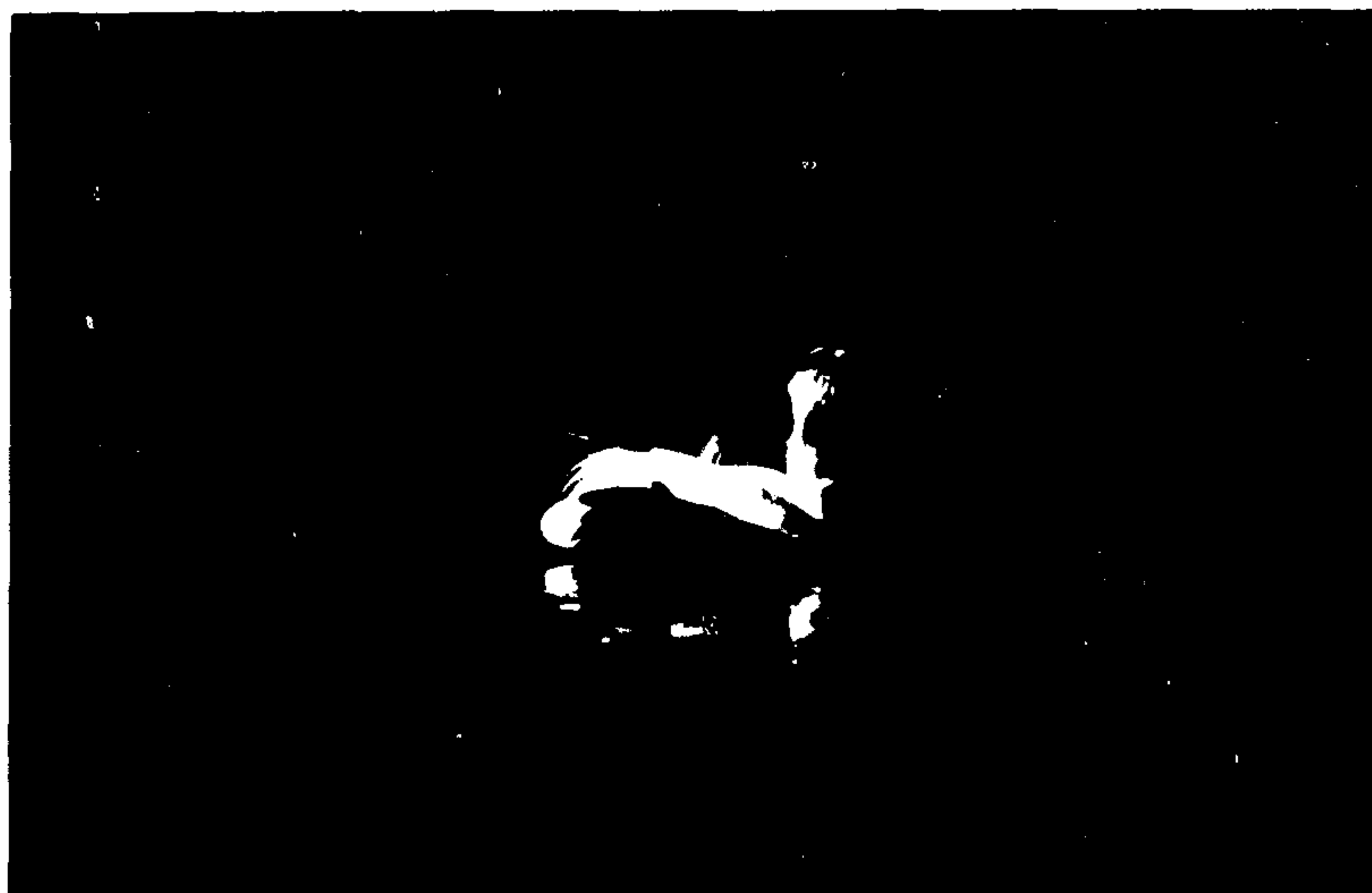


**R. Ian Goudie  
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(editors)**

# **Behaviour and ecology of sea ducks**

**Occasional Paper  
Number 100  
Canadian Wildlife Service**



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Papers presented at the Pacific Seabird Group Symposium,  
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## Preface

Sea ducks are a diverse group of waterfowl exhibiting dramatic ornate plumages and life history strategies that are more akin to seabirds than to other species of ducks. Some sea ducks, such as Common Eiders, have played a long and important historic role in the economy and subsistence of areas of the northern hemisphere. Other species, such as the Nearctic Surf Scoter, are among the most poorly studied waterfowl in the world.

In the general picture, sea ducks have been marginalized in waterfowl conservation and management programs, as most attention has been focused on the "sport ducks," notably Mallards. In fact, much of our understanding of the demography and harvest of ducks is based on the Mallard model. Perceived lack of interest in hunting of the sea ducks had led to liberal management for this group. Large harvests in southern areas and intense subsistence use in the north have proved a dangerous combination. Over the past decade, unprecedented conservation issues have arisen among the sea ducks — notably, *endangered* status for the eastern population of Harlequin Ducks and *threatened* status for Spectacled Eiders and Steller's Eiders. Furthermore, all species in the sea duck tribe except mergansers are exhibiting continental declines. Our understanding of the ecology and causal factors for the declines of these species is poor.

In November 1995, the Colonial Waterbird Society and the Pacific Seabird Group held a joint conference in Victoria, British Columbia. On the first day of the conference, a full-day symposium on the biology of sea ducks was held. The papers in this volume were presented at this symposium. It is hoped that by synthesizing this information, more informed management decisions for sea ducks may emerge. The symposium contents help to emphasize the seriousness of some conservation issues facing sea ducks, notably the possible endangerment of the eastern population of Barrow's Goldeneye and the dwindling numbers of eider ducks in the Nearctic, while also providing new data on the behaviour and habitat use of this beautiful group of ducks.

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