



Conservation centre «Strizh»

## **Final Report on CLP Project «Conservation of White-headed duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) in Russian Federation»**

Russian Federation, 01.04.2010 – 25.12.2011

**The project goal** – is reduction of the degradation scale of 46 key sites (international hotspots) of WHD in Russia.

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## **Summary**

The project has been executed by the employees of the conservation centre «Strizh» in 2010 – 2011. The project goal – is reduction of the degradation scale of 46 key sites (international hotspots) of white-headed duck (WHD) in Russia. The tasks of project:

1. To raise the awareness level of local communities inhabiting the outskirts of 46 international hotspots about the importance of conservation of WHD and its habitats.
2. To estimate the modern number of WHD on 46 international hotspots within the species area on the whole RF territory.
3. To elaborate and approve the National Action plan for the conservation of WHD.
4. To prepare the set of documents to impart the status of nature reserve to two international hotspots.

In the frameworks of the project, modern nesting number of WHD has been determined, which amounts 230-500 nesting couples. 2500-3000 individuals are observed before their migration. All 46 selected key sites preserved their international value for the conservation of WHD. The project team has established a protected area on the key place of the WHD nesting in Western Siberia («Lakes of Karasuk town»), prepared primary documents for the establishment of protected area «Lake Kulundionskoe», raised the level of the information awareness of the local communities in surroundings of the key sites to 16% from 3% (more 35 thousand people), and developed the National Action Plan on the conservation of the white-headed duck.

## **Introduction**

Russia – is one of the 4 key countries of white-headed duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) habitat (IUCN/EN). Here nests not less than 500 birds and migrates not less than 4000 birds of this species, 2500-3000 individuals after reproduction period, and up to 500 individuals stay for wintering. A significant reduction of the number of white-headed duck was observed since the 1980th (for example, by 7 times in Western Siberia by the beginning of the 2000th)

However, the coverage of the whole Russian population of the species is required in order to obtain more important results. The work should be focused on 46 international hotspots (IBA, Ramsar, Ramsar Shadow List), which are not only key sites of WHD, but represent important ecosystems. Thus, conservation of these ecosystems implies WHD protection as well. The problem of the WHD number reduction is complex and manysided. The whole complex of reasons influences this process. The primary ones are: low awareness of the local population about the problem, lack of actual protection on more than 50% of the area of international hotspots, lack of the National Action plan for the conservation of WHD, incompleteness of scientific information about the state of the Russian population.

The present project is continuation of work for conservation of the white-headed duck and its habitats that were started by the conservation centre «Strizh» in 2006. The project has been implemented on the territory of 13 regions of Russia, where 46 international hotspots are located (picture 1). More than 90% of the Russian population of the white-headed duck inhabits these areas.



Picture 1 – Map of project area:

● – key sites of White-headed duck in Russia.

The project executed helps to implement the International Single Species Action Plan for the conservation of the white-headed duck, Ramsar Convention, CMS, AEWa and Convention on Biological Diversity. A comprehensive approach for conservation of the white-headed duck and its habitats has been elaborated and realized. Scientific research allowed obtaining up-to-date information on the state of the white-headed duck population in Russia, limiting factors and threats. National Action plan for the conservation of white-headed duck in Russia has been prepared on the basis of scientific data specifying the measures to restore the number of the white-headed duck. At the same time active educational work was carried out to raise the level of information awareness of local population on the importance of conservation of the white-headed duck and its habitats. Also the set of documents was prepared to impart the status of nature reserve to two international hotspots, which are among the most important areas for the species reproduction.

Main partners of the project:

- Representatives of the National working group on the white-headed duck conservation from 13 regions (public conservation organization, research institutes, universities, nature reserve and national park) have been elaborating the National Action plan, performed recording of number of the white-headed duck on the key sites and distributed informational materials among local communities;
- Local authorities of Karasuk, Karasuk and Bagan districts of Novosibirsk region, Suyetsk and Blagoveshchensk districts of Altay region rendered administrative and financial support to create a nature reserve;

- Leaders of local communities (chairmen of hunting communities of Karasuk and Bagana districts, heads of initiative conservation groups and farming in Novosibirsk region and Altay region) disseminated information among the local population;
- public organization of Altay region – Geblerovskoye conservation society rendered assistance in dissemination of information regarding the work on establishment of a nature reserve.

## **Project members**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Date of birth</b>	<b>Team role</b>	<b>Highest educations level completed</b>	<b>Current occupation</b>	<b>Опыт природоохранной работы</b>
Evgeniy Murzakhanov	04.01.1983	leader	Master	Program Manager	> 5 yrs
Svetlana Nimirskaya	08.05.1990	major vice-leader of the project	High School Diploma	Student/Fellow	4 yrs
Andrey Bazdyrev	06.08.1988	vice-coordinator of the project on issues connected with implementation of scientific research	Bachelor	Student/Fellow	5 yrs
Irina Rodionova	22.06.1990	media relations manager	High School Diploma	Student/Fellow	4 yrs
Enver Gorpinich	27.04.1990	experienced in ecological education	High School Diploma	Student/Fellow	4 yrs
Mikhail Egorenko	19.10.1988	responsible for logistic support of the project field work, participant of the field work	High School Diploma	Student/Fellow	4 yrs
Olga Vasina	31.05.1989	participant of the field work	High School Diploma	Student/Fellow	4 yrs
Yuliya Osokina	27.07.1990	translator	High School Diploma	Student/Fellow	3 yrs
Irina Ponarina	07.12.1990	participant of the field work	High School Diploma	Student/Fellow	4 yrs
Nikita Nosov	26.03.1990	participant of the field work	High School Diploma	Student/Fellow	2 yrs
Andrey Vylegzhanin	13.05.1990	participant of the field work	High School Diploma	Student/Fellow	2 yrs

## **Aim and objectives**

Overall goal – maintain population and range of the White-headed Duck (WHD) on 46 key sites (international hotspots) in Russia.

The project goal – is reduction of the degradation scale of 46 key sites (international hotspots) of WHD in Russia. Project aim:

1. To raise the awareness level of local communities inhabiting the outskirts of 46 international hotspots about the importance of conservation of WHD and its habitats.
2. To estimate the modern number of WHD on 46 international hotspots within the species area on the whole RF territory.
3. To elaborate and approve the National Action plan for the conservation of WHD.
4. To prepare the set of documents to impart the status of nature reserve to two international hotspots.

## **Methodology**

<b>Aim</b>	<b>Methods</b>
To raise the awareness level of local communities inhabiting the outskirts of 46 international hotspots about the importance of conservation of WHD and its habitats.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Arrangement of 2000 posters containing the information about WHD, its habitats, threats and conservation mechanisms in 165 settlements surrounding the key sites. The posters have been placed in crowded places: schools, commercial enterprises, station buildings, parks and other places of mass leisure.</li><li>2. Holding of 3000 meetings by a “face to face” method that consists in immediate communication with people</li><li>3. During the meetings 3100 brochures with the information about WHD, its habitats, threats and conservation mechanisms have been distributed.</li><li>4. In order to determine the modern awareness level, 2000 people have been questioned on the model territory of the project (Barabinskaya Lowland and Kulundinskaya Plane).</li><li>5. In the town of Karasuk in Novosibirsk region the mass holidays «Day of white-headed duck» have been carried out for the local population in 2010 and 2011 (picture 3). The number of participants in 2010 – was not less than 500 people, and in 2011 – more than 1000 people. The programme of the holidays included conservation contests for local people, information about the methods of conservation of WHD and its habitats, performances of local music bands, cleaning of wetlands – WHD habitats – from the household garbage and collection of donations from residents for WHD conservation.</li><li>6. There have been published 25 articles in the local and regional mass media (newspapers, radio, TV, internet) about WHD, its habitats, and conservation mechanisms.</li><li>7. A box for private donations for the work on conservation of WHD has been put in the main commercial centre of Karasuk. The total collected amount for the project realization was 3000\$.</li></ol>

	<p>8. Holding of 470 meetings by the “face to face” method with simple hunters, leaders of local hunting entities and hunting and fishing communities.</p> <p>9. Distribution of 1800 specialized brochures with the information about WHD, its habitats, threats and conservation mechanisms during personal meetings with hunters in the habitats of WHD and when issuing hunting licenses (via hunting organizations).</p> <p>10. Distribution of 5000 DVD-disks with the information about WHD, its habitats, threats and conservation mechanisms through regional educational committees among 130 schools, situated in the surroundings of 46 key sites.</p> <p>11. Conducting of 10 ornithological excursions for schoolchildren from 3 conservation clubs in Barabinskaya Lowland and Kulundinskaya Plane.</p>
<p>To estimate the modern number of WHD on 46 international hotspots within the species area on the whole RF territory.</p>	<p><b>1. Monitoring of number.</b> The birds were observed on 46 key sites [1-7; 9-24, authors’ data] (more than 600 wetlands have been investigated) using 10–20-fold binoculars and telescopes at different times (on migration, during wintering and reproduction season). 15 model wetlands have been chosen in Barabinskaya Lowland and Kuludinskaya Plane, where the annual monitoring was performed three times during the field season (May, June/July, and August). The inspection spots have been chosen so as to provide complete view of the wetland.</p> <p><b>2. Defining of reproduction success.</b> It was defined on 3 model wetlands in Karasuk. The total success of reproduction was determined as the number of nestlings that survived to flight per one nesting couple. The success of the nesting period (percentage of hatched nestlings from the number of laid eggs) and brood period (percentage of nestlings that survived to flight from the number of hatched) was determined separately. In 2009 and 2010, 8 nests were analyzed each year to evaluate the reproduction success, in 2011 – 16 nests have been analyzed.</p>
<p>To elaborate and approve the National Action plan for the conservation of WHD (NAP).</p>	<p><b>1. Preparing NAP on the basis of scientific data and on-line discussion with members of a National work group.</b> NAP was prepared on the basis of International Single Species Action Plan and up-to-date scientific data.</p> <p><b>2. Interacting with the Ministry of environmental resources RF for approval of NAP.</b></p> <p><b>3. Issue of the report «WHD in Russia» in English/Russian.</b> Review of the modern number and distribution of WHD in RF, analysis of the problems of conservation of WHD and its habitats, logical framework conservation of WHD, recommendations of stakeholders about the priority ways of conservation of WHD and its habitats.</p>
<p>To prepare the set of documents to impart the status of nature</p>	<p>1. Preparing the materials of the comprehensive environmental survey of the territory.</p>



reserve to two international hotspots

2. Holding 2500 meetings with the stakeholders – local people, users of natural resources and local authorities to agree on the mode of protection and use of the nature reserve.



Picture 2 – Conducting of information campaign “face to face”.



Picture 3 – Day of white-headed duck in Karasuk.





Picture 4 – Day of white-headed duck in Karasuk.

## **Outputs and Results**

### **Task 1**

1. The level of the information awareness of the local communities in the surroundings of 46 key sites was raised from 3% to 16% (more 35 thousand people).
2. There have been collected 915\$ of donations from the local population for the events on conservation of WHD and its habitats.
3. The level of the information awareness about WHD among the hunters and fishers in Barabinskaya Lowland and Kuludinskaya Plane has increased during the period of 2006 - 2011 to 86% from 3%. The data of the opinion poll of 2006: n=184 hunters or 35%; 2011: n=198 hunters or 37%.
4. In 2011 the issue regarding closing of spring hunt and shifting the period of autumn hunt in 9 key habitats of WHD has been agreed with the management of 2 hunting entities.
5. 3 children's conservation clubs of WHD guards have been established and not less than 90% of school children of Barabinskaya lowland and Kuludinskaya plane have been informed about the importance and methods of WHD conservation.

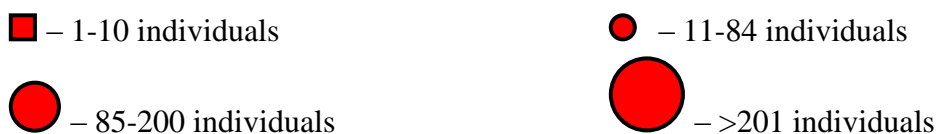
### **Task 2**

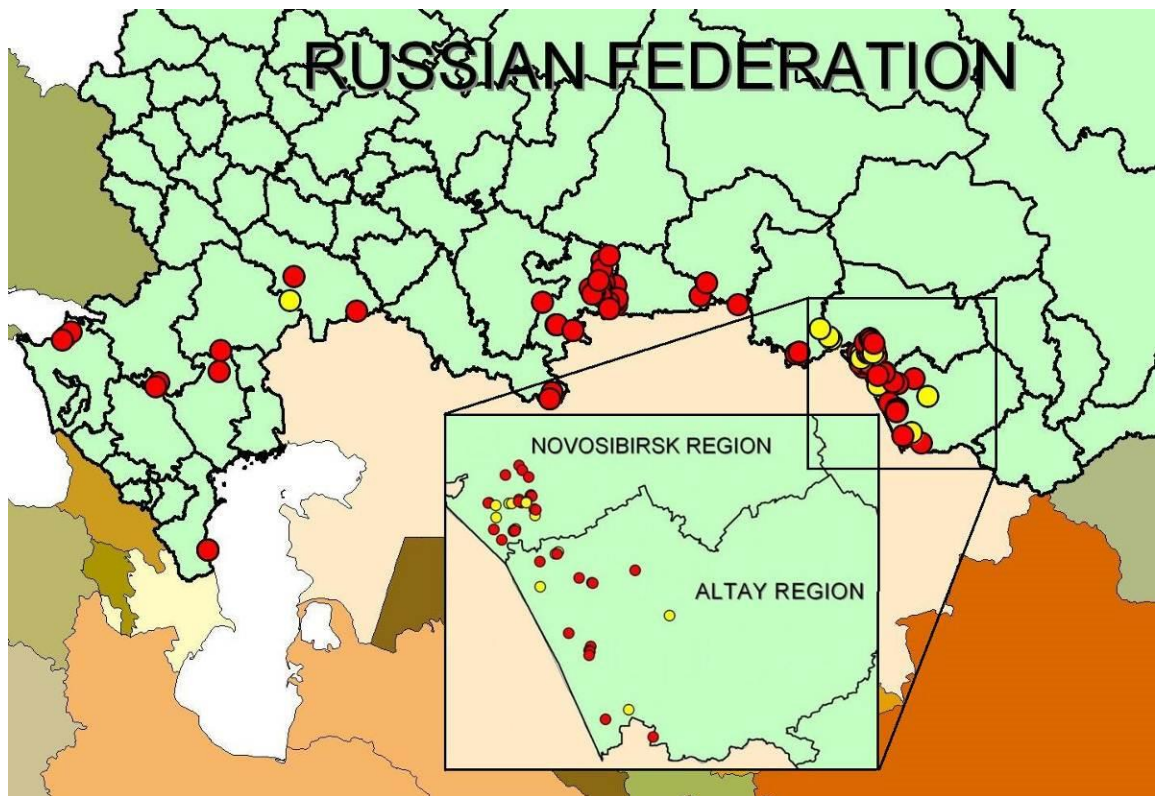
1. It has been determined that total number of WHD in Russia as of now amounts 230 – 500 nesting couples [1,2, authors' data] depending on the level of wetlands in reproduction places. 2500 – 3000 individuals are observed before flight [18, authors' data], and not less than 4000 individuals fly over the Kuma-Manychskaya cavity during spring migration (part of them is nesting in Kazakhstan) [9]. In separate years up to 500 birds can winter on wetlands of Pre-Caucasian region and Caspian Sea region [9].

2. All 46 key sites preserved their international value for the conservation of WHD. Modern distribution of WHD on these areas is shown in picture 5.
3. For the first time in Russia, the reproduction success of WHD has been estimated - 3.4 – 3.6 flying young birds for one nest. The main losses occur during the reproduction period – up to 56% of nests and up to 57% of laid eggs are perishing.
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Picture 5 – Modern distribution of White-headed duck in Russia.





Picture 6 – Nesting places of the white-headed duck in Russia in the 2000-th.

- – nesting was precisely identified;
- – nesting is high probable.

### Task 3

NAP was created on the basis of the International Single Species Action Plan, modern scientific data and conclusions of members of the National Working Group on the conservation of the white-headed duck in Russia from 13 RF constituent units. The sections of NAP include general information about distribution and number of WHD in Russia; threats for the species; legal fundamentals of conservation and specific plan of actions up to 2020, with respect to the species conservation, specifying the results, periods and evaluation criteria. The Plan has been approved on the federal level by the Ministry of environmental resources RF and distributed to local governments of the key regions of the species habitation.

The content of NAP is included into the final report «WHD in Russia». The report will be published in February of 2012 in Russian and English, and will contain complete information about the project realization and recommendations of stakeholders regarding the priority methods of conservation of the species and its habitats.





Picture 7 – A meeting of the National working group in 2010.

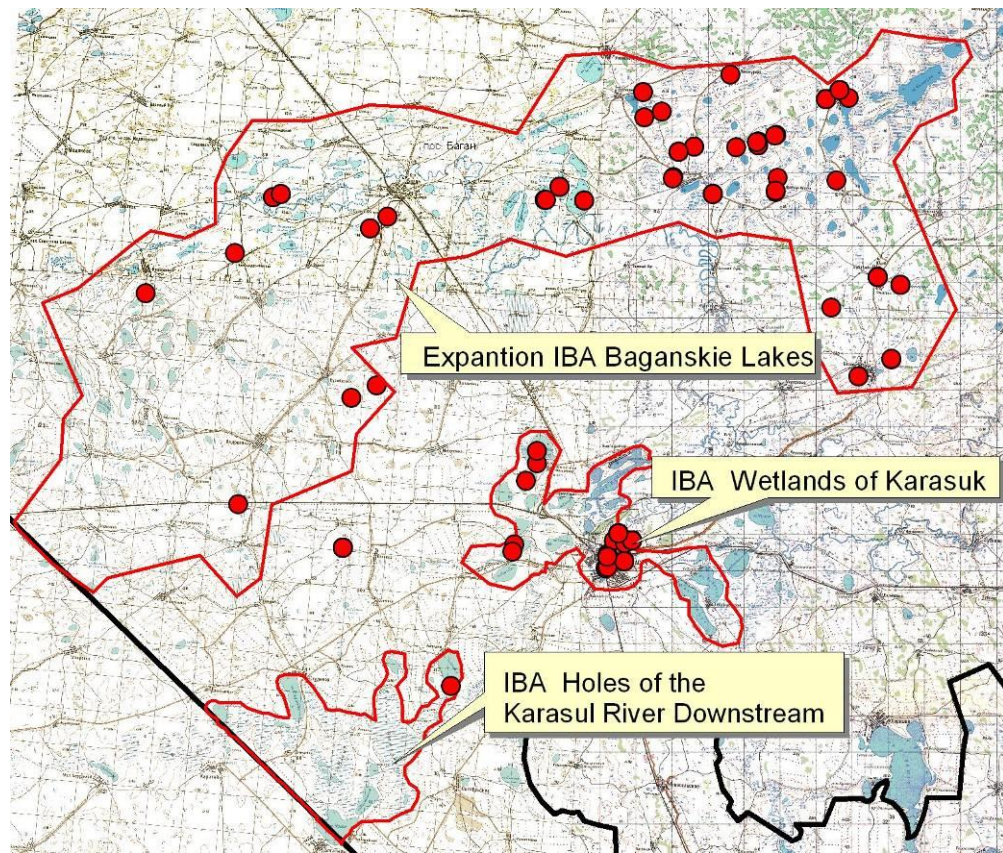
#### **Task 4**

For the establishment of PA, 2 international hotspots have been selected – lakes in Karasuk and Kulunda lake, since 6% of the nesting population of WHD in Russia is inhabiting these territories. The Kulunda Lake is also included into the Ramsar shadow List and has IBA status.

By the present time the documents have been prepared for the establishment of PA «Lakes of Karasuk town» on international hotspot on the basis of the current Russian environmental legislation with involvement of scientists of relevant direction from the Institute of Systematics and Animal Ecology of SB RAS and National Research Tomsk State University. The documents passed through the process of approval in local governments and by February of 2012 a PA will be established in Karasuk.

In summer of 2011, a large information campaign has been conducted among the residents of 8 settlements and local governments located on the border with Kulunda Lake. As a result of this work the issue of PA establishment has been agreed, the borders and regime of the planned nature reserve have been defined and the required documents for this process have been prepared.

On the basis of the scientific data collected by the project team in 2006-2010, 2 new IBA have been established in 2011 (Wetlands of Karasuk and Holes of the Karasul River Downstream) and the area of IBA Baganskie Lakes has been expanded (picture 7). 90% of WHD habitats in Novosibirsk oblast and 83% of the species individuals are on the territory of IBA «Wetlands of Karasuk» and «Baganskie Lakes».



Picture 8 – Maps of IBA.

● – Habitats of WHD on the territory of established IBA.

## **Conclusion**

Project «Conservation of White-headed duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) in Russian Federation» is directed at the reduction of the degradation scale of 46 key sites (international hotspots) of WHD in Russia. All tasks assigned were fulfilled and sustainable conservation results were achieved during implementation of the project.

Studying the number and distribution allowed to establish that despite reduction of the WHD number (2.6 times in Baraba lowland and Kulunda Plane since 1970-80th.), all 46 key sites of WHD in Russia retained their international value for the conservation of the species. Besides, there is a vast reserve of suitable habitats in Russia which can provide growth of number of this duck.

Obtained scientific data have been used for creation of the National Action plan for the conservation of white-headed duck, where specific mechanisms of restoring the number of WHD in Russia are reflected. To ensure state protection of the important key sites, 1 protected area has been created and primary documentation for creation of another area has been prepared. These territories allow protecting habitats of 6% of the nesting population of WHD in Russia.

Thanks to implementation of the project, the level of the information awareness of the local communities in surroundings of 46 key sites was raised from 3% to 16% (more 35 thousand people). On the model territory of the project (Baraba lowland and Kulunda Plane) an active support (financial, administrative, legal) was obtained from the local authorities, heads of hunting entities and local population.

Thus, implementation of the project allowed introducing a comprehensive approach for the conservation of a globally rare species – white-headed duck, which provides sustainability of obtained results and further improvement of the situation. The implemented project can be used as a model for introduction in other regions and for other globally rare species.

## **Problems encountered and lessons learnt**

All 4 objectives of the project have been successfully fulfilled thanks to several important mechanisms:

1. Using scientific approach for conducting biological and sociological investigations.
2. Regular interaction with stakeholders to specify the importance of conservation of WHD and find out the interests and opinion of each target group.
3. Using different channels to inform the target groups of the project – personal meetings, distribution of various informational materials, articles in the mass media, mass actions etc.
4. Support from local authorities, leaders of local communities, key users of natural resources and local people.
5. Broad coverage of the work in the mass media.
6. Weekly trainings for the project team members, established corporate policy.
7. Engaging outside partners of the project.

Especially should be noted increase of the level of the information awareness of the local communities from 3% to 16% (more than 35 thousand people), which number included the representatives of local authorities and key users of natural resources. As a result of the information campaign on the model territory of the project, close links with the local authority bodies have been established, which provided financial and administrative support in creating a protected area in Karasuk. Together with the representatives of local authorities a working group has been created for development of tourism on the territory of Karasuk-Bagan wetlands. Another advantage of the information campaign is that not less than 90% of school children and teachers from schools of Baraba lowland and Kulunda Plane received free access to the information on conservation of WHD



and its habitats. Also 3 school conservation clubs dealing with studying and conservation of WHD and its habitats have been established under support of Rufford Small Grants.

The method of meeting “face to face” with simple local residents and authority proved to be especially efficient way of work. This mechanism allows obtaining 3 important results:

- Bring required information to the target group in accessible language, explaining in detail the issues that arise;
- Find out the interests of people, their information awareness and motivation for the conservation of WHD;
- Enlarge the number of people covered by the information campaign, since each person will discuss the meeting with the relatives and friends more actively than the news heard in the mass media.

The number and distribution of WHD have been investigated using a single method on all areas investigated during all years, both by the project team and by the National working group on the white-headed duck conservation, which allows comparing the data obtained in different years in different regions.

The most important problem the team encountered while implementing the project was the difficulties to create a protected area on Bagana lakes, since the owners of the hunting entity on which territory it was supposed to be made were not agree. Not to lose the work time, the project team decided to create a protected area on another territory, also having an international value as the habitat of WHD and other birds – Kulundinskoye lake and surrounding territories (IBA, Ramsar shadow List), where the employees of the ecological centre «Strizh» together with the NGO «Geblerovskoye Conservation Society» has been working since 2009 under support of the Global Greengrants Fund and Rufford Small Grants. At that, in order to ensure protection of WHD in the places of proposed creation of the protected area on Bagan lakes, an agreement has been reached with the heads of local hunting entities to close spring hunting and shift the opening period of autumn hunting on 9 key habitats of WHD, for it not to get under shots.

### **In the future**

Conservation centre «Strizh» is going to develop the achieved results on the conservation of white-headed duck and its habitats in several directions.

First, the research work will be continued, in particular, the focus will be given to investigation of migration ways and wintering places of the Russian population of WHD; currently, there are no available data regarding this issue. The obtained information will enable to develop a comprehensive international program for the species conservation during all periods of its life cycle. Second, the PA system and areas with limited use of natural resources on the key habitats of the species will be developed for legal protection of WHD in Barabinskaya Lowland and Kuludinskaya Plane. In Russia the process of attaching the status of PA is a difficult task, therefore establishment of areas with limited use of natural resources is an alternative opportunity for conservation of the species diversity. Through the corrections in the management plans of wetlands on the local and regional levels, the spring and autumn hunt is planned to be closed by 2015 on 90% of key sites in Barabinskaya Lowland and Kuludinskaya Plane. Third, the population will be involved into work on conservation of WHD and its habitats through the information campaigns, establishment of children’s conservation clubs and development of the ecological tourism in the regions.

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### **Address list and web links**

<http://www.strizh.tsu.ru>

Web-site of the conservation centre «Strizh» - detailed information about the Organization.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/ECStrizh/>

Channel of the conservation centre «Strizh» - video materials on events conducted.

<http://rbcu.ru/>

Web-site of the Russian Birds Conservation Union

<http://admkarasuk.ru/>

Web-site of Administration of Karasuk town

<http://www.adm-karasuk.ru/>

Web-site of Administration of Karasuk rayon

### **Distribution list**

1. Governments: Ministry of environmental resources RF, Ministry of Forestry and Hunting of the Orenburg region, State Inspectorate for Environmental Protection of the Orenburg region, Ministry of radiation and ecological safety of the Chelyabinsk region, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Kurgan region, The Office for Protection, Control and Management of wildlife and their habitats of the Tyumen region, The Office for Protection, Control and Management of wildlife and their habitats of the Omsk region, Department of Wildlife Protection of the Novosibirsk region, Office of hunting of the Altai region, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Tomsk region, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Novosibirsk region, Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Altai region, Administration of Karasukiy, Baganskiy, Zdvinskiy, Kupinskiy, Krasnoozerskiy,

Chanovskiy and Barabinskiy rayon of the Novosibirsk region, Administration of Burlinskiy, Khabarskiy, Slavgorodskiy, Kulundinskiy, Tabunskiy, Klyuchevskiy, Mikhailovskiy, Uglovskiy, Rubtsovskiy, Mamontovskiy, Blagovetschenskiy and Suetskiy rayon of Altai region, Administration of Karasuk town.

2. Educational and scientific organizations: Moskow State University, St. Petersburg State University, Tomsk State University, Rostov State University, Dagestan State University, Stavropol State University, Volgograd State University, Saratov State University, Orenburg State University, Chelyabinsk State University, Kurgan State University, Tyumen State University, Omsk State University, Novosibirsk State University, Altai State University, schools of Karasukiy and Baganskiy rayon of the Novosibirsk region; Institute of ecology and evolution of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Animal Systematics and Ecology Siberian Branch of RAS.
3. NGOs: Russian Birds Conservation Union, conservation organizations of Tomsk, Rostov, Dagestan, Stavropol, Volgograd, Saratov, Orenburg, Chelyabinsk, Kurgan, Tyumen, Omsk, Novosibirsk and Altai regions, WWF, Rufford Foundaion, RSPB, Bird Life.