

A6.27 Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (non-breeding)

1. Status in UK

Biological status		Legal status		Conservation status	
Breeding	✓	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	General Protection	Species of European Conservation Concern	Table 4
Migratory	✓	Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985	General Protection	(UK) Species of Conservation Importance	
Wintering	✓	EC Birds Directive 1979	Migratory	All-Ireland Vertebrate Red Data Book	

2. Population data

	Population sizes (individuals)	Selection thresholds	Totals in species' SPA suite
GB	73,500	750	62,810 (84% of GB total)
Ireland	7,000	70	2,663 (38% of all-Ireland total)
Biogeographic population	300,000	3,000	65,472 (22% of biogeographic population)

GB population source: Kirby 1995a

Ireland population source: Way et al. 1993

Biogeographic population source: Rose & Scott 1997

3. Distribution

The global range of the Shelduck extends discontinuously east from western Europe, through central Asia to approximately 120° E, and south to Iran and Pakistan. In the non-breeding season the species occurs along most of the coasts of north-west Europe, from western France to inshore Danish waters. It has a more localised distribution on the coasts of southern Spain and France as well as other discrete localities on the European and North African coasts of the Mediterranean (Scott & Rose 1996).

The species is monotypic, although six biogeographic populations are recognised (Rose & Scott 1994). Of these, three populations occur in Europe. Non-breeding Shelduck in the UK are part of the north-west European population, which comprises 300,000 individuals (Rose & Scott 1997). Shelduck wintering in the UK occur on most coasts. There are notable concentrations on the muddy estuaries of East Anglia, the south coast of England, the Severn Estuary, north-west England, eastern Scotland, and the east coast of Northern Ireland (Lack 1986).

In late summer, major aggregations gather to moult. Many British and Irish birds move to the Helgoland Bight of the Wadden Sea, with very large numbers occurring in this area from mid-July to the end of August (Meltofte *et al.* 1994). Significant late summer moulting

concentrations also occur in the UK, notably on the Humber Estuary, The Wash, Bridgwater Bay in the Severn Estuary, and the Firth of Forth (Pattersen in press).

4. Population structure and trends

Increases are reported in the breeding populations of most European countries (Snow & Perrins 1998). Consequently, numbers of the north-west European population counted in winter have also increased in recent decades. However, data from the International Waterbird Census indicate that this increasing trend stabilised between 1987 and 1996 (Delany *et al.* 1999). In the mid 1980s, the north-west European population was in the order of 120,000–130,000 birds (Lack 1986) but by the mid 1990s it had risen by approximately 140% to 300,000 individuals (Rose & Scott 1997). The reasons underlying this international increase are not clearly known.

Annual indices show that numbers of non-breeding Shelduck in the UK have remained stable over the last 35 years, particularly since the mid-1970s (Pollitt *et al.* 2000). Up to the 1970s, the wintering population in Britain was around 50,000 individuals after which there was an increase of between 20% and 30% to 60,000–65,000 by the mid-1980s (Lack 1986). This is partly due to an increase in the British breeding population but may also be due to birds moving west from the Wadden Sea in response to severe winters (Lack 1986). Numbers counted in most recent winters have fallen to totals more typical of the mid-1980s (Pollitt *et al.* 2000).

5. Protection measures for population in UK

SPA suite

In the non-breeding season, the UK's SPA suite for Shelduck supports, on average, 65,472 individuals (calculated using WeBS January site totals for the period 1992/93 to 1996/97 – see section 4.4.1 and Appendix 2 for further explanation). This total amounts to about 84% of the British population, about 38% of the all-Ireland population, and about 22% of the international flyway population. The suite comprises 32 sites at which Shelduck has been listed as a qualifying species (Table 6.27.1).

6. Classification criteria

All 13 sites in the UK supporting more than 1% of the international population were considered under Stage 1.2, and all were selected after consideration of Stage 2 judgements.

A further 19 sites were considered and selected under Stage 1.3 (see section 5.3) as Shelducks were an important component of a non-breeding waterbird assemblage in these sites.

The sites are distributed through most of the range of the population in the UK, from the Firth of Tay in eastern Scotland, down the east and west coasts of England, to sites on the south coast, and four sites in Northern Ireland. All these sites are multi-species SPAs, of importance also for a range of other waterbirds. There is a very long recorded history of occupancy at most of these sites (Boyd in Atkinson-Willes 1963).

As the selection of sites under Stages 1.2 and 1.3 resulted in a suite which gives comprehensive coverage of the population and range of wintering Shelduck in the UK, it was not considered necessary to select additional sites using Stage 1.4.

Distribution map for non-breeding Shelduck SPA suite

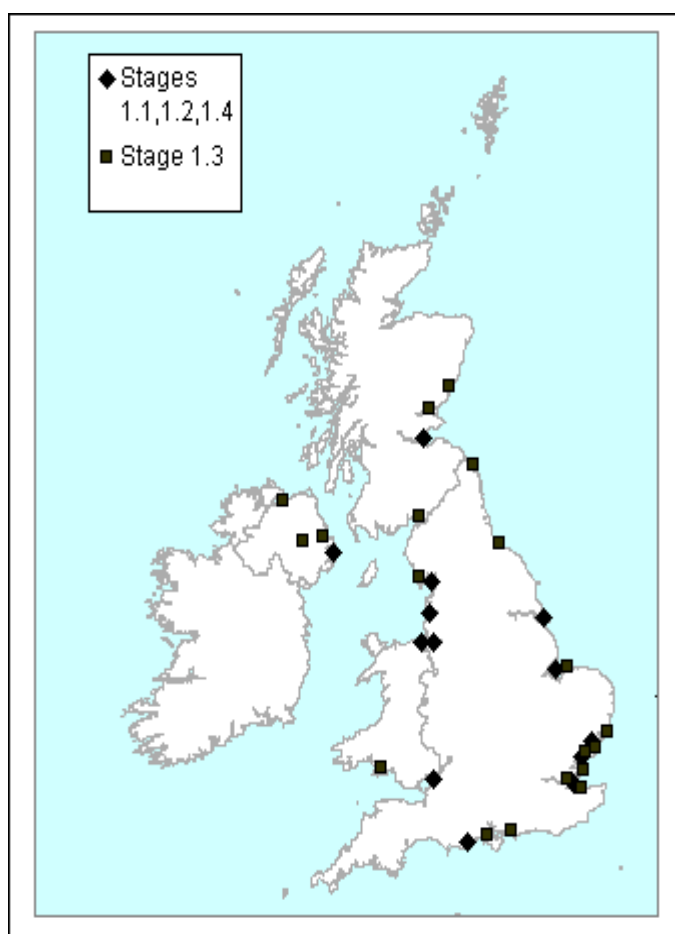


Table 6.27.1 – SPA suite

Site name	Site total	% of biogeographical population	% of national population	Selection stage
Alde-Ore Estuary	1,059	0.4	1.4	1.3
Belfast Lough	589	0.2	8.4 (Ire)	1.3
Blackwater Estuary	4,594	1.5	6.3	1.2
Burry Inlet	968	0.3	1.3	1.3
Chichester and Langstone Harbours	2,410	0.8	3.3	1.3
Colne Estuary	1,773	0.6	2.4	1.3
Duddon Estuary	1,108	0.4	1.5	1.3
Firth of Forth	3,586	1.2	4.9	1.2
Firth of Tay and Eden Estuary	1,144	0.4	1.6	1.3
Foulness	1,024	0.3	1.4	1.3
Hamford Water	1,629	0.5	2.2	1.3
Humber Flats, Marshes and Coast	4,083	1.4	5.6	1.2
Lindisfarne	899	0.3	1.2	1.3

Site name	Site total	% of biogeographical population	% of national population	Selection stage
Lough Foyle	287	0.1	4.1 (Ire)	1.3
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg	159	0.1	2.3 (Ire)	1.3
Medway Estuary and Marshes	4,465	1.5	6.1	1.2
Mersey Estuary	5,039	1.7	6.9	1.2
Montrose Basin	753	0.3	1.0	1.3
Morecambe Bay	6,372	2.1	8.7	1.2
North Norfolk Coast	1,016	0.3	1.4	1.3
Poole Harbour	3,569	1.2	4.9	1.2
Ribble and Alt Estuaries	4,103	1.4	5.6	1.2
Severn Estuary	3,330	1.1	4.5	1.2
Solent and Southampton Water	1,476	0.5	2.0	1.3
Stour and Orwell Estuaries	3,672	1.2	5.0	1.2
Strangford Lough	3,871	1.3	55.3 (Ire)	1.2
Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast	1,139	0.4	1.5	1.3
Thames Estuary and Marshes	1,625	0.5	2.2	1.3
The Dee Estuary	6,827	2.3	9.1	1.2
The Swale	2,609	0.9	3.6	1.3
The Wash	15,981	5.3	21.7	1.2
Upper Solway Flats and Marshes	2,196	0.7	3.0	1.3
TOTALS	65,472 (in January)	21.8%	83.7% 38.0% (Ire)	