

# First wild sighting of mandarin duck (*Aix galericulata* Linnaeus, 1758) in Algeria at Sidi Abdoune hillside reservoir (Theniet El Had National Park).

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## Abstract

This study is the first confirmed wild sighting of the mandarin duck in Algeria, observed 11 December 2020 at Sidi Abdoun hillside reservoir (Theniet El Had National Park). Originally native to South-Est Asia the mandarin duck was introduced as ornamental bird in Europe in the 18th century and since established a feral population.

**Key words:** Mandarin Duck, first observation, Birdwatching, Algeria.

## Recommended Citation

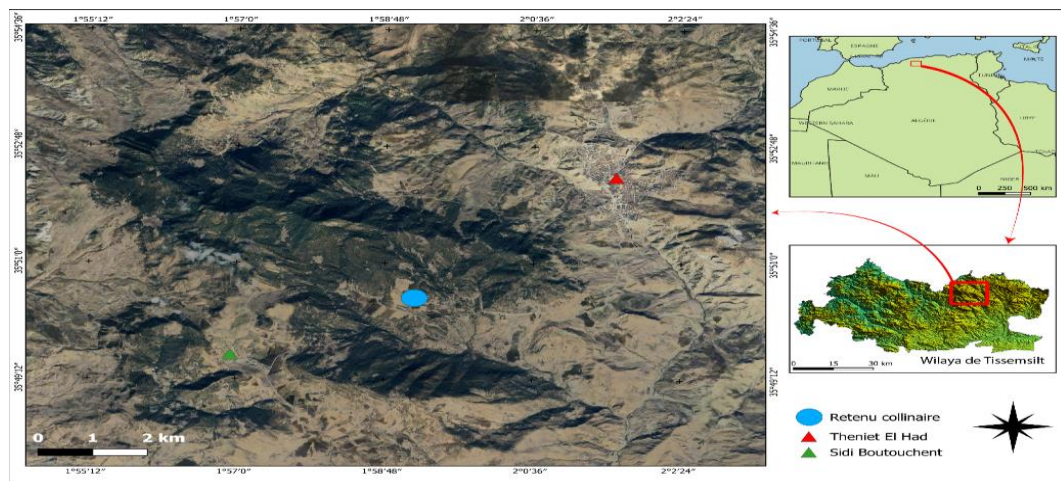
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## Introduction

The Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* Linnaeus, 1758 belongs to the family Anatidae. The original range of this species is Southeast Asia. Starting in the 18th century, numerous Mandarin Ducks were taken from the wild and brought to Europe, where they were kept as ornamental birds in private collections, parks, and zoos [1]. The Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* was first introduced into Britain in 1745, but the main introductions leading to the feral population of today took place during the early part of the present century [2]. The Mandarin Duck because of its beauty is the most widely introduced waterbird within the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) area and perhaps in the world [3]. The list of Anatidae in Algeria includes 34 species, the Mandarin Duck is not among them, as it has not been recorded in the wild in the country [4]. This study aims to document the first wild sighting of mandarin duck in Algeria.

## Materials and Methods

On November 23, 2020, during a field outing to geolocate the boundary markers of the Theniet El Had National Park, a group of mallard Ducks caught our attention at the Sidi Abdoune hillside reservoir (Theniet El Had National Park) at 35°50'26.28"N and 1°59'10.93"E (Fig.1). The observation site is located at an altitude of 1280 meters. Along with the group of mallards, four Mandarin Ducks were observed, and one individual was photographed (fig. 2). The male of mandarin Duck is unmistakable, with white supercilium, orange whiskers and orange-green bushy crest and orange-red bill. Remarkable are the orange wing “sails” [1].



**Figure 1:** Localisation of Sidi Abdoune hillside reservoir.



A- In the top right of the picture,  
a male Mandarin duck.



B- Enlargement of picture A to see the  
white eyebrow, orange whiskers, a bushy orange-  
green crest characteristic of the mandarin duck male.

**Figure 2:** Picture of a male Mandarin duck in the Sidi Abdoun hillside reservoir  
(Photographed by Cherier Hamid, December 11, 2021).

## Results and discussions

According to [4], the Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*) has never been recorded in the wild in Algeria. In Morocco [5] reported an adult male shot during a hunt on 11 December 2021, in the Bas Loukkos marshes. The authors noted that it was an accidental species, probably escaped from captivity or originating from established populations in Europe. [5] mentioned only one previous sighting in Morocco, a pair observed at La'nacer in the Rif on 9 January 1984. In addition, [6] included the Mandarin Duck in their list of bird species introduced to Africa. The species was introduced to Europe as an ornamental bird in the 18th century, mainly in Great Britain, where it established feral populations estimated at 7,000 individuals (2,300 couples) in 2013 [7]. In France, the first recorded natural breeding of the Mandarin Duck was in 1977 in Seine-et-Marne. Between 2014 and 2015, between 350 and 400 individuals were counted, representing 30 to 60 pairs distributed in three main population centres: Alsace, Île-de-France, and the Atlantic region [7]. In the Netherlands, the number of the Mandarin Duck increased rapidly, especially during the 1980s and late 1990s. Results

from the national waterbird census indicate an increase until the early 2000s, followed by more recent fluctuations [1].

## Conclusion

The observation of Mandarin ducks (*Aix galericulata*) at the Sidi Abdoune reservoir in Algeria marks a significant and unexpected occurrence, as the species has not been previously recorded in the wild in the region. Although the Mandarin duck is considered an introduced species in Morocco and has been introduced in Europe, its presence in Algeria suggests the possibility of range expansion, whether through escape from captivity or migration from established European populations.

This observation highlights the need for further monitoring to determine if these individuals represent a stable or transient presence and to assess any potential impacts on local biodiversity.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest

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