

BOU Category:	C1E* (GB), C1E (site)†
Site status:	rare feral visitor/escapee
Devon status:	uncommon feral resident/escapee † †
Conservation status:	BOCC3 (unlisted); † SPEC (unlisted); IUCN European and Global (Least Concern) †
Conservation levels	n/a, but >10 noted †

International

Its natural range is throughout sub-Saharan Africa, where it frequents a wide range of freshwater habitats. Largely sedentary, it makes seasonal nomadic or dispersive movements related to water availability, and congregates on key waters during post-breeding moult. Partly influenced by latitude, nesting can occur anytime from Mar to Aug.† Overall its population of estimated 210,000 - 510,000 mature individuals is decreasing. ††

Europe

Up until the early 18th century, it was a natural breeding species centred on the River Danube in E Europe, but has since retreated with its nearest native breeding in Palestine and Egypt. † Occasional winter records from NW Africa, Cyprus and Malta are likely genuine vagrants, but all modern records in NW Europe are of feral or escapee origin. † Widely introduced up to the late-20th century, soon feral, self-sustaining populations established and in places are increasing rapidly in GB, Belgium, France, Netherlands (4,500-5,000 breeding pairs in 1998-2000) and Germany. ††

Great Britain

Between 1830 and 1880, wildfowlers in Northumberland were familiar with small wintering parties and those appearing on the Norfolk coast after strong easterlies during the 19th century were considered at the time to be genuine vagrants. Although one text speculated these could be of Dutch feral breeding origin,† the first feral breeding record there was not until 1967. †

It was first described in Britain in a wildfowl collection in St James' Park, London in 1678 and was first noted in Norfolk in 1808.† During the 19th century, it became increasingly common as free-flying collections on estates in S & E England from where birds dispersed to establish feral breeding colonies, most notably between Holkham and Beeson, and also the Bure Valley and Broadland area, Norfolk. It continues to spread slowly S and E, breeding for the first time in Essex (1979), Somerset (1982) and Cambridgeshire (1988), † with successful breeding in 12 counties during 2003 - 2005. † The adult population has increased from an estimated 300 - 400 (1963) to 504 (mid-1980s),† to 906 (1991), † to c.950 (2000) † and most recently approximately 3,400 in 2010. † The BOU admitted it to Cat C in 1971. †

Devon

In the mid-1800s, 20+ free-flying birds from a collection at Bicton, near East Budleigh frequently flew down to the Otter Estuary mouth to graze. When lakes froze over or after heavy rain, birds roamed around and beyond the county from here and a collection near Crediton. One was killed from a flock of up to 40, near Exeter on 12 Feb 1869, by a man who flung a pitchfork at them! Once numerous, they had all but been shot out within 30 years. †

No available information of its presence in Devon from the 1890s until records were published in 1980, † describing it as a 'resident', but regarded the three records that year as, "probably refer to escapes". This indicates presence in the county before 1980, so the dearth of records during preceding years (and absence from the previous avifauna) † could be attributed to observers largely ignoring it as an un-noteworthy escapee. †

Since 1980, it was recorded regularly from scattered locations with a post-breeding site maxima count of 15 on the Dart Estuary in Sep 2010.

† It has bred on the Dart Estuary in most years since 2005 and on the River Teign, near Newton Abbot where present 2000 - 2006, with nine in Jan 2003. ††

Dawlish Warren

On a few occasions it was reported and shot on the Exe during the latter half of the 19th century, there is one historic record that probably refers to here, "Mr Comyns had an Egyptian Goose in his collection which was killed on the Warren [at the mouth of the Exe] probably...(E.M., Trans. Plym. Inst. 1830, p.343)." †

There are **16** modern **records** involving up to 26 birds:

10 Apr 1983	one, then three on 17 Apr	04 Jun 2005	two, one a leucistic individual, also seen on 27 Aug & 03 Sep 2005, and 15 Mar 06
20 Oct 1985	two	07 May 2006	three in Shutterton Creek
17 Nov 1991	three on Main Pond	29 Jun 2006	three flew over; perhaps from the Axe Estuary
06 May 1992	two flew up the Exe	14 Feb 2011	one with Canada Geese on the golf course
12 Nov 1992	two flew up the Exe	01 Feb 2012	two briefly in Shutterton Creek before flying N later relocated at Bowling Green Marsh
24 Dec 1994	one with Brent Geese		
13 May 2004	one		

The historic record probably originated from the free-flying collection at Bicton. Some of the modern records refer to returning feral bred or free-flying birds, which are known to wander widely around south Devon.