

EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds:  
Special Protection Area

STODMARSH (KENT)

Stodmarsh proposed Special Protection Area is a wetland of international importance comprising open water bodies, reedbeds, grazing marshes and alder-carr. The site provides wintering and breeding habitats for important assemblages of wetland bird species, particularly wildfowl and waders. The boundary of the pSPA is similar to that of Stodmarsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), but several peripheral areas towards the western and eastern ends of the SSSI and the central coal tip are omitted.

Stodmarsh qualifies under Article 4.1 of the EC Birds Directive by regularly supporting nationally important wintering populations of two Annex 1 species. In the five winter period 1987/88 to 1991/92, the following average peak means were recorded: Two bittern *Botaurus stellaris* (at least 1% of the British wintering population); and nine hen harrier *Circus cyaneus* (about 1% of British population).

The site qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive by virtue of regularly supporting 1% of the British breeding population of gadwall *Anas strepera*, a regularly occurring migratory species. The site also supports an average of 42 pairs of bearded tit *Panurus biarmicus*, representing 7% of the British breeding population (figures given are five year peak means up to 1992).

The site qualifies under Article 4.2 by virtue of regularly supporting nationally important wintering populations of the following migratory species (figures given are average peak means for the five winter period 1987/88 to 1991/92): 77 gadwall (1.2% of the British wintering population); and 165 shoveler *Anas clypeata* (1.8% of British). An average of 75 bearded tits have been recorded on the site in winter, representing 1.5-2.5% of the British population.

The site also qualifies under Article 4.2 by virtue of regularly supporting, an assemblage of breeding species, especially those associated with reedbeds, grazing marsh and other marshland habitats. These include great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, grasshopper warbler *Locustella naevia*, Savi's warbler *L. luscinoides*, sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, and reed warbler *A. scirpaceus*.

The site also qualifies under Article 4.2 by virtue of regularly supporting a diverse assemblage of wintering waterfowl, including white-fronted goose *Anser albifrons*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, tufted duck *A. fuligula*, water rail *Rallus aquaticus*, lapwing and snipe.

During severe winter weather elsewhere, Stodmarsh can assume even greater national and international importance as wildfowl and waders from other areas arrive, attracted by the relatively mild climate and abundant food resources available.

SPA Citation  
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This citation is made in accordance with Article 4 of the Register of European Special Conservation Areas.  
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Signed: Byrce  
on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Environment