

PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF SPECIES ON THE APPENDICES OF THE CONVENTION
ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS

A. PROPOSAL: Inclusion of Larus ridibundus (Western Palearctic populations) in Appendix II.

B. PROPONENT: Government of the Federal Republic of Germany

C. SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Taxon

- | | |
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| 1.1. Classis | Aves |
| 1.2. Ordo | Charadriiformes |
| 1.3. Familia | Laridae |
| 1.4. Genus/Species/Subspecies | <u>Larus ridibundus</u> Linnaeus 1766
Monotypic |
| 1.5. Common names | |
| English: | Common Black-headed Gull |
| Spanish: | Gaviota Reidora |
| French: | Mouette rieuse |

2. Biological data

2.1. Distribution

The species breeds widely across north and temperate Eurasia from Iceland to Eastern Siberia, western populations wintering south to Mauritania and East Africa. No discrete populations are identifiable. Three main groups are recognized: (i) birds which breed in Western Europe (west of 30°E) south to southern Spain, and winter mainly in Western Europe, the West Mediterranean and West Africa; (ii) birds which breed in Eastern Europe south to central Turkey, and winter mainly in the Black Sea and East Mediterranean; and (iii) birds which breed in Western Siberia south, patchily, to northwestern Iran, and winter in the Caspian Region, Middle East and Northeast Africa south through Sudan to East Africa.

2.2. Population

Three populations are recognized.

- West & Central Europe/West Mediterranean/West Africa: 5,000,000 (Rose & Scott 1993); increasing.
- East Europe/Black Sea/East Mediterranean: 300,000-450,000 (Rose & Scott 1993).
- West Siberia/Caspian Sea/Middle East/Northeast Africa: 250,000 (Rose & Scott 1993).

The breeding population in West and Central Europe has recently been estimated at 1,250,000 pairs. The species has shown a marked increase in most of Western Europe since the early 19th century, with a number of countries colonized since 1800 (e.g. Germany, Finland, Faeroes and Iceland). There was a marked increase in Britain between about 1900 and 1970, and increases have also been recorded this century in Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia,

Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. The substantial changes in population size and distribution in Northwest Europe over the past 150 years have been attributed to a reduction in human persecution coupled with increasing food supplies, particularly in winter, together with the provision of reservoirs which provide inland roosting sites, and possibly the recent warming of climate allowing range extensions to the north (Evans 1984). However, the population breeding on the coast of Denmark decreased from about 250,000 pairs in the 1940s and 1950s to 110,000 pairs in 1974 (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

The population in Eastern Europe has been estimated at 300,000-450,000 birds, but this figure may be too low as little information is available on numbers in Russia. Little information is available on trends in this population; a marked increase has occurred in northern Belarus in recent years, but numbers in Bulgaria have apparently declined (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

The West Asian population has been estimated at about 250,000 birds on the basis of mid-winter counts. At least 176,000 are known to winter in Southwest Asia south of the Caspian. Over 94,400 were recorded in Southwest Asia during the Asian Waterfowl Census of January 1992, mainly in Bahrain (18,900), Iran (26,800), Oman (24,600) and the United Arab Emirates (22,400) (Perennou & Mundkur 1992). The total wintering population in Iran in the 1970s was estimated 35,000-60,000 (Scott 1992). No information is available on trends in this population.

2.3. Habitat

Breeds in a wide variety of wetland habitats from the steppe and Mediterranean zones to the boreal zone and fringe of the subarctic, and from continental interior to oceanic coasts and islands. Always near shallow, calm water, which may be fresh, brackish or saline, usually at margins of ponds, lakes or slow-flowing rivers, beside lagoons, or in deltas, estuaries, or artificial wetlands such as sewage farms, gravel pits, reservoirs and canals. Prefers to nest in wet sites, such as bogs, marshes or swamps with floating vegetation, but also uses dry sites such as stony islands and islets, moorland, sand-dunes and the upper zone of salt-marshes. Forages on grassland and arable land, and over water including sea-coasts. Outside the breeding season, partly shifts to inshore tidal waters, avoiding rocky or exposed coasts and preferring inlets or estuaries with extensive sandy or muddy beaches. Also increasingly frequenting moist grassland, arable land, reservoirs, ornamental lakes, urban parks, sewage farms and refuse dumps (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

2.4. Migrations

Mainly migratory to the east and north of the zone of winter freezing; dispersive or partially migratory elsewhere. Western Palearctic breeders winter from southern Iceland, the Faeroes, southern Norway, the western Baltic, the Balkans, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea southwards to Senegal, the Niger inundation zone in Mali, the Red Sea and the Arabian Peninsula. Small numbers reach the Gulf of Guinea, the Nile Valley in Sudan and coast of East Africa. Most birds breeding in West and Central Europe (east to the Gulf of Finland and Poland) winter in the western seaboard countries of Europe, western Mediterranean and,

less commonly, West Africa. Birds breeding in Eastern Europe (including a minority of Finnish birds) winter in the eastern Mediterranean, Black Sea and Transcaucasia. The birds wintering in the Caspian Region, Middle East and Northeast Africa are thought to breed mainly in Western Siberia, although there are few ringing recoveries to support this (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

3. Threat data

3.1. Direct threats to the population

Possible causes for the marked decline in the breeding population on the Danish coast include the simultaneous marked increase in Larus argentatus, hunting, egg-collecting, poisoning and rats (Cramp & Simmons 1983). The species is still legally hunted as a game species in several countries, and is classified as a pest species in Belgium and the Netherlands.

3.2. Habitat destruction

The species readily adapts to man-made wetlands (e.g. gravel pits, reservoirs, sewage farms, ornamental lakes) and feeds extensively on farmland. Thus in most parts of its Western Palearctic range, any loss of natural wetland habitats has been more than compensated for by an increase in suitable man-made or man-modified habitats.

3.3. Indirect threats

Permanently at risk from floating and beached oil, especially in the heavily polluted North Sea.

3.4. Threats connected especially with migrations

None known.

3.5. National and international utilization

The species is legally hunted in Denmark, Germany and Spain within the EEC, and probably also in several East European and Southwest Asian countries.

4. Protection status and needs

4.1. National protection status

Within the EEC, Larus ridibundus is protected under national legislation in France, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal and the United Kingdom, and is classified as a game species for which a hunting season is established in Denmark, Germany and Spain. In Belgium and the Netherlands, it is classified as a pest species and may be controlled under specific conditions. In Africa, it is fully protected under national legislation in Benin, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, Tanzania and Tunisia.

4.2. International protection status

Larus ridibundus is listed in Appendix III (protected fauna) of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Berne Convention), and is also listed in Annex II/2 of the EEC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC).

4.3. Additional protection needs

The populations in question are considered to have a favourable conservation status, and are not in need of any additional special protection measures at the present time.

5. Range States

See attached table.

6. Comments from Range States

7. Additional remarks

8. References

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- Evans, P.G.H. (1984). Status and Conservation of Seabirds in Northwest Europe (excluding Norway and the USSR). In: Croxall, J.P., Evans, P.G.H. & Schreiber, R.W. (eds), Status and Conservation of the World's Seabirds: 293-321. ICBP Tech. Publ. No.2. Cambridge, UK.
- Harrison, P. (1983). Seabirds: an identification guide. Croom Helm Ltd., Beckenham, U.K.
- Perennou, C. & Mundkur, T. (1992). Asian and Australasian Waterfowl Census 1992. IWRB, Slimbridge, U.K.
- Rose, P.M. & Scott, D.A. (1993). Waterfowl Population Estimates. Draft report presented at the Fifth Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, 9-16 June 1993, Kushiro, Japan. IWRB, Slimbridge.
- Scott, D.A. (1992). Summary of Waterfowl Counts in Iran in the 1970s. Unpublished manuscript on file at IWRB, Slimbridge, U.K.
- Urban, E.K., Fry, C.H. & Keith, S. (1986). The Birds of Africa. Volume II. Academic Press, London & Orlando.

Taxon: <i>Larus ridibundus</i>		
Population		
(a) W & C Europe/W Mediterranean/W Africa		
(b) E Europe/Black Sea/E Mediterranean		
(c) SW Asia/NE Africa		
State	Pop.	Status
Albania	a	W
Algeria	a	W
Armenia	c	S
Austria	a	Wsr
Azerbaijan	c	Swr
Bahrain	c	W
Belarus	a	S
Benin	a	W
Bosnia & Herzegovina	a	W
Bulgaria	a	Wrs
"	b	Wrs
Burundi	c	W
Chad	b	V
Cote d'Ivoire	a	W
Croatia	a	Wrs
Cyprus	b	W
Czech Republic	a	S
Denmark	a	Wrs
Faroese	a	Srw
Djibouti	c	W
Egypt	b	W
"	c	W
Estonia	a	Swr
Ethiopia	c	W
Finland	a	Swr
France	a	Wrs
Gabon	a	V
Gambia	a	W
Georgia	b	Wsr
Germany	a	Wsr
Ghana	a	W

Greece	a	W
"	b	W
Guinea	a	W
Guinea-Bissau	a	W
Hungary	a	Wsr
Iceland	a	W
Iran	c	Wsr
Iraq	c	W
Ireland	a	Wrs
Israel	b	W
Italy	a	Wrs
Jordan	b	W
Kazakhstan	c	Swr
Kenya	c	W
Kuwait	c	W
Latvia	a	Swr
Lebanon	b	W
Liberia	a	W
Libya	a	W
Liechtenstein	a	Wr
Lithuania	a	Swr
Luxembourg	a	W
Macedonia	a	W
Mali	a	W
Malta	a	W
Mauritania	a	W
Moldova	a	S
"	b	Sr
Monaco	a	W
Morocco	a	W
Mozambique	c	V
Nigeria	a	W
Norway	a	Swr
Oman	c	W
Poland	a	Swr
Portugal	a	W
Qatar	c	W
Romania	a	Swr

Romania	b	Wrs
Russian Federation	a	S
"	b	Swr
"	c	Swr
Rwanda	c	W
Saudi Arabia	c	W
Senegal	a	W
Seychelles	c	Wp
Sierra Leone	a	W
Slovakia	a	S
Slovenia	a	Wrs
Somalia	c	W
Spain	a	Wsr
Sudan	c	W
Sweden	a	Srw
Switzerland	a	Wrs
Syria	b	W
Tanzania	c	W
Togo	a	W
Tunisia	a	W
Turkey	b	Wrs
Turkmenistan	c	Wsr
Uganda	c	W
Ukraine	a	S
"	b	Swr
United Arab Emirates	c	W
United Kingdom	a	Wrs
Uzbekistan	c	S
Yemen	c	W
Yugoslavia	a	Wrs
Zaire	c	W
Zimbabwe	c	V

Key to Status	
S/s Breeding summer visitor	R/r Resident
W/w Winter visitor	V Vagrant
P/p Passage migrant	? Status uncertain
Upper case = primary status Lower case = secondary status	