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Waterbirds around the world

A global overview of the conservation,
management and research of the
world's waterbird flyways

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Cover photography: Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* arriving at Martin Mere, England. Photo: Paul Marshall.
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Waterbirds in the valleys of the Ob river tributaries (Western Siberia) and their conservation

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Previous studies of the avifauna of the swamps and taiga forests in the Chulym and Vasugan river areas (Western Siberian plain) are scarce. This study describes waterbird species of the taiga zone: numbers, distribution and species assemblages of the different landscapes in the region.

Surveys were made in the eastern part of the Western Siberian plain in the Chulym-river area (Ob river right tributary) in May – July from 1996 – 2002 and in the Vasugan-river area (left tributary) in 2003 (Blinova & Samsonova 2004). Birds were counted from cutters, motorboats and hovercraft in different types of lakes and water areas of medium and small rivers. In total the surveys covered about 2 000 kilometers.

A total of 27 species of waterfowl were found during the surveys, including: Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*, Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*, Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Bewick's Swan *Cygnus bewickii*, some species of river and diving ducks, terns and gulls and 23 other wetland associated species, including birds of prey; White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, sandpiper species, Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, and Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*; in total about 30 % of the region's avifauna.

Among these, 11 species (one-fifth of the total) are listed as rare (Red Data Book of the Tomsk region 2002): Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, Grey Heron, Black Stork, Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*, Whooper and Bewick's Swans, White-tailed Eagle, Osprey, Common Crane *Grus grus*, Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* and Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*.

Other species vulnerable to the effects of human activity are those at the limits of their distribution: Bittern, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Coot *Fulica atra*, Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*, Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*, White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Great Crested Grebe and Water Rail *Rallus aquaticus*, species rare on the flyway; Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*, and passage species Herring Gull *Larus argentatus* and Mute Swan.

Species living near reservoirs and watercourses are influenced by anthropogenic factors (hunting, felling of riverside trees, spring fires, grass cutting). The most damage is from poaching, including the hunting of rare species. Spring fires affect early-nesting birds near river banks, and also destroy dead wood, which White-tailed Eagles and Ospreys use for nesting. Tree-felling also destroys White-tailed Eagle, Osprey, and Black Stork nesting sites.

In recognition of its ornithological importance, four Important Bird Areas (IBAs) of federal importance have been identified in the Chulym river basin:

- The Middle Chulym river basin IBA includes the river section between Tomsk and Krasnoyarsk oblasts and its surrounding landscapes. White-tailed and Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* nest there, and regular records of Black Stork and Osprey suggest that they also probably breed there (Blinova, et al., 2001). Comcrakes *Crex crex* are common on the flooded meadows. In winter, Gyrfalcon *Falco rusticolis* and Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* occur;
- The Bolshie Chertany Lake IBA is of great importance as a migratory bird staging area. Birds include Whooper, Bewick's and Mute Swans, Black-throated Diver, Greater Scaup, Goosander *Mergus merganser*, Osprey, Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila marila* also use the lake, and Aquatic Warblers *Acrocephalus paludicola* occur in the riparian scrub on the banks;
- The Dikoye Lake IBA is situated between the Ob and Chulym rivers, with nesting species including White-tailed Eagle, Osprey and Whooper Swan; and
- The Lower Chulym IBA occupies a 50 km length of river from its mouth and the neighboring biotopes. Osprey and White-tailed Eagle nest here. Oystercatchers occur on the sandbanks of the Chulym, with Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* in the forests and Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus*, Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula*, Whooper Swan and Little Tern in the wetlands. Black Stork also occurs as does Gyrfalcon in winter.

Measures to secure the conservation of waterbirds in the region include identification of further IBAs, the strengthening of species conservation in Nature Reserves, the prevention of accidental spills during extraction and transportation of petroleum, communication with hunters and local communities to prevent direct persecution by hunting and poaching, and placing notices near nests.

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