



Strasbourg, 20 July 2022

T-PVS(2022)18

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**EXPERT MEETING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE ERADICATION OF
THE RUDDY DUCK IN EUROPE**

Wednesday, 20 July 2022
14:30-16:00 CEST
online meeting

MEETING REPORT

*Document prepared by
the Secretariat of the Bern Convention and Peter Cranswick (WWT)*

1. Welcome by the Secretariat

The Secretariat welcomed the participants to the meeting. A round table of introductions followed the welcome remarks. The Secretariat recalled the last expert meeting to review progress on the eradication of the Ruddy Duck which had taken place online on 21 July 2021. As in 2021, a questionnaire to assess the progress in the eradication of the Ruddy Duck and the implementation of the Action Plan had been prepared by technical experts of Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) and sent to the Focal Points of Contracting Parties with a response deadline of 18 August 2022. The results of the questionnaire would be presented in a progress review report at the 42nd Standing Committee. The Secretariat thanked WWT for its continuous support in providing technical expertise to the Bern Convention over the past years for the eradication of the Ruddy Duck. It thanked in particular Mr Peter Cranswick and Ms Colette Hall for the preparation of the questionnaire and analysis of the incoming replies to the questionnaire.

2. Action Plan for the Eradication of the Ruddy Duck in the Western Palearctic: recap of targets

Mr Cranswick (WWT) gave a brief recap of the Action Plan for the Eradication of the Ruddy Duck and its targets, highlighting that the eradication of the Ruddy Duck is a collective task rather than that of an individual country. He stated that good progress had been made, with the number of the population of the Ruddy Duck having been reduced to a few hundred birds across the whole Western Palearctic.

3. National situation – progress towards the targets and issues encountered

The nominated experts gave a presentation on the progress made in their countries.

Belgium

Less than 10 birds remain in the country. No breeding has taken place between 2021-2022. One wintering bird has been detected in Wallonia (Haut Geer Nature reserve). In Summer 2020, there have been less than 10 birds in 8 locations. In Winter 2021-2022, there were a maximum of 10 birds in 9 locations. In regard to data, the citizen science platform www.waarnemingen.be, is believed to be the most complete source of information on the number of birds. The Belgian rapid response protocol was introduced (which pertains to the Flemish region where most birds occur, yet similar action is taken in Wallonia). Since 2019, an average of 2 birds was shot each year. Since the last Ruddy Duck Expert Meeting in 2021, 5 birds have been spotted, 3 of which have been culled. The current developments showed less birds and less removal in the Antwerp harbor area (shift towards more inland sites, border with France) than before. They also showed an occurrence of isolated and secretive birds (often in reed vegetation) at the border with Zeeuws-Vlaanderen (Netherlands). So far, the early warning is good and there are no problems with non-reporting. Some sites remain difficult for taking action to remove the Ruddy Duck (e.g. nature reserve Blankaart, too dry for boats). It is to be assumed that some birds found in the wild are of captive origin. Little communication to the public is undertaken regarding the actions of Ruddy Duck culling, but so far there are no interferences of birders or animal rights groups with the eradication plans. The slides of the expert's presentation are available [here](#).

France

Since the implementation of the LIFE project (2018-2023) in France, the number of Ruddy Ducks has reduced drastically (6-8 remaining birds in November 2021). Bird detection is ensured by reports from naturalist networks and by regular surveys by LIFE agents. The control action following the report was increased with a maximum intervention of 48 hours. These birds were located in the West by the Grand-Lieu Lake, with some individuals in the north and east of France. To eradicate the Ruddy Duck in the West, due to the size of the lake, birds are being hunted from 3 watchtowers in

winter and in the beginning of spring by shooting when birds move to the bank and reed beds. Also, as the birds tend to keep their distance from the watchtowers in winter, additional trapping is tested. No captive Ruddy Duck was killed in nature. Currently, regarding to the EU IAS regulation, a large operation regarding the Ruddy Duck population in captivity is underway with approximately 100 birds remaining. In winter 2022, a sudden arrival of around 50 Ruddy Ducks in the Grand-Lieu Lake with unclear origin has been observed (movement/migration from other countries?). However, about 50 percent of the population were adult individuals. The biggest challenge remains the investigation of their origin. The slides of the expert's presentation are available [here](#).

Germany

There are approximately 40 birds in the wild¹ in about 8 Federal States. As most of them remain in the same spot, double-counts are less likely (but not impossible). Difficulties emerge in i) the distinction of individuals over time and sites, ii) the fact that records from ornitho.de are unchecked and iii) the fact that some records may not be shared publicly by observers on the relevant Apps (due to animal welfare concerns). It remains unclear where individuals from previous winter sightings in North Rhine Westphalia, near the Dutch border, have gone. Although many locations of the Ruddy Duck in Germany stayed the same, there were several new ones in 2020-2022. In the wild, there was one breeding attempt in 2020, but the ducklings did not survive. One bird might have been killed 2021/2022 (unconfirmed), but in general the efforts to eradicate the present birds are presumably low. There is little information on the status of the Ruddy Duck in captivity and the numbers are presumably low. In the last year, only little effort was made to eradicate these birds, but they are not known to reproduce.

Germany's Federal States have a working group on the eradication of invasive species where the Ruddy Duck plays a role, but efforts could be increased. The practicality of shooting the birds and difficulties emerging with the use of weapons is currently still keeping the Federal States from an increased implementation of the eradication plans. The slides of the expert's presentation are available [here](#).

The Netherlands

A relatively big population of Ruddy Ducks is to be found in the Netherlands. Since 2017, 117 birds were controlled, 29 only in the season 2021-2022. Control is delegated to the provinces (sharing best practices and coordinating through an interprovincial working group). There is an ambition for a cross-border approach for professional hunters, so that provinces can share the associated costs. In 2022, the province of Noord-Holland, one with the highest number of wild Ruddy Ducks, overcame legal culling barriers and updated its licensing, so that the province will now be able to engage hunters for the Ruddy Duck control. Despite this achievement, legal barriers remain an obstacle to the eradication of the Ruddy Duck in other provinces. Other challenges relate to i) control in impassable or urban areas where shooting is not possible or safe, ii) insufficient resources of Invasive Alien Species experts at provincial level, iii) ethical concerns of local population to report the presence of Ruddy ducks through citizen science platforms, and iii) perceived public reaction of eradication programmes. The expectation is that culling of wild Ruddy Ducks will increase in the next year, as other provinces might be able to overcome their legal barriers and take actions for the eradication.

In June 2022, a field visit was hosted by the Dutch province of Flevoland in which experts from both United Kingdom and France participated. The visit was found beneficial for sharing best practices on control measures through hunters and traps. The slides of the expert's presentation are available [here](#).

¹ The numbers of Ruddy Ducks in the wild can be found on [Home ornitho.de / ornitho.lu - www.ornitho.de](https://www.ornitho.de/). Further information can be found on State Bird Conservancies of the Federal States and [EASIN - European Alien Species Information Network \(europa.eu\)](https://easin.europa.eu/).

United Kingdom

Since 2014, the population of Ruddy Ducks in the UK declined significantly. Only 15 to 20 individuals remaining in-country. Breeding does not occur yearly, and mixed-sex populations were found only in three areas. The strategy for the UK is to continue monitoring efforts in the medium-term, ensure eradication efforts are mainstreamed in all the provinces where Ruddy Ducks were reported and prioritise the removal of adult females to prevent breeding. The slides of the expert's presentation are available [here](#).

Spain

The Secretariat informed the participants that the invited expert for Spain, a Tier 2 country, was excused from the meeting, but the expert's presentation had been sent, available [here](#).

4. Solutions, next steps, and recommendations

The participants recognised that progress had been made in most countries, although new individuals have recently been reported in France and Germany. The participants discussed the possibility to create a dashboard to be used by neighbouring Contracting Parties, especially for reports of birds located along national borders. To tackle the sudden appearance of new individuals, it was suggested to continue monitoring the population and, if possible, perform genetic analysis to understand where the population comes from. For capacity building in Germany, it was considered essential to ensure that all control mechanisms are in place and that they allow fast response mechanisms.

The progress in the Netherlands was noted as a very positive development and it was hoped that more Ruddy Ducks would be eradicated in 2023. It was suggested that the province of Noord-Holland would champion overcoming legal barriers to other provinces via the interprovincial working group. The participants expressed their willingness to support the Netherlands in communicating the Ruddy Duck eradication programme to the wider public and relevant stakeholders. They also thanked Germany for its contribution in collecting and providing data.

Next steps could be to increase the visibility of the Ruddy Duck eradication programme across the Western Palearctic and identify key performance indicators related to the Action Plan for the Eradication of the Ruddy Duck to facilitate monitoring. WWT expressed its availability to support Contracting Parties in their efforts.

5. Any other issues

The next expert meeting on the eradication of the Ruddy Duck will be held in 2023, tentatively scheduled for July.

The Secretariat thanked the participants for the engaged and fruitful meeting. It also thanked Mr Cranswick (WWT) for his assistance and guidance throughout the discussion.

Annex I

AGENDA

1. **Welcome by the Secretariat**
2. **Action Plan for the Eradication of the Ruddy Duck in the Western Palaearctic: recap of targets**
3. **National situation – progress towards the targets and issues encountered**

Updates from the different states:

- Belgium
- France
- Germany
- The Netherlands
- Spain
- United Kingdom

4. **Solutions, next steps, and recommendations**
5. **Any other issues**

Annex II

PARTICIPANT LIST

Contracting Parties	Name and Function
Belgium	Tim ADRIAENS Scientist, Research Institute for Nature and Forest (INBO) Brussels
France	Jean François MAILLARD Invasive species specialist, French Biodiversity Agency Nantes Adrien TABLEAU Invasive species specialist and LIFE Oxyura project coordinator, French Biodiversity Agency Nantes Maxime BREDIN Project manager and field operator, LIFE Oxyura project, French Biodiversity Agency Nantes
Germany	Peter HERKENRATH Head of bird conservation

	North Rhine-Westphalia Office of Nature, Environment and Consumer Protection, Recklinghausen
Netherlands	Carlijn VAN DER BAAN Provincie Noord-Holland Beleidsadviseur sector Groen Haarlem
Spain	Rubén MORENO-OPO DÍAZ-MECO (<i>excused</i>) Jefe de Sección Técnica Subdirección General de Biodiversidad Terrestre y Marina Ministerio para la Transición Ecológica y el Reto Demográfico Madrid
United Kingdom	Iain HENDERSON Chief Inspector, Pilot Non-Native Species Inspectorate Animal and Plant Health Agency London
Independent consultant	Name and Function
	Peter CRANSWICK Senior Project Development Manager, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT)
	Colette HALL Senior Research Officer, WWT
Council of Europe/ Secretariat of Bern Convention	Name and Function
	Ursula STICKER Secretary of the Bern Convention
	Nadia SAPORITO Junior Project Officer
	Roxane BRADACZEK Trainee