nest, using mostly mosses and liverworts. The female then incubates a typical clutch of four to six eggs for 12 to 14 days. Young birds leave the nest after about 11 days at which time it has been claimed that they can swim if necessary.

In the southern part of their breeding range, Prothonotary Warblers will nest twice in one season.
Prothonotary Warblers eat mostly insects and snails during the breeding season; the bulk of the food taken includes caterpillars, flies, midges, spiders, and mayflies. On its wintering grounds, this species will also eat fruits, seeds, and nectar along with insects. Birds depart for their winter territories beginning in late July, arriving on the wintering grounds from late August through October.

NESTING/REPRODUCTION

Reproduction: *Male Prothonotary Warblers arrive early to establish territories, using vigorous song, and chasing and fighting behavior. Males adorn false nests with moss and sometimes build a cup. The purpose of these "dummy" nests is not clear, but the male displays in front of all of them. After females arrive a few days later, both sexes display and form pairs for the season. Most often, the birds use abandoned woodpecker holes, but will occasionally dig their own cavities in soft wood, 3 to 10 feet above the water. Prothonotary Warblers also use artificial cavities, including nest boxes, old cartons, cans, and jars.*
Female Prothonotary Warblers complete the nest, line it with fine plant materials, and lay 3 to 7 whitish eggs with brown spots. After approximately 12 days of incubation by the female, the young emerge naked and helpless. Both parents tend the young. Fledglings leave the nest after 10 days and can swim short distances by flapping their wings. The parents separate the fledglings into two groups and each parent feeds one group for up to 30 days. Independent juveniles gather in small flocks and tend to remain fairly close to their natal territory.

The Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers Association is developing a network of nest boxes along the Mattaponi River, Pamunkey River and other local wetlands.

It is MPRA's goal to establish a large database of information about the local populations of Prothonotary Warblers. We hope any data collected will help in the conservation and preservation of this and many other species associated with our local wetlands.

MPRA hopes to accomplish this goal with the help of local citizens and volunteer groups. MPRA wants to involve as many citizen volunteers as possible to help educate them about a very unique migratory bird and the wetlands they call home.

Our rivers provide a great location for this unique migratory species. Please contact MPRA if you would like to participate.

Interested participants/groups: Please contact MPRA

MPRA.ORG

Materials can and will be provided!