

## Mid-winter Waterfowl Bird Census 2011

Between January 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> the professionals from Yoluka Foundation Ilya Acosta and Enzo Garcia, had the opportunity to collaborate in the Mid-winter Waterfowl Census, led by the team of experts from Balkani Wildlife Society, Executive Environment Agency and Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation.

The activity was framed within the International Waterbird Census (IWC) and its being done since more than 15 years in the Bulgarian Wetlands. The IWC is realized in more than 100 countries and millions of waterbirds are counted each year. This project allows to:

- Monitor changes in waterbird numbers and distribution.
- Improve knowledge of little-known waterbird species and wetland sites.
- Identify and monitor sites that qualify as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.
- Provide information on the conservation status of waterbird species.
- Increase awareness of the importance of waterbirds and their wetland habitats at local, national and international levels.

During these 2 days, bird census was realized in the region of Silistra, covering the shores of the Danube and the amazing Srebarna Nature Reserve. Srebarna Nature Reserve protects a lake and wetland ecosystem of 638ha located near to the village of Srebarna on the west bank of the Danube River. It is an important wetland on the Western Palaearctic bird migratory flyway, providing nesting grounds for 99 species of birds and seasonal habitat to around 80 species of migratory birds. The property holds populations of birds that are considered critical to species survival. It hosts the only colony of Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*) in Bulgaria, as well as the largest breeding populations of four more globally threatened species: Pygmy Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax pygmeus*), Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroc*), White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) and Corncrake (*Crex crex*).

By far the highlights of this census was the sighting of over 2400 assorted duck flock (*Anas crecca* and *A. platyrhynchos*) in the nearby of village

Popina, and the discovery of a new roost of *P. pygmeus* near the town of Silistra, where around 121 Pygmy Cormorants were registered while landing to roost at the white willow forest at sunset. As a result, Balkani Wildlife Society informed through their official website, that will submit a proposal to the Rousse Regional Inspectorate of Environment and Waters asking it to issue a report on the findings and recommendations, stating that the trees in the vicinity of Silistra, where the birds roost, should be preserved.

Yoluka Foundation would like to thanks to the organizers, the chance to participate in this project and to give us the invaluable opportunity to share experiences with other local conservation groups.

For more information and references, please visit the following websites:

[www.balkani.org](http://www.balkani.org)

<http://nfp-bg.eionet.eu.int/bul/index.html>

[www.bepf-bg.org](http://www.bepf-bg.org)

<http://www.srebarnabirding.blogspot.com/>