

# Distribution of breeding birds in the Gediz Delta, Western Turkey

(Aves)

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**Abstract:** Atlas mapping of breeding birds in Gediz Delta Ramsar Site on the western coast of Turkey was performed in 2002. The study area of 305 km<sup>2</sup> was divided into 305 1x1 km square UTM grids. Breeding evidence was obtained for 92 species in 291 UTM squares; 47 were classified as *confirmed breeding*, 22 as *probable breeding*, and 23 as *possible breeding*. Among the breeding species, three were European species of global conservation concern (*Falco naumanni*, *Pelecanus crispus*, *Emberiza cineracea*), 12 were species with a concentrated population and with unfavourable conservation status in Europe, and 34 were species with their population not concentrated in Europe but with unfavourable conservation status in the region. Among those with a threatened status, 7 species were vulnerable, 4 were rare, 2 were localised, 18 were declining, and 18 were depleted species. During the study, various threats were identified in 173 UTM squares out of 291 (59.5%). Among these, the most frequently observed were pollution observed in 30% of the squares, overgrazing in 22% and illegal hunting in 22%.

**Key words.** Gediz Delta, breeding bird atlas survey, population monitoring, zoogeography, population status, Turkey, Middle East.

## Introduction

Gediz Delta, situated on the Aegean coast of Turkey, is a wetland of international importance. It qualifies as an “Important Bird Area” (IBA) for 28 species (EKEN 1997, KILIÇ & EKEN 2004) and holds important breeding and non-breeding populations of some globally threatened species including breeding Dalmatian Pelicans (*Pelecanus crispus* Bruch, 1832) and Lesser Kestrels (*Falco naumanni* Fleischer, 1818). It has been designated as a Ramsar site, “Natural SİT Area” (a conservation category according to Turkish law), and wildlife protection area.

Previous studies on the birds in the delta mainly focused on some waterbirds and their populations (SİKİ 1985, 1988, SİKİ & ÖKTEM 1992, EKEN 1997, SİKİ et al. 1998, SİKİ 2002). These studies do not include comprehensive quantitative information on abundance and distribution of the breeding bird species, except for a few selected species. Most of the previous studies refer to the protected parts of the delta only. In order to show the distribution and abundance pattern of the breeding birds of the delta, we conducted in 2002 a mapping study in the delta. The distribution patterns of birds were compared with the distribution pattern of available habitats and threats. The purpose is to provide a scientific baseline for landscape and protected area planning, to define the status of the species in Turkey, and to update the recent lists by KASPAREK (1992), KASPAREK & BILGIN (1996) and KIRWAN et al.