

Hooded Merganser

Scientific Name: *Lophodytes cucullatus*

Class: Aves

Order: Anseriformes

Family: Anatidae



The length is 16 to 19 inches. This duck's small, thin bill and crested head give it a distinctive profile. Breeding males may have a glossy black head with a neat, rounded crest, and a prominent white head patch starting behind the eye. Rusty flanks are separated from a white breast by two vertical black bars and a black back. Females are dark with a grayish-brown head and a prominent rust-orange crest. The back is dull black, the flanks brownish-gray, and the chin and throat paler.

Range

Alaska to Nova Scotia, British Columbia, the U.S.A. except southwestern states

Habitat

Wooded habitats that contain clear-water streams or clear lakes.

Gestation

32 to 33 days

Litter

8 to 12, usually 10, glossy white eggs

Behavior

Usually seen in pairs or small parties, these ducks are less sociable than most diving-ducks. Their flocks rarely exceed 15 birds. Pair formation begins in mid-winter. Mergansers feed by diving. They fly rapidly, low over the surface of the water, taking off with some spattering over the surface. They are very agile while flying through the trees. They are migratory, but often remain until forced to move by freezing waters.

Reproduction

Females frequently reoccupy the nest site of the previous year if it is still available. They prefer to nest in tree cavities along secluded woodland ponds and streams. When incubation is underway the males desert the females to commence post-breeding molt. Females move their newly-hatched ducklings out of the nest within a day of hatching, and usually go to shallow waters close to timber. The fledging period is about 70 days. It is uncertain how long the female remains with her brood.

Wild Diet

Fish, frogs, tadpoles, crustaceans, mollusks, snails