

Wildfowl at risk, 1979

JANET KEAR

Following publication of the recent review (Kear & Williams 1978) of the status of the world's threatened wildfowl species, it has been decided to update the information periodically. Correspondence with workers having additional data would therefore be welcomed by the author, who is Chairman of the Endangered Waterfowl Group sponsored by the IUCN's Survival Service Commission and the IWRB.

Cuban Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna arborea*

W. B. King (pers. com.) reports that five Cuban Whistling Duck were seen at Parrottee, Jamaica in December 1976.

Coscoroba Swan *Coscoroba coscoroba*

The Government of Chile, in an application to have this Swan added to Appendix I of CITES, have said that the species is becoming increasingly rare. At the moment, there are only 1,000 individuals known to occur in Chile and the bird has significantly diminished in range, being found currently only in the south. In the event, Chile's application was rejected on the grounds of insufficient evidence. Counts of the swan in other parts of South America are urgently required.

Trumpeter Swan *Cygnus cygnus buccinator*

The US Government is proposing to remove the Trumpeter Swan from Appendix II of CITES. In fact, due to an error, the Swan is not mentioned in the final listing, and has never been treated as a Washington Convention animal, except possibly by the USA. Continuing efforts to conserve it have resulted in a stable or increasing population that is well censused and adequately protected.

Eastern Greylag *Anser anser rubrirostris*

Suggestions have been made that the Eastern Greylag is declining throughout much of its range (M. J. S. Mackenzie, pers. com.). In Mongolia, for instance, Kitson (1978) found that this was the least common of the four

geese occurring there, despite an earlier statement by Nowak (1970) that it was the most numerous. Further information is required.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

The Red Data Book of the USSR states that in 1971, there were probably no more than 1,000 geese in USSR, and that numbers are decreasing. In the Altai, the bird is now very rare.

Aleutian Canada Goose *Branta canadensis leucopareia*

An autumn, winter and spring study of the Aleutian Canada in California was conducted through 1977/78. Areas that are commonly frequented in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys were surveyed, with daily population counts and searches for ringed individuals. A combined count of 1,630 birds was made on 10/11 November 1977, and a known mortality of 130 individuals between autumn 1976 and spring 1977 compares favourably with previous years (Woolington *et al.* 1979). The ban on Canada Goose hunting has been effective in protecting the Aleutian subspecies on its wintering grounds (Yparraguirre 1978).

In the summer of 1978, 139 Aleutian Canadas were released on Agattu Island, which has now been cleared of foxes. Twenty-two were adult birds, most of which were live-trapped in the winter. It was hoped that these would act as 'guide birds' for the 117 young geese, raised in captivity at Amchitka Island, in the Aleutians and at Patuxent, Maryland, and released with them. All 139 birds have been marked with blue plastic neck collars so that precise wintering areas in California can be located.

Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae*

The management programme for the Cape Barren Goose in Tasmania has been described in an article in the Game Bird Breeders Gazette (1978). In the summer of 1977, the National Parks and Wildlife Ser-

vice again allowed an open season on Flinders Island. During two weekends, 204 licensed shooters killed approximately 1,000 geese out of an estimated total Furneaux Island Group population of 5,000. From the point of view of the Wildlife Service, the shoot was considered successful. The goose population of the Furneaux Group is increasing due to changes in its largely agricultural habitat, where scrub has been cleared, grassland improved, and water provided for stock. Three of the five major breeding islands have been made into nature reserves and are being managed for the geese, so that production of young birds is high. It is, however, the non-breeding, summering flocks that come into conflict with the farmers. The policy of the Wildlife Service towards the summer flocks involves: (a) providing a refuge area of improved pasture on Flinders Island remote from the farms; (b) leasing three paddocks traditionally favoured by the geese from the farmers on the understanding that birds feeding there are undisturbed; (c) allowing a limited open season on farmland in order to encourage geese to use the refuge areas. Research will continue to monitor population size, breeding success and the value of the summer management programme.

Galapagos Pintail *A. bahamensis galapagensis*

Kear & Williams (1978) were incorrect in supposing that no Galapagos Pintail are currently held in captivity. Wuppertal Zoo in West Germany has had a pair for three or four years. The female has laid but the eggs have been infertile so far (C. R. Schmidt pers. com., Schürer pers. com.).

Kerquelen and Crozet Island Pintail *A. acuta eatoni* and *A. drygalskyi*

J.-F. Voisin (in litt.) has stated that the Kerguelen Pintail (which he feels is a 'good' species and not merely a race of the Northern Pintail) is abundant along the coast of Kerguelen 'mainland' and of the many offshore islands. His studies of 1967 established a population size of several thousands. The duck breeds in inaccessible places far from human habitation, so is not directly threatened by Man. However, introductions of feral cats and Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* are likely to be a hazard as yet uninvestigated.

The status of the Crozet Pintail is more alarming. Dr Voisin estimated its numbers on Possession Island in 1966 to be about 400 adults, with a preponderance of males. On Hog Island (Ile aux Cochons) it is very rare, represented by only 30–50 individuals. On East Island, there are perhaps slightly more than on Possession Island. Penguin and Apostles' Islands were unvisited, but are small and steep and could hold few birds. Thus the race may consist of only 1,000 to 1,200 birds (see Paulian 1953; Derenne *et al* 1974; Derenne *et al* 1976; Despin *et al* 1972).

New Zealand Brown Teal *Anas aucklandica chlorotis*

Since 1975, 'Operation Pateke' has made progress: Ducks Unlimited (NZ) Ltd. members now hold 34 pairs of Brown Teal in captivity and have returned 19 birds to the Wildlife Service for release (F. N. Hayes, pers. com.). Eight pairs are held by the Wildlife Service and there are four further pairs in captivity that, it is hoped, will produce duck for release into the wild.

Hawaiian Duck *Anas (platyrhynchos) wyvilliana*

W. B. King (pers. com.) feels that the mongoose can still be prevented from becoming established on the island of Kauai, if a concerted effort is made to eliminate it. Captive-bred duck released on Oahu appear to be surviving and are still seen.

Mexican Duck *Anas platyrhynchos diazi*

The US Government is proposing to delete the Mexican Duck from Appendix I of CITES. The bird is thought to be secure in its primary range in central Mexico (a population in excess of 50,000 is indicated), and is expanding its historical range into Arizona and Texas in the USA. Its status as a subspecies of the Mallard rather than a species in its own right is now firmly established. The Mexican Duck has also been removed from the US List of Endangered & Threatened Wildlife where it has been since 1967.

Meller's Duck *Anas melleri*

The captive pair at Jersey Zoo proved very

productive in 1978 (Darby 1979), and birds are now held by the Wildfowl Trust at Martin Mere, Lancashire, as well as at Slimbridge. In egg size, clutch size, duckling weight and appearance, and growth rate, Meller's Duck is similar to the Mallard.

Blue Duck *Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos*

Fears continue to be expressed about the future of this species. A number of hydroelectric schemes are planned that will dam the rivers on which the duck occurs. A count of 64 birds was made recently on the Manganui, north of Raetihi, where one such project is being considered (F. N. Hayes, pers. com.).

New Zealand Scaup *Aythya novaeseelandiae*

Good numbers are being recorded in the wild, and over 100 are held in captivity in New Zealand with good breeding results (F. N. Hayes, pers. com.).

Mandarin *Aix galericulata*

D. S. Melville (pers. com.) writes that the

Mandarin is still being imported and sold in Hong Kong 'quite frequently'. Numbers are declining in the Soviet parts of its range due to degradation of habitat, the felling of old hollow trees and hunting (Red Data Book of the USSR), and a complete census is needed.

Australian Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus albipennis*

The Australian Government was proposing CITES Appendix II listing for this race of the Pygmy Goose. It is the rarest of the Australian duck and its range, already restricted, has been considerably reduced through drainage and land reclamation for agriculture. At the conference of the parties to CITES in Costa Rica, this application was withdrawn.

White-winged Wood Duck *Cairina scutulata*

The presence of this duck on the island of Siberut off the west coast of Sumatra has not been confirmed despite repeated searching (A. J. Whitten, pers. com.).

References

- Darby, P. W. H. 1979. The breeding of Meller's Duck *Anas melleri* (Sclater) at the Jersey Zoological Park. *Dodo* 15.
- Derenne, Ph., Lufberry, J. X. & Tollu, B. 1974. L'avifaune des îles Kerguelen. *CNFRA* 33: 57-87.
- Derenne, Ph., Mougin, J.-L., Steinberg, C. & Voisin, J.-F. 1976. Les oiseaux de l'île aux Cochons, archipel Crozet. *CNFRA* 40: 107-149.
- Despin, B., Mougin, J.-L. & Segonzac, M. 1972. Oiseaux et Mammifères de l'île de l'Est. Archipel Crozet. *CNFRA* 31, 106 pp.
- Kear, J. & Williams, G. 1978. Waterfowl at risk. *Wildfowl* 29: 5-21.
- Kitson, A. 1978. Notes on the waterfowl of Mongolia. *Wildfowl* 29: 23-30.
- Nowak, E. 1970. The waterfowl of Mongolia. *Wildfowl* 21: 61-68.
- Paulian, P. 1953. Pinnipèdes, Cétacés, Oiseaux des îles Kerguelen et Amsterdam. *Mem. Instit. Sc. Madagascar* ser. A. 8: 111-234.
- Tasmanian National Park & Wildlife Service. 1978. The Management of Cape Barren Geese in Tasmania. *Game Bird Breeders Gazette* 27(7): 28-32.
- Woolington, D. W., Springer, P. F. and Yparraguirre, D. R. 1979. Migration and wintering distribution of Aleutian Canada Geese. Pp 299-309 in R. L. Jarvis and J. C. Bartonek (eds.) *Management and Biology of Pacific Flyway Geese*. Corvallis, Oregon: OSU Book Stores, Inc.
- Yparraguirre, D. R. 1978. Distribution, Migration and Mortality of Aleutian Canada Geese in California, 1977-78. Mimeographed, from the Resources Agency, State of California Department of Fish & Game.

Dr Janet Kear, Wildfowl Trust, Martin Mere, Burscough, Lancs. UK.



The parasitic Black-headed Duck *Heteronetta atricapilla* from South America bred for the first time in captivity at Slimbridge in 1977 and each year since. Above: the foster mother Rosybill *Netta peposaca* leads a day-old Black-headed duckling and two of her own. Below: within two days the duckling has become independent. (Philippa Scott)

