

# First record of White-faced Whistling-Ducks *Dendrocygna viduata* (Linnaeus, 1766) (Aves Anatidae) in Libya

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## ABSTRACT

In 24th May 2022, the presence of one adult specimen of White-faced Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* (Linnaeus, 1766) (Aves Anatidae) was recorded in the sewage treatment lagoon of Al-Saket, in Misrata city about 200 km east to Tripoli (32°19'11.0"N 15°00'48.3"E), Libya. It was found swimming on water surface of the lagoon. *Dendrocygna viduata* breeds in sub-Saharan Africa and much of South America and is considered as gregarious and vagrant species. This is the first record of *D. viduata* in Libya that requires further confirmation as only one specimen has been observed and being a duck subject to human breeding.

## KEY WORDS

White-faced whistling duck; Alsaket sewage treatment; Misrata; Libya.

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## INTRODUCTION

Libya is a country with a dry and desert climate. It has many wetlands, most of which are represented in coastal saline Sabkhas with the presence of some lagoons. Inside there are many highly saline desert oases, and along the coast there are some estuaries that rely on rainfall, which has decreased significantly in recent years with the increase in urbanization and the accompanying destruction and pressure on natural environments such as forests and wetlands, the number of industrial and man-made wetlands such as reservoirs of the man-made river and sewage treatment plants has increased, with a proven role in attracting birds, especially aquatic birds (Algadry et al., 2022). In terms of numbers and types of birds,

Libya is considered poor compared to its neighboring countries in the region (Smart et al., 2006). In the year 2016, the last book on Libyan birds was published (Isenmann et al., 2016); it included 351 species of which about 100 species were mentioned as nesting in Libya. The total of Anatidae species reached 25, although this group need to be updated; for example: the white headed duck was seen only in 1965 in the Wadi Kaam area (Bundy, 1976).

Currently, most of the aquatic bird species that are counted in Libya are the results of the regular winter survey of waterbirds (IWC) that started from 2005 to 2022 (Azafzaf et al., 2005, 2006; Smart et al., 2006; Etayeb et al., 2007; EGA-RAC/SPA, 2012; Bourass et al., 2013; Etayeb et al., 2015a, b; Benyezza et al., 2017; Etayeb et al., 2020).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A White-faced Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna viduata* (Linnaeus, 1766) (Aves Anatidae) was recorded for the first time in Libya. This species was observed on 24 May 2022 in the sewage treatment lagoon of Al-Saket site in Misrata (32°19'11.0"N 15°00'48.3" E) about 200 km east to Tripoli (Fig. 1).

The only one specimen bird observed showed the typical appearance of this species with a black neck and head, a distinctive white face, and a long



Figure 1. The sewage treatment lagoon of Al-Saket site in Misrata about 200 km east to Tripoli (Libya).

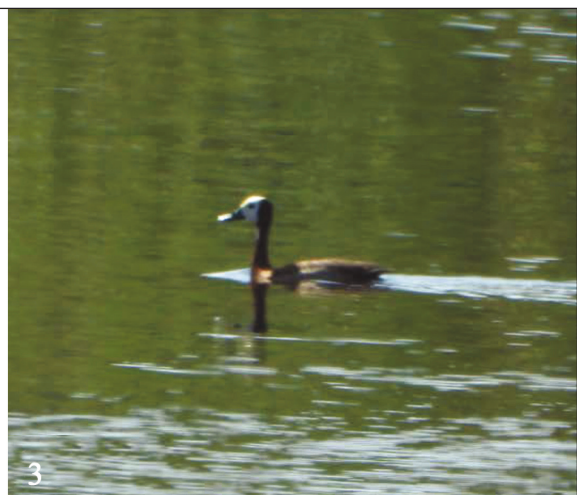
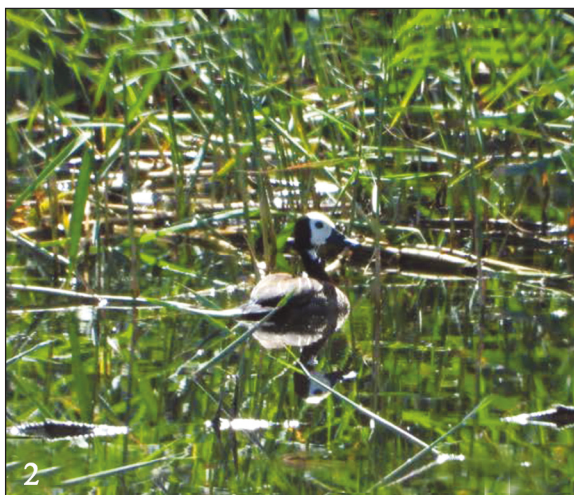
grey bill; it swam on the surface of the lagoon and some photos were taken with the surrounding environment consisting mainly of reed plants (Figs. 2, 3).

The range of *D. viduata* is subsaharan Africa, including Madagascar and Comoro Island, and South America, from Costa Rica and Trinidad to northern Argentina and Uruguay (Johnsgard, 1965; del Hoyo et al. 1992; Dickinson et al., 2004; Arlott et al., 2021).

This species was listed by Robertson & Woolfenden (1992) as “*unestablished exotics*” in Florida. Successively, there have been multiple reports of *D. viduata* in Florida since the first in 1991 (Sullivan et al. 2009, Greenlaw et al. 2014, EDMaPS 2018; O’Connell & McBride, 2019). The sighted birds were most likely released or escaped from captivity. Greenlaw et al. (2014) list the species in Florida as “*verifiable, potential natural vagrants*”. Other reports are reported for several other countries such as Spain and Seychelles (BirdLife International, 2016) and, more recently, Iraq (Salim et al., 2020) and Socotra in Yemen (Suleiman, 2020).

Based on biological and genomic characteristics of *D. viduata*, our research will continue to better understand the presence of this species in Libya.

*Dendrocygna viduata* has most recently been assessed for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as Least Concern (BirdLife International, 2016).



Figures 2, 3. *Dendrocygna viduata* near reed plants (Fig. 2) and in the lagoon (Fig. 3).

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