



DUCK

DUCK (*morḡābī* < *morḡ-e ābī* “aquatic fowl” or *ordak* < Turk. *ördäk*), technically any species of the family Anatidae but in Persian popular usage including similar waterfowl from other families, particularly some geese and grebes.

François Hüe and R. D. Etchécopar recorded (pp. 106-33) eight genera comprising twenty-three species of Anatidae, either nesting in or migrating through Persia (cf. Read, pp. 3-5: eleven genera and twenty-two species; Scott et al., pp. 54-71: nine genera and twenty-one species).

It should be noted that the vernacular, or “Persian,” terminology “officially” adopted by Sāzmān-e ḥefāẓat-e mohīt-e zīst (Department for the protection of the environment) and recorded by D. A. Scott and his colleagues includes only a few authentic names for some of the better-known nesting ducks and that most of those assigned to migratory or sporadic species are arbitrary adaptations of the respective Latin, English, or French names. Careful study of the vernacular terminology of the avifauna of different regions of Persia will help to exclude many such arbitrary names. For instance, though further verification is required, the Gīlakī names for ducks observed in Gīlān and recorded by Aḥmad Mar’āšī (s.vv.) and Maḥmūd Pāyanda Langarūdī (pp. 188-89) may be adopted; they include *sīā-kūt/d* for *Aythya fuligula*, *jaq(q)ā-dār* for *Clangula hyemalis*, *kallā-sorkū* for *Netta rufina*, *set-k/gar* and *rūḡānā-mūrḡay* for *Mergus albellus*, *čū/obrāk* for *Anas clypeata*, and *sīā-kar* for *Bucephala clangula*. Similarly, the vaguely defined Kurdish names for ducks (*mrāwī* or *māmārāwī*, lit., “aquatic fowl,” *sōnā*, *wordek/wardak*) recorded by



Moḥammad Mokrī and ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān Šarafkandī Hažār (s.vv.), if identified more precisely, may prove helpful, as in these examples (pronunciation varies in different Kurdish dialects): *bōrcîn*, female *sər-səwz* (mallard, lit., “green-headed”); *merīšk(-ī/-ē) āwī* (a kind of large duck, lit., “aquatic hen”); *pēbaqangə* (a kind of small duck); *sūr-ə qāng* (a kind of duck the size of a mallard); *sūr-əwīk* (a kind of red duck); and *gūtka-koṛə* (a kind of small, diving duck (lit., “diver”).

Although the Šūrā-ye ‘ālī-e ḥefāzat-e moḥīṭ-e zīst (High council for the protection of the environment) has prohibited the hunting of some rare species of ducks (especially the ruddy shelduck, the white-headed duck, and the marbled duck) and has fixed heavy fines for violations (decree dated 10 Šahrivar 1366 Š./1 September 1987), illegal duck hunting goes on in Persia wherever wild ducks and other waterfowl flock together. Various methods and devices are used. The following are brief descriptions of those used in Māzandarān (Badī‘-Allāh Īmānī, personal communication). The *čelā-sū*

(< *čelā* “duck hunting by night” + *sū* “(lamp/torch)light”) method is used on large ponds, *ābendūns/ūndūns/ennūns*, serving as open-air reservoirs. A group of three persons in a *nū* (a canoe carved from a tree trunk; cf. Pers. *nāv*) is arranged so that one person wields a long-handled fork behind a torch or *čerāg-tūrī* (an oil lamp with an incandescent mantle and a piston to atomize the oil) fixed on the bow; behind him the second man (*tašt-ko/eten*) strikes monotonous muted notes on a *tašt*, a special plate made from an alloy of seven metals (Pers. *haft-jūš*), while the third person rows. At an appointed moment the lamps in a group of *nūs* are lighted, and the canoes begin to move, silently converging on the place where ducks are resting; after a while the *tašt* beaters begin “playing” in unison. As if hypnotized by the dazzling light and the soporific sound, the sleepy ducks allow themselves to be caught by the fork handlers, who twist the wings of each duck and place it in a sack. This kind of hunt may be repeated several times in winter. A second kind of hunting, involving live decoys, takes place at dawn or dusk. From a *kīmē* (an improvised small hut; Pers. *kūma*) of reeds screened by a blind of reeds on the edge of an *ābendūn* the hunter launches a few decoys among the wild ducks flying about or resting on the pond. When the ducks have been lured to the blind, the hunter drops a large net over them. The decoys are trained to escape through a hole in the net. In the *dūm* (Pers. *dām* “trap”) method the hunter stretches a large net (ca. 15-20 × 5 m) vertically between two poles at the edge of a paddy or shallow *ābendūn*. His companions rush toward the ducks,



driving them away toward the net; the bewildered flock, flying low before soaring, hits the net, which the hunter, hidden in a *kīmé*, lets drop at the right moment, enveloping the whole lot. This method has been specifically forbidden by the *Sāzmān-e moḥīṭ-e zīst* (p. 32; for variants of these methods in Gilān, see Pāyanda Langarūdī, pp. 475-78).

In rural parts of Gilān, Māzandarān, and other provinces, wherever there is a nearby pond or watercourse, flightless domestic ducks are kept for eggs and meat. As duck meat has a strong taste, it is usually cooked in highly seasoned dishes, especially *fesenjān* (q.v.; for a recipe, see Ramazani, p. 155). *Kūtkā-kabāb* (broiled teals) is a gourmet dish in Gilān.

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