

The Scaly-sided Merganser (*Mergus squamatus*) in North America

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In 2004, the International Wild Waterfowl Association (IWWA) conducted a survey to assess the state of captive waterfowl collections in the United States. As a result of this survey, the IWWA completed an importation from Europe of several waterfowl species whose populations were considered critically low. Scaly-sided Mergansers were included in this import, which took place in 2007. Soon after, the first North American breeding of the Scaly-sided Merganser took place in 2009 at the Sylvan Heights Bird Park's Breeding Center in Scotland Neck, North Carolina. Later that year, staff from the Breeding Center were awarded with an IWWA Breeding Award in recognition of their achievement.



Scaly-sided Merganser pair.
Photo by Judith Wolfe.

population in North American zoos, which reached 40 birds in 2014.

In 2014, The Toledo Zoo in Ohio became just the second zoo in North America to successfully propagate Scaly-sided Mergansers. As of the end of 2014, the Scaly-sided Merganser is displayed at six North American zoos and with increasing interest in displaying and breeding this species that number will likely continue to increase.

Scaly-sided Mergansers have also been bred in good numbers at several private waterfowl collections since 2010 and many skilled aviculturists have made great contributions to the North American captive populations. In particular, Arnold and Debbie Schouten at Dry Creek Waterfowl in Port Angeles, Washington have produced impressive

numbers of Scaly-sided Mergansers for the past several years. The Livingston Ripley Waterfowl Conservancy in Litchfield, Connecticut and Pinola Aviary in Shreveport, Louisiana have also had success with this species.

The hope of a captive breeding program for the Scaly-sided Merganser in North America is to help ensure a future for this species as a whole. Birds on display at different zoological institutions serve as ambassadors for their wild counterparts and educate guests about the biology of this beautiful bird, the reasons why the species needs help, and the efforts currently underway to preserve them. Captive breeding programs can also produce data and husbandry information that may aid biologists working with wild birds in their effort to conserve this species.



A nesting hen sticks her head out of a wooden cavity box.
Photo by Judith Wolfe.



A four-day-old Scaly-sided Merganser duckling in a wet brooder.
Photo by Judith Wolfe.