

## EC Directive 2009/147 on the Conservation of Wild Birds Special Protection Area (SPA)

**Name:** Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

**Unitary Authority/County:** Northamptonshire

**Boundary of the SPA:** Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SPA encompasses most of the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);

**Site description:** The disused sand and gravel pits extend for approximately 35 kilometres along the alluvial deposits of the River Nene floodplain from Clifford Hill on the southern outskirts of Northampton, downstream to Thorpe Waterville, north of Thrapston. They form an extensive series of shallow and deep open waters which occur in association with a wide range of marginal features, such as sparsely-vegetated islands, gravel bars and shorelines, and habitats including reedswamp, marsh, wet ditches, rush pasture, rough grassland and scattered scrub. This range of habitat and the varied topography of the lagoons provide valuable resting and feeding conditions for major concentrations of wintering waterbirds, especially ducks and waders. Species such as golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* also spend time feeding and roosting on surrounding agricultural land outside the SPA.

**Size of SPA:** The SPA covers an area of 1,357.67 ha.

### Qualifying species:

The site qualifies under **article 4.1** of the Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the Great Britain populations of the following species listed in Annex I in any season:

Annex 1 species	Count and season	Period	% of GB population
Bittern <i>Botaurus stellaris</i>	2 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0%
Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	5,790 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.3%

The site qualifies under **article 4.2** of the Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by 1% or more of the biogeographical populations of the following regularly occurring migratory species (other than those listed in Annex I) in any season:

Migratory species	Count and season	Period	% of subspecies/population
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	773 individuals – wintering	5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04	2.0% <i>strepera</i> , NW Europe (breeding)

**Assemblage qualification:**

The site qualifies under **article 4.2** of the Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) as it is used regularly by over 20,000 waterbirds (waterbirds as defined by the Ramsar Convention) in any season:

In the non-breeding season, the area regularly supports 23,821 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 1999/2000 – 2003/04), including wigeon *Anas penelope*, gadwall *Anas strepera*, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, shoveler *Anas clypeata*, pochard *Aythya ferina*, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* and coot *Fulica atra*.

**Bird counts from:** Denton Wood Associates. 2005. *Wintering waterbirds in the Upper Nene Valley – supplementary data analysis in relation to possible SSSI, SPA and Ramsar site designation*. Unpublished report to English Nature.

**Interests that do not currently meet the SPA selection guidelines:** The SPA is used by breeding common tern *Sterna hirundo* and kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* (both species listed in Annex I of the EC Birds Directive) in numbers of less than qualifying thresholds.

This citation relates to a site entered in the Register of European Sites for England.

**Register reference number: UK9020296**

Date of registration: 7 April 2011

Signed: *S G Hopkins*

On behalf of the Secretary of State for  
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs