

INTERNATIONAL WATERBIRD CENSUS REPORT

TURKEY · 2009-2018



Mediterranean Waterbirds
Oiseaux d'eau Méditerranée
الطيور المائية بمنطقة البحر المتوسط

LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS

Since the beginning of the Mid-Winter Waterbird Counts in Turkey, in 1967, many local and international ornithologists and bird enthusiasts have been involved; their valuable commitment has made it possible to continue these counts up until the present day. In the last 10 years alone, a total of 851 volunteers have participated in the programme, all of which have been very supportive over the years, unfortunately it would be impossible to mention them all by name, even though they have all played a key role in making the waterbird counts a success.

There are some key NGOs, institutions and individuals who do deserve a special mention, as they have coordinated the counts in the different Turkish regions: General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks and all its branch offices; Doğa Araştırmaları Derneği (Nature Research Society); Doğa Derneği (Doga); KuzeyDoga Society; Akdeniz University Birdwatching Community; Antalya Birdwatching Community; Burdur Birdwatching Community; İstanbul Birdwatching Community (IKGT); Ondokuz Mayıs University Birdwatching Community; Sıbaşı Birdwatching Community (SıbaşıKuş); Zonguldak University Birdwatching Community; Ali Atahan, Cem Akın; Cemil Gezgın; Dilara Arslan; Emin Gündüz; Emrah Çoban; Ergün Bacak; Evrim Tabur; Güler Bozok; Halil Fırat; Hürmüz Yenıceli; İlker Özbahar; Kadri Kaya; Kerem Ali Boyla; Lale Aktay Sözüer; Mehmet Atahan; Mehmet Ünlü; Merve Ünal; Murat Biricik; Mustafa Erturhan; Ortaç Onmuş; Ömer Döndüren; Pınar Gündoğdu; Recep Karakaş; Süleyman Ekşiođlu; Tamer Yılmaz; Tuğba Gözükara; Tuğba Usta; Ümit Bolat.

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A WEAKENED NETWORK IN 2009-2010 WHICH THEN RECOVERED QUICKLY

Since the beginning of the International Waterbird Census in Turkey, a total of 286 sites have been counted. Some sites have only been visited once, while around 80 have been counted every year. As it was not feasible to visit all the sites during the censuses, in 2011 the sites were prioritised, and the methodology and counting points for each wetland were standardised so that the procedure could be easily reproduced and followed by everyone involved, even those who are counting for the first time. During 2009-2018, 202 sites were counted at least once; coverage was at its lowest (11%) in 2010, and at its highest (53%) in 2018.

NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS:

AT LEAST **851** VOLUNTEER COUNTERS



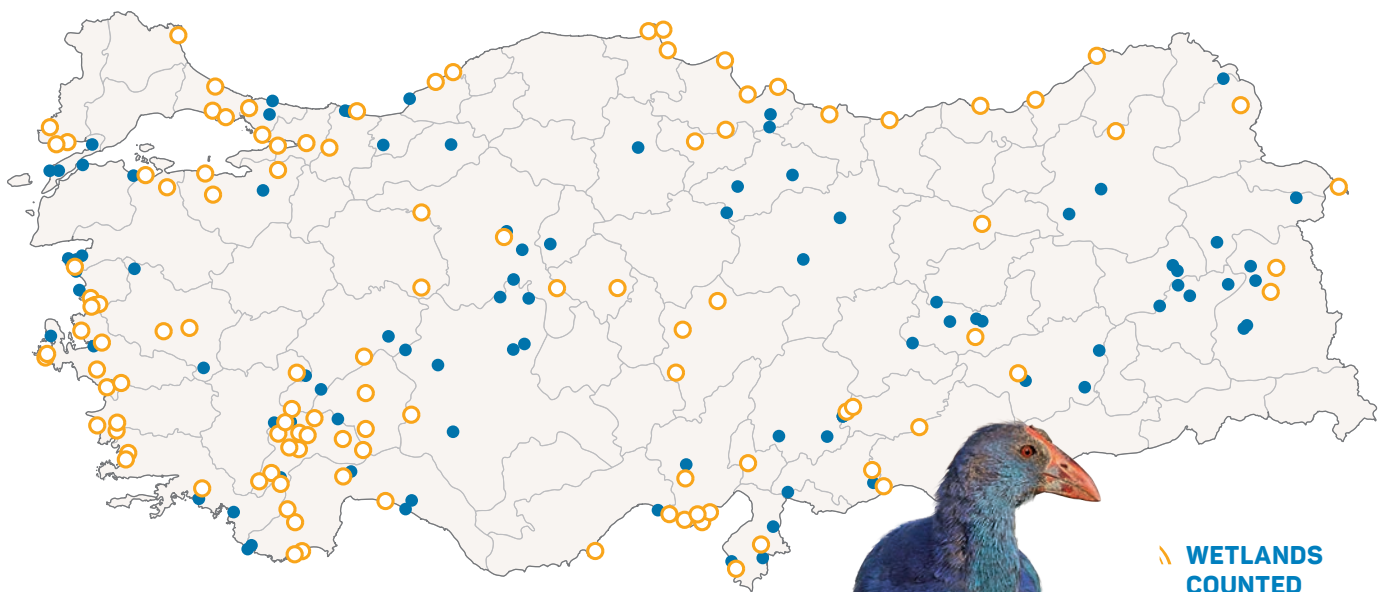
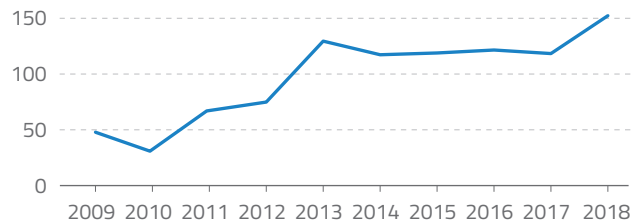
NUMBER OF WETLANDS COUNTED:

MORE THAN **98** WETLANDS COUNTED ANNUAL AVERAGE



Reduced interest and support by volunteers, in 2009 and 2010, led to a decrease in the number of wetlands counted which led to the establishment of the "Mid-Winter Waterbird Census Committee", in 2011. The committee succeeded to motivate the interest of volunteers, which brought about a parallel increase in the number of counted wetlands. Later, in 2014, the involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry General Directorate of Nature Conservation and Natural Parks resulted in broader coverage.

NUMBER OF MONITORED SITES counted from 2009 to 2018

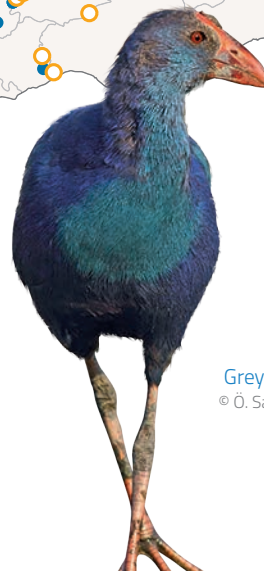


0 100 200 km

National census network

- Sites irregularly counted (*less than 5 of the years between 2009 and 2018*)
- Sites regularly counted (*at least 5 of the years between 2009 and 2018*)

WETLANDS COUNTED in Turkey from 2009 to 2018



Grey-headed Swamphen © Ö. Sağlam

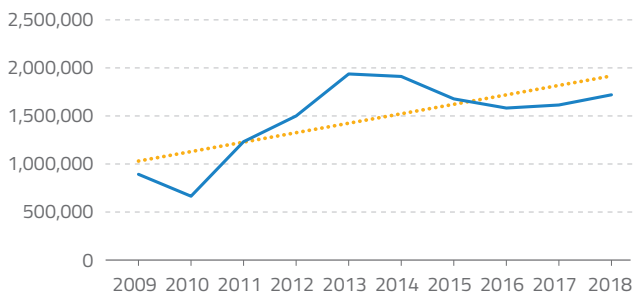
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A POSITIVE TREND OF WATERBIRD POPULATIONS, MANY SPECIES ON THE RISE

During 2009-2018, the highest numbers were recorded in 2013: a total of 1,927,935 waterbirds, belonging to 98 different species. The lowest count was in 2010: 666,370 waterbirds from 89 different species. There was an overall positive trend during these 10 years. The species totals and trends for 2018 are summarised in the table below. In 2018, the Eurasian Coot was the most abundant waterbird with 49% (849,093 birds) counted across 110 wetlands. The national total for Common Pochard, Mallard, Eurasian Teal, Greater Flamingo and Black-headed Gull was more than 50,000 individuals.

According to population changes during the periods 2009-13 and 2014-18, the majority of species have been on the rise; 26% of species populations have increased, while 72% are stable; only the Common Scoter population has seen a decline.

NUMBER OF COUNTED WATERBIRDS from 2009 to 2018



Juvenile swans on Kizilirmak Lake - © Ö. Sağlam

SPECIES IN DECLINE, ACCORDING TO CALCULATIONS MADE DURING THE PERIOD 2009-2018

ORDER	Mean
Species	2009-2013 2014-2018
ANSERIFORMES	
Common Scoter <i>Melanitta nigra</i>	23 4



SPECIES ON THE RISE, ACCORDING TO CALCULATIONS MADE DURING THE PERIOD 2009-2018

ORDER	Mean
Species	2009-2013 2014-2018
ANSERIFORMES	
Bewick's Swan <i>Cygnus columbianus</i>	275 3,065
Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>	71 159
Ruddy Shelduck <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	10,419 26,358
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	50,191 79,227
PODICIPEDIFORMES	
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	3,748 8,359
GRUIFORMES	
Common Crane <i>Grus grus</i>	1,695 4,676
GAVIIFORMES	
Black-throated Loon <i>Gavia arctica</i>	565 5,124
PELECANIFORMES	
Black-crowned Night-Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	21 117
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	1,396 3,383
Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>	1,344 2,689
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	581 1,008
CHARADRIIFORMES	
Spur-winged Lapwing <i>Vanellus spinosus</i>	4 30
Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	342 888
Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	568 1,261
Ruddy Turnstone <i>Arenaria interpres</i>	3 11
Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>	6,965 13,557
Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	123 252
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	39 354
Green Sandpiper <i>Tringa ochropus</i>	62 161
Marsh Sandpiper <i>Tringa stagnatilis</i>	4 11
Pallas's Gull <i>Larus ichthyaeus</i>	523 1,376
Yellow-legged Gull <i>Larus michahellis</i>	25,682 55,179
Armenian Gull <i>Larus armenicus</i>	7,741 29,421



Species considered as stable
 according to calculations
 made during the period 2009-2018



ORDER		Mean	
Species		2009-2013	2014-2018
ANSERIFORMES			
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	1,704	3,552
Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	749	1,499
Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	286	544
Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	1,403	1,441
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	251	40
Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>	474	1,536
White-headed Duck	<i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>	1,443	920
Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	8,090	8,846
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>	24,400	27,803
Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	68,966	95,096
Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	130	393
Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	14,604	22,626
Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	15,595	16,624
Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	5,109	4,341
Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	34,242	38,366
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	7,102	9,585
Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	97,464	98,865
PODICIPEDIFORMES			
Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	22,169	38,355
Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	2,571	4,541
PHOENICOPTERIFORMES			
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	54,896	89,046
PELECANIFORMES			
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	6	8
Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>	15	32
Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	206	250
Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>	132	106
Eurasian Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	6	8
Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	78	59
Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	32,243	44,630
European Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	636	498
Pygmy Cormorant	<i>Microcarbo pygmeus</i>	3,597	5,237
Dalmatian Pelican	<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>	1,391	2,090
Great White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>	27	113

ORDER		Mean	
Species		2009-2013	2014-2018
GRUIFORMES			
Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>	29	30
Purple Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	849	407
Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	522,632	700,842
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	363	521
PROCELLARIIFORMES			
Yelkouan Shearwater	<i>Puffinus yelkouan</i>	3,823	3,821
CHARADRIIFORMES			
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	24	46
Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>	6	12
Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	2,355	2,202
Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	4,410	6,271
Common Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	78	97
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>	608	1,003
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	735	1,568
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	1,506	622
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	8	17
Ruff	<i>Calidris pugnax</i>	37	77
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	64	22
Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	1,616	2,147
Eurasian Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	6	8
Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	62	94
Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	57	263
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	1,532	1,784
Slender-billed Gull	<i>Larus genei</i>	801	1,022
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	80,748	104,563
Little Gull	<i>Larus minutus</i>	83	460
Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>	379	1,035
Mew Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	4,353	4,517
Caspian Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	192	424
Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	4	11
Caspian Tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	36	77
Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>	298	416
Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>	9	31
Parasitic Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	3	7

2018 counts and 10 year trends of numbers of regular wintering waterbird species recorded in Turkey during the period 2009-2018



DUCKS, COOTS AND GULLS DOMINATE THE WATERBIRD CENSUS REPORTS

All waterbird species defined by BirdLife International and Wetlands International have been counted during these census reports. Kingfishers, Shearwaters and raptors ecologically connected to wetlands are also targeted in Turkey, and are evaluated within the national reports; in this report, Kingfishers and raptors have been excluded. The most dominant waterbird groups were Ducks, Coots, Rails and Crakes, and Gulls. An increase was seen in all waterbird groups during 2009-2013 and 2014-2018, which may be due to the increase in the number of covered areas.



Counting waterbirds on the Kızılırmak Delta - © H. Kayıkçı

Increases ranged from 21% to 804%, whereas Shearwaters showed no change. The highest change was recorded in Loons. The Black Sea coasts were not covered during 2009-2011; after this period Loon numbers have fluctuated over the years. For swans, especially the Bewick's Swan, wintering numbers have increased over time, and have shown a 198% increase. Since the discovery of a Crane roosting site at Yumurtalık Lagoon in 2013, Crane numbers have increased by 176%. Herons have increased by 114%, especially the Grey Heron (142%), the Great Egret (100%), and the Little Egret (73%).

GROUPS	MEAN 2009-2013	MEAN 2014-2018
Coots, Rails and Crakes	523,872	701,800
Ducks	400,841	483,418
Gulls and Terns	122,314	205,441
Flamingos	54,497	89,046
Cormorants	36,479	50,370
Grebes	28,489	51,258
Waders	22,244	34,930
Shearwaters	3,823	3,821
Hérons	3,402	7,265
Swans	2,943	8,760
Geese	1,705	2,009
Cranes	1,695	4,676
Pelicans	1,427	2,218
Sea ducks	897	1,793
Loons	567	5,127
Storks, Ibis and Spoonbills	305	375
Woodcocks and Snipes	127	261
TOTAL WATERBIRDS (5 YEAR AVERAGE)	1,205,626	1,652,569

MEAN NUMBERS OF WATERBIRDS counted during the mid-January census, 2009-2013 and 2014-2018



Eurasian Wigeons on meadows around the Kızılırmak Delta - © N. Yavuz

A GREAT POTENTIAL FOR RAMSAR SITES

During 2009–2013, a mean total of 1,240,902 waterbirds was recorded across 153 sites; and in 2014–2018 a mean total of 1,701,975 waterbirds was recorded across 186 sites. Akyatan and Yumurtalık Lagoons on the Mediterranean; Bafa Lake, Büyük Menderes Delta, Gediz Delta and Marmara Lake on the Aegean; Büyükçekmece Lake, Manyas Lake, Uluabat Lake on the Marmara; Kızılırmak Delta on the Black Sea, and Eğirdir Lake, Sarıyar Dam in Central Anatolia, all support high numbers of waterbirds during the winter. The majority of waterbirds were recorded on coastal wetlands which have a wide variety of habitats preferred by many different species. The lowest number of individuals was seen in East Central and Eastern Anatolia due to the mostly frozen lakes and dams there.



SITES OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

	Ramsar Site	> 20,000 waterbirds	Common Pochard	Common Teal	Eurasian Wigeon	Ferruginous Duck	Gadwall	Red-crested Pochard	Ruddy Shelduck	Smew	Tufted Duck	White-headed Duck	Mute Swan	Tundra Swan	Whooper Swan	Armenian Gull	Black-headed Gull	Common Coot	Common Crane	Dalmatian Pelican	European Shag	Great Crested Grebe	Greater Flamingo	Pied Avocet
Number of sites		22	5	3	3	1	1	1	17	1	1	1	1	5	2	12	1	6	1	9	1	1	5	1
ADANA PROVINCE																								
Akyatan gölü	(R)	○		○	○													○						○
Seyhan baraj gölü																○								
Yumurtalık lagünü	(R)	○																	○					○
ADIYAMA PROVINCE																								
Atatürk barajı																○								
AMASYA PROVINCE																								
Yedikır barajı								○																
ANKARA PROVINCE																								
Hirfanlı barajı		○	○					○			○			○		○		○						
Tol gölü									○															
AYDIN PROVINCE																								
Bafa gölü		○																○		○				
Büyük Menderes deltası		○		○																○				○
BALIKESİR PROVINCE																								
Manyas gölü	(R)	○	○							○		○								○				
BITLIS PROVINCE																								
İron sazlığı																	○							
Nazik gölü																	○							
BURDUR PROVINCE																								
Akgöl									○															
Burdur gölü	(R)								○															
Karataş gölü									○															
BURSA PROVINCE																								
Kocaçay deltası									○															
Uluabat gölü	(R)	○	○																		○			
ÇANAKKALE PROVINCE																								
Kavak deltası																					○			
DENİZLİ PROVINCE																								
Işıklı gölü		○						○										○						

WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE FOR WATERBIRDS identification based on mid-January (2014–2018) count data for Ramsar Criteria 5 and 6*. Empty cells in the “Ramsar site” column identify sites not included in the Ramsar network; (R) identifies wetlands with a Ramsar designation.

*Criterion 5: A wetland can be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds.

Criterion 6: A wetland can be considered internationally important if it regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird.

A GREAT POTENTIAL FOR RAMSAR SITES

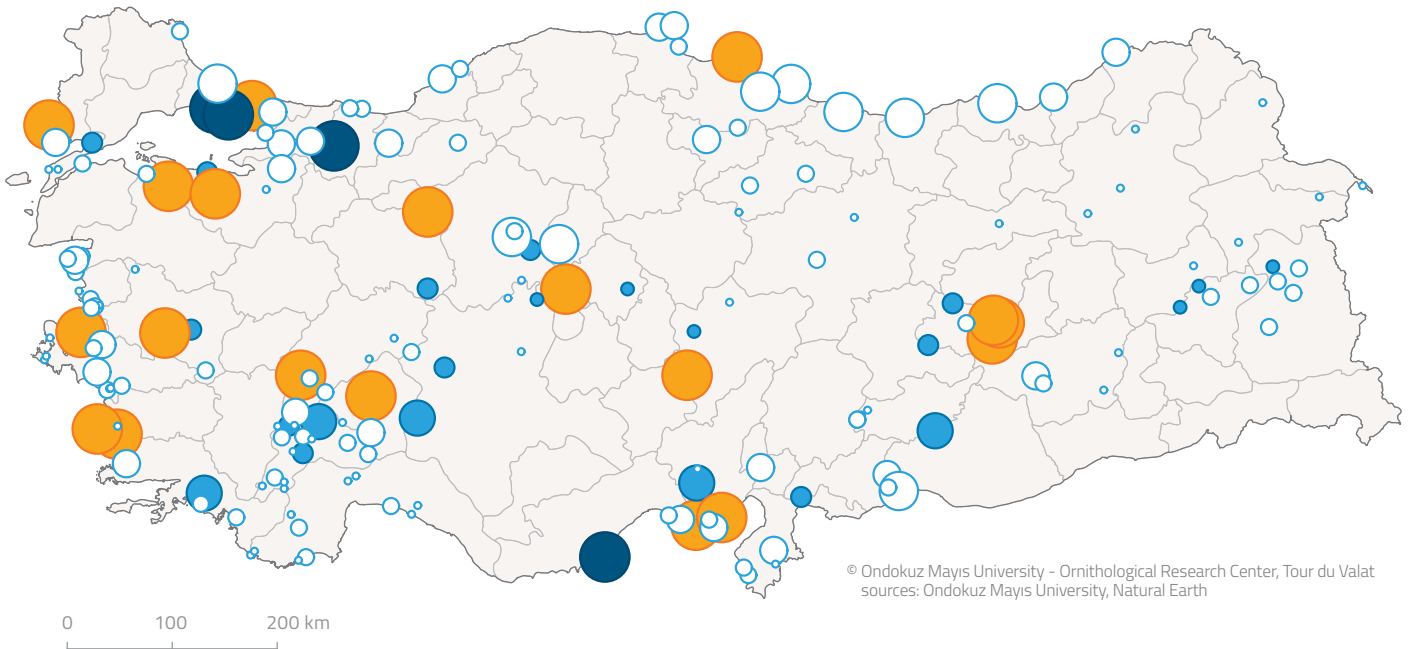


SITES OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE	Ramsar Site																							
	> 20,000 waterbirds	Common Pochard	Common Teal	Eurasian Wigeon	Ferruginous Duck	Gadwall	Red-crested Pochard	Ruddy Shelduck	Smew	Tufted Duck	White-headed Duck	Mute Swan	Tundra Swan	Whooper Swan	Armenian Gull	Black-headed Gull	Common Coot	Common Crane	Dalmatian Pelican	European Shag	Great Crested Grebe	Greater Flamingo	Pied Avocet	
<i>Number of sites</i>	22	5	3	3	1	1	1	17	1	1	1	1	5	2	12	1	6	1	9	1	1	5	1	
EDİRNE PROVINCE																								
Meriç delta	○						○					○	○	○					○				○	
ELAZIĞ PROVINCE																								
Hazar gölü	○														○									
Karakaya barajı															○									
Keban barajı	○						○								○						○			
ESKİŞEHİR PROVINCE																								
Balıkdanı							○																	
Sarıyar barajı	○	○					○						○											
GAZİANTEP PROVINCE																								
Tahtaköprü barajı							○																	
ISPARTA PROVINCE																								
Eğirdir gölü	○	○		○			○										○							
İSTANBUL PROVINCE																								
İstanbul boğazı	○															○					○			
Büyükçekmece gölü	○																							
Küçükçekmece gölü	○																							
İZMİR PROVINCE																								
Gediz deltası	Ⓡ	○																	○			○	○	
KAYSERİ PROVINCE																								
Hürmetçi sazlığı							○																	
Sultansazlığı	○		○				○																	
KIRŞEHİR PROVINCE																								
Seyfe gölü	Ⓡ						○																	
KONYA PROVINCE																								
Beşehir gölü															○									
Çavuşçu gölü													○											
Kulu gölü							○																	
MANİSA PROVINCE																								
Demirköprü barajı																					○			
Marmara gölü	○				○												○			○				
MERSİN PROVINCE																								
Göksu deltası	Ⓡ	○																						
MUĞLA PROVINCE																								
Köyceğiz gölü					○																			
SAKARYA PROVINCE																								
Sapanca gölü	○																							
SAMSUN PROVINCE																								
Kızılırmak deltası	Ⓡ	○		○			○						○	○										
VAN PROVINCE																								
Çelebibağ sazlıkları																○								

WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE FOR WATERBIRDS (followed on from previous page)

44 sites meet the criteria of international significance over the period (avg. 2014-2018); only 9 of these locations are currently listed as Ramsar sites, therefore, 35 additional wetlands could now be declared as Ramsar sites. 22 sites meet solely Ramsar Criterion 5; 19 sites meet both Ramsar Criteria 5 and 6; 40 sites meet Ramsar Criterion 6 for one or more species.

Turkey hosts wintering populations of international importance for 22 species, meeting Ramsar Criteria 6; Ruddy Shelduck and Armenian Gull qualify the highest number of sites, followed by the Dalmatian Pelican. Large dam lakes in Central and Eastern Anatolia, coastal lakes on the Aegean, Mediterranean, Marmara and Black Sea, as well as the Lake District in SW Central Anatolia, include these internationally important wetland sites.



LOCATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WATERBIRD CENSUS (IWC) SITES, showing mean numbers of waterbirds (2014-2018), and information on Ramsar criteria 5 & 6.

Mean abundance of waterbirds 2014-2018

- < 600
- 600 - 3,000
- 3,000 - 8,000
- 8,000 - 20,000
- > 20,000

Ramsar sites according to criteria 5 & 6

- Ramsar criterion 6
- Ramsar criterion 5
- Ramsar criteria 5 & 6



Waterbird census on the Kızılırmak Delta
© N. Yavuz

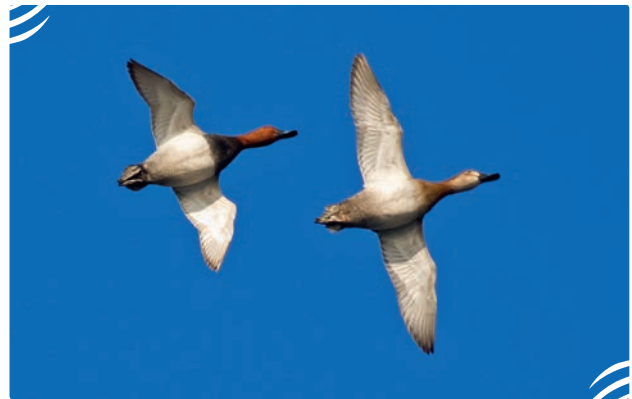
FOCUS ON THE COUNTRY'S "KEY" SPECIES

COMMON POCHARD, *AYTHYA FERINA*

The breeding population in Turkey is estimated at between 500-1000 pairs. The Common Pochard has an extremely large wintering population in Turkey with estimates of 38,620 - 93,480 individuals; Turkey holds 9% of the overall European wintering population. The population trend has fluctuated over the years, although there has been a slight increase since 2012; the figures may have been skewed by the reduced coverage in 2009 and 2010. The most recent wintering population is still well below the numbers seen during the 1990s. The species was counted across 118 areas during 2009-2018, when 5 wetlands triggered the 1% population threshold for the national scale, and 9 wetlands triggered the threshold for the international scale.

Common Pochard populations increased on the Eğirdir Lake, Hirfanlı Dam, Sarıyar Dam and Manyas Lake, while it decreased on Kızılırmak Delta, Karataş Lake, Karkamış Dam and Büyükçekmece Lake. On Uluabat Lake, the numbers have seen a drastic change, in parallel with the numbers of unidentified duck species, this is due to harsh weather conditions which impacted counting circumstances; therefore, within this number of unidentified counted waterbirds, there is a high probability that several thousand are Common Pochard.

In 2018, Eğirdir Lake, Sarıyar Dam, Manyas Lake and Hirfanlı Dam met the criteria of an international important wetland, according to the 1% threshold.

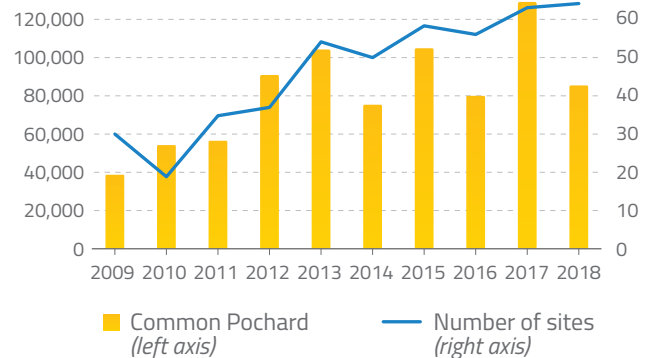


Common Pochards in flight - © Ö. Necipoğlu

Sites of international importance in Turkey, in 2018 (threshold of 1% pop.): Eğirdir Lake, Sarıyar Dam, Manyas Lake and Hirfanlı Dam **4 SITES**

6 SITES **Sites of national importance in Turkey, in 2018 (threshold of 1% pop. nat.):** Eğirdir Lake, Sarıyar Dam, Manyas Lake, Hirfanlı Dam, Küçükçekmece Lake, Uluabat Lake

COMMON POCHARD NUMBERS 2009-2018 and number of Common Pochard counting sites



Common Pochard
© Ö. Furtun

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL DATA

The Mid-winter Waterbird Counts, internationally known as the International Waterbird Census (IWC), have been carried out by many volunteer birdwatchers, photographers, NGOs, and governmental organisations. Mid-winter Waterbird Counts are essential tools for monitoring regional and global waterbird populations, and consequently the conservation of waterbird species and wetlands. These counts are the largest, longest running and one of the most comprehensive monitoring programmes in the country.



Despite the many logistical challenges imposed by the wide geography, variable climate and the diversity of the widespread wetlands, counts have been conducted fairly regularly up to this point in time. The organisational challenges of such an important programme need to be overcome, and it is important that methodologically valid, reliable and reproducible data continues to be obtained in future years. This would provide us the opportunity to evaluate the wintering population trends, and to identify the national and international importance of our wetlands. Further efforts and commitment of our volunteers will help contribute to the protection of birds and their habitat.

This report summarises the basic results of the 2009–2018 Mid-winter Waterbird Counts. The amount of wetland coverage affects the numbers of waterbirds counted. The total number of waterbirds on certain wetlands, as well as the population size of certain species, confirms that there are wetlands which qualify as being of international importance, and these wetlands need a proper conservation status.

However, we should keep in mind that, even though the numbers of birds present on a wetland at any one time may not meet the Ramsar Criteria 5 or 6, the site may still support internationally important numbers of birds, and should, therefore, benefit from careful monitoring and protection.

Dunlins in flight on Yumurtalik Lagoon - © Ö. Necipoğlu



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Sunset on the Kizilirmak Delta - © Ö. Sağlam



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