

# WI-IUCN SSC Threatened Waterfowl Specialist Group

2016-2017 Report



Baz Hughes

## Chair

Baz Hughes

## Red List Authority Coordinator

BirdLife International

## Location/Affiliation

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, UK

## Number of members

268

## Mission statement

To conserve the world's most threatened waterfowl by focusing on direct action; developing, demonstrating and disseminating best conservation practice and processes; and actively promoting and encouraging information exchange on threatened waterfowl monitoring, research, conservation and public awareness worldwide. We will do this through producing and implementing international action plans, incorporating *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation tools, as necessary; by providing advice to policy makers, international conventions and practitioners; encouraging information exchange and cooperation amongst threatened waterfowl conservationists and with other relevant conventions and organisations.

## Main activities by Key Priority Area (2016 & 2017)

### Barometer of life

#### ■ Research activities

i. Study of genetic status of captive Baer's Pochard undertaken in collaboration with Cardiff University (Mike Bruford, Co-chair of Conservation Genetics Specialist Group). It demonstrated no hybridisation or inbreeding among the captive stock held at Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) Slimbridge. (KSR #32)

### Communications

#### ■ Conservation activities

i. Public exhibit of Madagascar Pochard (*Aythya innotata*) completed and opened by Princess Anne in Madagascar. (KSR #25)

### Conservation action

#### ■ Conservation activities

i. Viable captive population of 16 Baer's Pochard (eight pairs) are held in a specialist breeding centre at WWT Slimbridge. (KSR #25)

Baer's Pochard (*Aythya baeri*), Critically Endangered  
Photo: Luo Yihua



ii. Captive breeding population of ca. 100 individuals of Madagascar Pochard maintained in Madagascar. (KSR #25)

iii. Release plan of Madagascar Pochard due for completion in 2018. Release cage trialled at Slimbridge using wild Tufted Ducks. (KSR #25)

iv. With the purpose of ensuring sustainable management of water in the Madagascar Pochard facility in Madagascar, Aquaponics systems were developed at Slimbridge captive breeding facilities using Baer's Pochard (*Aythya baeri*) as a surrogate. Waste water from the Baer's Pochard ponds is filtered through growth beds to clean the water, which is then fed back into the Baer's Pochard ponds. Plants from the grow beds are fed to the ducks. (KSR #25)

v. Habitat management and restoration activities for Madagascar Pochard release program. Management responsibilities on Lake Sofia transferred to local communities. Rules and regulations established by the associations at Lake Sofia (Pochard release site) have been promoted during training and are displayed on the newly erected community information points in all villages. A recent vegetation report showed that there had been no significant deterioration of aquatic habitat at the lake. Areas for ecological restoration of aquatic, marginal and forest habitat have been identified and approved by the newly formed community-based associations. Reforestation of the lakeside will begin in 2018. Pesticide inputs on 100 pilot sites significantly reduced. (KSR #25)

vi. Eradication strategy of European Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*) reviewed and recommendations produced. (KSR #15)

#### ■ Proposal development and funding

i. Funds secured for Baer's Pochard Action Plan implementation workshop in China, March 2018, with estimated attendance of ca. 100 people. (KSR #30)



Male scaly-sided Merganser (*Mergus squamatus*), Endangered  
Photo: Peigi Liu



White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*), Endangered. Major threats are due to competition and hybridisation with the non-native North American Ruddy Duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*)  
Photo: WWT

#### ■ Research activities

i. Surveys of Baer's Pochard were conducted and small numbers of wintering individuals were found at two sites near Mandalay. Further surveys and community engagement have subsequently been carried out by BANCA, particularly at Pyu Lake. (KSR #12)

#### ■ Synergy

i. Letter of support provided for the French LIFE project to eradicate the Ruddy Duck from France. (KSR #29)

#### ■ Technical advice

i. Comments provided on final draft of AEWA White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) Action Plan. (KSR #18)

#### **Acknowledgements**

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#### **Targets for the quadrennium 2017-2020**

##### **Barometer of life**

Research activities: conduct paleoecology PhD study to determine past ecology of Lake Sofia to inform future management of the lake.

##### **Communications**

Communication: TWSG forum list server maintained to facilitate communication between TWSG members.

Technical advice: provide information and technical advice in support of the programmes of IUCN-SSC, Wetlands International, BirdLife International, Ramsar and others as necessary.

##### **Conservation action**

Conservation activities: (1) hold a Baer's Pochard Action Plan implementation workshop in China; (2) maintain a viable captive population of Baer's Pochard at Slimbridge; (3) maintain captive breeding population of Madagascar Pochard in Madagascar; (4) conduct Madagascar Pochard Disease Risk Assessment; (5) produce Madagascar Pochard release plan; (6) begin release of Madagascar Pochard into the wild; (7) release up to 40 Madagascar Pochard per annum into the wild at Lake Sofia; (8) conduct post release monitoring of Madagascar Pochard to improve understanding of pochard ecology and inform future management of the lake; (9) maintain Aquaponics systems in the Slimbridge captive breeding facilities of Baer's Pochard; (10) produce plan for how and when the Aquaponics system will be rolled out in Madagascar; (11) continue habitat management and restoration activities at the proposed release site of Madagascar Pochard, working through local associations; (12) review implementation of European Ruddy Duck eradication strategy and produce recommendations for its further implementation; (13) support EC LIFE project

to eradicate the Ruddy Duck from France and provide advice as required.

Research activities: conduct PhD study to understand the effect of conservation interventions at the last remaining breeding site of the Madagascar Pochard.

#### **Projected impact for the quadrennium 2017-2020**

Baer's Pochard. By the end of 2020, we will have held the Baer's Pochard workshop and produced a prioritised list of conservation actions and fundraised for the highest conservation priority projects. Until the workshop is held in March 2018, it is not possible to say what these will be.

Madagascar Pochard. By the end of 2020, we will have released over 100 Madagascar Pochard into the wild at Lake Sofia, will understand how best to release birds at Lake Sofia, and developed clear targets for success. We will have a better understanding of the past ecology of the breeding site and will understand the impact of conservation interventions.

White-headed Duck. By 2020, we hope that the population of Ruddy Ducks in France will have been significantly reduced.

#### **Summary of activities (2016-2017)**

Key Priority Area ratio: 3/7

Key Priority Areas addressed:

- Barometer of life (1 activity)
- Communications (1 activity)
- Conservation action (10 activities)

Main KSRs addressed: 12, 15, 18, 25, 29, 30, 32

KSR: Key Species Result