

# FERRUGINOUS DUCK POPULATION STATUS IN RUSSIA

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## Distribution

In Russia, the Ferruginous Duck inhabits deserts, semi-deserts, steppe, and forest-steppe regions. In certain areas, it penetrates the southern taiga zone. The northern limits of the breeding range of the species occur in Russia. In the past, the breeding range stretched north to the Voronezh Region and the Middle Volga.

Irregular breeding records were known from the far North, for example in Pskov, Smolensk, Kaluga, and Yaroslavl Provinces in European Russia (Dementiev & Gladkov, 1952). In Western Siberia the species range extended up to 56°N (Stepanyan, 1990). Further eastwards it extended to the foothills of the Altai Mountains (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: Historical breeding distribution of Ferruginous Duck in Russia (1910-1970s).  
Key: 1 - northern limit of the breeding range; 2 - records of irregular breeding; 3 - vagrants.

Recently, the species breeding range has contracted significantly. In the European part of Russia, the Ferruginous Duck now occurs only in territories adjacent to the Sea of Azov, Caucasus and Lower Volga (Fig. 2). Breeding now takes place in the Don and Kuban Deltas in Rostov and Krasnodar Provinces, on the north-western coast of the Caspian Sea in the Dagestan Republic, and in the Lower Volga region in Astrakhan and Volgograd Provinces. In total, there are only 10 known breeding sites: the Don River Delta, the Kuban River Delta and Yejsky

Lagoon at the Sea of Azov, four wetlands on the north-western coast of the Caspian Sea (Temirgoiskiye Lakes, Achikolskiye Lakes, Mekhteb Reservoir and Adzhi Lake), and the Volga Delta, Sarpa Lakes and Western Ilmen area in the Lower Volga region (Sviridova & Zubakin, 2000).

Four staging areas are known: Sulakskaya and Turalinskaya Lagoons on the north-western coast of the Caspian Sea in the Dagestan Republic, Varfolomeevskiye salt marshes (Saratov Province) and Novokvasnikovski salt-lake

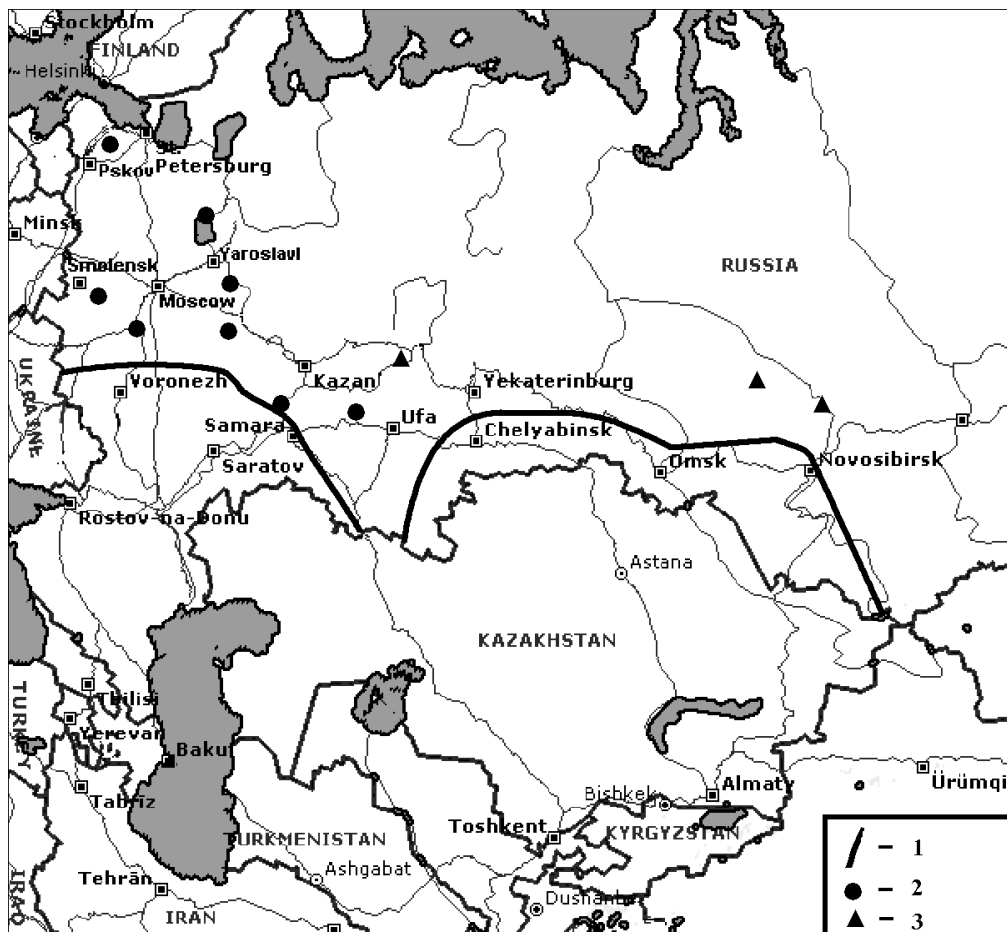


Fig. 2: Current distribution of Ferruginous Duck in Russia. Key: 1-main breeding areas; 2-breeding records in 1990s; 3-records of migrating birds and vagrants; ?-no data

(Volgograd Province) in the Lower Volga region. There are also a few recent records of migrating birds in Penza, Ulyanovsk, Saratov and Volgograd Provinces (Sviridova & Zubakin, 2000; Borodin *et al.*, 2001).

In south-western Siberia the species is observed in Chelyabinsk, Omsk, Novosibirsk and Altai Provinces (Garms, 1998; Irisova, 1998; Yakimenko, 1998). Recently breeding was confirmed in the southern taiga of Omsk Province (Yakimenko, 1998) and in the steppe and forest-steppe of Altai Province (Garms, 1998). In other regions of Western Siberia there are records of migrating birds.

### **Trends and Numbers**

The only estimation of the Ferruginous Duck numbers is for the European part of Russia at the end of 1980s. Tucker & Heath (1994) estimated that 500-1 500 pairs bred, but recent studies suggest this was an overestimate. Numbers are currently decreasing throughout the species range. In the Volga Delta, breeding numbers have decreased from 1 000 pairs in 1968 to none in 1995. Counts during the IBA project in 1996-1998 suggested the European part of Russia held 410-560 breeding pairs (Sviridova & Zubakin, 2000). During migration, 350-570 birds have been counted, and during winter 20-200 birds, mainly on the Caspian Sea coast of the Dagestan Republic (Sviridova & Zubakin, 2000). In Western Siberia, current breeding numbers are unknown, but are thought not to exceed several dozen individuals. Breeding has never been confirmed during many years of research in most regions of the Western Siberian Plain. On the basis of this information, the number of Ferruginous Duck in Russia are estimated at 500-700 breeding pairs.

### **Threats**

The shrinking breeding range and declining numbers in Russia are mainly the result of destruction of breeding habitat, and climate change leading to drought conditions (Krivenko, 1991). For example, many steppe lakes inhabited by Ferruginous Duck in Northern Kazakhstan and southern Russia dried up during successive annual droughts in 1990s. Therefore, the species disappeared over large areas where formerly it was comparatively common.

Hunting is unlikely to be an important factor in the Ferruginous Ducks decline in Russia. The species is not a popular quarry species in Russia and hunters do not shoot these ducks, especially when other duck species are available. However, hunting disturbance might contribute to negative trends especially on staging areas and wintering grounds.

### **Conservation Measures**

Thanks to the efforts of Russian ornithologists following the last Ferruginous Duck meeting in Hungary, the Ferruginous Duck was listed in the Red Data Book of the Russian Federation (2000) as Category II (Vulnerable). The species is only really strictly conserved in the Astrakhansky, Rostovsky, Dagestansky and Chernye Zemli Nature Reserves and the Azov Federal Zakaznik. Implementing protective measures on the breeding grounds and staging areas, the creation of new protected areas, and the prohibition of spring hunting on waterfowl are the most important conservation needs for the Ferruginous Duck. Species and habitat protection in the steppe and forest-steppe zones of Russia are also needed.

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