



Life Oxyura - Oxyura against Oxyura.  
Eradicate the Ruddy duck to save the  
endangered White-headed duck from  
extinction.

LIFE17 NAT/FR/000542



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Project description:

Background

The white-headed duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) is a threatened Eurasian species, with a known population size estimated at 25 000 individuals. It is resident in North Africa, breeds and winters in Turkey and can be found in several EU countries over winter. The main threat to this species is genetic introgression by hybridisation with the ruddy duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*), a species introduced from North America. Since 1997, 14 000 ruddy ducks have been killed in Europe. Approximately 400 remain, of which 55 % are in France and 45 % in the Netherlands, Belgium, UK, and occasionally Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and Switzerland. In France, 250 to 350 ruddy ducks are also held in captivity, with a risk of escape into the wild. Actions undertaken in France since 1997 have not eradicated the ruddy duck due to insufficient resources and incoming ducks, particularly from the UK. The near-eradication of the UK's population together with control measures implemented in Belgium and the Netherlands now make the eradication of ruddy duck in France a realistic possibility.

Objectives

The objective of the Life Oxyura project is to eradicate the invasive non-native ruddy duck in the natural environment in France by 2023. This will stop this introduced species interbreeding with the endangered white-headed duck. Thus, it will prevent the exchange of genes between species and the extinction of the native duck species. The project also aims to prevent any new introductions of the ruddy duck by 2020, and to reduce the captive population to zero by 2030

(with the exception of zoos). In addition, the project team will encourage the rapid detection and destruction of ruddy ducks in the EU countries where they occur most commonly, to prevent their further spread to south and south-east Europe and Northern Africa.

The project implements the Birds Directive, under which the white-headed duck is listed. It also contributes to the Habitats Directive, the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, and the Regulation on invasive alien (non-native) species.

Expected results:

- Establishment of a network of observers covering the main areas where ruddy duck occurs in France (at least 95 % of the population) - its members (e.g. naturalists, site managers) will communicate sightings within 24 hours;
- New ruddy duck breeding sites identified for culling operations;
- Improved culling methods implemented regularly (15 operations per winter) on the main ruddy duck wintering site;
- Increased efficiency of culling operations (by at least 20 % during the breeding season) due to rapid interventions following new reports of ruddy duck and an intensification of control measures, enabling a high proportion of females to be exterminated before they reproduce to achieve a reduction in the wintering population by at least 50 % each year;
- Modelled population dynamics of ruddy duck to predict the effect of control measures on population trends (so control measures can be adapted if necessary), to define new annual objectives, and to observe trends in wintering bird numbers;
- For captive ruddy duck, all duck owners will know the new Regulation on invasive alien species and whom to contact to comply with it, while breeders not yet declared will be identified (e.g. by monitoring internet exchanges and analysing breeding registers);
- All declared duck holdings will comply with the Regulation on invasive alien species by 2019, and the ducks kept will be contained and unable to breed;
- The general public and wetland users (e.g. naturalists, hunters, fishermen, landowners) in France will be regularly informed and made aware of the issue; and
- To prevent hybridisation in Europe and North Africa, the sites known to potentially host ruddy ducks in Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany, Italy and Switzerland will be regularly monitored, and eradication operations promptly implemented with appropriate means and techniques.

Results

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

## Biodiversity issues - Invasive species

### Keywords

monitoring system, population dynamics, preventive measure

### Target EU Legislation

- Nature protection and Biodiversity
- Regulation 1143/2014 - Prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien ...
- COM(2011) 244 final “Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 ...
- Directive 79/409 - Conservation of wild birds (02.04.1979)

### Target species

Oxyura leucocephala

### Natura 2000 sites

Not applicable

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### Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage
Type of organisation	National authority
Description	ONCFS is the French National Agency for Hunting and Wildlife. It is in charge of the hunting and environmental police and provides technical support for policy makers, managers and planners in rural areas. It is directly connected to the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, and has around 1 500 staff.
Partners	Société Nationale de Protection de la Nature

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## Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE17 NAT/FR/000542
Duration	01-OCT-2018 to 30-DEC -2023
Total budget	1,674,361.00 €
EU contribution	1,210,362.00 €
Project location	Île,de,France(France) Champagne-Ardenne(France) Picardie(France) Haute-Normandie(France) Centre(France) Basse-Normandie(France) Bourgogne(France) Nord-Pas-De-Calais(France) Lorraine(France) Alsace(France) Franche-Comté(France) Pays de la Loire(France) Bretagne(France) Poitou-Charentes(France) Aquitaine(France) Midi-Pyrénées(France) Limousin(France) Rhône-Alpes(France) Auvergne(France) Languedoc-Roussillon(France) Provence-Alpes-Côte d' Azur(France) Corse(France) Guadeloupe(France) Martinique(France) Guyane(France) Réunion(France)

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