



## Fulvous Duck

### Fluiteend

#### *Dendrocygna bicolor*

The Fulvous Duck is uncommon and sparse in southern Africa, and confined to the north and east. Its world range includes the Americas from the southern United States to Argentina, most of sub-Saharan Africa outside of forest and desert, Madagascar, and tropical Asia from India to Burma, Pakistan, Bangladesh and sometimes Sri Lanka (Stark & Sclater 1906; Madge & Burn 1988).

In southern Africa the Fulvous Duck is concentrated in the Okavango–Chobe region, in northern Zimbabwe, and around the Witwatersrand, the Free State goldfields, north-eastern KwaZulu-Natal, and southern Mozambique where it is sometimes more abundant than Whitefaced Duck *D. viduata* (Milstein 1984). Scattered records occur from further west and the southwestern Cape Province. In Zimbabwe it is scarce because of a lack of extensive floodplains, constituting only about 0.5% of the waterfowl game bag (Irwin 1981). It is widely but thinly represented in the Transvaal and Swaziland, though fairly common on the Witwatersrand (Tarboton *et al.* 1987b). In KwaZulu-Natal it is mostly confined to the littoral and the pans in Maputaland, being a straggler elsewhere (Cyrus & Robson 1980). It breeds at scattered localities in the Free State, but is generally rare (Earlé & Grobler 1987). It has bred rarely in the southwestern Cape Province, but is a scarce visitor, mainly January–September (Hockey *et al.* 1989).

It is easily distinguishable by its rich golden-brown plumage and the white plumes on the flanks. In flight its white rump separates it from the Whitefaced Duck.

**Habitat:** It is found mainly at larger inland waters, especially floodplains, with plentiful aquatic vegetation (Irwin 1981; Maclean 1993b). The reporting rates were relatively low and its distribution concentrated around major wetlands.

**Movements:** The movements of this duck are poorly understood. In addition to much local nomadism, there appears to be regular breeding migration southward into southern Africa in summer and northward again after breeding (Brown *et al.* 1982); this is supported by the models. It was more common in the wet season during waterbird surveys in Botswana (Herremans 1993e; Herremans *et al.* 1994d). It spreads into the southwestern Cape Province mainly in wet years (Maclean 1993b). Benson *et al.* (1971) referred to unpatterned fluctuations in numbers

in Zambia; the situation in Zimbabwe appears to be similar (A.J. Tree pers. comm.).

**Breeding:** The egg-laying peak in South Africa is December–March (Siegfried 1973; Clark 1976; Tarboton *et al.* 1987b), but is apparently mainly in the winter months (April–September) in Zimbabwe (Siegfried 1973). Irwin (1981) recorded egg-laying January–September in Zimbabwe. The models are based on small sample sizes, except for Zone 7 where most breeding was recorded March–May, and most records probably represent sightings of ducklings. In the other Zones, breeding spanned February–June. Breeding was first recorded in the southwestern Cape Province in 1955 and subsequently again in 1977 (Langley 1979).

**Interspecific relationships:** Although Fulvous and Whitefaced Ducks congregate to roost and feed in more or less mixed flocks, their foraging habits serve to reduce competition: the Fulvous Duck dives for much of its food, while the Whitefaced tends to upend or dabble (Siegfried 1973; Clark 1978). Their breeding seasons are claimed to overlap only to a limited extent from Botswana and Zimbabwe northward (Siegfried 1973), but Siegfried (1973) and Clark (1976) showed that they both have breeding peaks December–February or March in South Africa.

**Historical distribution and conservation:** This duck appears to have been very rare about 100 years ago, having been collected only at Sesheke on the upper Zambezi, in the Okavango Delta and near Durban (2931CC) (Stark & Sclater 1906). It has increased its range in southern Africa since then, but is still sparse.

Although the Fulvous Duck is not presently at risk, there is a need to pay careful attention to the preservation of the quality of natural bodies of water, especially floodplains and the Okavango–Chobe–Zambezi system, upon which it depends.

G.L. Maclean

Recorded in 392 grid cells, 8.6%  
Total number of records: 2151  
Mean reporting rate for range: 4.8%

#### Reporting rates for vegetation types



