

**Rare birds hatch at Woodland Park Zoo for the first time**  
***Animal care staff are hand-rearing ducklings***

SEATTLE—For the first time at Woodland Park Zoo, scaly-sided mergansers have hatched. Also known as Chinese mergansers, the large diving ducks are very rare in zoos and in the wild.

The zoo's animal care staff are hand-rearing the pair of ducklings. "These birds are sensitive and endangered, so we're taking every precaution necessary to give these ducklings the best start we can," said animal keeper Joanna Klass. "By hand-rearing the chicks, we can ensure they are getting all the food they need without having to compete with other larger adult birds that share the wetlands habitat."

Once the ducklings grow to adult size and their juvenile plumage grows in, they will be introduced to the other birds in the zoo's Temperate Wetlands habitat.

The ducklings were hatched under the Scaly-sided Merganser Species Survival Plan, which is a cooperative, conservation breeding program across accredited zoos to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of the species. There are approximately 77 individuals in the Association of Zoos & Aquariums' (AZA) population at only 13 AZA facilities. Eventually, the ducklings will be paired up by the Species Survival Plan and sent to other AZA-accredited facilities.

Woodland Park Zoo participates in 111 [Species Survival Plans](#), overseen by AZA. Led by experts in husbandry, nutrition, veterinary care, behavior, and genetics, these plans also involve a variety of other collaborative conservation activities such as research, public education, reintroduction and field projects.

**About scaly-sided mergansers**

- Scaly-sided mergansers are native to Eastern Asia, primarily Manchuria and southeastern Russia. They inhabit fast moving forest streams where they use their agility and eyesight to capture fish and other invertebrates. They are named for the scaly pattern on their flanks.
- Three species of mergansers can be found in the Pacific Northwest: red-breasted, common and hooded.
- They are excellent divers, with ducklings taking to the water within 48 hours after hatching. Their long, serrated bill helps them grab on to their prey.
- Females nest in tree hollows that can be as high as 60 feet. The ducklings will follow the female out of the nest within days of hatching, jumping out to meet their parents below. Their light, fluffy bodies allow them to bounce on the forest floor, and they're up and running in no time!

Scaly-sided mergansers are endangered. With fewer than 5,000 remaining in the wild, their population is decreasing due to loss of habitat and food sources, illegal hunting, drowning in fishing nets, disturbance from boats during breeding season, pollution, and an emerging threat of high levels of heavy metals in parts of their range.

Visit <https://www.zoo.org/conservation> to learn more about the zoo's conservation collaborations and <https://www.zoo.org/action> on how to help save animals.

Please visit [www.zoo.org/relief](http://www.zoo.org/relief) to help support the animals at Woodland Park Zoo. While the zoo is temporarily closed to the public, the exceptional animal care and veterinary teams, and other staff continue to work to provide dedicated care to more than 900 animals. As a non-



profit organization, the zoo is relying on the community now more than ever to help these wonderful animals continue to thrive. Contributions, both big and small, will help creatures of all sizes.

**###**