

PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

Hooded Grebe *Podiceps gallardoi*



Hooded Grebe (© James C. Lowen / www.pbase.com/jameslowen).



Background

Hooded Grebe is an unmistakable waterbird of interior Santa Cruz in south-west Argentina, where its breeding range is restricted to a few basaltic lakes. Recent surveys of its wintering grounds at the Rio Coyle and Rio Gallegos estuaries suggest a 40% decline over seven years, but trends have been even more stark at known breeding lakes: three revisited in 2006 and 2009 had shown declines of 88-100%.

The grebe's reliance on a few lakes leaves it clearly susceptible to climate change, and falling water levels have been cited as an important reason for its decline. The other primary threat is the introduction of salmonid fish to private lakes, which has been shown to negatively correlate with breeding populations.

Actions being implemented

1. Two **specialist workshops** were arranged in Rio Gallegos and Buenos Aires to discuss problems and solutions in the conservation of Hooded Grebe and its environment. These have provided a sound basis for future research and conservation work on the species.
2. Twenty-four **threats were identified** by participants in the workshop. Fish introduction and soil erosion were particularly prevalent among these.
3. The workshop emphasised the **importance of education** in the success of the project. There are plans to publicise the plight of the species, educate landowners on its conservation, and include it in the local school curriculum.
4. Creation of a **Santa Cruz Provincial Reserve** was discussed as a target.
5. There will be a **census** of the Hooded Grebe population, so that trends can be assessed. Research will also focus on investigating the migratory movements of the birds.

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