

A Read Aloud Story

# Mrs. Wood Duck & her Eight Ducklings



Snug in the nest she had built in a hole way, way up in a tall tree, Mrs. Wood Duck settled herself on her eight beautiful cream-coloured eggs. She was proud of this fine nest, lined with her own breast feathers, soft and warm for her young ducklings when they hatched.



She had been sitting for a long time, only getting up from time to time to stretch her legs and to find something to eat. She knew her babies would hatch very soon, she could hear their little clicking noises signalling to each other that they were ready. Sure enough, that evening the first duckling started pecking at its shell and by morning all eight were hatched!



The little ducklings were hungry and Mrs. Wood Duck got ready to take them to the near-by pond. She climbed out of the nest and went a little way along a tree branch, gripping with the special claws on her feet so she wouldn't fall off.



**"Listen, children,"** she said. **"I am going to fly down to the ground and wait for you. When I call, you climb out of the nest and jump down to join me. You won't hurt yourselves, I promise."**

Down she flew to the base of the tree, and called **"Come along, jump now!"**

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight little ducklings climbed out of their nest, gripping with their tiny claws, and - one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight - they each jumped down to join their mother.

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Just as she promised, they did not hurt themselves because they were so light they floated down like dandelion puffs and bounced and rolled to a stop, eager to walk on the forest floor.

**“Follow me, quick march!”** quacked their mother and the eight little ducklings followed her down to the pond.



Like all ducklings, the eight knew how to feed themselves as soon as they were born. Mrs. Wood Duck just had to take them to a place where they could find the nutritious food that would help them grow big. The pond she took them to had duckweed and water-beetles in the water and spiders and bugs in the nearby grasses.

The ducklings dived right in - one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight - swimming this way and that, eating as fast as they could – but never getting too far from their mother. She would keep them safe from the bullfrogs and big fish that like to eat baby ducklings.



Every day they swam about in the pond, eating and growing, and every night in the long grass their mother kept them warm, tucked under her wings.

By the end of the summer the ducklings were big enough to fly, so away they flew, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight....southwards with their

mother to join their uncles and aunts and cousins to spend the winter in a place where the ponds and lakes did not freeze over.

**“That was a good place for a nest,”** Said Mrs. Wood Duck to herself. **“I think I’ll come back next year.”**

**Note to Reader.** The Wood Duck is a true North American, having evolved on this continent. The male Wood Duck is considered the most beautiful drake in the world. While not as colourful as her mate, the female Wood Duck has prettier markings than other female ducks. Their scientific name is *Aix sponsa* which means “waterbird in wedding finery”.

