

SCALY-SIDED MERGANSER

‘THIS BEAUTIFUL DUCK REQUIRES CLEAN FAST-FLOWING RIVERS WITH ABUNDANT FISH AND BROAD-LEAF RIVERINE FOREST FOR NESTING IN CAVITIES – HABITATS WHICH ARE BECOMING SCARCE IN DEVELOPING CHINA’

EAST ASIAN-AUSTRALASIAN FLYWAY PARTNERSHIP SCALY-SIDED MERGANSER TASK FORCE

Far eastern Russia, and the Primorye region in particular, have become the last refuge for several endangered species originating from China. Together with the Amur Tiger, the Scaly-sided Merganser is a species that is particularly badly affected by rapid development in China and becoming increasingly dependent on less populated habitats in Russia for survival.

The species’ home range is now restricted to just three mountain countries, and any habitat loss via deforestation, river pollution or overfishing has a critical impact on its small global population. A Scaly-sided Merganser Task Force study found that the life expectancy of breeding females is now very short – probably as a result of hunting and of bycatch in fishing nets. Genetic diversity of the species is among the lowest of all world bird species.

However, information and education programmes with local people within the breeding range promise to help decrease direct bird mortality; and artificial nest programmes can be effective in compensating for breeding habitat loss due to the logging of riverine forests. As annual productivity is a key factor for the species’ survival, the EAAFP Scaly-sided Merganser Task Force is researching construction techniques for artificial nests, which will render them both attractive to ducks and predator safe. Unfortunately, winter habitat degradation, due both to dam building and river pollution from industrial development in China, is difficult to mitigate.

COMMON NAME:

Scaly-sided Merganser

SCIENTIFIC NAME:

Mergus squamatus

SIZE: Approx 58cm in length.

STATUS: Endangered.

POPULATION: 4,600 individuals.

LIFESPAN: No females studied lived longer than eight years – unusually short for a sea duck species.

RANGE: Breeds entirely in far eastern Russia and north-east China within two mountain ranges: Sikhote-Alin in Russia and Changbai in China and DPR Korea, providing home for 98% of the world population. Winters mainly on the tributaries of the Yangtze river in China; in fewer numbers in South Korea, and a very few in Japan, Vietnam and Taiwan.

THREATS: Breeding and wintering habitat degradation in China; illegal shooting during duck spring season; and mortality in illegal fish nets in the rivers of Russia.



WHAT YOU CAN DO...

- Discover what the Scaly-sided Merganser Projects (both in Russia and China) are doing to help conserve the Scaly-sided Merganser by visiting www.eaaflyway.net/scaly-sided-merganser.php.
- Be aware of the source of any boreal hardwoods you buy. Make sure your purchase does not contribute to the illegal trade from deforestation of far eastern Russia’s broad-leaved forests.
- Support the work of the Scaly-sided Merganser Projects via WWT by becoming a WWT member at www.wwt.org.uk.

