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EGYPTIAN GOOSE *ALOPOCHEN AEGYPTIACA* HYBRIDIZES WITH COMMON SHELDUCK *TADORNA TADORNA*

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Hybridization in wild Anatidae is a regular occurrence, especially in the smaller species of waterfowl (Milstein 1979). Wildfowl are also more prone to hybridize in wild populations than other bird groups, mainly because of the close genetic proximity of species, their mating systems where pair bonds are renewed each year in some species and similarity of courtship displays (del Hoyo *et al*. 1992). Milstein (1979) found hybridization at Barberspan Nature Reserve, Delareyville, North West Province mainly between native duck species such as Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*, Redbilled Teal *Anas erythrorhynncha* and Yellowbilled Duck *Anas undulata*. Hybridization in the wild occur mainly as a consequence of the close relationship between different species such as the *Alopochen* and *Tadorna* genera of the subfamily Tadorninae on which this paper reports (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992).

On 30 June 2009, Mr Steven Squires of the farm Paddadam, Jacobsdal (29' 09S; 24' 45E), in the north western Free State, donated an Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* specimen to the National Museum in Bloemfontein. He found the bird on an irrigated field near the Riet River. He presumed the bird to be a hybrid as it differed from the other Egyptian geese. The specimen was prepared as a study skin during June 2010 and digital images were taken of bird. It was subsequently identified as hybrid Egyptian Goose x Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*. (Figure 1 & 2).

Figure 1: *Egyptian Goose Alopochen aegyptiaca hybrid specimen showing back plumage (dorsal view).*

The head and neck of the hybrid specimen were brown. The wings and back appeared very similar with only slight differences to that of the Egyptian Goose. The speculum on the primaries of the hybrid bird was purple, whereas the speculum of the Egyptian Goose is an iridescent green. The base of the bill had a small reddish knob – it is similar to the larger knob of the Common Shelduck (photo of hybrid supplied by Brian Colahan, *pers comm*.). The chest and lower belly was white with reddish feathers on the chest. The underwings had been covered with grey-barred feathers on.

Although no records of hybridization of Egyptian Geese with Common Shelduck in southern Africa are known, there are a few records of Egyptian Goose hybridizing with Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*, Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Common Shelduck and as well as with Mallard Ducks *Anas platyrhynchos* (Banks *et al.* 2008, Davies & Allan 2005). Mallard Duck are known to hybridize with Yellow-billed Dauck and African Black Duck *Anas sparsa* which are of conservation concern in wild duck populations (Hockey *et al.* 2005). The extent of Egyptian Geese hybridizations in southern African populations are unknown and needs further study.

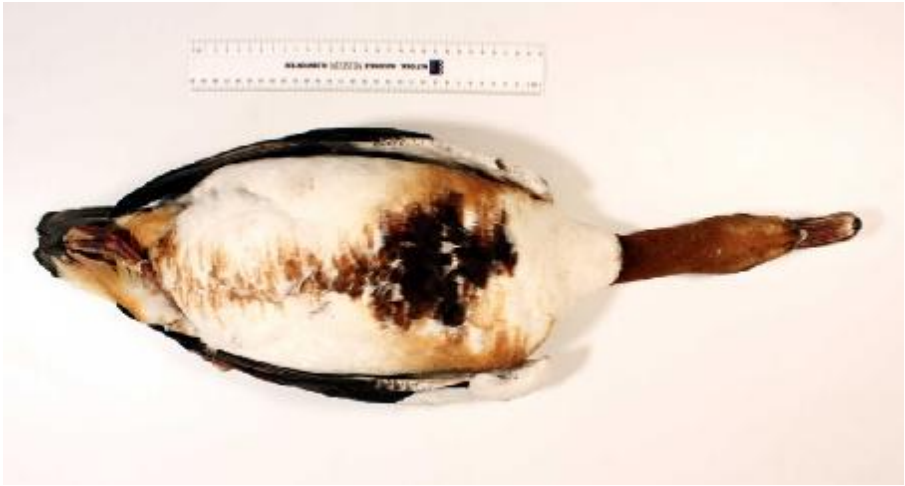

Figure 2: *Egyptian Goose Alopochen aegyptiaca hybrid specimen showing chest and belly plumage (ventral view).*

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The auther acknowledges the assistance of Brian Colahan in indentifying this hybrid species. Steven Squires donated the specimen to the National Museum, Bloemfontein (NMBV no: 06828).

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