

**The Hook-billed Duck.
An Anthology.**

Jonathan M. Thompson, Norfolk, UK., December 2018.

For

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Rudolph, Rostock University, with appreciation of his support and help over more than three decades, and his contributions to our knowledge of the history and genetics of the domestic duck; and, on a personal note, for :-

'De omnibus dubitandum'.

Thank you.

“Reason obeys itself; and ignorance submits to whatever is dictated to it.”

Thomas Paine (1727-1809)



Fig. 1 Menagerie & Aviary at Chateau de Versailles in 1664 by Adam Perelle (1638-1695).

©RMN (Chateau de Versailles) Gérard Blot.

Precisely when the domesticated Hook-billed Duck first appeared in Europe and, indeed, where it originated, are facts possibly lost to history.

There has been speculation that the Hook-billed Duck originated in the Far East. Fuelling such speculation is an article in the *Avicultura* magazine (August 1990), in which J. Bonenkamp reports on finding the image of a bird resembling the Hook-billed Duck on pieces of Indian brass-ware; also the set-back placement of the Hook-billed Ducks' legs, akin to that in the 'Penguin' or Indian Runner Duck of the Malay Archipelago.

However, the precise locations of these brass-wares are not known and any images not sighted; and, unlike the 'Penguin Duck' or Indian Runner Duck which, in varying forms, has been located in the Far East, no living specimens resembling the Hook-billed Duck have, as yet, been located.

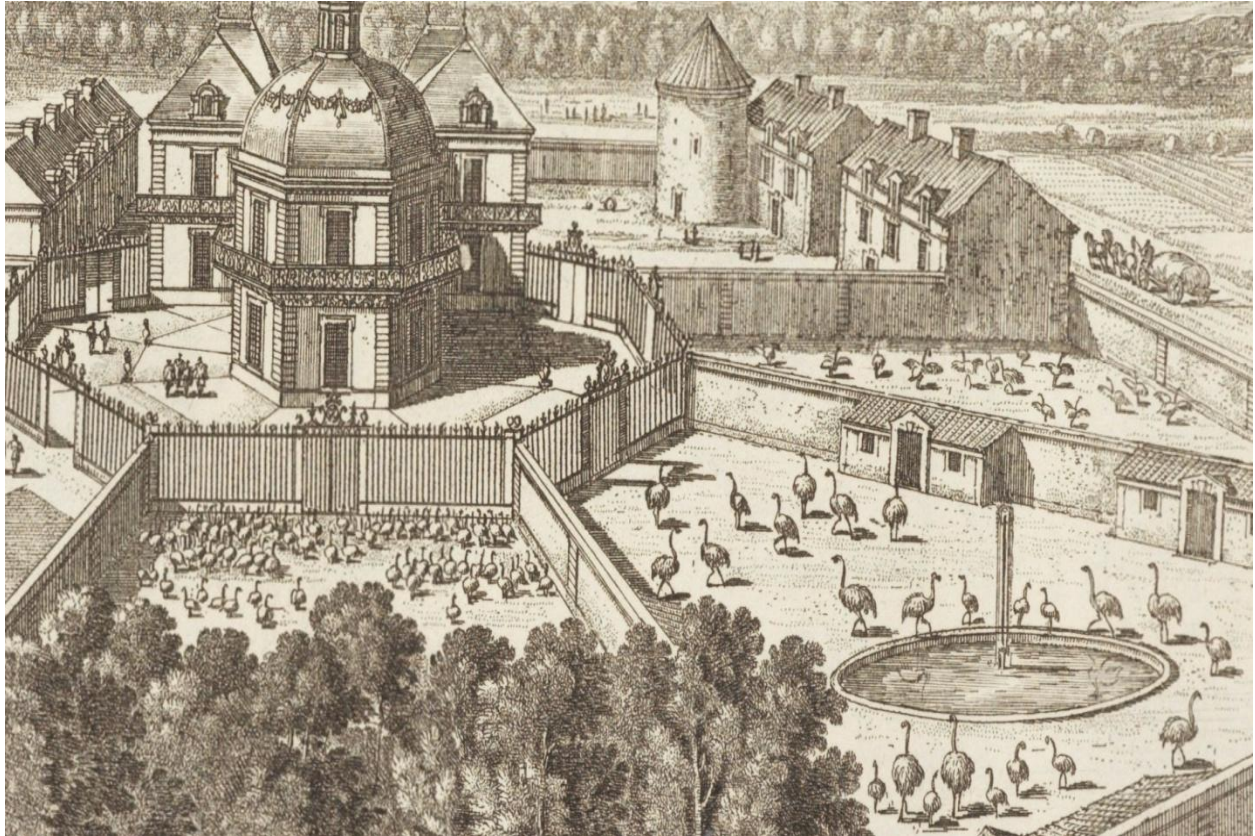


Fig. 2 Menagerie & Aviary at Chateau de Versailles in 1664 by Adam Perelle (1638-1695).
Detail of a reverse view from Fig.1. showing some of the water birds, etc.

The early writers, Pierre Belon (1517?-1564), Conrad Gesner (1516-1565), and Aldrovandi (1522-1604) (this author includes as much myth, as he does fact, in his gleanings), all omit any reference concerning a domestic duck with a curiously-formed bill; even the 'compiler', Joannes Jonstonus (1603-1675) neither mentions, nor depicts such a duck, in his work of 1657.

However, such a bird was noticed and delineated by artists working at the French Courts, probably as early as the 1630's.

In 1635, along with other artists, the French painter and engraver, Nicolas Robert (1614-1685), was engaged by Gaston d'Orléons (1608-1660), the younger brother of Louis XIII of France, to paint the collection of plants, animals and birds kept at Blois. After the death of d'Orléons, Robert became miniaturist to Louis XIV, and between 1664 - 1674 he was commissioned to paint the collections at the Jardin du Roi in Paris and at Versailles. He produced a folio of two hundred

meticulous ornithological paintings, among which are studies of ducks with hooked/downward curving bills (Figs 3.& 4.). Following such a prestigious appointment, Robert received commissions from wealthy courtiers and amateur collectors.



Fig. 3. *Mergus anatiformis cyphorynchus* ~ Plongeon à bec courbé /Diver with curved beak.
Attributed by Christie's to Nicolas Robert (1614-1685) / or studio.

The genus name (Fig.3.), *Mergus*, is a Latin word used by Pliny and other Roman authors referring to any unspecified water-bird, possibly indicating the subject matter is new, or previously unknown to science at that time. The image, as it appears to modern eyes, is the depiction of a female duck, of grey plumage with white flight feathers and white markings to the head and neck and with an abnormally downward-curved / hooked bill.

The image (Fig.4.) presents a drake, here titled genus *Anas*, which displays some colour dilution from the Wild, or Mallard Duck; and again shows white flight feathers and white feathering in the head and neck, and with an abnormal bill.



Fig. 4. *Anas torquatus mas Ornith* ~ Canard ou espece de Sarcelle / Duck or species of Teal. (Museum nationale d'Histoire naturelle. Paris) Attributed to Nicolas Robert (1614-1685).

It is in 1676 that mention is made of the Hook-billed Duck in an English publication.

Francis Willughby (1635-1672) was born into a good family and studied at Cambridge University under the naturalist, John Ray (1627-1705).

Between 1662 and 1666 Willughby and Ray toured Great Britain and the European Continent, and upon returning to England Willughby made preparations to publish his observations on the birds they had studied.

Tragically, Willughby died of pleurisy in 1672, before he finished compiling his work, which was eventually completed and published by Ray in 1676 with a Latin text under the title of *Ornithologiae Libri Tres*. It is an important work; revolutionising ornithological taxonomy by organizing species according to their physical characteristics for the first time.

The image on *TAB LXXV.* (Fig. 5.) is titled *Anas rostro adunco* *The Hook-bill'd Duck.*



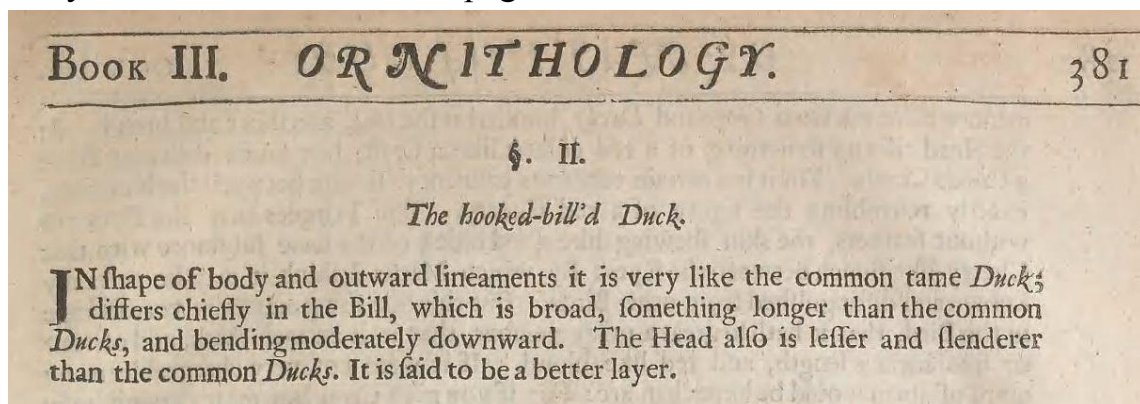
Fig. 5. Detail from *TAB LXXV.*

Ornithologiae, 1676, p.294 :-

Anati domesticæ vulgari externâ specie simillima est, rostro præcipuè differt, quod latum est, longius paulo quàm vulgaris, & deorsum modicè inflexum seu aduncum. Caput quoque minus & gracilius esse videtur.

Two years after the publication of *Ornithologiae Libri Tres*, the same illustration, *TAB LXXV.*, appears in Ray's enlarged and corrected edition published with an English text entitled *The Ornithology of Francis Willughby of Middleton in the County of Warwick.*

John Ray's 1678 edition states on page 381 :-



§. II

The hooked-bill'd Duck.

In shape of body and outward lineaments it is very like the common tame *Duck*; differs chiefly in the Bill, which is broad, something longer than the common *Ducks*, and bending moderately downward. The Head also is lesser and slenderer than the common *Ducks*. It is said to be a better layer.

As Tim Birkhead (*The Wonderful Mr. Willughby* 2018) puts it:

Willughby was from a fairly, but not staggeringly, wealthy family who were keen on book learning. When he went up to the University of Cambridge as an undergraduate at the age of 17, one of his tutors was John Ray. The two of them hit it off and they embraced this new way of thinking about the natural world. That new way was to *not trust* the ancients, like Aristotle, not take somebody else's word for it—but to find evidence and see things with your own eyes.

I concur whole-heartedly with the last sentence; it is as relevant to current writing as much as it is to the ancient. I have lived by "*De omnibus dubitandum*", when Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Rudolph of Rostock University, first made me aware of it in 1984; and it has always held me in good stead.

Birds resembling a crested Hook-billed Duck are portrayed in the paintings (Figs. 6 & 7.) of the Dutch artist Melchior d'Hondecoeter (1636-1695).



Fig. 7. Hook-billed Duck with a crest, showing white on the neck and in the flight feathers .



Fig. 6. Crested Hook-billed Duck, duckling & Muscovy Drake

Details of images by Melchior d'Hondecoeter (1636-1695), circa 1680. (Source Wikicommons)

The presence of the Hook-billed Duck in France, Britain and Holland is recorded in portraiture and text from the 1630's onwards. It is possible, but not, as yet, provable that the birds were shipped to Europe by the *Dutch East India Company*, or *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (United East India Company), which traded chiefly in valuable spices obtained in Indonesia from 1603-1800. Another source could be the British-formed *East India Company*, established in 1600 and traded until 1874; although this company's activities were mainly confined to trading with India after withdrawing its operations from Indonesia, except at Banten / Bantam, in 1620.

John Ray in his own work of 1713, *Synopsis methodica Avium*, p.150, places his Hook-billed Duck in the list of *Anates Domesticæ* / Domesticated Ducks as : *Anas domestica rostro adunco*; and follows Willughby's description.

Fifty years after Willughby's mention of the Hook-billed Duck, another English writer, Richard Bradley (1688-1732) in *A General Treatise of Husbandry and Gardening* of 1726, Vol. II., referring to the management of rivers and ponds, states on page 101:-

On this Water you may likewise keep six Couple of Ducks, which for laying and Encrease, should be of the nook'd Bill sort, and from that Kind one might have young ones fit for killing about the latter end of March, as I have seen this Year sold in the London Poulterers' Shops at 2s. apiece

Bradley's "nook'd Bill" is taken to refer to the Hook-billed Duck.

Elazear Albin (c.1680-c1742) was an art teacher of German descent and had changed his surname from Weiss when he arrived to work in London from 1708. In 1731 the first volume of his *A Natural History of Birds* was published; volume II followed in 1734, and volume III in 1738.

The title page and preface to the first volume informs the reader that Albin and his daughter, Elizabeth, made their drawings from living specimens; engravings were made from these, which they both hand-coloured. Except for a few instances, the description accompanying each species is also based on observation of such living specimens.

Each of the volumes contains a full-page illustration of a bird and a page of text describing it. In the case of the Hook-billed Duck, Albin presents hand-coloured engravings of both sexes (Figs. 9 & 10) in the second volume in 1734.

Albin's description is given below:

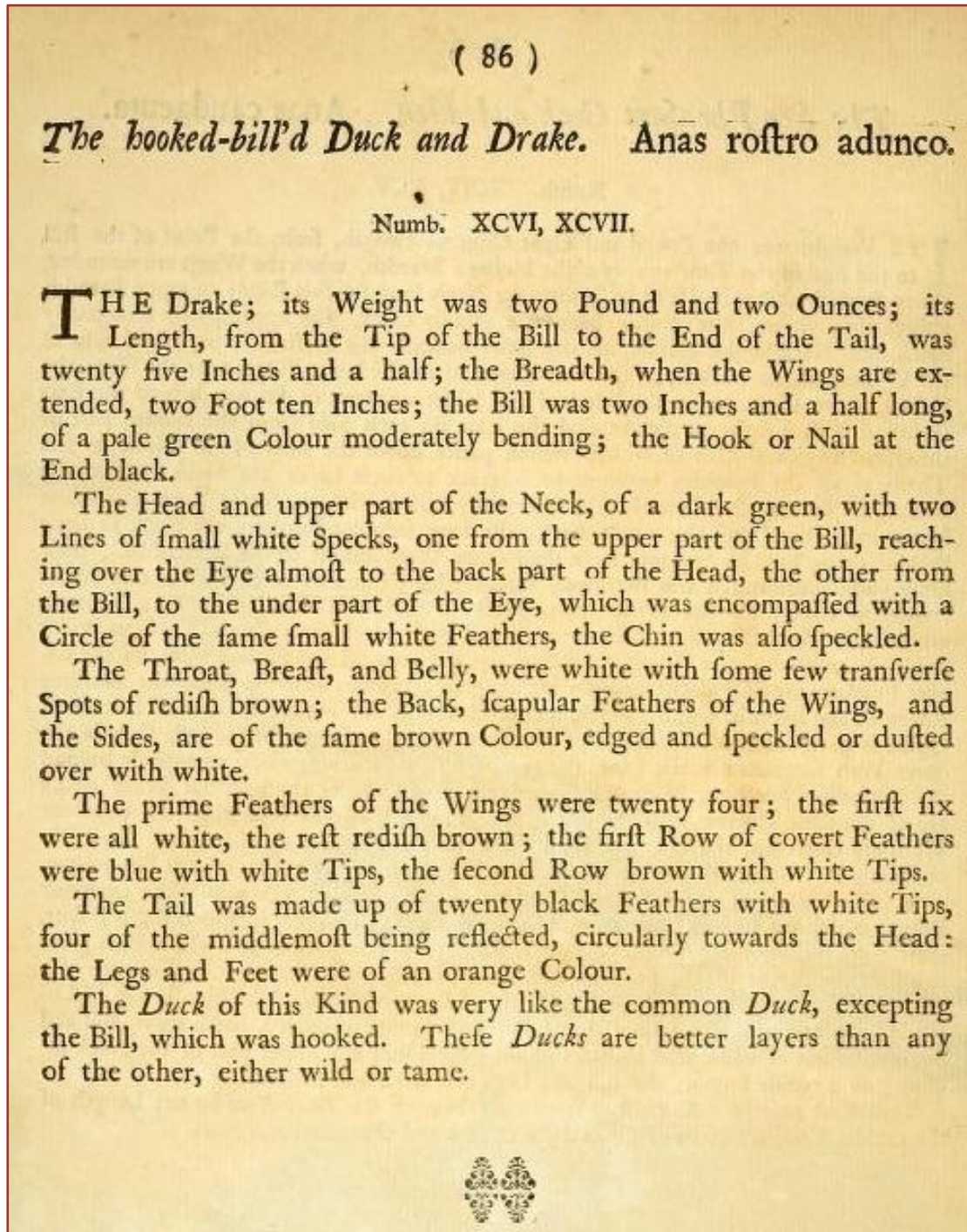


Fig. 8. Albin's *A Natural History of Birds*, Vol. II, 1734, p.86.

Source : The Internet Archive.



Fig. 9. Hook-bill'd Duck
Anas rostro adunca fem.
Source: The Internet Archive.

Fig.10.Hook-bill'd Drake
Anas rostro adunca Mas.
Source: The Internet Archive.



It is worth noting that the images by Robert (Figs.3. & 4.) both have white flight feathers; Willughby's bird presents a light-coloured throat with a single eye-stripe; and the birds portrayed by both d'Hondecoeter (Fig.6.) and Albin (Figs.9 & 10.) have a white throat/upper-breast/bib, with white flight feathers. Albin's birds also have the addition of white eye-stripes; suggesting that the birds possess this 'dilution' and white breast from the earliest times.

In 1750, William Ellis (ca.1700-1758) published his *The Country Housewife's Family Companion*, and this author covers the various sorts of poultry known to him at that time. In the section on Ducks, he mentions on p.162:-

Of the Several Sorts of Ducks kept in England.-- The common white Duck is preferred by some, by others the Crook-bill Duck, some again keep the largest of all Ducks, the Muscovy Sort; but the Gentry of late have fell into such a good Opinion of the Normandy Sort;, that they are highly esteemed for their full Body and delicate flesh;

The Hook-billed Duck is recognised and described in French as *Canard à bec crochu, anas rostro adunca*, in *L'Encyclopédie*, (Texte établi par D'Alembert - Diderot) 1751, 1st ed. Tome II, pp. 584-587, by Vandenesse Daubenton, after Albin's text of 1734.

Thomas Hale's (ca.1700-1759) *A Compleat Body of Husbandry*, 1756, says in Volume II, Book V, Chapter 36, p.95 :-

Of the Duck, . . . there are several kinds of ducks kept in England but the greater part for their curiosity . . . the two kinds . . . to regard, are the common tame duck, and the wild duck kept tame . . .

Of the tame ducks there are several breeds, which though they differ but in slight particulars, are yet worth the Farmer's notice as distinct from one another, . . . There is the narrow beak'd breed ; which is hardier than the common kind, and yet will do with less water; and there is a breed that have the Beak more turning up at its End : they are found upon experience to be better layers. They do not bring up their broods so well as some others. . . . The common tame duck does best in gardens and Orchards.

Here the *narrow beak'd breed* may be taken to be the Muscovy Duck, and it is most probable the next mentioned are the same with the Hook-billed Duck; and again mention is made of their productivity.

Their productivity is further endorsed some twenty years later, in Thomas Hale's *The Complete Farmer or, a General Dictionary of Husbandry*, 2nd ed. 1777; to which there is no pagination:

Once in the year they lay a large quantity of eggs, especially a sort of duck which turns up its bill more than the common kind.

The term "turned up" ~ referring to the downward curve of the bill ~ is encountered in descriptions of this breed.

Carl Linné (1707-1778) published the tenth edition of his *Systema naturae* in 1758, for which work he has long been credited with introducing binominal taxonomy ~ something Willughby and Ray had done by 1676 ~ and on page 128 he gives *Anas adunca*, citing Willughby, Ray & Albin as his sources.

Mathurin Jacques Brisson (1723-1806) found Linne's work of 1758 lacking in detail, and published *Ornithologia, sive Synopsis methodica sistens avium*, in six volumes 1760, with dual Latin and French texts; ; marking an important stage in the scientific study of birds.

Following on from his account of the Domestic Duck ~ *Anas domestica* , he gives on p. 311 - 313:-

Syst. Nat, ed. 10 .Gen.61.Sp.35; *Anas adunca*.
Klein, Avi.p.133 No.17 *Anas adunco rostro*

LE CANARD A BEC COURBÉ

It is almost the same size of the preceding duck [*Anas domestica*]. . . .
It is variable in color, like the preceding duck. It only differs by the bill that is longer and curved downward. I Some have a greenish bill, others more yellowish, some blackish. The female is a little smaller than the male. She is also variable in colour, like the male. She differs only by the four feathers of the tail which are not curved upright.

From the office [collection] of M. de Réaumur.

(Trans. Beranger/Thompson).

Giving the French names of ‘ Canard à bec crochu’ for Albin p.61, pl 96 & 97, and ‘Canard à tête élevée’ = the Upright Duck of Albin p.42; Pl.100, saying “avec des figures mal coloriée” = 'with the figures badly/wrongly coloured' and "(c'est un Bâstard de cette espece).” = 'it is a bastard of this species.'

The description given here is based upon a preserved specimen in the extensive collection held by René Antione Ferchault de Réaumur (1683-1757), French scientist and foremost entomologist of the early 18th century. Réaumur also conducted research into all aspects of the natural world, and had developed methods for preserving birds eggs and skins that they did not immediately fall victim to natural decay.

Brisson studied at the college of Fontenay from 1737 to 1738, and prepared a bachelor of theology in Poitiers . However, he was not destined for life in Holy Orders and, thanks to his relationship with Réaumur, who was married to Brisson's aunt, he followed natural history; becoming curator of Reaumur's collections in

1749. In 1756 he translated *Système du règne animal* by Jacob Theodor Klein (1685-1759).

In the French Court, the courtiers jealously guarded their position and status. The rivalry between George Louis Leclercq, Count de Buffon, and Brisson's mentor, Reaumur was intense.

On Reaumur's death in 1757, the collections he had amassed and bequeathed to the Academy of Sciences, were ceased and entered into the collection of King Louis XV, under the supervision of Buffon. Buffon denied Brisson further access to the collections and he was dismissed.

Brisson's work of 1760 had not been well received; where upon, Brisson abandoned ornithology and became a professor of natural philosophy at Navarre and, later, in Paris. Possibly in an attempt to elevate his status, Brisson chose to repeat only the Latin text for the new abridged/amended edition of his work published in 1763. The text uses figures for the previously printed written numbers to the measurements given.

Ornithologia, sive Synopsis methodica sistens avium, 1763, gives in volume II, on page 445, under 'AVES. Ordo XXIV. Genus CVII.:'

**** 2. ANAS ROSTRO INCURVO.**

Anas versicolor ; rostro incurvato ; 20 retribus ;
quatuor intermediis in mare sursum reflexis. . . .
LE CANARD A BEC COURBÉ.

In this edition the double asterisk indicates Brisson had first-hand knowledge of the bird; whether this implies having seen a live specimen, or the preserved one as mentioned in his 1760 work, is not clear.

In the citations, the comments in the previous edition are omitted and the newly entered Frisch [see below] is commented upon, saying: "*hujus icon accurtat.*" = 'this picture is accurate'. At the end of the citations, Brisson adds the German and English names :-

"KRUMSCHNABLICHE HAUS ENTE." and "HOOK BILL'D DUCK." The description given is identical to the 1760 edition.

At the beginning of 1806 Brisson suffered a severe attack of apoplexy. His memory was so damaged that he could no longer speak French, retaining only the use of a few words from his native Poitevin dialect.

Johann Leonhard Frisch (1666-1743) published the first of his series of volumes with the collective title *Vorstellung der Vögel in Teutschland* in 1733.

The work is set out in twelve *Classes*, finally being published in 1763, some twenty years after the Frisch's death. The task of compiling and publishing work had been completed by his sons. The eleventh *Classe* deals with waterfowl, both wild and tame, and presents a hand-coloured engraving of a pure white Hook-billed Duck (female) with the caption reading :- *Die Krumschnabliche Haus Ente Anas domestica curvi rostra. Cane ayant le bec torta.*



Fig. 11. Plate No. XXII, p.179.

Source: Neidersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen.

The text suggests this form was not very hardy and speculates that it may have originated in warmer climates.

The catalogue for the sale of Adriaan Vroeg's collection of natural history items on October 6th, 1764, lists on page 25 :

248 KROMBECK EEND. *Mannnetje*. (*Adunca Mas*)Lin. Sp.35. Is uncommon. Occurs on various European rivers. Probably this is the wild species from which the

tame/domesticated forms originated.

P.S. Pallas *Spicilegia zoologia* 1769, vol. VI, p. 33-34 is quoted by Latham (1785).

By 1769 the Hook Billed Duck is included in the Dutch dictionary, *Huishoudelijk woordenboek*, Vol.II, p.586, following on immediately after the entry for "De gewonne Eend, . . . *Anas domestica*:

Krombek, in Latin *Anas Adunca*; (*Anas reatricibus intermeliis (Maris) recurvatis, rostro incurvato*, Linn. Sist. Nat.) is a mutation or variety of the former [Tame Duck]; being a little smaller and thinner of body; the name of Krombek was given because of their bill which is hooked; one can find them, like the former, in various colours, and they are domesticated ducks.

(Trans. E. Vogelaar)

George Louis Le Clerc, the Count de Buffon's account of 'The Duck' in *Histoire Naturelle*, 1749-1804, was translated by William Smellie, 1812, p.115-116:

Some are more or less white, brown, black, or mixed; others have assumed ornaments foreign to the species, such as the crested breed; another, still more deformed by domestication, has its bill twisted and bent.

The bird is not featured among the *Planches enluminées d'histoire naturelle* of François Nicolas Martinet (1731-1800), which were produced 1770 - 1786 to accompany Buffon's main work.

John Latham in *A General Synopsis of Birds*, 1785, relates several descriptions under the heading :

43.

- TAME -DUCK,
or, General Variety.

On pages 496-7 this Author gives :

Anas Adunca, *Lin. Syst.* i. p. 206. 41.

Le Canard à bec courbé, *Bris. Orn.* vi. p. 311. 2.

Hook-billed Duck, *Raii Syn.* p. 150. 2.—*Will. Orn.* p. 381. pl. 75—

Albin, ii. pl. 96. 97.— iii. pl. 100.

Lev. Mus.

43.

VAR. D.

HOOK-BILLED

D

This differs not in colour of plumage, make, and size, from the common *Wild Duck*; and is also seen in every variety incident to the *domesticated* one; but differs in the bill, which is somewhat longer, and bent downwards.

This seems to be a mere variety of the *common Duck*, and breeds as well in its tame state. It seems only to be kept in *England* out of curiosity; but we are informed that in some parts of *Germany* this sort is full as common, and the breed is encouraged almost to the exclusion of the last.

Latham then gives :-

44.

Anas curvirostra, *Pall. Spic. vi. p. 33*

CURVE-BILLED

D.

SIZE of the *Wild Duck*, if not bigger. Bill as in that bird, but bent downwards: irides fulvous: general colour of the plumage black, but more dull on the quills and underpart: the head, neck, and rump, tinged with shining grey: on the throat an oval spot of white: the five outer quills white; the others black; the exterior secondary quill margined with white on the outer edge at the end; but the outer margins in general have a blue gloss, forming a speculum of that colour on the wing: tail as in the *Mallard*, with the two recurved feathers in the middle.

The above is described from a specimen in the late *Museum* of *M. Vroeg*, now dispersed, and in the *Prince of Orange's Museum*. The author supposes it not to be a variety of the *Mallard* with the hooked bill, but a distinct species.

From the above, although Latham had not had sight of the bird described by Pallas, it may be taken that, at the time, this variety of the *common Duck* was well known to the English and to the Germans, and that the White-bibbed /-breasted, white-flighted dark variety was then thought to be confined to the Netherlands.

Marmaduke Tunstall (1743-1790) was an avid collector of all natural history material & amassed a great collection of preserved birds which he at first displayed to the public at his house in Welbeck Street, London. In 1760 he inherited property from his uncle, his name-sake, including the estate of Wycliffe, North Yorkshire, which he began re-modelling around 1773, with a specially constructed room to house his collections. Tunstall removed from London to Wycliffe upon his marriage in 1776, and moved his collections there in 1780-81.

Ref: *Memoirs of Marmaduke Tunstall, Esq.*, by George Townsend Fox (F.L.S); Newcastle 1827.

Following Tunstall's death his collections were acquired first by George Allen and subsequently by the Newcastle Museum. A manuscript entry for the Hook Billed Duck made by Tunstall, appears on page 96 of the *Synopsis of the Newcastle Museum* by George Townshend Fox, F.L.S. pub. 1827, printed by T. & J. Hopton. Newcastle.

246. The Hook Billed Duck, (*Anas boschas*, var. ζ. Lathan -- *A. adunca*, Lin. -- Albin 2t. 96 & 97.

Have seen in these parts the *Anas adunca*, or Crook-billed Duck, pretty certainly an accidental variety at first of the Domestic Duck, though now I believe it mostly permanent.- *Tunst. MS.*

It may be presumed the Tunstall manuscript was written at Wycliffe between 1776 and his death in 1790.

Johann Matthäus Bechstein, who lived 1757-1822, was a native of Gotha in Thuringia, a state in east-central Germany; he was a prolific zoologist and one of the first concerned with wildlife conservation. In his book, *Gemeinnützige Naturgeschichte Deutschlands nach allen Drei Reichen*, 1791, vol.II, pp.719-721, is found:

(80) 2 Die krummschnablige Ente.
Anas adunca. Lin.
Le Canard à bec courbé.
The Hook-billed Duck.

The description given follows that of Elazear Albin, and contains a paragraph which other writers have attributed to authors in the 19th century.

The tame sort/form**, which is common across Europe, and particularly in Thuringia, where you have ponds in gardens, are kept in large flocks due to their succulent meat, and their good eggs, it varies in colour, just like the common domesticated duck, and some have crests. (Trans: JMT.)

George Montagu gives the breed a scant paragraph in his *Ornithological Dictionary* of 1802 to which there is no pagination:-

DUCK. -- HOOK-BILLED. This is a mere variety of the common domesticated Duck. The only difference is in the bill, which is large, and bent downwards.

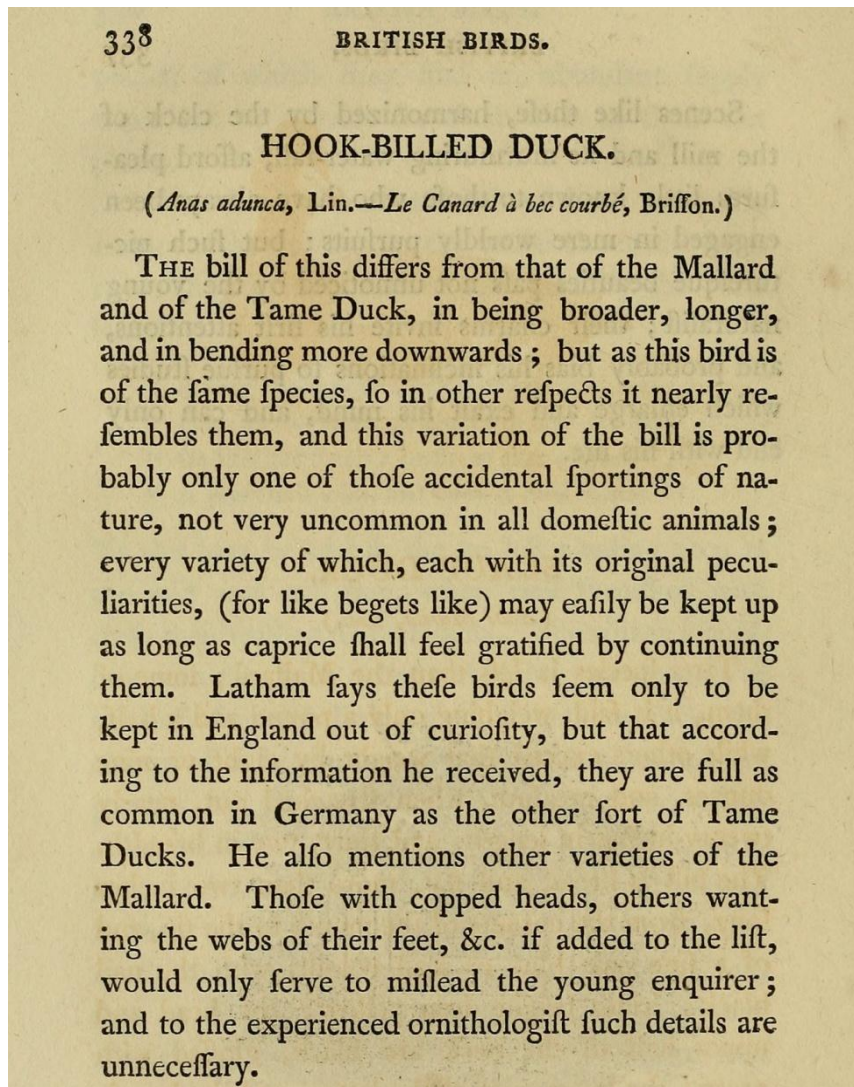
The edition of 1831 has slightly varied text p.259:-

HOOK-BILLED DUCK.—A variety of the common Duck, with the bill lengthened and bent downwards.

Although Thomas Bewick never met with Marmaduke Tunstall, in 1789 Tunstall commissioned Bewick to engrave the Chillingham Bul, possibly Bewick's most famous engraving. In 1791 Bewick had travelled to Wycliffe with the express purpose of viewing the collection of stuffed birds, which he considered were badly presented.

Thomas Bewick published the first volume of *A History of British Birds, - Land Birds*, in 1797.

The second volume, *A History of British Birds - Water Birds*, 1804 p.338: gives no illustration, but a description :



The 1806 edition of *A General System of Nature* by Linne, with additions by William Turton M.D., follows Pallas and Latham in presenting a distinct species under the heading of "BIRDS. ANSERES. 31. Anas." on page 331:

Curviros-

tra.

Black; middle tail-feathers (of the male) recurvate; chin with an oval white spot; bill hooked.

Curve-billed Duck.

Inhabits the Netherlands; larger than *A. boschas*.

Irids tawny; *head, neck* and *rump* greenish-black; *5 outer quill-feathers* white; *chin* white; *wing-spot* deep shining blue.

Immediately following this is :

- * *Boschas*. Cinereous ; middle tail-feathers (of male) recurvate ;
 Bill straight ; collar white. *Mallard. Wild Duck.*
2. Varies in its colours by domestication. *Tame Duck.*
.....
6. Bill hooked.

A number of varieties are listed under the heading “ *Tame Duck,*” which appear to follow Brisson.



Fig. 12. Detail: *Hook-billed Duck*, Plate V, dated 1807, in Abraham Rees, *The Cyclopaedia*, 1820. Source: www.archive.org.

James Smith Barr, who was by profession a printer, in 1797-1807 published a translation of Buffon’s *Natural History..of birds, etc.* 1807, and includes, p.184 :-

The *Hook-Billed Drake* generally weighs two pounds or upwards, and is about two feet from the extremity of the bill to the end of the tail, and in breadth from the extension of each wing near three feet. The bill is crooked, of a palish green, except the hook at the end, which is black; it is in length upwards of two inches.

The upper part of the head and neck is of a dark green, with two small white speckled lines, one of which runs from the upper part of the bill, over the eye towards the back part of the head; the other runs from the bill to the lower part of the eye, around which is a circle of fine white feathers, with small white feathers under the chin. The breast, belly, and throat are white, with small transverse spots, of brownish red, running across them. The first six prime feathers of the wings are white, the rest of a reddish brown; the first row of covert feathers are blue, tipped with white; the second are brown, with white tips. The scapular feathers of the wings, the sides and the back, are of a reddish brown, which appears dusted or speckled over with white.

The tail is black, with white tips; which turn up in a sort of circular curl towards the back. The legs and feet are of a fine orange colour.

But for excluding the description of the female, the above description appears to be a re-write of that given by Albin (1734). Barr refers to Albin by name on page 187.

In 1808, Pierre-François de Wailly (1775-1852), who had been appointed as artist to the Museum Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle in 1803, produced a painting, based on live specimens of Hook-billed Ducks (Fig.13), which, in their colouration, bear a close resemblance to the present day Nantais Ducks of France.



Fig. 13. Canard á bec courbe, *d'apres l'animal vivant*, 1808.
(Museum Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris.) Attributed to P.F. de Wailly.

Sonnini de Manoncourt, in *A Treatise on the Breeding and Fattening of Poultry* 1810, P. 6:

Curve Billed Duck. (Canard á bec recourbé.) (*Anas recurvirostra*. Lath.) This bird, rather larger than the *wild duck*, and noted by its turned up bill, is almost entirely black; this colour throws waves of dark-green over the head, neck, and rump; the five outer quill-feathers white, and this same hue forms an oval patch on the chin; irides are white.

An Introductory discourse - The Lit. & Phil. Soc. N.York 4 May 1815 P. 94
Note 23. By De Witt Clinton, LL.D. Pub. David Longworth, NY.:

The *anas cygnoides orientalis*, or Muscovy gander, breeds with the common goose; and the *anas ægyptica*, about the size of the common goose, is a beautiful bird;

they are common in gentlemen's ponds in England, and might be introduced into this country[USA].

A variety of the *anas boschas*, or common duck, with a hooked bill, is kept in Germany, almost to the exclusion of the common sort. The French, or gray duck, is much larger than the common.

Edward Donovan issued his *A Natural History of British Birds* in ten volumes between 1794 and 1819. Volume nine (1819) contains the aquatic birds arranged in systematic order following Linnaeus. Plate 218 (Fig.14) presents a Hook-billed Duck very similar to those already described by earlier authors.

This bears a general resemblance to the Common Duck, *Anas Boschus* [sic]; and is considered to be a variety of that species by Mr. Latham. Linnaeus describes it as a distinct species under the name *Adunca*; and it cannot be but interesting to ascertain the bird Linnaeus describes as a species, whether it be really only a variety or not. We shall therefore offer no apology for its introduction in this place.

The figure of the Hook-billed Duck in the annexed plate is taken from a very fine specimen in our Museum. The length is twenty-five inches: the form more slender than the Wild Duck in general: the neck white; the legs thicker, the shanks rising in a projection at the commencement of the foot, and again at the knee, and the bill incurvated in a most singular manner.

The singular incurvation of the bill might easily suggest an idea that it could be no other than accidental deformity; but this cannot be the fact, since the same character prevails unerringly throughout the whole race.



Fig. 14.

Source: www.biodiversitylibrary.org.

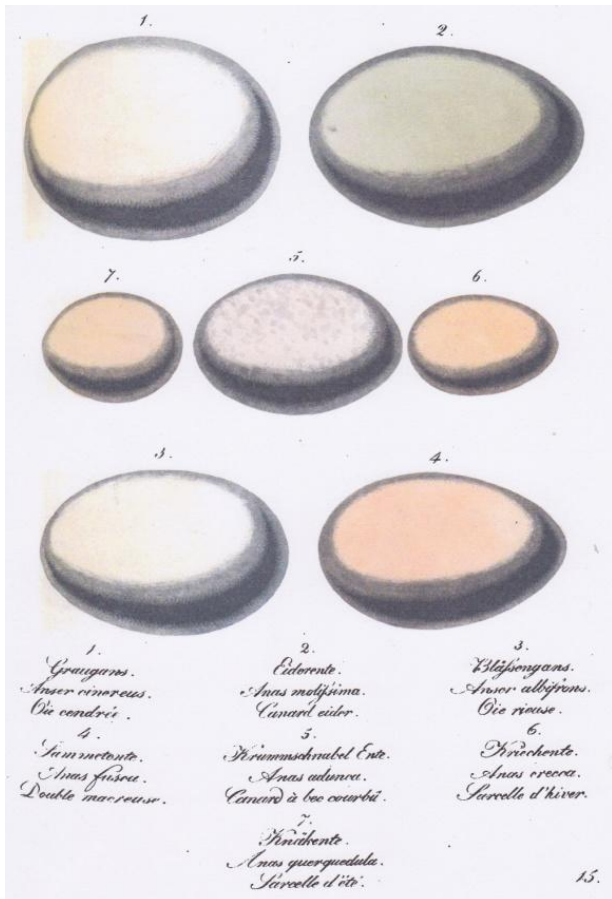
The illustration shows a drake, or male, Hook-billed Duck bearing a general resemblance to those already depicted; i.e. each lacks the normal claret breast-colouration which is replaced by pale or white feathers, and each exhibits white flight, or primary feathers.

Heinrich Rudolph Schinz's *Beschreibung und Abbildung der künstlichen Nester und Eier der Vögel*, 1819, Tabel XV, p.23, features nests and eggs:

- 5. Krummschnabel Ente
- Anas adunca.
- Canard à bec courbû

This duck seems a mere variation of our domestic duck, and is now and again found in chicken farms, it is but little known. Whether they occur somewhere in a wild form, it is very doubtful; more striking is that their eggs have quite an individual colour, and are speckled with grey flecks.

Trans. (JMT.)



Schinz's Hook bill's egg is in the centre of Plate 15 (shown left), with goose and teal eggs for comparison.

Source: www.archive.org.

John Atkinson, 1820, follows those that have gone before him and on page 209, under the heading “ANAS. ”, gives :

16. **BOSCHAS.** MALLARD, OR WILD DUCK.
A. cinerea, reatricibus intermediis (maris) recurvatis,
rostro recto, torque alba. Lath.

VAR. B DOMESTICA. TAME DUCK.
Variat corpore versicolore.

VAR. Š ADUNCA. HOOK-BILLED DUCK.

This is followed by a description of the male and female Mallard.

George Graves, *British Ornithology: being The History, with a coloured representation of every known species of British Birds*, Vol.III, London 1821; to which there is no pagination.



Fig. 16.

Source: www.biodiversitylibrary

The illustration, Fig.16 , is dated 1813 and was possibly intended for inclusion in the earlier volume of that date. The text (below) indicates the Hook Bill Duck was thought to be a wild or feral variety of the common Mallard, to be caught along with that species in the Decoy traps of the day.

ANAS BOSCHAS (VAR.) CURVIROSTRA.
HOOKED-BILL DUCK.

HOOK-BILLED DUCK. *Mont. Orn. Dict. Bewick Br. Birds, pt. 2. p. 303.*

IN size this variety exceeds the Common Mallard, like which it is subject to a great variety in colours; it breeds with the common kinds, and in a few generations the curvature of the bill disappears; it has been taken with other wild fowl in the decoys; our figure was drawn from a specimen sent from a decoy at Spalding, to the London Market.

Except in the Ornithones of the curious, the HOOKED-BILL DUCK is but rarely seen in England, though it is said to be common in Holland and Germany. A pair of these birds kept in a domesticated state, by a friend of the author's, were quite tame; yet they never associated, but for several successive years each bred with the other sex of the Common Duck.

The Hook Billed Duck was represented in the gardens of the Zoological Society in London in 1830, as shown in *Reports of the Auditors of the Accounts of the Zoological Society for the Year 1830, and of the Council, read at the Aniversary Meeting April 29th 1831:-*

p. 22 = Wild Duck. *Anas boschas*, Linn., var. *rosto adunco*.

The Book of Nature, Ed. By an Association of Scientific Gentlemen; Pub. Philadelphia 1834, Vol. 1, Image of *Anas curvirostro* Hook Billed Duck [as in Ree's Cyclopaedia (1820)] is presented in plate ; p.79:-

FIG. 4. *Hook-billed Duck. Anas Curvirostra*, LINN.

Apparently distinct from the wild duck, than which it is rather larger ; its beak is similar, but bent downwards ; irides fulvous ; the prevailing colour of the plumage is deep black, with the quills and under parts dull ; the head, neck, and rump are slightly tinged with shining gray ; on the throat is an oval white spot ; the five outer quills are white ; the rest black ; the exterior secondary quill is margined with white at its tip on the outer edge ; but the outer margins in general have a blue-black gloss, and form a speculum of that colour on the wing ; the tail as in the wild duck, with the four middle feathers recurved. Described by Pallas: its native country is unknown.



The dealer in all manner of articles, J. J. Nolan of 33 Bachelors' Walk, Dublin, advertised 'Dutch Hook-billed Ducks' for sale as early as 1834, when advertisements appeared in the *Dublin Morning Register*. Nolan continually offered these ducks for sale through to 1847.

The Reverend Leonard Jenyns, M.A., follows Linne's " *Anas adunca* " and cites Lathan and Donovan in *A Manual of British Vertabrate Animals*, 1835, p. 234, saying in his chapter " **AVES NATATORES.** ", under the section " **GEN. 91. ANAS, Linn.** " following on from the description of the common Mallard :-

Differs from the *Common Mallard* in the bill being broader, longer, and inclined more downwards at the tip. In other respects similar. It does not seem to be satisfactorily determined, whether it be a peculiar species, or only a variety of that last described [*Anas boschas*]; probably, however, the latter. Not uncommon in the domestic state.

Jennyns has summed up the limbo in which the Hook-billed Duck found itself in being suitably classified.

Edward Blyth, writing in the *Magazine of Natural History*, vol. 8, January 1835, pp. 40 - 53, says in section II Acquired variations :

The crested varieties of domestic geese and ducks, and the hook-billed variety of the latter, are, however, in all probability, *true varieties*, and what are called “lob-eared” rabbits may be either a “*true variety*”, or a *breed*.

As reported in *The Gardener's Magazine*, 1835, vol.11, p.43, the proprietor of the Botanic Garden [now known as the Abbey Gardens], Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, UK., Mr. Hobson, added various birds and livestock as further attractions for his paying public. Among the birds listed by the Curator, Mr. Turner is a pair of Hook-billed Ducks

Baron Cuvier's work translated into *The Animal Kingdom* 1837, volume 1, p. 378, following the reference to the Mallard, gives simply:

“A singular variety is found in the Hook-billed Duck, the *An. adunca*, L. ”

Thomas C. Eyton makes no mention of the Hook-billed Duck in the 1836 publication of his *History of the Rarer British Birds*, however in his *Monograph on the Anatidæ, or Duck Tribe*, 1838, p.141. is entered:

Var. A. *Anas adunca* (Linn.) Hook-billed Duck
This variety has the bill turned downwards.

Var. B. Penguin Duck
The peculiar upright position of this variety when at rest and standing distinguish it.

Here Eyton clearly follows Linnæus. The fact that no Latin names are attributed to the 'Penguin Duck' may indicate it had been previously unknown to scholars.

The second edition of Peter Boswell's *The Poultry Yard* 1840, states on page 121 :

Among the varieties may be noted the Curve-billed Duck, which is larger than the wild duck, remarkable for its turned up bill, colour is entirely black, though waved with green over the head, neck and rump. ”

This Author's description is almost, but not exactly, the same as that given for Turton's (1806) *Anas Curvirostro*, and following Latham's “Curve-billed Duck.”

Christian Adolph Buhle, in ~ *Naturegeschichte der domesticirten Thier*, Halle 1842, Vol. II, deals with domestic geese and ducks. On p.59 is given :

3. Der Krummschnäblige Ente. *Anas adunca* Lin.

There follows a description and account of the breed, as given in Bechstein (1791), without any attributions, except that to Linné. It is little wonder that, down the years, authors finding this account attribute it to Buhle, knowing nothing of Bechstein's work.

The same statement is repeated in successive works by Buhle, such as the edition of 1860 given in Schmidt (1989).

H.D, Richardson in *Domestic and Ornamental Poultry*, 1847 makes scant note of the variety on page 109, under the heading :

The Penguin Duck,

Remarkable for its erect walk; hence its name. The Dutch *hooked-bill*; beak pointing downwards.

Rev. E. S. Dixon , *Ornamental and Domestic Poultry*, 1848, p.126:

There is also the White hook-billed Duck, with a bill monstrously curved downwards, not *upwards*, as some writers have it, but roman-nosed ducks in short, . . of a most grotesque and ludicrous appearance. . .

J. J. Nolan in *Domestic Fowl and Game Birds* 1850, says, pp. 159 - 160 :-

THE DUTCH HOOK-BILLED DUCK

Is sometimes coloured, and frequently white, and occasionally found of either, or both colours, with top-knot. They are said to be more prolific than the ordinary kinds. In a collection of water-fowl, they are kept more for the purpose of variety than utility, as they are smaller than our improved breeds. The beak has a considerable curve downwards.

The name given here suggests Nolan, as a dealer, knew this variety was to be found in Holland. He notes it to be not as large in stature as the "improved breeds", which probably refers to the Aylesbury and the Rouen Ducks that had considerably gained in size due to the husbandry methods employed in England.

The American edition, 1851, of *Ornamental and Domestic Poultry* with large additions by J.J. Kerr M.D., p.466, and the revised English edition of 1853, p.133, contain :

But Hook-billed Ducks are nothing new. Albin, in 1738, published coloured figures of both sexes, which look much as if they had a right to claim the rank of a species. The lines of small white specks on the head, as he describes them, are remarkable. The bill has some resemblance in its curvature to that of the Flamingo. He says, "These Ducks are better layers than any of the other, either wild or tame."

Here, the writer is mistaken in the volume of Albin's works; the Hook-billed Ducks appear in volume II, 1734; anyone repeating this statement perpetuates the error.

The Poultry Book 1853, Wingfield & Johnson, p. 297 - 299 :-

The Hook-billed Duck.— Many early writers refer to this species, the singularity of whose appearance would secure attention in the days when real utility so often yielded to what merely gratified curiosity.

The bill is of large size, and turned downwards; the plumage usually white, with a large top-knot; but coloured specimens are not unfrequent. Holland is the source from which our importations of these birds are commonly derived; and Messrs. Bates assure us that they pair like wild Ducks, and manifest disinclination to associate with other Ducks, amongst a variety of which they had been kept by those gentlemen.

We are not aware of ever having tasted one; but we are told that they possess qualities for the table, in addition to the recommendation of being both hardy and good layers.

In the 1854 edition of Charles Knight's *Encyclopaedia*, p.414, Hook-billed Ducks are reported to be kept in the collection of the Ornithological Society in St. James's Park, London.

The Poultry Chronicle, 1855 vol.III, pp.511-513:

THE varieties of ducks already described are merely those of colour, which may be attributed to the effects of domestication; but those to be described as the Crested, Penguin, and Hooked-bills, have other properties which I think can hardly be considered as solely the effects of that cause: it therefore remains for us to enquire into the history of our tame ducks, to try and discover the cause of these variations of structure.

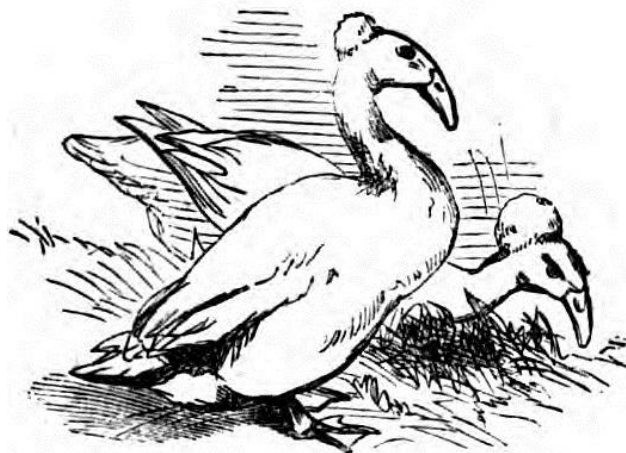
The Hooked-bill ducks, called also Dutch Hook-bills, are rather small, being not much larger than the common Wild ducks. They derive their name from the formation of the beak, which is bent in the middle, downwards, which gives them a Roman-nosed appearance. They are of various plumage, but usually either of the wild colour, or pure white; they are very loquacious, and were formerly much imported from Holland, and esteemed as excellent layers; indeed they occupy the place among ducks, that the Bolton Bays and Greys do among fowls, being what are termed, everlasting layers. One thing worthy of note is, that if these are crossed with the straight-billed ducks, many young ones are produced with the upper mandible shorter than the lower, which not unfrequently causes the death of the bird, from its inability to pick up sufficient nutriment.

B. P. B.



Fig. 17. Birmingham Poultry Show 1859, illus. By H. Weir in *The Illustrated London News*. Hook-bills owned by Lord Berwick shown top left of picture.

Mrs. Isabella Beeton's guide for her Victorian clientele, *Beeton's Book of Household Management*, 1861, p.453, features line-drawings (Fig.18) by Harrison Weir.



BOW-BILL DUCKS.

Fig.18

There are some curious varieties of the domestic duck, which only appear interesting from their singularity, for there does not seem to be anything of use or value in the unusual characteristics which distinguish them; thus, the bow-bill duck, as shown in the engraving, called by some writers the hook-bill, is remarkable for the peculiarly strange distortion of its beak, and the tuft on the top of its head. . . . These odd peculiarities add nothing of value to the various breeds, and may be set down as only the result of accidental malformation, transmitted from generation to generation.

Charles Darwin gives an account and illustration (Fig.19) of the head and beak structure (Fig. 16) of the Hook Billed duck in *The Variation of Animals and*

Plants Under Domestication, 1868, p.334:

Breed 2. *Hook-billed Duck*. This bird presents an extraordinary appearance from the downward curvature of the beak. The head is often tufted. The common colour is white, but some are coloured like wild-ducks. It is an ancient breed, having been noticed in 1676.³ It shows its prolonged domestication by almost incessantly laying eggs, like the fowl which are called everlasting layers.

³ Willughby's 'Ornithology', by Ray, p.331. This breed is also figured by Albin, in 1734, in his 'Nat. Hist. of Birds, vol.ii, p. 86.

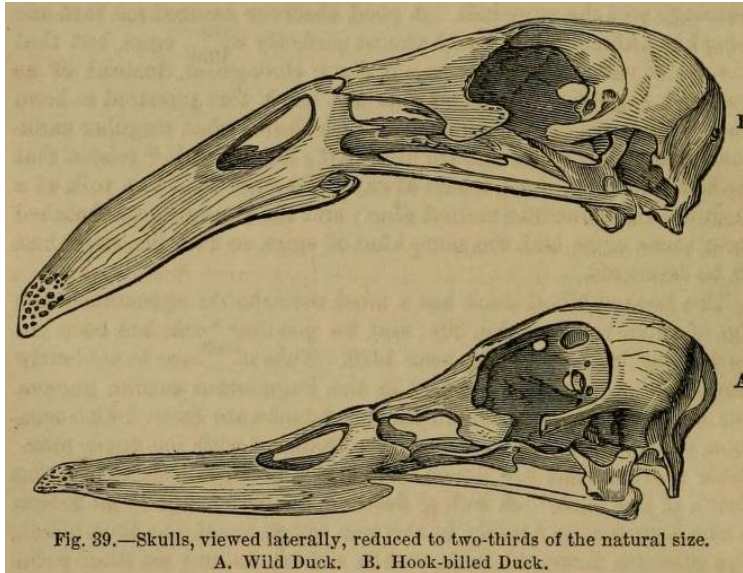


Fig.19.

Source: www.archive.org.

C.N.Bement, *The American Poulterers' Companion*, 1871, page 277, relates only descriptions from earlier authors, particularly from Dixon :-

THE HOOK-BILLED DUCK

Many early writers refer to this species, the singularity of whose appearance would secure attention in the days when real utility so often yielded to what merely gratified curiosity.

Description.— the bill is of large size, and turned downward, *not upward*, as some writers have it ; but roman-nosed ducks, in short, with features of a most grotesque and ludicrous appearance. The plumage is usually white, with a large top-knot; but colored specimens are not unfrequent. Holland is the source from which these birds are commonly derived; and it is said that they pair like wild ducks, and manifest a decided disinclination to associate with other ducks.

Dixon says, "Hooked-billed ducks are nothing new." Albin, in 1738, published colored figures of both sexes, which look much as if they had a right to claim the rank of a species. The lines of small white specks on the head, as he describes them, are remarkable. The bill has some resemblance to the Flamingo. He says these ducks are better layers than any of the other, either the wild or tame.

We are not aware of ever having seen or tasted one; but they are said to possess qualities for the table, in addition to the recommendation of being both hardy and good

layers.

In the third paragraph the inverted commas should have continued through to its completion; it being taken directly from Dixon (see above) including the incorrect date.

W. B. Tegetmeier writes in *The Poultry Book*, 1873, p.358, following the paragraph on the Penguin Duck:

THE HOOKED-BILLED DUCK.

This hooked-billed duck is another accidental variation which has been perpetuated by man. It is characterised by the bill turned downwards, instead of being straight, as in other varieties. It is a very old breed, having been described by Willughby in his "Ornithology", 1676, and also figured by Albin in his Nat. Hist. of Birds, 1734. In Holland, this variety was formerly not unfrequent, and was frequently delineated by the old Dutch Masters. In colour and size, the hooked-billed ducks vary considerably.

Here, once again, "*Ornithology*" is mistakenly given instead of '*Ornithologiae*' for Willughby's work of 1676.

The Dutch author, Robert T. Maitland, *Handboek voor de vergorgie en kennis van Ganzen, Zwanen en eenden* 5 editions between 1883 - 1888 pp.134-135:

111b. KROMBEK-EENDEN

Hollandsch: Poolsche Eend.

Engelsch: Curve Billed Duck, Hook-billed Duck.

Fransch: Canard polonais, Canard sabreur.

Van deze betsaan er twee varieteiten namelijk:

- a. witte met licht rooskleurigen en sterk gebogen bek (Canard polonais).
- b. zwart- en witbonte met kuif en loodkleurigen krommen bek (Canard sabreur).
- c. blauwgrijze met dito gekleurden bek.

Deze laatste treft men niet zelden in de provincie Noord-Holland an.

111b. CURVED-BILL DUCK

Of this form there are two varieties namely:

- a. White, with light-rose coloured and strongly curved beak (Canard polonais).
- b. Black and white variegated with crest and lead-coloured beak (Canard sabreur).
- c. blue-grey with same coloured beak.

The last is often found in the province of North Holland.

(Trans. E, Vogelaar)

Harrison Weir in *Our Poultry and All About Them* 1902, page 698, refers to:-

THE BOW-BILLED OR HOOK-BILLED DUCK.

This is said to have been of Indian origin, but those to be found in the fancy duck collection as far back as 1837 to 1840 were imported from Holland. The first that I remember seeing were on the lake at the Surrey Zoological Gardens about that period; they were of the ordinary colours, mostly being white or splashed with red, yellow, and brown or grey. The carriage was somewhat upright, and the necks and bodies long and narrow, they being in no way more desirable, except as a curiosity, than the common duck.

Years after some far better birds were shown at Birmingham. These were white with clear orange-yellow bills, shanks and feet, and differing from the foregoing by having a top-knot towards the back of the skull. On enquiry of the owner I was told they were active foragers and prolific layers. They were not large, being, when full grown, about six pounds.

Of these I made a sketch, considering them, from a naturalist's point of view, interesting.

They are described by Willughby in his "Ornithology," Book III., page 381, 1678, under the name of hook-billed duck, and "as very like the common duck, from which it differs chiefly in the bill, which is broad, something longer than the common duck's, and bending moderately downwards, the head is also lesser and slenderer . . . it is said to be a better layer."

Edward Brown , *Races of Domestic Poultry*, 1906:

Does not mention this breed/variety. However, Brown describes the ducks he had seen in the Netherlands

Up until this date, reports on the description and distribution of the Hook Billed Duck has been fairly straightforward, with the various sources following one after another.

Bruno Dürigen, in *Geflügelzucht*, 1906, includes the 'Krummschnabel=Ente', on p.373.

12. Krummschnabel=Ente. die Krummschnabel=, haken= oder bogenschnäblige Ente -- Anas dom. adunca; Engl.: Hook-bill Duck --

-- similar in shape, body size, way of life as a small domestic duck, but differs from it by a downward curved bill and reminiscent of the formation of the beak on the Bagdad Pigeon. This peculiarity emerged centuries ago and has been inherited, because earlier the English scholar, Willughby, mentioned the Hook Bill'd duck in his book, 'Ornithology', published by Ray in 1676. In earlier times it was fairly common, especially in the Netherlands, and Ch. A. Buhle notes in 1860: " It is widespread throughout Europe and particularly in Thüringen where one finds garden ponds, and

because of its succulent flesh (especially from the white variety) and good eggs, it is kept in large flocks." By the beginning the 1880's all the Hook Bills disappeared, they appeared again in recent years [circa 1905 ?] in Holland and at the same time in the Berlin Zoological Gardens, usually with small crest on the head..

Regarding the colouring, it produces multi-coloured (wild-duck-coloured) and white birds, Some, in former times, carried a crest. Primarily esteemed because of their excellent egg yield and succulent meat, their peculiar appearance is maintained only when they are kept as a pure race .

Trans. (JMT):

Dürigen cites Willughby's '*Ornithology*'[sic] of 1676, when the correct date for this work is 1678.

This author also cites "Ch. A. Buhle, 1860", as the source of the quotation he gives regarding the ducks' popularity in Thüringen. The same text, with an additional paragraph, is used in the 1927 edition of Dürigen's work. However, as has been shown, Buhle presents that paragraph in 1842, having taken it from Bechstein (1791) without attribution . Dürigen also states the birds had disappeared by the early 1880's, and that in recent years (Circa 1905 ?) birds were to be found in Holland and those with a crest on the head could be found at the Berlin Zoological Gardens. Certainly, in 1882 the Hook Billed Duck is not included in the list of animals kept at the Gardens, although, Aylesbury, Pekin & Muscovy Ducks are represented as domestic forms there.



DUCK-KEEPER'S HOUSE AT LANDSMEER.

Fig. 20. A Duck-keeper's house/ dwelling at Landsmere. *Report on the Poultry Industry in the Netherlands*, 1921.

Edward Brown, *Report on the Poultry Industry in the Netherlands*, 1921, states p.55:

Holland is not a Duck Country.-- Whilst a fair number of ducks are to be met with in the Netherlands, these birds are few as compared with what might be expected under the prevailing conditions.

Brown describes the types of ducks he found on his visit to the Netherlands p.37:

It may be noted that ducks are kept mainly for their eggs and not the flesh. At Landsmeer, as referred to in Section VIII, the birds vary somewhat. Many are of wild plumage, indicating recent domestication, especially as they are small in size of body. Some, however, are black in body, with a white throat, such as are to be met with in Belgium and Denmark. Upon one of the duck farms at the place named [Landsmeer] were birds which I do not remember to have seen before. These had mallard plumage, but carried a very long bill which curved downwards, the upper and lower mandibles being alike in this respect. The effect was very peculiar. They were said to come from one farm only, and were thought to be wonderful layers. As they were kept separate, some credence may be given to this statement.

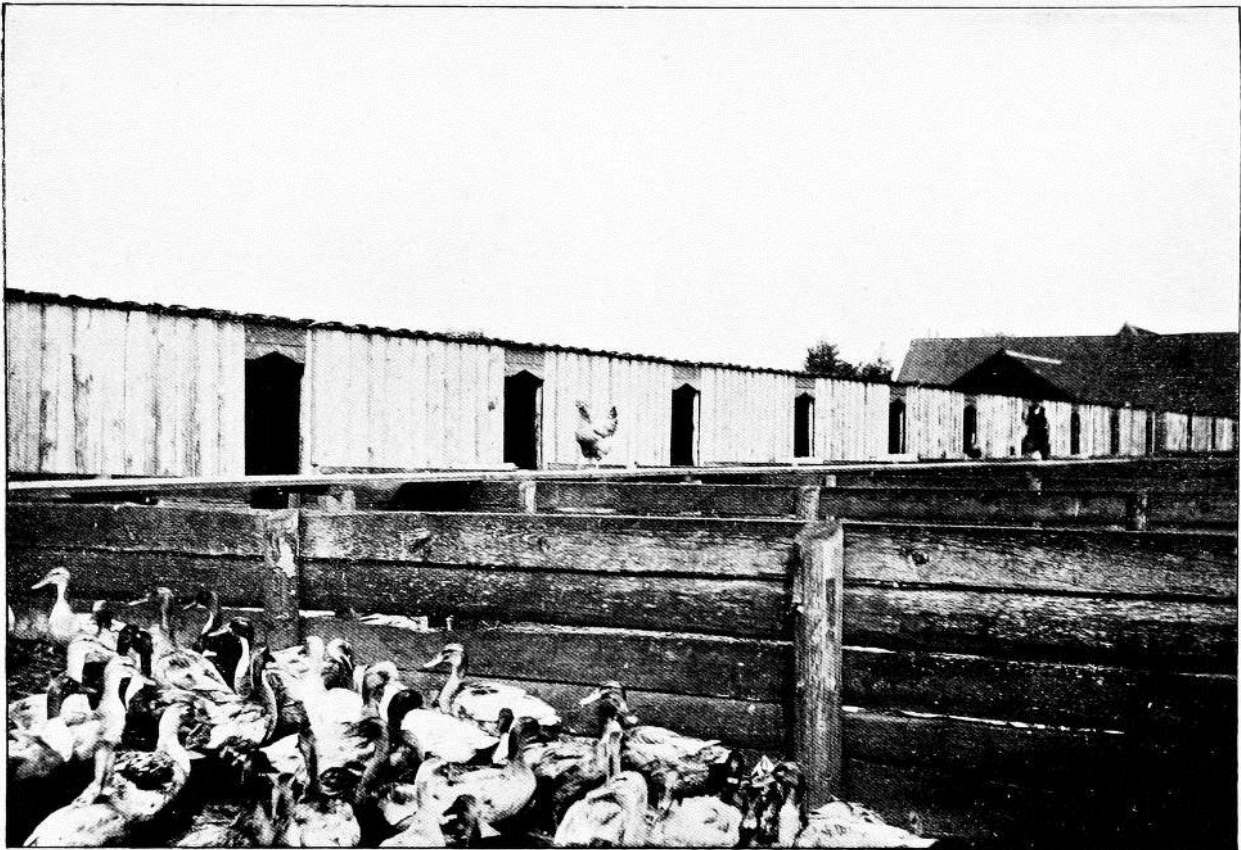
From Brown's statement, it appears the Hook Billed Duck was already scarce in the Netherlands prior to 1921.



Fig.21. Duck housing/sheds at Landsmere. *Report on the Poultry Industry in the Netherlands*, 1921.

Brown relates the common method of duck-keeping in the Netherlands. He writes p.59-59:

67. HOUSES AND RUNS.-- The number of ducks on the individual occupations varies considerably, ranging from 100 to 4,000 birds. In all, however, the methods adopted are remarkably uniform. The duck houses, built of wood and having open fronts, are placed parallel to the side streams with enclosed yards in front, about 30 ft. in length and 6ft. to 8ft. wide, divided by wire-netting and wood. Of the length about 6ft. is water, so that the birds have constant access to what is their natural element. The water sections are divided by boards about 2in. or 3in. apart, so that the water passes through freely and is thus kept sweet and clean. The houses are simple in the extreme, but substantially built.



RANGE OF DUCK SHEDS AT LANDSMEER.

Fig. 22. Duck housing/sheds at Landsmere. *Report on the Poultry Industry in the Netherlands*, 1921.

All the ducks that Brown encountered are contained in pens and none are evident at 'free-range' on the canals.

The *Feathered World* magazine, dated 2nd February 1925, contains an image of a Hook Bill Duck that had been sent to England by Dr. te Hennepe of Rotterdam.



Bruno Dürigen's 1923 edition, p.376-377, adds little to what is in the 1906 edition except for including an image (Fig.23.) of a mounted/stuffed Hook Bill Duck held in the Berlin Museum. .

Fig. 23.

Abb. 199. Krummschnabel-Ente.
(Museum der Landwirtschaftlichen
Hochschule, Berlin.)

Jean Delacour in *The Waterfowl of the World*, 1964, volume four, in describing domestic waterfowl produces the name “ Polish Duck,” and says (p. 165) :- “An old breed, perhaps vanished today, medium-sized, white or coloured, in which the bill is arched downwards.”

The term “Polish Duck ” had earlier been used in America in naming the ‘Crested Duck.’

The survival of the Hook Billed Duck is due to a handful of breeders concerned not to let it die out.

Edgar de Poel, writing in *Zeldaam Huisdier*(2008) tells how the Zuurbier family in North Holland had maintained a flock for a many years until their numbers were seriously depleted by the predation of foxes.

A survey of the breed carried out in 1976 found extremely small numbers the breed distributed among just three breeders in the Netherlands; J.C. van der Zaan of Zeyveld, P. Roodenburg of Overschie and Pieter Deelstra of Cornjum; from these people came the nucleus of birds to form a breeding program.

In the summer of 1984 Kenneth Broekman of the Dutch Domestic Waterfowl Association wrote to the John Hall of Chediston, Suffolk, UK, who was the foremost authority on waterfowl, both domestic and wildfowl, in the UK. The letter is reproduced in here by kind permission of the late John R. Hall.

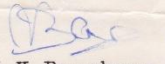


Exloerveen-Holland
4-6-1984

Dear Mr. Hall

Included this letter you will find a photocopy of in Dutch called "krombek eend", the curved bill duck, is the translation. The Dutch Domestic Waterfowl Association is very much concerned about the nearly extinction of this duck. For 200 years ago up till the 1930-ies, there were thousands of these ducks in the Netherlands general used for their egg-laying. Their special character was, they flew miles away to the rivers and canals to collect their food, but always returned home to lay their eggs or to spend the night. Even Willoughby in 1676 described this bird and named it, Dutch ducks. Harrison Weir wrote that these appeared by the hundreds on the London market. At the moment there are a few of these ducks left, but they do not exist of the original structure of the bill, and lack of tallness in the body. They possess various colours in white-whitebreasted, original wild duck colour. The colours are not that important it is the curved bill and their tallness what really matters. We know that the chances are to a minimum to locate such a bird in the UK but who knows in the future suddenly the latter appears in your vicinity. It will be highly appreciated by the few breeders in the Netherlands if you could inform us, thanking you.

Your Sincerely


H.K. Broekman

PS. Due to the importance of the subject copies of this letter were sent to breeders across the UK.

Fig. 24. Letter from K. Broekman to John Hall, dated 4th June 1984.

There are several statements in the letter which are immediately dubious.

For 200 years ago up till the 1930-ies, there were thousands of these ducks in the Netherlands general[ly] used for their egg-laying.

Their special character was, they flew miles away to the rivers and canals to collect their food, but always returned home to lay their eggs or spend the night.

Edward Brown (1921) found only one farm having Hook Billed Ducks in the area of Landsmere, which is located in the province of North Holland; and states that the farming of ducks was still secondary to that of chickens, and had only increased in the Netherlands since circa 1900; but not to the numbers suggested by Broekman. Brown also comments on the method of husbandry and makes no mention of the ducks being allowed to wander at will; Brown saw wooden houses with a surround of wood and wire-netting that allowed the ducks constant access to the water, and retained them within a confined area.

Even Willoughby [sic] in 1676 described [sic] this bird and named it, Dutch ducks.

Broekman has knowledge of the earliest written source when he mentions "Willoughby[sic] in 1676" ~ for, as has been shown, Willughby and/or Albin are referred to by Weir (1902), Tegetmeier (1873), Darwin (1868) and Dixon (1853); however, neither Francis Willughby nor John Ray designate their "Hook-billed Duck" as being of "Dutch" origin, as stated in the above letter.

The statement that : "Harrison Weir wrote that these appeared by the hundreds on the London markets.", however, has not been substantiated; and no reference to this has been located in any of the works by Weir.

Broekman wrote in BWA's *Waterfowl Spring 1987*, pp.60-61 on "Ornithophilia", a Dutch show held at Utrecht, Holland, says:

Also seen at this show is the hooked bill duck: a hooked bill created so that hunters could distinguish it from others and refrain from shooting it. Before the war hook bills were kept by the hundreds of thousands in the province of North Holland. Unfortunately, word was spread that paratyphus was passed through duck eggs, the water became polluted, and five years ago we only had 30 hooked bills left. Through the efforts of the Dutch Domestic Waterfowl Association it is back again in its full glory. Actually, it was a Dutch method of keeping ducks that did not cost anything . . . this particular duck went in the morning to the rivers and canals to find food and returned home before dark to spend the night and to lay eggs.

It is highly unlikely neither the breed's bill formation, nor the advent of a white 'bib' were specifically "created" to identify it to local hunters; the bill shape and the white 'bib' have been evident from the earliest documentation of this variety of domesticated duck, as is clear from the earliest illustrations.

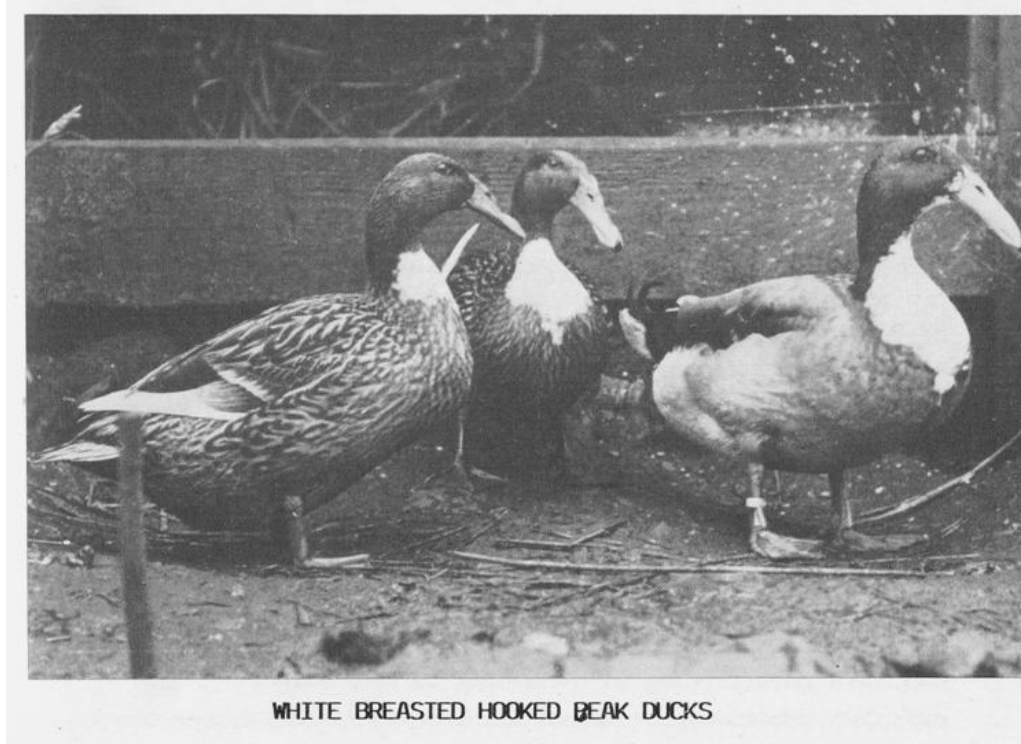


Fig. 25. *Waterfowl*, Spring 1987, p61. British Waterfowl Association.

In 1994 Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Rudolph published an article in *Kleintierzüchter, Geflügel*, 103, Nr. 8, pp. 9-11, giving insight into the origins and breeding of domesticated breeds of ducks, and sets out observations on the history of the Hook Billed Duck.

Dr. Horst Schmidt, in his *Handbuch Rasse- und Ziergeflügel. Puten, Perlhühner, Gänse, Enten* (1998), gives an account of the 'Krummschnabel-Ente' / Hook Billed Duck on pages 233-235.

Schmidt omits reference to Willughby in his bibliography, although he correctly cites Willughby's "**Ornithologie** [sic]" of 1676 in his text. Also omitted from the bibliography is the reference citing "Ch. A. Buhle" giving the same reference to these ducks inhabiting Thüringen, that Bechstein (1791) gives; again, Bechstein is not included in Schmidt's bibliography, although cited in Schmidt's text as "(Bechstein: " Naturegeschichte Deutschland", 1790)."; as previously discussed, Bechstein's 'Krummschnabel Ente' is found in volume II, 1791.

It appears that Schmidt's reference to Willughby and Buhle are based solely upon the passage given in Bruno Dürigen's works of 1906 and 1923; a work that is contained in Schmidt's bibliography.

Schmidt states he quotes a sentence from a work entitled "**The Dutch way of keeping ducks** [sic]", which he attributes to H. Weir; however, this is omitted in the bibliography and researches have failed to locate such a work; therefore, without a citation, its inclusion lacks credibility.

Schmidt (1998) p.234:

The following quote comes from the Englishman H. Weir from his book "The Dutch way of keeping ducks": "These ducks fly at sunrise to the canals and rivers and return to nest at night to lay their eggs." Trans. (JMT.)

Schmidt relies upon Broekman (1987) for the opinion in Holland being that the curved bill and white breast-marking were created to distinguish the birds to hunters,

In 2000 Hook Billed Ducks were imported into America by Dave Holderread, who wrote of his breeding experiences with this breed in *Storey's Guide to Raising Ducks*, 2011.

Chris & Mike Ashton (*The Domestic Duck* 2001) cite Broekman (1987), introducing the reference "(Bechstein and Frisch 1791)", neither of which is included in the Ashton's bibliography. These authors also cite Schmidt (1989), who has possibly quoted Buhle, as given by Dürigen (1906), without having sight of original documentation.

Prof. Dr. W. Rudolph elaborates on the history and proposed genetics of the Hook Billed Duck in his article 'Krummschnabelenten - Erhaltung alten Kulturgutes' [Hook Billed Ducks - Preservation of an ancient cultural heritage] in *Kleintierzüchter, Geflügel*, 112, Nr. 13, pp. 4-7. Professor Rudolph explains that a genetic symbol for the Hook Billed Duck had not been established due to a lack of breeding records being available and suggests, as acknowledgement of the efforts of the Dutch breeders efforts to preserve this race, that the genetic symbol *kbkb* be adopted for the breed.

Ashton (*The Domestic Duck* e-book 2015) repeats much of the text from former works, and is either economic in entering all of the evidence, or had missed some important facts. Although mentioning Brown's (1921) account of duck-keeping in Holland, Brown's account of only a few farms maintaining the Hook-billed duck is omitted, giving the impression that these birds were wide-spread.

As has been shown, all historical 'information' circulated by Broekman, is fundamentally flawed. No-where in Broekman's writing, on any breed, are citations

given and this, based upon the documentary evidence cited in this article, leaves Broekman's statements totally unsubstantiated.

Like-wise, in 2010 Mariano Zamarano published an article in *Waterfowl Yearbook 2010*, pp.11-13, on attempts to conserve the dwindling population of this breed. Zamarano's article deals primarily with locating breeders and setting up an online breeding program and stud book. However, several unattributed statements of a historical nature also appear; and with these I took issue.

Zamarano claims the origin of this breed is the Netherlands, in the Province of North Holland. He writes: " The city of Haarlem, somewhere in the 1700's, held an inventory in their fields and canals and came up with more than 120,00 hook bill ducks [sic], . . ." However, no citation for such an important document is given. He also states this breed was kept in private collections and by three zoos around "the early 1700s. I believe Birmingham Zoo is one of them."

Hoping to clarify some of the historical points regarding this breed I wrote a letter that was later published in the B.W.A.'s *Waterfowl*, and is reproduced below.

Letter to the Editor.

In Mariano Zamorano's article, The Hook-billed Duck (*Waterfowl Yearbook 2010*, pp.11-13), admirable though the actions to preserve the Hook-billed Duck are, the statements regarding its history are vague and confused. I immediately communicated my interest to the author of the article, but have received no response to my enquiry.

Firstly, had the city of Haarlem conducted an inventory recording the presence of these birds, surely such a document can be dated to something more precise than "somewhere in the 1700s"?

Also, the statements that, "three zoos in the UK kept this breed around the early 1700's." and "Birmingham Zoo is one of them" are both incorrect. There were private collections & menageries in Britain in the 1700's; but the very first 'Zoo' in Britain was the Zoological Society of London at Regent's Park, founded in 1828 and opened to the Public in 1847. This establishment held Hook-Billed Ducks in its collection in 1830, and the birds are reported to be in the (Royal) Surrey Zoological Gardens in 1837 -1840. The city of Birmingham sought to establish such an enterprise, but never proceeded beyond the publication of the prospectus in 1835.

To clarify some further points in the published history of this breed: in 1984 I sent Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Rudolph a photo-copy of the Hook bill'd Duck from Francis Willughby's *Ornithology* (1678); the work was unknown to him prior to this. Since that time the image has appeared in various articles and books, often with different and erroneous attributions. To set the record straight, Willughby's book has a Latin text; John Ray translated and published an edition in English, in 1678, as *The Ornithology of Francis Willughby*, using the same illustrations as the original.

Another imprecision in attribution is made where writers cite C. A. Buhle (1860) as the author of the tract translated along the lines of: "It [Hook-billed Duck] is found throughout Europe and especially in Thuringia; where-ever one has a garden pond it is kept in large flocks (especially the white variety) for its flavoursome meat and good egg production."

Horst Schmidt, in *Puten, Perlhüner, Gänse, Enten* (1989), writing on the Hook-billed Duck, mentions Willughby (1676) and says that Buhle (1860) 'passes down' the passage given in the previous paragraph. Schmidt does not give either of these authors in his list of reference books; but does include Bruno Dürigen's *Die Geflügelzucht* (1906), which cites them both. In *The Domestic Duck* (2001), the authors draw upon Schmidt's text and list both Buhle and Dürigen in the bibliography as "cited in Schmidt (1989)", acknowledging they had not had sight of these works either.

The original text appeared almost eighty years before Buhle's book, contained in J. M. Bechstein's *Gemeinnützige Naturgeschichte Deutschland* (1791), and has been handed-down or copied by subsequent writers, at times without the correct attribution.

We must all be vigilant in our researches before committing ourselves to print.

Jonathan M. Thompson.

A telephone call from Mariano Zamarano ensued and I offered to forward to him all my bibliographic records and images relating to this breed, and this was duly done. Although I received no further communication from Mr. Zamarano, this possibly explains some of the information and images in subsequent articles on this breed appearing on the internet.

I feel the mere copying of statements made by previous authors, with the text stating "according to", and without thorough investigation/research, leads a writer into a quagmire from which it is extremely difficult to extricate the true facts. It is hoped this anthology may highlight some of the pit-falls that the casual writer might fall into.

The future of the Hook Billed Duck presently appears to be fairly stable, with breeding flocks in England, Continental Europe and the USA. Perhaps close monitoring of each gene-pool would be a wise precaution against the occurrence of too much inbreeding which could prove detrimental to the future of this breed.

