

LIFE OXYURA AGAINST OXYURA :

After-life plan

2018-2023



CONTENTS

PROJECT SUMMARY

p. 3



INTRODUCTION

p. 4

Project scope and objectives
p. 4

Actions and results achieved during the LIFE
p. 6



AFTER-LIFE PLAN OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

p. 10

PROJECT SUMMARY

Location:
France

Title:
Oxyura against *Oxyura*.
Eradicate the ruddy duck to save the endangered white-headed duck from extinction.

Coordinating Beneficiary:
French Agency for Biodiversity

Associated Beneficiary:
National Society for Nature Protection

Project duration:
01/10/2018 – 30/12/2023

Project budget:
1,674,361 €

Project eligible costs:
1,674,361 €

EC contribution:
1,210,382 € (72.29%
of total eligible budget)

Beneficiaries' contribution:
463,979 €

Contact

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INTRODUCTION

Project scope and objectives

The white-headed duck *Oxyura leucocephala* is a small Eurasian diving duck with populations in decline throughout its distribution range. It is classified as Endangered in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and subjected to several national and international action plans set to preserve the species.

The main threat to the western Mediterranean population is the hybridization with the ruddy duck

Oxyura jamaicensis, an American diving duck belonging to the same genus.

The ruddy duck was introduced in the United Kingdom around 1950, escaped from captivity and has since spread throughout northern Europe.

An international eradication plan was signed in 1997 and the species is considered as invasive by European regulation 1143/2014 since 2014.



The LIFE *Oxyura* against *Oxyura* was designed to eradicate the invasive ruddy duck in France, in order to preserve the endangered white-headed duck. More specifically, it aims at three objectives:



PROMOTE

rapid detection and eradication of ruddy ducks in EU countries where they are most abundant and through which they can enter North Africa, Southern and Southeastern Europe: Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and Switzerland.

ERADICATE

the wild ruddy duck population in France before 2023



PREVENT

any new introduction into the natural environment from hobby and commercial farms by 2020. Eradicate the captive population by 2030 (except in zoos).

C1 Intensification and optimization of regulation technics to eradicate the wild ruddy duck population.

ACTION

- Intensify already used control technics by hiring a dedicated field team to regulate the wild ruddy duck population
- Optimize already used control technics to adapt to the French context



RESULTS

Thanks to a dedicated team of two to four technicians, the time period between the report of a bird and a control operation decreased

44 days before the LIFE to less than a week during the project.

Moreover, the proportion of birds culled among birds detected was higher

50 % before the LIFE vs 80% during the LIFE

This higher efficiency allowed to decrease the wintering counts of ruddy ducks in France by 86% during the LIFE period. The wild ruddy duck population is thus near eradication in France.

C2 Define new regulation tools to eradicate the wild ruddy duck population.

ACTION

- Settle winter shooting operations on the main wintering site in France, the Grand-Lieu lake.
- Construct an efficient trap to regulate the wild population before reproduction



RESULTS

2 prototype cages built and tested on Lake Grand-Lieu in 2023.

9 wild birds caught before reproduction, from a wintering population of 28 individuals.

This high capture rate proves the effectiveness of the method, which is also a complement to shooting operations carried out only during the reproductive season. In addition, it is an effective means of controlling water bodies where other protected species live or which are frequented by the public.



C4

Control and manage the ruddy duck captive population following European regulation N°1143/2014

ACTION

- Owners identification and control that detention is legitimate
- Develop an educational project in authorized ex-situ breeding establishments open to public



RESULTS

Thanks to the implication of French Agency for Biodiversity (OFB) police officers, the captive population of ruddy ducks was controlled in 2022/2023.

Between of **82%** of captive ruddy ducks in France between 2014 and 2023

Between **30** and **50** captive birds estimated in 2023

Only **1** ringed individual detected in the wild and killed

Commercial farms no longer exist, and most captive birds are hold in ex-situ conservation centres for educational purposes. **It indicates that the captive population of ruddy ducks is no longer a threat to the maintenance of the wild one.**

E

Public awareness and dissemination of results

ACTION

- Public sensibilization and communication
- Experience transmission to other European countries and in North Africa where the white-headed duck is present



RESULTS

Numerous communication tools were edited during the LIFE period.

A website was designed to inform about the threat represented by the ruddy duck and about the LIFE project.

An educational poster was edited and posted in different zoological parcs detaining ruddy ducks.

A practical guide to transmit technical knowledge gained during the project was also written in French and English. The LIFE team also presented the project in numerous international and national conferences.

Participation to the Bern Convention Expert Group on the eradication of the ruddy duck,

Organisation of a symposium to reconstitute results acquired during the LIFE allowing to bring together experts working on the management of the ruddy duck and on the conservation of the white-headed duck, and to emit recommendations to continue preserving the white-headed duck.

AFTER-LIFE PLAN OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

The After-LIFE Plan of the "Oxyura against Oxyura" project aims to achieve the following objectives to ensure continuity in the management of the risk posed by the remaining presence of the ruddy duck in France:

1

Maintain monitoring and rapid response to the last wild individuals detected

- Update prefectural decrees authorising ruddy duck control measures by the administration with the support of OFB or service providers
- Maintain monitoring on ornithological platforms and networks to identify birds observed
- Maintain rapid control measures by OFB and SNPN services (on Lake Grand-Lieu)
- Produce annual reports reporting on the situation of the species and the control measures carried out by the OFB in France

2

Monitoring the evolution of the captive population

- Administrative control of breeders authorised by the OFB management and services for a third time by 2030
- Continuation of monitoring and search for possible illegal breeders, exchanges and sales by the police forces (OFB, Gendarmerie, Customs) with the aim of stopping the offences

3

Communicate with the public and participate in European expert networks on exotic species, including the ruddy duck

- Continue to raise awareness about invasive alien species and the threat posed by the ruddy duck in the Western Palearctic
- Transfer the experience gained in France to other European countries and other species
- Participate in the European coordination led by the Council of Europe to eradicate the ruddy duck



Code	Objectives and actions	Fundings	Unit in charge	Involved staff	Timetable	Detailed budget	Budget	Priority
1.	Maintain the control pressure on the remaining wild individuals							
1.1	Keep to date prefectural decrees authorizing control operations on ruddy ducks	French Biodiversity Agency	Research and Scientific Support Direction - IAS Team	1 IAS project manager	At the expiration date of each decree	Personal costs : 5 days x 314 € x 5 years = 7535 €	7535 €	★★★
1.2	Monitor the evolution of the wild population							
1.2.1	Monitor ornithological websites and networks to detect observed birds	French Biodiversity Agency	Research and Scientific Support Direction - IAS Team	1 IAS project manager	Daily	Personal costs : 2 days x 314€ x 5 years = 3140 €	3140 €	★★★
1.2.2	Winter countings on Grand-Lieu lake	National Society for Nature Protection	Lake Grand-Lieu nature reserve team	1 field agent	Annually	Personal costs : 5 days x 290 € x 5 years = 7250 € Equipment costs : 20 € x 5 years = 100 €	7350 €	★★★
1.3	Perform control operations							
1.3.1	Shooting operations on Grand-Lieu Lake during winter	National Society for Nature Protection	Lake Grand-Lieu nature reserve team	1 field agent	Annually	Personal costs : 20 days x 290 € x 5 years = 29000 € Equipment costs : 100 € x 5 years = 500 €	29500 €	★★★
1.3.2	Shooting operations on other water bodies all year long	French Biodiversity Agency	Regional Directions - Biodiversity police officers	2 field agents	Annually	Personal costs : 20 days x 2 people x 250 € x 5 years = 50000 € Equipment and travel costs : 1000 € x 5 years = 5000 €	55000 €	★★★
1.3.3	Trapping on Grand-Lieu lake in spring	National Society for Nature Protection	Lake Grand-Lieu nature reserve team	1 field agent	Annually	Personal costs : 36 days x 290 € x 5 years = 52200 € Equipment costs : (boat 500 € + traps 100 €) x 5 years = 3000 €	55200 €	★★★
1.4	Record observations and culling operations in France							
1.4.1	Maintain observations and control operations database	French Biodiversity Agency	Research and Scientific Support Direction - IAS Team	1 IAS project manager	Annually	Personal costs : 5 days x 314 € x 5 years = 7535 €	7535 €	★★★
1.4.2	Write a technical report on the evolution of the wild population	French Biodiversity Agency	Research and Scientific Support Direction - IAS Team	1 IAS project manager	Annually	Personal costs : 5 days x 314 € x 5 years = 7535 €	7535 €	★★★

2.	Monitor the captive population							
2.1	Control existing breeders to monitor the evolution of the captive population	French Biodiversity Agency	Regional Directions - Biodiversity police officers	10 police officers	Once before 2030	Personal costs : 1 day x 10 people x 250 € = 2500 €	2500 €	★
2.2	Identify new owners and apply the European legislation in France	French Biodiversity Agency	Regional Directions - Biodiversity police officers	10 police officers	Along the way	Personal costs : 1 day x 10 people x 250 € x 5 years = 12500 €	12500 €	★
3.	Public communication and participation to the European network working on ruddy duck management							
3.1	Public sensibilization on invasive species and the ruddy duck issue in the Western Palearctic							
3.1.1	Maintain the LIFE Oxyura website up to date	French Biodiversity Agency	Research and Scientific Support Direction - IAS Team	1 IAS project manager + 1 web developer	Annually	Personal costs : 2 days x 314 € x 5 years = 3140	3140 €	★★★
3.1.2	Maintain educational posters in the ex-situ conservation centers where ruddy ducks or white-headed ducks are detained	French Biodiversity Agency/National Society for Nature Protection	Research and Scientific Support Direction - IAS Team/Lake Grand-Lieu nature reserve team	1 IAS project manager	Long term	Personal costs : 1 day x 314 € = 314 €	314 €	★★
3.1.3	Participate to seminars or workshops on invasive alien species issues	French Biodiversity Agency/National Society for Nature Protection	Research and Scientific Support Direction - IAS Team/Lake Grand-Lieu nature reserve team	1 IAS project manager	Occasionally	Personal costs : 2 seminars over 5 years x 2 days x 314 € = 1254 € Travel costs : 2 x 600 € = 1200 €	2454 €	★★
3.2	Experience transmission in France and to other European countries							
3.2.1	Organize a workshop on invasive alien species management for biodiversity police officers and managers in France	French Biodiversity Agency	Research and Scientific Support Direction - IAS Team	1 IAS project manager	Annually	Personal costs : 5 days x 314 € = 1570 € Travel costs : 12 trainees x 200 € = 2400 €	3970 €	★★★
3.2.2	Participate to workshops focusing on technical issues in managing the ruddy duck in other European countries	French Biodiversity Agency	Research and Scientific Support Direction - IAS Team	2 IAS project managers	Occasionally	Personal costs : 16 days x 314 € = 5024 € Travel costs : 2 x 600 € = 1200 €	6224 €	★★★
3.2.2	Communicate on the evolution of the ruddy duck population in France in the Bern Convention Group of Experts on the eradication of the ruddy duck in the western Palearctic	French Biodiversity Agency	Research and Scientific Support Direction - IAS Team	2 IAS project managers	Annually	Personal costs : 3 days x 314 € x 5 years = 4710 € Travel costs : 2 x 600 € x 5 years = 6000 €	10710 €	★★★

Total Budget : 214607 €

PHOTO CREDITS

p. 1 : wikicommons

p. 2 : Waterbody / Éric Médard

p. 4 : Éric Médard

p. 8 : Detention control / Philippe Massit, OFB

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