

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: RIVER NANNY ESTUARY AND SHORE SPA

SITE CODE: 004158

The site comprises the estuary of the River Nanny and sections of the shoreline to the north and south of the estuary (c. 3 km in length). The estuarine channel, which extends inland for almost 2 km, is narrow and well sheltered. Sediments are muddy in character and edged by saltmarsh and freshwater marsh/wet grassland. The saltmarsh is best developed in the eastern portion of the estuarine channel, with species such as Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and Sea Purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*) occurring. Further up the estuary, the marsh habitats support species such as Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) and Yellow Flag (*Iris pseudacorus*). The shoreline, which is approximately 500 m in width to the low tide mark, comprises beach and intertidal habitats. It is a well-exposed shore, with coarse sand sediments. The well-developed beaches, which are backed in places by clay cliffs, provide high tide roosts for the birds. The village of Laytown occurs in the northern side of the River Nanny estuary.

This site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Knot, Sanderling, Black-headed Gull and Herring Gull. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands, and as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

This is an important site for wintering waders, with nationally important populations of Golden Plover (1,759), Oystercatcher (1,014), Ringed Plover (185), Knot (1,140) and Sanderling (240) present (all figures are average peaks for the 5 year period 1995/96-1999/2000). The populations of Knot and Sanderling are of particular note as they represent approximately 4% of their respective national totals. Black-headed Gull (926) and Herring Gull (609) also occur here in significant numbers. A range of other waterbirds also occurs, including Cormorant (35), Brent Goose (145), Mallard (76), Grey Plover (55), Lapwing (1,087), Dunlin (721), Bar-tailed Godwit (59), Curlew (107), Redshank (150), Turnstone (59), Common Gull (66) and Great Black-backed Gull (70). The site is of most importance as a roost area for the birds but the intertidal flats also provide feeding habitat. Many of the birds also utilise the intertidal areas and beaches further to the north and south, and also the fields above the shore.

The main threat to the wintering birds is increased levels of disturbance by beach users.

This site is of ornithological importance as it supports five species of wintering waterbirds in numbers of national significance. Two species using the site, Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit, are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.