

Threatened duck species pays the price for water skiing competition

Title

Over the past eight months, the main breeding site of the Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* in the extensive reed beds of the Pamvotis Lake in northern Greece has been illegally excavated without any environmental approval, in order to construct a water skiing track to be used for European competitions in September. The water skiing venue, characterized as destructive to the Pamvotida Lake by local NGOs and the Hellenic Ornithological Society, is constructed without any approved reed bed management plan, which could indicate the usefulness of excavation works in the reeds, within a critical nesting habitat of the globally threatened Ferruginous Duck. Although the project was launched in December 2012, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was just filed for public consultation in July lasting only 30 days instead of the legally stipulated 35 working days, asking from services and citizens their view on a project after its actual completion. The multitude of environmental law violations and the systematic cover-up of ongoing violations and critique of the absence of environmental licensing for the project have led to the unprecedented unanimous resignation of the Board of the Association for Environmental Protection in the Ioannina region. Sustainable recreation activities in lakes in Greece first and foremost requires safeguarding public health and respecting the natural capital with the proper siting of activities. Otherwise both are sacrificed without any specific benefit neither for the environment nor for the local community, that has been experiencing for years now, the impact of the encroachment and the urbanization of the Pamvotis coastline to serve the narrow interests of the local political scene. *For more information: Media and Communications Officer, Katerina Giosma, tel:+30 210 8228704, kgiosma@ornithologiki.gr*
