
The Hengshui Declaration

Conservation of Baer's Pochard (*Aythya baeri*)

Hengshui Hu, Hebei Province, China, 20 March 2018



Photo by Luo Jianhong

THE HENGSHUI DECLARATION

On 19-20 March 2018, an international workshop on the conservation of Baer's Pochard was held at Hengshui Lake Nature Reserve, hosted by Beijing Forestry University, Hengshui Municipal Government, organized by Hengshui Lake National Nature Reserve, School of Nature Conservation, Beijing Forestry University and Hengshui University and supported by State Forestry Administration of China, China Wildlife Conservation Association and the Forestry Department of Hebei Province. Co-organisers included the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) Baer's Pochard Task Force, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the China office of Wetlands International.

Delegates included representatives from all key range states within the flyway - Bangladesh, China, DPRK, India, Japan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Russia, Republic of Korea and Thailand.

The workshop focused on the EAAFP / CMS Baer's Pochard International Single Species Action Plan as adopted by EAAFP Partners in 2015 and CMS Parties in 2017. Specifically, delegates discussed:

- ★ The status of Baer's Pochard, its conservation needs and threats, from across the range countries,
- ★ The identification of information gaps, research and conservation priorities
- ★ The development of national action plans

As delegates of the workshop, we:

- ★ Warmly welcome the **State Forestry Administration's recommendation that Baer's Pochard be added to the list of species given first class protection in China;**
- ★ Encourage all range states to **strengthen the protection of all sites supporting Baer's Pochard** as a matter of urgency;
- ★ Identified priorities for research and monitoring, including the need for **synchronous censuses across the wintering range, efforts to locate further key breeding areas and improved knowledge about the breeding ecology**
- ★ Encourage the development of **stronger collaboration between different stakeholders** including national and regional governments, nature reserves, researchers, NGOs and the general public;
- ★ Highlight the **urgent need to raise awareness of the conservation needs of Baer's Pochard** among key stakeholders, including national and regional decision-makers, nature reserve managers and the general public; and
- ★ Recognise the importance of Hengshui Hu for breeding, migrating and wintering Baer's Pochard, suggest that the site is **nominated as a wetland of international significance under the Ramsar Convention**, and hereby nominate Hengshui Hu as the **"Home of Baer's Pochard"**.

Participants committed to further refining and implementing the International Single Species Action Plan with a view to slowing and reversing the population decline of Baer's Pochard and urged everyone to support the achievement of this goal.

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Background on Baer's Pochard

Baer's Pochard is a poorly known migratory diving duck that was formerly widespread in eastern Asia. Since the 1980s it has suffered a precipitous decline throughout its range, but the causes of this and the current population size are largely unknown. Following uplisting to Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List in 2012, an International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) was prepared in 2014 and adopted by the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) in 2015 and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) in 2017.

Based on the limited knowledge at the time, this emergency plan identified two key threats as having likely had the largest impact on Baer's Pochard, particularly at breeding sites; (i) habitat loss and degradation; (ii) unsustainable harvesting as a result of poisoning, trapping and egg collection. Other potential threats identified were: (i) inadequate site protection and management; (ii) human disturbance and recreation; (iii) bycatch in fishing nets; (iv) lack of awareness; (v) policy obstacles. Possible threats include: (i) potential for hybridization now Baer's Pochard numbers are so low; (ii) excessive use of pesticides and fertilisers.

Recent activities focused on Baer's Pochard conservation have been carried out in six range states. This has included targeted surveys of breeding and wintering habitat in Russia (breeding), Myanmar (wintering) and China (both seasons). Efforts to improve management of key sites have also been conducted in Russia, China and Myanmar. General wetland monitoring and management activities in many other countries have also enhanced knowledge and conservation. Focused awareness raising has also been carried out in a number of countries and as a result the status of Baer's Pochard and the need for its conservation is now much more widely understood. These efforts have been greatest in China, the most important country for this species, and significant new information is now available on its status, ecology and threats.

The East Asian - Australasian Flyway Partnership Baer's Pochard Task Force
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