

Oxyura jamaicensis



Taxon	Family / Order / Class / Phylum
<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i> (Gmelin, 1789)	Anatidae / Anseriformes / Aves / Chordata

COMMON NAMES (English only)

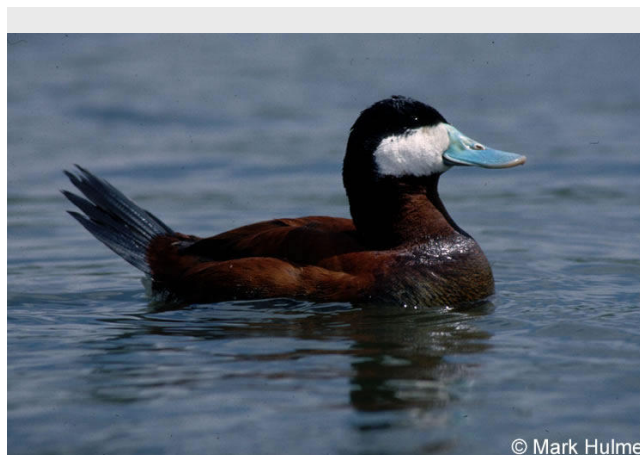
Ruddy Duck

SYNONYMS

Anas jamaicensis Gmelin, 1789

SHORT DESCRIPTION

A small diving duck inhabiting freshwater habitats. Omnivorous, feeding on molluscs, insects and their larvae especially chironomid larvae, but also on seeds and parts of water plants. Distinguished by a long, sometimes erect tail characteristic of the stiff-tail tribe *Oxyurini*, with males having a bright blue bill, black crown and nape, white cheeks and reddish body.



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Oxyura jamaicensis is an omnivorous small diving duck.

Photo: Mark Hulme

BIOLOGY/ECOLOGY

Dispersal mechanisms

Northern populations in North America migrate south to Florida and as far south as Costa Rica, seasonal dispersal in resident UK populations.

Reproduction

Breeds singly or colonially from April-August, usually breeds once per season, but can be double-brooded. It lays 4-12 eggs (max. 20, mean 7).

Known predators/herbivores

Egg predators include raccoons, minks, skunks, foxes, corvids, and Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) and Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) in the native range. Gulls, herons and fish such as pike and bass prey on ducklings. Adults hunted in parts of native and introduced range. Predators have limited impact on adults in winter, except for hunting pressure.

Resistant stages (seeds, spores etc.)

None.

HABITAT

Native (EUNIS code)

B: Coastal habitats, C: Inland surface water habitats, D: Mire, bog and fen habitats

Habitat occupied in invaded range (EUNIS code)

B: Coastal habitats, C: Inland surface water habitats, D: Mire, bog and fen habitats

Habitat requirements

Almost exclusively freshwater; prefers pools with fairly shallow bottoms and rich in aquatic plants; avoids flowing fresh water.

DISTRIBUTION

Native (EUNIS code)

Northwestern and north-central U.S.A. and Canada, Central America, Caribbean, Andean highlands

Known Introduced Range

Recorded in 21 Western Palearctic countries from Belgium east across to Turkey, south to Spain, Portugal, Italy and Morocco and north to Norway; Iceland. The UK has the largest population with around 5,000 individuals followed by France with 50 breeding pairs while other countries currently have very low numbers.




Trend

Increasing in several European countries; some actions to control populations exist in at least 15 Western Palearctic countries.

MAP (European distribution)



Legend

	Known in country		Known in CGRS square		Known in sea
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INTRODUCTION PATHWAY

Escapes and accidental releases from waterfowl collections and breeding farms
Natural spread to Europe from UK populations.

IMPACT

Ecosystem Impact

Hybridization with two species including the VULNERABLE White-headed Duck, *Oxyura leucocephala*. It is dominant over this species in the wild. First and second generation hybrid back-crosses with the Ruddy Duck are fertile and dominant also. A serious threat to this species.

Health and Social Impact

None.

Economic Impact

Costs of eradication are considerable. There is an ongoing eradication program in the UK since 1992 with the goal of reducing the population to less than 175 birds or 5 % of the 1999 population at an estimated cost of 3.6 million GB Pounds or 4.4 million Euros over a 4-6 year period. By 2004, at least 15 countries in the Western Palearctic were taking actions to control populations. Approximately 5,500 individuals have been controlled in various countries, particularly the UK (5,100), France (246) and Spain (217).

MANAGEMENT

Prevention

Major steps are to establish baseline information and monitor existing wild and captive populations. Legislation should be improved to prevent deliberate introductions and to limit or remove populations. Strict controls, such as licensing, should be put in place to prevent escapes or ban their inclusion in captive collections.

Mechanical

Culling (shooting) has been applied in France since 1998, Spain since 1993 and Portugal. The largest population and assumed source of some introductions is the UK where culling has been controversial.

Chemical

None.

Biological

None.

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