



Brazilian Merganser (*Mergus octosetaceus*)

Update November 2020

The year 2020 has been very successful for the Brazilian Merganser Project and, before the year is over, we would like to send this update to all of our sponsors. It's important that you all have a feedback about the accomplishments of the project and the latest news.

Breeding season

This year's breeding season was the most productive one we ever had and, for the first time, we celebrated the hatch of 15 ducklings in total. Also, for the first time one female has laid 7 fertile eggs and all of them have hatched and a F1 pair reproduced and gave us our first F2 ducklings.



Picture 01-08-2020



Picture 28-11-2020



Picture 04-08-2020



Female with the offspring

Through the partnership between Zooparque Itatiba and ICMBio (the Institute of Conservation with the Ministry of Environment) we were able to collect eggs from Serra da Canastra, in the state of Minas Gerais. This was very important because we need more bloodlines to integrate the ex situ population of mergansers. When the eggs arrived at zoo, they were placed with a foster parent and 2 healthy ducklings hatched.

The last egg of this breeding season hatched in September 12th and gave us the last duckling of the season. It was also incubated and raised by foster parents.

Today we have a total of 28 adult birds (11,17), and 15 adolescences.



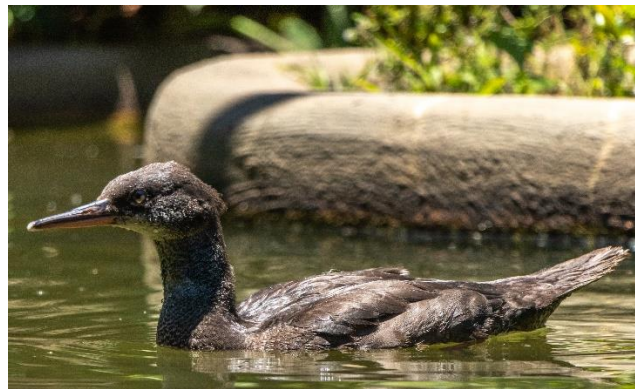
Picture 09-08-2020



Picture 28-11-2020



Picture 12-09-2020



Picture 28-11-2020

Genetics

In December 2019, we collected blood samples of all the mergansers and sent for analysis to two universities in Brazil: USP (University of São Paulo) and UFMG (University of Minas Gerais). Because of the corona virus pandemic, the institutions took a long time to return with results, but finally this month we received some results. They are important for us to use as guidance for pairing the birds in the future.

However, the university communicated that some of the samples were not usable. Considering this information and the fact that we didn't have this year's offspring when the samples were collected, we decided to collect more blood samples from all the 43 birds in January 2021 and send it to analysis again.



Collecting blood samples in December 2019 with Luis Fabio (MZUSP) and Alexandre Resende (veterinarian)



Facility development

We can announce with pleasure that this year's OZO (Austria Zoo Organization) sponsorship was responsible for the construction of another 6 aviaries. They are under construction at this moment and will expand our Brazilian merganser breeding center and be an important area for the parent rearing process. The goal is that the offspring of the birds paired in these aviaries will be specially raised with the least human contact as possible, which is essential for the reintroduction project.



Construction site



Construction site



Construction team



With the support of IWWA (International Wild Waterfowl Association), Steppe Birds Breeding Center and Aviornis, we are preparing a pipeline for water and electricity for a new water bore hole (well) and water supply system for the aviaries. The construction of this system has already started, the license is approved and this month we can start the drilling for over a 150 meters deep borehole, this should give us enough water for all the mergansers.



Create a water pipe



Pipe line for the water system



The storage of 30.000L

A new generator has been bought with the support of Prague Zoo. This generator will provide energy in case of a power cut for the entire breeding center, including all the water pumps of the well and filter system, pumps of the live fish tanks, incubator room, electric fence, etc.



Picture of the generator



Picture of the generator



This was only possible with the support of all our sponsors, Zooparque Itatiba would like to thank all of you, without you this project wouldn't be so successful.

Hope that you have a good holiday season and that we'll be working together again in 2021.



Thank you very much!

Robert Frank Kooij
Responsible Project Manager
Camila Piovani
Responsible Biologist

