

# **Recent changes in distribution range of certain breeding and wintering waterbird populations in Central and Eastern Europe**

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Marked changes in distribution range of several breeding waterbird species were recorded in Central and Eastern Europe throughout the recent decades. The eastward and northward range expansion of several species of waterbirds characteristic of Western Europe has recently resulted in colonization of their new breeding grounds in Eastern Europe. Significant changes in species composition, distribution and numbers were recently found also in wintering populations of waterbirds. In Lithuania the number of wintering waterbird species has increased from 17 in the 1930s to 42 in the 1990s. The total number of wintering waterbirds in the inland wetlands of the Baltic States, Ukraine, Poland, Belarus and NW Russia during the last years has exceeded two millions birds. A particularly marked increase in numbers was observed in wintering Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) population, with more than one million wintering ducks counted in this region in the year 2000. The analysis of long-term ringing data indicate that the main wintering sites of Mallards of the eastern Baltic origin during the last 20 years have shifted 400 km north-eastwards and of Mute swans (*Cygnus olor*) - 450 km eastwards. Until the 1970s Mallard and Mute Swan were strictly migratory in Central/Eastern Europe, while at present local populations of both species are resident or partially migratory. Data of genetic analysis indicate that certain newly developed sedentary populations of Mallards in Eastern Europe were formed by the local partially migratory ducks. The recent major changes in distribution range of certain breeding and wintering populations of waterbirds were mainly caused by the general impact of the global climate change and by human impacts.