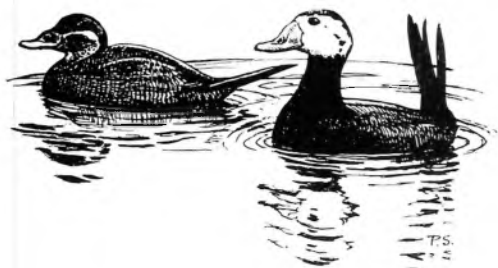


Progress in the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* Action Plan Project



SIMON ANSTEY

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, with the assistance of IWRB and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, has been undertaking a project to clarify the status of the White-headed Duck and elaborate the conservation actions necessary to ensure its survival.

The project is close to completion and the basic conclusions are:

1) **Status.** The world population has remained relatively stable over the past two decades and the present population is approximately 12,000 birds. However, distribution is becoming increasingly fragmented and the rate of decline of suitable habitats (shallow wetlands) in the present stronghold of the species (Turkey/USSR/Pakistan) is a threat, as is the excessive hunting disturbance at the primary wintering ground (Burdur Golu, Turkey).

2) **Action.** The priorities for action are essentially concerned with basic habitat conservation of key sites listed in the Plan. The Action Plan outlines a feasible and an inexpensive approach to ensure its survival and one which has relevance for the conservation of other declining species (e.g. Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca*, Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*), and a disappearing habitat type.

Outputs

a) **Documents:** Two documents will soon be produced, one a technical report presenting detailed information on status, ecology, action priorities and a bibliography, and the other a short "glossy" brochure for general dissemination (published in the appropriate languages).

b) **Databases:** A number of databases have been set up to assist the preparation of the Plan, provide a means for easy up-date and

allow monitoring of trends and evaluation of action taken.

- 1) **Site** database; consists of data on sites (location, protected status, description of habitat, fauna/flora, conservation status, status of species, action priorities) for each relevant country.
- 2) **Population** database; consisting of data from IWRB mid-winter counts (1967 to present) and all other available records collected from published and unpublished sources (location, date, source, numbers, notes).
- 3) **Literature** database; an extensive and unique collection of information on habitats, ecology, status of the species from published/unpublished sources and personal communications.

These databases should provide a valuable basis for other threatened species Action Plans.

Follow-up

An informal group of conservationists (organisations and individuals) for each of the relevant countries has been established and involved in the development of the Action Plan. These local contacts represent the best means for the implementation of action and the follow-up phase intends to sustain the involvement of this group (e.g. a formal Working Group if appropriate). The momentum of the project should also be maintained by the wide distribution of the reports and visits to relevant countries.

The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust has now established a small committee to oversee action and studies on threatened species, and a full-time officer has been employed to develop action plans for all species of vulnerable and threatened wildfowl.

Simon Anstey, The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester, GL2 7BT, England.