



## Two Ducks and a Merganser

### Prep

During the fall, biologists journey out into wetlands to monitor Rhode Island's population of wood ducks by checking up on man-made nest boxes. To reduce stress, they wait until the ducks have left for the season, then they open up the side of the box, which has a special hinge, to peek inside and look for evidence of hatched ducklings! They carefully sift through the nesting material to find and count the leathery membranes that make up the inner part of the eggshells. The more membranes, the more successfully hatched eggs! Hooded mergansers like to use the nest boxes, too, so biologists must carefully examine the eggshells and membranes to figure out what kind of bird was using the box. Sometimes both species lay eggs in the same box, so biologists have to be very good at determining which eggs are truly wood ducks and which are mergansers!

### How to:

Explain to students that you hope they paid close attention to the wood duck lesson, because now they will quiz each other on what they learned through this fun game. This activity is based on the game "Two Truths And A Lie." Students will make three statements about wood ducks, two of which are true and one that is made up. The rest of the class must determine which of the three statements is false (the merganser among wood ducks).

\*For younger students, teachers can act as the leader. See the next page for a list of truths and lies.

### Example:

1. Wood ducks nest in hollowed out trees.
2. Ducklings are brightly colored.
3. You are allowed to hunt wood ducks in Rhode Island.

Answer: Duckling are not brightly colored, they are drab which helps them camouflage! Tip: Encourage students to think about their diet, behavior, habitat and conservation efforts.

## TRUTHS (FACTS):

- Wood ducks are herbivores.
- Wood ducks nest in holes in trees.
- Wood ducks live in wetlands.
- Male wood ducks are brightly colored.
- Female wood ducks are brown.
- Chicks are drab brown in color.
- Wood ducks are allowed to be hunted in Rhode Island, with lots of rules, and you need a license to do so.
- Wood ducks are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
- Snakes will eat wood duck eggs.
- Females wood ducks will nest in the same location every year.
- Wood duck chicks can survive jumping nearly 50 feet from their nest to the ground.
- Wood ducks lay between 8 and 15 eggs.
- Female ducks are called hens.
- Male ducks are called drakes.
- Some wood ducks are migratory.
- Wood ducks nest in the spring.
- Beavers help create habitat for wood ducks.
- Wood ducks feed by “dabbling.”
- Female wood ducks will line their nest with down feathers from their bodies.
- Wood ducks almost disappeared due to habitat loss and unregulated hunting.

## LIES (FICTION)

- Wood ducks are mammals.
- Wood ducks nest on the ground.
- Female wood ducks are brightly colored.
- Wood ducks live in the desert.
- You can keep wood ducks as pets.
- Wood ducks are predators.
- Wood ducks lay 2 eggs.
- There are no wood ducks in Rhode Island.
- Wood ducks are not allowed to be hunted in Rhode Island.
- Beavers are predators of wood ducks.

Learn more about this program:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/pdf/wood-box-summary.pdf>