Ruddy Duck, *Oxyura jamaicensis*

**Overview**

**Short description of *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Ruddy Duck**
A diving duck with a dumpy, short-necked shape and a longish tail, sometimes held upright. Males are chestnut-red with white cheeks and a swollen, bright blue bill. Females are brown with a dark cap and a horizontal dark bar across the cheek.

**Description of *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Ruddy Duck status in GB**
A population of up to 6,000 birds had become naturalised in GB but has been reduced to fewer than 100 birds by an ongoing programme of control.

**Habitat summary: *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Ruddy Duck**
Ruddy ducks nest at fresh water bodies that have extensive emergent reeds and winter mainly in substantial flocks on large lakes or reservoirs.

**Overview table**

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<thead>
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<th>Environment:</th>
<th>Terrestrial and Freshwater</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Species status:</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
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<td>Functional type:</td>
<td>Omnivore</td>
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<td>Status in England:</td>
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<td>Status in Scotland:</td>
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<td>Status in Wales:</td>
<td>Non-Native</td>
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<td>Location of first record:</td>
<td>Slimbridge</td>
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<td>Date of first record:</td>
<td>1952</td>
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**Invasion history: *Oxyura jamaicensis*, Ruddy Duck**

**Origin**
The native range extends across all of North America north to southern Alaska and southern Canada, and south to Mexico and the Caribbean. Further populations, sometimes treated as separate species, occur in the Andes, from Colombia to Tierra del Fuego.

**First Record**
Ruddy ducks were first seen in the wild in GB in 1952, and nesting began in the former county of Avon in 1960.

**Pathway and Method**
GB ruddy ducks have their origin in the import of the species for aviculture since the
Species Status
The GB population had reached an estimated 6,000 birds by 2000. The annual growth rate is estimated to have been 24% during 1976–96. By 1988–91, birds were breeding almost throughout England and Wales, in eastern Scotland and also in Northern Ireland. Birds breeding in France, Spain and the Netherlands are believed to have originated from GB. The species is considered to be invasive in Spain, where it hybridises with the native white-headed duck. Eradication across Europe is expected to be complete by 2015.

Ecology & Habitat: Oxyura jamaicensis, Ruddy Duck

Dispersal Mechanisms
Though only partly migratory, ruddy duck makes both exploratory and regular seasonal movements, and readily establishes new breeding sites. All records of ruddy ducks east of the Atlantic Ocean, from Iceland and Ireland south to Morocco and east to Finland, Turkey, Israel and Tunisia, are thought to stem from introduced populations, mainly from GB.

Reproduction
Females build floating nests hidden among emergent vegetation, sometimes at ponds smaller than half a hectare. Most broods hatch in July. Interbreeding with white-headed ducks occurs readily and produces fertile hybrids.

Known Predators/Herbivores
Raptors such as peregrine may take adult birds, and ducklings are vulnerable to a wider range of predators.

Resistant Stages
None known.

Habitat Occupied in GB
In the breeding season, ruddy ducks are widely dispersed at fresh water sites, with a strong preference for those with a wide reedy fringe. In winter, large numbers of birds congregate on known traditional sites. For example, in January 2000, 83% of the GB population was recorded on only 25 sites, with 67% occurring on only ten sites.

Distribution: Oxyura jamaicensis, Ruddy Duck
The GB population has been very much reduced by culling, which began in 1999.

Impacts: Oxyura jamaicensis, Ruddy Duck

Environmental Impact
Ruddy ducks have posed a major threat to the Spanish population of the endangered white-headed duck, through introgressive hybridisation and competition. Within GB, the ruddy duck appears to occupy a vacant niche, although there may have been some competition with other duck species at the peak of its population.

Health and Social Impact
None known.

Economic Impact
None known.

References & Links: Oxyura jamaicensis, Ruddy Duck

Identification

BTO bird facts

RSPB fact sheet

BirdLife International fact sheet

BirdLife International fact sheet for white-headed duck
**Biology, ecology, spread, vectors**


**Management and impact**

UK eradication project: https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/index.cfm?pageid=244


**General**


https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/71368

https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/nonnativespecies/downloadDocument.cfm?id=1412