

# Status and development of the population of the globally threatened Dalmatian Pelican, *Pelecanus crispus*, in Turkey

(Aves: Pelecanidae)

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**Abstract.** The Dalmatian Pelican, *Pelecanus crispus* (Bruch, 1832), used to be a widespread breeding species in Turkey in the past. Until the 1990s, approximately 473-763 pairs were breeding at 20-25 sites. Of these, 53-59% have been lost due to drainage of wetlands, 17-19% due to direct persecution, 16-22% due to both drainage and persecution, and 6-8% due to water level increase. Currently there are only five active breeding colonies: Gediz Delta, Manyas Lake, Büyük Menderes Delta, Aktaş Lake and Işıklı Lake. The colony at Işıklı Lake was discovered in 2010 and comprises 6 pairs. Since 2000, the total breeding population of Dalmatian Pelicans increased moderately from 220-250 to 277-341 pairs. Likewise, the wintering population has also increased from 352 up to 2,344 individuals, which seems to be linked with the increase in the breeding population in the region. Nevertheless, the population size still renders the species susceptible to the risks affecting small populations.

**Key words.:** Dalmatian Pelican, *Pelecanus crispus*, Turkey, breeding population, wintering population, threats, new breeding site, Işıklı Lake.

## Introduction

The Dalmatian Pelican, *Pelecanus crispus* (Bruch, 1832), is a species of Global Conservation Concern (Vulnerable - VU), listed by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and protected under several international treaties such as the Bern Convention, the Wild Birds Directive of the European Commission, and the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement under the Bonn Convention. The distribution of the Dalmatian Pelican is strictly limited to the Palearctic Region, from Europe to Mongolia, and the world population is presently estimated to be between 4,350 and 4,800 breeding pairs (BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL 2008). The species breeds locally in south-eastern Europe, which accounts for less than half of its breeding population with an estimated 1,600 to 2,000 pairs. The most important countries for breeding are Greece with 1,400-1,500 pairs (CRIVELLI, HATZILACOU, NIKOLAOU, unpubl.), Romania with 400-550 pairs, and Turkey with 220-250 pairs (BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL 2004).

The aim of this study is to provide the first comprehensive synthesis of past and present information on the distribution and population status of breeding and wintering Dalmatian Pelicans in Turkey, and to communicate a new, recently-found breeding site for Turkey.