

FOREWORD

by

ARNULF MULLER-HELMBRECHT

Executive Secretary of CMS

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range. It is one of a small number of inter-governmental treaties concerned on a global scale with the conservation of wild animals and the habitats on which they depend. Parties to CMS cooperate to conserve migratory species and their habitats by providing strict protection for the endangered migratory species listed in Appendix I of the Convention; by concluding multilateral Agreements for the conservation and management of migratory species listed in Appendix II and by undertaking co-operative research activities.

CMS has a unique role to play in focussing attention on and addressing the conservation needs of the 107 endangered species presently listed in Appendix I. With a view to formalizing the implementation of the Convention's provisions relative to the conservation of Appendix I species, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to CMS established, at its 3rd Meeting, the instrument of "Concerted Actions for Appendix I species". Through appropriate resolutions, the COP encourages the Parties and instructs the Secretariat to develop concerted actions and prepare review reports on priority species included in Appendix I. Concerted Actions have so far materialized in an array of initiatives on several species, ranging from field research and conservation projects to the establishment of technical and institutional frameworks for action.

The Ferruginous duck (*Aythya nyroca*) is included in both Appendix I and II of CMS, and was designated for Concerted Actions under the Convention by the 6th Meeting of the COP (Cape Town, Nov. 1999). It is to be noted that the species is covered, for a major part of its range, under the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), the most ambitious Agreement concluded so far under the auspices of CMS. The incomplete coverage of the species' range by AEWA, and its general value as indicator of over-exploitation and loss of biodiversity in its migration range are the main reasons requiring the active involvement of the Convention in the conservation efforts for the species. The present workshop is actually only one element of a more comprehensive initiative, co-ordinated by BirdLife International and the Bulgarian Society of the Protection of Birds (BSPB) and jointly supported by CMS and AEWA, which includes as other main components field surveys for the species, the establishment of a network of experts, the preparation of an updated report on the status of the species and of a comprehensive Action Plan covering the whole range of the species.

The present workshop is central to this initiative. Besides providing decisive input to the elaboration of the above-mentioned status report and action plan, the meeting was certainly instrumental in establishing and strengthening contacts among researchers and conservationists involved in the conservation of the species throughout its range. The participants to the workshop actually constitute the bulk of the recently established Ferruginous Duck Conservation Team, coordinated by BSPB and which, from a CMS perspective should constitute a driving force for the further development of the initiative for this species. Finally, the UNEP/CMS Secretariat hopes that the publication and dissemination of this document will contribute to an increased awareness on the status of the species, encouraging further research and monitoring in the field and stimulating conservation actions by governments, local communities and dedicated non-governmental organizations.

The UNEP/CMS Secretariat wishes to express its thanks to the many people and organizations that made the workshop and this publication possible. These include primarily the participants to the workshop and the authors of the various papers, as their efforts and work constituted the basis for the workshop and this publication. A special thank you goes to BSPB, BirdLife International – European Division Office and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust which took care of the logistical and technical organization, as well as of the publication of these Proceedings.

The UNEP/CMS Secretariat is confident that the joint efforts of all stakeholders will eventually succeed in ensuring the restoration and long-term conservation of this charismatic species.



ARNULF MULLER-HELMBRECHT

FOREWORD

by

BERT LENTEN

Executive Secretary of AEWA

In the mid-1980s, the Government of the Netherlands took the lead in the development of an international regional treaty for the conservation of migratory waterbirds, under the framework of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS). This Agreement, known as the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), was concluded at the Negotiation Meeting in The Hague, The Netherlands in 1995. After the required number of ratifications was accrued, the AEWA entered into force on 1 November 1999. Since then the number of Contracting Parties has increased steadily and is currently 37.

The AEWA encompasses Europe, Central Asia, Middle East and Africa. The Agreement covers in total 235 species of birds ecologically dependent on wetlands for at least part of their annual cycle, including many species of pelicans, storks, flamingos, swans, geese, ducks, waders, gulls and terns.

At the second Session of the Meeting of the Parties (September 2002, Bonn) the draft of the second edition of the Report of the Conservation Status of Migratory Waterbird Species was distributed. This Report, compiled by Dr. Derek Scott, gives the latest information on the conservation status of all AEWA species, including the Ferruginous Duck. Four Ferruginous Duck populations are identified, of which three occur in the Agreement area. The conclusion of this report is that the number of Ferruginous Ducks has declined markedly throughout its main breeding range in Europe and Western Asia in recent decades and this decline is continuing.

The current conservation status of the species has been taken into account when reviewing the AEWA Action Plan 2000-onwards. In the 2003-2005 Action Plan, adopted by the MOP2, the long-term decline has been addressed. In accordance to the Agreement and its Action Plan, which are both legally binding, Contracting Parties are requested to take action to reverse the decline of species listed in Table 1 Column A, Category 1. The Ferruginous Duck is listed as such and therefore the UNEP/ AEWA Secretariat decided to support the meeting hosted by the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds. This meeting, held in Sofia in October 2002, is a starting point for sharing existing information and moreover for drafting an International Species Action Plan for the conservation of the Ferruginous Duck. The UNEP/ AEWA Secretariat hopes that through the efforts of BirdLife International, CMS, all experts involved and AEWA, all populations of the Ferruginous Duck could be restored to a favourable conservation status.



BERT LENTEN

FOREWORD

by

CANAN ORHUN

Head of European Division of BirdLife International

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Ferruginous Duck was considered, across its entire wide range from France to Mongolia and from Poland to Ethiopia, an extremely common species. Since then the destruction of wetlands has resulted in a dramatic decline of the species both in range and in numbers. In 1994, the species was classified as 'Vulnerable' at global level by IUCN. Following increased interest in the species and improved knowledge in some Asian areas, the species seems to be more numerous than previously thought and according to the last assessment, it is classified as 'Near Threatened'. Unfortunately, the forces that affected the species in the western part of the range (drainage, habitat loss, drought) are now affecting the eastern part of the range; furthermore the decline in Europe has not yet been stopped or reverted. In Europe, the species has adapted to take advantage of artificial habitats, such as fishponds, but the intensification of fish farms or their abandonment are now affecting breeding opportunities for the species.

The Ferruginous Duck is considered a priority in all international treaties dealing with species conservation (CMS, AEWA, Bern Convention and the European Union and CITES). A Pan-European action plan for the species was developed in 1996 and endorsed by CMS, the Bern Convention and the European Union. BirdLife International is well placed to contribute to the conservation of the Ferruginous Duck since it is active in 63% of the countries where the species occurs and 78% of the countries where it breeds. Already 185 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) have been identified. BirdLife International can contribute significantly to the fitness of the species, through monitoring, protecting and helping with the proper management of these sites.

The successful workshop organized by Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds with the support and co-operation of CMS and AEWA, and the contribution of the IUCN-SSC / Wetlands International Threatened Waterfowl Specialist Group, has allowed experts from a significant part of the species' range to meet, exchange information and ideas. This established the basis for the flyway species action plan to be drafted in 2003 as the common document for the conservation of the species. BirdLife looks forward to continuing co-operation with CMS and AEWA and other international parties for the conservation of this important species.



CANAN ORHUN

FOREWORD

by

BOJIDAR IVANOV

President of BSPB/BirdLife Bulgaria

Looking back just a few decades, I remember the numerous Ferruginous Duck population on the Bulgarian Danube island of Belene. The marshes there were full of life with almost all breeding species of ducks in Bulgaria, grebes and herons. Now these luxuriant marshes are dry and the Ferruginous Duck along with many other rare species have vanished. This is one of the bad examples of destruction of natural marshes in Bulgaria. In the 19th and early 20th century, there were over 200 000ha of natural wetlands in Bulgaria. Today, less than 10% remain. Many marshland species have undergone severe declines due to the drainage of wetlands for agriculture and development, and the damming and canalisation of rivers. This destruction continues even today in different forms. We continue to lose these valuable pieces of our Nature.

In some areas in Bulgaria, fishponds have been created on the sites of drained marshes. Unfortunately, the economic effect of this has been negative as fish production from natural wetlands along the Danube River was much higher than from expensive fish-farming. However, fish farming has created extensive fishponds that provide shelter for many wetland birds that have lost their natural habitats. In many countries in Europe fishponds are now the main habitat for the Ferruginous Duck. Nevertheless, the transition period in Bulgaria, like in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, brings new economic realities and extensive fishponds face dramatic changes and transformations. The authorities in CEE countries now have the responsibility to preserve these valuable sites. The Ferruginous Duck is just one of the many rare species of birds, amphibians, invertebrates and plants that have found shelter in these artificial wetlands. Many of the fishponds hold internationally important populations of waterbirds and are identified as IBAs and Ramsar sites. We need to focus our efforts on creating programmes which favour the survival of these extensive fishponds as biodiversity hot spots.

For almost 10 years now the Ferruginous Duck has been the focus of research and conservation activities of BSPB. A complete inventory of breeding sites has been produced and data on numbers and key sites is now available. BSPB has done a great deal of work on the species, including public awareness, protecting key sites managing breeding sites and promoting the value of the wetlands. Now that we co-ordinate the BirdLife International Ferruginous Duck Conservation Team, we look forward to sharing our experiences and working together with colleagues from throughout the Ferruginous Duck's range. I hope that the meeting hosted by BSPB on behalf of BirdLife International and CMS in October 2002 in Sofia has been a starting point for this partnership effort and that the data gathered in this book will help produce an effective Flyway Action Plan.



INTRODUCTION

by
THE EDITORS

The four most important international treaties in Europe dealing with species conservation (European Union Birds Directive, Bern Convention, Bonn Convention, and African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA)) all list the Ferruginous Duck among their priority species. Despite their different wording and provisions, all four treaties call for the legal protection of the species; the ban or the strict regulation of hunting; the prohibition of trade of the birds, eggs, or identifiable parts; the protection of important sites and its habitat. They all also call for and promote international co-operation among national governments that are party to the treaties.

In 1999, a pan-European Species Action Plan for the Ferruginous Duck was developed by BirdLife International (compiled by The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust), but it is clear that an action plan covering only part of the range, although helpful in addressing specific threats, will never be completely successful. In order to promote co-operation and action throughout the whole range of the species, the Bonn Convention and AEWA asked BirdLife International to develop a global Action Plan. The first step has been the collection and verification of contemporary information on population size, trend, threats and conservation measures in the 76 countries in which Ferruginous Duck occur. To facilitate this, BirdLife International and the Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds, in cooperation with the IUCN-SSC/Wetlands International Threatened Waterfowl Specialist Group, organised an international workshop in Sofia, Bulgaria, in October 2002 with the financial support of the Bonn Convention and AEWA. Experts attended from throughout the Ferruginous Duck's range - from Hungary and Poland to Russia, Turkey and Iran.

On the first day of the meeting, experts presented papers on the status, distribution, biology and conservation of the Ferruginous Duck. The second day then comprised interactive sessions to brainstorm the threats faced by Ferruginous Ducks and the conservation actions needed to address them. These proceedings include 25 papers either presented to the meeting or from invited experts who could not attend. We hope that they provide you with useful information on the Ferruginous Duck, its biology and conservation needs.

The meeting concluded that the Ferruginous Duck, despite having a widespread distribution, was still in grave danger. With the exception of a small number of large autumn and winter counts in south-east Asia, national populations are mostly in decline. For example, in the Ukraine, the breeding population had declined from 70 000 to only 1 000 pairs. Long-term droughts in Central Asia and Africa, no doubt recently exacerbated by global climate change, have caused many important breeding, staging and wintering areas to dry out. The long-term effect of this drought on the Ferruginous Duck is currently unknown, but potentially catastrophic. In many countries, Ferruginous Ducks now rely on artificial habitats, such as fish ponds and dams, for their survival. These factors, the Ferruginous Duck's widespread distribution, and detailed ecological research in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, suggest that the Ferruginous Duck may be one of the best indicator species of wetland conditions across Europe, Africa and Asia. The BirdLife International Ferruginous Duck Conservation Team, established at the meeting, will strive to monitor future population trends and to encourage conservation action to increase Ferruginous Duck numbers worldwide. Further information on the team and its activities can be found at <http://www.bspb.org/nyroca>.