

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

# Daugleddau Estuary and Milford Haven Waterway

# Annual Surveillance of Summer Shelduck Populations



Report for 2012



Parc Cenedlaethol  
Arfordir Penfro  
Pembrokeshire Coast  
National Park



**DAUGLEDDAU ESTUARY AND**  
**MILFORD HAVEN WATERWAY:**  
**ANNUAL SURVEILLANCE OF SUMMER**  
**SHELDUCK POPULATIONS**

**REPORT FOR 2012**

**J. E. HODGES**

*PEMBROKESHIRE COAST NATIONAL*

*PARK AUTHORITY*

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## Summary

*The Daugleddau Estuary and Milford Haven Waterway hold nationally important numbers of shelducks during the winter months. In addition there is a small summer population which had been the subject of annual summer boat surveys carried out between 1991 and 2011. The summer boat surveys were repeated in 2012 as part of a co-ordinated programme of environmental surveillance in the estuary system. The aims, objectives and methods used, together with the data obtained are described in this report.*

*The results indicate that in terms of the numbers of broods of ducklings seen on the water, 2012 was the poorest year for breeding shelducks in the estuary since the current sequence of annual surveys began in 1991. Predation is thought to have been a major factor affecting the number and size of broods recorded in 2012. Disturbance may also have been a contributory factor, although there is little hard evidence on which any assessment of the importance of this as a factor affecting the population can be based. Adverse weather conditions in the spring and summer of 2012 are thought to have been a significant factor affecting the population: the prolonged periods of torrential rain and huge quantities of surface water may have resulted in some nests being flooded out. A further factor to consider is that since the mid-1990 s there has been a steady decline in the numbers of shelduck over wintering in the UK which has been reflected at local levels probably in response to the recent run of mild winters across northern Europe. The decline in the over wintering population has led to fewer birds remaining within the estuary system to breed.*

*Data collected for other wetland birds once again underlined the importance of the estuary system during the autumn migration period, especially for species such as curlew and green and redshank.*

*The report concludes with a recommendation for the continuation of the annual surveillance of summer shelduck populations in the estuary system as part of the Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Surveillance Group's annual work programme.*