

TAXON SUMMARY

Blue-billed Duck

1	Family	Anatidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Oxyura australis</i> Gould, 1836
3	Common name	Blue-billed Duck
4	Conservation status	Least Concern

5 Reasons for listing

Although Blue-billed Ducks are relatively sparse through much of the species' range, the substantial flocks present on artificial wetlands in Victoria take the species out of threatened categories.

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	800,000 km ²	medium
trend	stable	high
Area of occupancy	5,000 km ²	medium
trend	decreasing	medium
No. of breeding birds	12,000	low
trend	stable	medium
No. of sub-populations	2	high
Largest sub-population	12,000	medium
Generation time	5 years	low

6 Intraspecific taxa

None described.

7 Past range and abundance

South-western and south-eastern Australia, particularly Murray-Darling basin and southern Victoria. Also regularly found, occasionally breeding, in south-east Queensland, north-east South Australia and throughout New South Wales (Frith, 1982, Blakers *et al.*, 1984, Marchant & Higgins, 1990, Chapman and Lane, 1997).

8 Present range and abundance

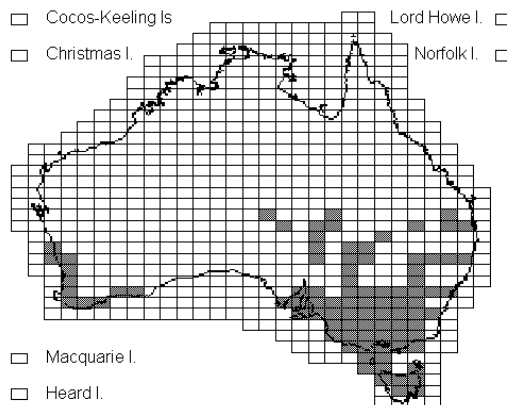
As above, although possibly at lower densities and on fewer wetlands (Frith, 1982). However, occupies artificial wetlands, including at the Western Treatment Plant (P. Menkhorst), where flocks of up to 7,000 recorded.

9 Ecology

Blue-billed Ducks are found on temperate, fresh to saline, terrestrial wetlands, including sewerage ponds rivers, salt lakes and salt pans (Marchant and Higgins, 1990). They prefer deep, permanent open water, within or near dense vegetation (Frith, 1982). They nest in rushes, sedges, *Lignum Muehlenbeckia cunninghamii* and paperbark *Melaleuca*, laying 5-6 eggs in spring. They eat aquatic insect larvae, and seeds and leaves of freshwater plants (Frith *et al.*, 1969; Marchant and Higgins, 1990). In autumn and winter, they form flocks and may move to permanent waters (Marchant and Higgins, 1990).

10 Threats

Drainage of deep permanent wetlands, or their degradation as a result of introduced fish or cattle, salinisation and lowering of ground water have reduced the area of suitable habitat, particularly breeding habitat (Marchant and Higgins, 1990), but not to the extent that the species is threatened. A small number are probably shot by accident during the duck hunting season (Loyn, 1991).



11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Identification of major perennial wetlands used by the Blue-billed Duck for breeding and moulting and their protection against further degradation.

12 Bibliography

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