



Milford Haven and Cleddau Estuary

Wetland Bird Survey

1995-96

Report prepared for the Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Monitoring Steering Group

by Annie Poole

on behalf of the Dyfed Wildlife Trust
and the Pembrokeshire Ornithological Research Committee.

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	Page	1
2. Methods		4
3. Results		5
4. The Sea Empress Oil Spill		12
5. Discussion		16
6. Heronries Census		17
7. Acknowledgements		18

Appendix 1. Species accounts

Appendix 2. Summary sheets of counts & comments during oil spill.

Appendix 3. Weather

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Milford Haven and Cleddau Estuary complex:

Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) 1995-96

1. Introduction

Counts of wintering wildfowl and waders have taken place on the Cleddau Estuary complex since 1972 as part of the national Birds of the Estuary Enquiry. The national coordination of counts was formerly divided between the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) for waders and the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) for wildfowl. From September 1993 the counts have been combined into the Wetland Bird Survey, jointly run by WWT, BTO, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

The counts are overseen locally by the Pembrokeshire Organising Committee for Ornithological Research (PORC), which comprises members from Dyfed Wildlife Trust (DWT), Countryside Council for Wales (CCW.), Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP), RSPB, BTO and the National Trust (NT).

Between 1982 and 1990 counts were done between July and March, then reduced to November to February each year. In 1993 it was decided to extend the counting season again to cover September to March for the whole estuary as part of the Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Monitoring Steering Group's (MHWEMSG) program of monitoring.

Because of the cold weather experienced in December 1995, an extra count was carried out during the New Year weekend. Following the Sea Empress Oil Spill in February 1996, there was an intensive period of counting from February 18th until the end of March. Data from all these extra counts is included in this report.

This report has been produced as part of an annual contract between DWT and the MHWEMSG. The report is for the 1995-96 season only, but includes summaries of the winter peak counts for many species.

Two other bird surveys have been carried out on the Cleddau in 1995-96. Grey Heron breeding sites were counted as part of the BTO's long running Heronries Census (see page 15). The annual Summer Shelduck Census is detailed in a separate report "Daucleddau Estuary and Milford Haven Waterway: Annual Shelduck Census - 1995".

Indices of National (British) and International Importance for individual species based on the percentage of the total national figure are compiled by WeBS and revised periodically. A wetland in Britain is considered Nationally Important if it regularly holds one percent of the estimated British population of one species, or subspecies of waterfowl. Any site regularly holding a total of 20,000 waterfowl qualifies for International Importance.

In most years the Cleddau qualifies as Internationally Important by having a total of 20,000 birds present when gulls are included in the counts. It is also of National Importance for its Shelduck, Redshank and Curlew populations.

The estuary is also important in a Welsh context, holding some 11% of all the wildfowl counted in Wales (including freshwater sites) and 7.4% of the waders on Welsh estuaries.