

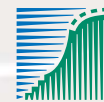
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Waterbirds around the world

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

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East-Atlantic flyway populations of seaducks in the Barents Sea region

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This study provides information on the distribution of nine species of seaducks in Kandalaksha and Onega Bays, in the southern part of the Barents Sea, and the northern part of the White Sea and identifies the principal marine areas important for seaducks (Table 1). The most extensive observations were carried out in varying seasons from 1993-2003. Data were collected using various methods including static observations, land-based line and spot counts, aerial surveys by helicopter and fix-winged aeroplane in both coastal and open waters. The major wintering grounds of seaducks were in open coastal areas of the ice-covered north-west portion of the White Sea and the unfrozen Murman coast of the Barents Sea.

In early April 2003, a 500 km transect of the coastline was surveyed, identifying c. 19 500 Barents Sea Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*, 7 000 Atlantic Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* and 4 500 King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (Krasnov *et al.* 2004). Long-tailed Ducks *Clangula hyemalis* winter mostly along the western Murman coast (Nygård *et al.*, 1995). The distribution of wintering seaducks appeared to be determined by climatic conditions, particularly the extent of ice (Krasnov *et al.* 2004).

During spring migration most seaducks pass through the area, but during autumn migration the southern Barents Sea and northern White Sea provide important staging opportunities, with principal stopover sites in the eastern Pechora Sea shallows. The Black Scoter *Melanitta nigra* is the most abundant species, with flocks of up to 15 000 birds recorded. Steller's Eider and King Eider were observed during migration from Novaya Zemlya and the Kara Sea to the eastern Pechora Sea. Major



Male Common Eider *Somateria mollissima*. Photo: Colin Galbraith.

moulting concentrations of King Eider (c. 40 000 birds) and Black Scoter were found in shallow areas of the south-eastern Barents Sea, while moulting Common and Steller's Eider were found mostly in the north-western White Sea along the shores of the Kola Peninsula (Isaksen *et al.* 2000, Krasnov *et al.* 2002, Strøm *et al.* 2004). The Terskiy and Murman coasts of the Kola Peninsula support high numbers of three species of eiders and Long-tailed Ducks during their moulting and wintering seasons while the south-east Barents Sea supports migrating scoters and moulting King Eiders. Both areas meet the conditions for recognition as marine Important Bird Areas (IBAs).

The rapidly increasing off-shore oil industry in the Russian part of the southern Barents Sea and the White Sea is considered

Table 1. Status of seaducks as observed in coastal regions of the study area.

Species	White Sea			Barents Sea	
	Kandalaksha Bay	Terskiy Coast	East Murman	Kola Bay	Pechora Sea
<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	M W	MO W B	MO M W B	W	B MO M W
<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	B MO W	B MO W	B MO M W	MO W B	B MO W
<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	M OW	M MO W	M W	W	B M MO W
<i>Polysticta stelleri</i>	M W	M MO W	M MO W	W	RB M MO
<i>Melanitta fusca</i>	B M	MO M W	M W	S	B M
<i>Melanitta nigra</i>	RB M	MO	M	W	B M MO
<i>Mergus serrator</i>	B MO	B MO	B MO	W	B MO M
<i>Mergus merganser</i>	MO	MO M	MO W	W	MO M
<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	B MO M	MO	-	MO W	MO

B – breeding (only species breeding along the seashore and on maritime islands are included); RB – rare breeding; MO – moulting; M – migrating through the area; W – overwintering; OW – occasionally/rare overwintering

a major hazard to seaduck populations. The current system of wildlife conservation in the region is based mainly on a network of special protection areas (SPAs) which cannot guarantee sufficient protection for seaducks and their marine habitats against oil-related hazards in shelf areas. It is essential to identify population connections and the demographic structure of Common Eider sub-populations in different areas of the study region, and to obtain numeric data on eiders wintering in Onega Bay and moulting along southern Novaya Zemlya to support enhancing the conservation of seaduck populations in the region.

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Female Common Eider *Somateria mollissima* with young. Photo: Colin Galbraith.