

**EC Directive 79/409 on the conservation of wild birds:
Special Protection Area**

Benfleet and Southend Marshes (Essex)

Benfleet and Southend comprises an area of intertidal mudflats, saltmarsh, scrub and grassland. The boundaries of the proposed SPA are virtually coincident with those of the Benfleet and Southend SSSI. A small area of the Benfleet Downs in the northern part of the SSSI has been excluded.

The site qualifies under Article 4.2 as a wetland of International Importance by regularly supporting, in winter, over 20,000 waterfowl. During the five year period 1985/86 to 1989/90 an average peak of 30,400 birds was recorded, comprising 22,800 waders and 7,600 wildfowl.

The site qualifies also under Article 4.2 by supporting internationally or nationally important wintering populations of the following species of migratory waterfowl (figures given are five-year average peaks for the years 1985/86 to 1989/90): 7,200+ dark-bellied brent geese *Branta bernicla bernicla* (4% of the world population, 8% of the numbers wintering in Britain); 2,500 grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola* (1% of the East Atlantic Flyway population, 12% of British); 8,400 knot *Calidris canutus* (2% of. EAF, 4% of British); 430 ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula* (2% of British), and 11,100 dunlin *Calidris alpina* (3% of British).

Updated SPA Citation
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