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Geographical range

Species of the Day: Brazilian Merganser

The **Brazilian Merganser**, *Mergus octosetaceus*, is listed as 'Critically Endangered' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. The highly fragmented global population of this riverine, fish-eating duck is believed to be fewer than 250 birds, found in the Cerrado biome of south-central Brazil. It has disappeared, or almost so, from Paraguay, Argentina and the Atlantic Forest of Brazil.

The contraction of this species' range is probably caused by a deterioration in river water quality. The Brazilian Merganser relies on clear water with healthy fish populations. Deforestation and agricultural practices cause high rates of soil erosion, which creates sediment-laden watercourses in which this species cannot survive.

Three of the remaining sites for the species are now partially protected, and an Action Plan has been adopted by the Brazilian government. Birds are being studied in these sites, and around Canastra National Park there are also awareness-raising activities with local land users. Recovery of the species will need a transformation in land and water use practices, but such change would substantially benefit human livelihoods, so there is great potential for positive action.

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