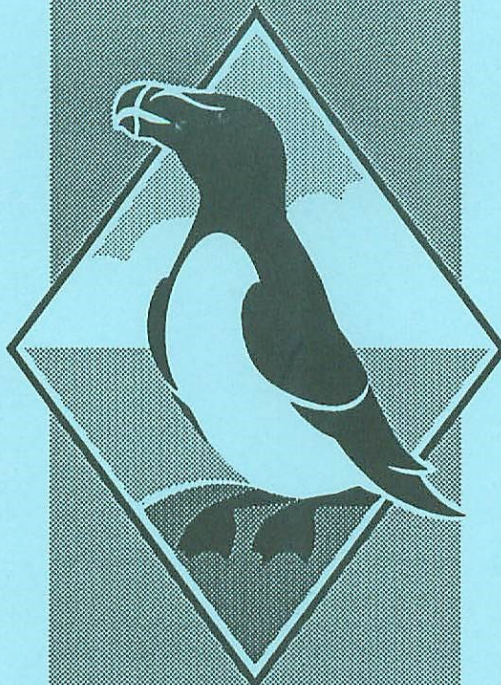


SBE



**Daugleddau Estuary &
Milford Haven Waterway
ANNUAL SUMMER
SHELDUCK SURVEY**

Report for 1996

598.412(429.9)

DAUGLEDDAU ESTUARY
AND
MILFORD HAVEN WATERWAY
ANNUAL SUMMER SHELDUCK SURVEY

REPORT FOR 1996.

Jane E. Hodges
Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
December 1996.

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Daugleddau Estuary and Milford Haven Waterway.

Annual Summer Shelduck Survey.

Report for 1996:

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Fig. 1 : Map showing the area covered by the 1996 survey, and distribution of pairs with broods.

Appendices.

Appendix 1 : Boat specification.

Appendix 2: Tabulated data.

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Appendix 4: Summary of oil pollution from the "Sea Empress", in areas used by Shelducks.

Summary.

The Daugleddau Estuary and Milford Haven Waterway hold internationally important numbers of shelducks during the winter months. In addition, there is a small summer population which has been the subject of annual boat-based summer surveys between 1991 and 1995. The survey was repeated in 1996, in April, May, June and July, as part of a rolling programme of environmental research and monitoring for the estuary system. The two additional "rounds" in April and May were undertaken in response to possible impacts of the "Sea Empress" oil spill. Of the six consecutive breeding seasons monitored since 1991, the 1996 season was the most successful, with seven more broods recorded than in 1995, the previous best season. The number of ducklings seen were at least on a par with those recorded in the 1960s and 1970s, and probably exceeded them. In addition to shelducks, the numbers of other estuary birds present were estimated, which showed that at the end of July/beginning of August, the numbers of curlew present were above the nationally significant threshold. The results of the survey are presented in this report, and factors thought to influence breeding shelducks in the estuary system are briefly discussed. The report concludes with a recommendation for the continuation of the annual summer shelduck surveys.