

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

**UPPER SOLWAY FLATS AND MARSHES
(DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY, CUMBRIA)**

The upper Solway Flats and Marshes is a large estuary on the west coast of Britain, with extensive areas of intertidal mudflats and fringing saltmarshes and grazing marshes. The boundaries of the SPA are coincident with those of the Upper Solway Flats and Marshes SSSI.

The site qualifies under Article 4.1 by supporting internationally or nationally important wintering populations of three Annex 1 species. During the five winter period 1986/87 to 1990/91 the following average peak counts were recorded: 250 whooper swans Cygnus cygnus (1.5% of the north west European population; 4% of the British wintering population); 12,300 barnacle geese Branta leucopsis (100% of the Svalbard population, all of which winters in Britain); and 3,380 golden plover Pluvialis apricaria (2% of British).

The Upper Solway Flats and Marshes qualify under Article 4.2 as a Wetland of International Importance, by regularly supporting over 20,000 water birds. In the five winter period 1986/87 to 1990/91 an average peak count of 122,200 waterfowl was recorded, comprising 43,100 wildfowl and 79,100 waders.

The site also qualifies under article 4.2 by regularly supporting internationally important wintering populations of the following eight migratory waterfowl species (average peak counts recorded during the five year period 1986/87 to 1990/91): 14,900 pink-footed geese Anser brachyrhynchus (14% of the Icelandic population, all of which winters in Britain); 1,400 pintail Anas acuta (2% of north west European, 6% of British); 2,300 scaup Aythya marila (2% of north west European, 57% of British); 33,850 oystercatcher Haematopus ostralegus (4% of east Atlantic flyway population, 12% of British); 15,300 knot Calidris canutus (4% of the east Atlantic flyway, 7% of British); 4,800 bar-tailed godwit Limosa lapponica (4% of east Atlantic flyway, 8% of British); and 6,700 curlew Numenius arquata (2% of east Atlantic flyway, 7% of British); and 2,100 redshank Tringa totanus (2% of east Atlantic flyway, 3% of British); as well as nationally important wintering populations of a further eight species: 1,600 shelduck Tadorna tadorna (2% of British); 1,400 teal Anas crecca (1% of British); 120 shoveler Anas clypeata (1% of British); 300 goldeneye Bucphala clangula (2% of British); 720 grey plover Pluvialis squatarola (3% of British); 260 sanderling Calidris alba (2% of British); 11,900 dunlin Calidris alpina (3% of British) and 600 turnstone Arenaria interpres (1% of British).

The above figures are minimal estimates due to gaps in count coverage of this large and complex site.

The Upper Solway Flats and Marshes also support important assemblages of breeding birds characteristic of saltmarshes, and wintering birds typical of estuarine habitats. Breeding birds include oystercatcher, lapwing Vanellus vanellus, redshank, black-headed gull Larus ridibundus, lesser black-backed gull Larus fuscus, herring gull Larus argentatus, common tern Sterna hirundo and arctic tern S. paradisaea. In addition to the wintering water birds listed above, the following are notable: cormorant Phalacrocorax carbo, greylag goose Anser anser, wigeon Anas Penelope; mallard Anas platyrhynchos, red breasted merganser Mergus serrator, goosander Mergus merganser, ringed plover Charadrius hiaticula, spotted redshank Tringa erythropus, greenshank Tringa nebularia, lapwing and common sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos.