

LAKE MIKRI PRESPA : THE SOLE BREEDING PLACE OF WILD MUTE SWANS (*CYGNUS OLOR* GMELIN, 1789) IN GREECE

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In Greece, the last known wild population of mute swans *Cygnus olor* bred up to the mid '70s in the Evros Delta. In 1967 a few birds from the Netherlands were introduced into Lake Kastoria and –artificial- Lake Agras in W. Macedonia and they have since established feral populations there. Up to the early '80s, breeding was taking place only at those two wetlands. Evidence for nesting of one pair of mute swans in Lake Mikri Prespa was first collected in 1982, and since then monitoring revealed that nesting was repeated in 1983, 1984, 1985 and after that annually in 2002-2012. Brood size varied between 0 and 7. Eggs hatch consistently during the second week of May. Estimated fledging success varied also between 0 and 7 young with an average of 3 ± 2.41 (N=12), but actual fledging success is assumed lower. Between 2009 and 2012 there were 3 breeding pairs which nested at the marshes of the northern part of the lake in distances ca 1200 meters away from each other. During 2011, the observation in Prespa of two birds ringed at Kastoria added substance to the suspected origin of breeders from individuals from Lake Kastoria, situated 36 km away. Mute swans are present in the area all year round, while maximum numbers of adult and immature birds, up to 11 individuals, occur in March. Thus, this small population seems to have established itself and is the only really wild breeding population of mute swans in Greece the last 30 years.