

# Wintering Waterbirds in Danube Between the Towns Somovit and Silistra, Bulgaria

*Bojidar Ivanov*

Institute of Zoology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, 1, Tzar Osvoboditel Blvd., 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria;  
e-mail: bai\_bobo@yahoo.com

**Abstract:** On-board counts of wintering birds in Danube between the towns Somovit and Silistra in January 1984, 1990, 1991, 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2005 were provided. The method applied allowed better count of the mass species and wider and more detailed comment of the results in relation to the ecological conditions. The number of Pigmy cormorant is underestimated by this count. For the entire period of investigation an average of 22 species were found wintering in the region and in different years this figure varied from 17 to 26. Eleven species wintered regularly in Danube. The number of species was not affected neither by the water level in the river nor by the cold weather. Ranked according to the average numbers, the most common species were Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Black-headed gull (*Larus ridibundus*), Tail (*Anas crecca*) and White-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons*). An early appearance in the spring for Dalmatian pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*) and further increase in the number of wintering cormorants was found. In some winters the number of Mallards can reach almost 90% of the total number of wintering birds and is affected by water level and the presence of sandbanks as well as the combination of low temperatures and snow cover. Some of the species observed appear or increase their number only during cold winters (Whooper swan, Goldeneye, Tufted duck, Long-tailed duck, Goosander, Smew).

**Key words:** mid-winter numbers, waterbirds, Danube, Bulgaria