Oxyura leucocephala's reintroduction on Biguglia's pond

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## Objective

The project seeks to re-establish a white-headed duck population at Biguglia by means of a programme for captive breeding and reintroduction to the site, starting from birds to be provided by the Donana national park in Spain. A first experimental release of ducks is scheduled for 1999 and the second, using young birds raised on-site, is planned for 2001. To protect the habitat, 230 ha of reedbeds will be bought and negotiations will be undertaken with users to see if human activities can be adapted to the ecological requirements of the white-headed duck. A contingency plan will be drawn up to permit rapid intervention in case the ruddy duck should appear.

The white-headed duck (Oxyura leucocephala) is a small diving duck whose numbers have suffered a sharp decline over the full extent of its range as a result of habitat degradation and hunting. The only breeding population left in the EU today is in Spain, with less than 1,000 individuals. After teetering on the brink of extinction, this Spanish population is now rising again thanks to conservation measures. However, a new threat has appeared on the horizon with the spread of the ruddy duck (Oxyura jamaicensis), an American species introduced to Great Britain, which risks extinguishing the European white-headed duck through hybridisation.

The duck was present in France in the Biguglia lagoon on Corsica until it disappeared in the 1960s as a result of hunting. In 1994 a nature reserve was established at this site and hunting was banned from part of the lagoon. Furthermore, the water quality was improved through the installation of a protective belt of purification systems around the lagoon.

## Coordinator

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