



MILFORD HAVEN WATERWAY
ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEILLANCE GROUP

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Milford Haven Waterway
and Cleddau Estuary
Wetland Bird Survey
2001-2002

Report prepared for the Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Surveillance Group

by Annie Poole

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

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(Reproduced from WeBS newsletter produced by Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust)
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WILDFOWL AND WADER COUNTS 2001-2002

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The Milford Haven Waterway and Cleddau Estuary hold large numbers of waterfowl (wildfowl and waders) during the winter months. Numbers of Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Dunlin, and Curlew reach levels of "national importance" in most years.

Monthly counts of waterfowl are carried out throughout the autumn and winter (September to March) as part of the national Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). Since the winter of 1993-94 these counts have also been incorporated into a rolling programme of research and survey initiated by the MHWESG.

2. Methods

The estuary is divided into fifteen sectors and is counted by a team of observers. Counts normally take place within two hours either side of high tide when most species are assembled in high tide roosts. Sectors are counted by a combination of walking the shore and counting from fixed points depending on accessibility. Coverage was almost complete in 2001-2002.

3. Results

Forty-eight species of waterfowl were recorded (excluding gulls), including twelve species of duck and twenty-two of waders. Divers, grebes, herons, cormorants and geese were also represented, together with mute swan, water rail, coot and moorhen.

During the peak period winter between November 2001 and February 2002, mean monthly totals of 5216 wildfowl and 7520 waders were present. The peak monthly count for wildfowl was 6368 in December, and for waders was 11033 in January. Dunlin was again the most numerous wader species, with Lapwing a close second.

Nationally Important species:	Little Grebe (max. 57 in January), Shelduck (max. 762 in February), Wigeon (max. 3192 in November), Teal (max. 1926 in December) Dunlin (max 3481 in December) Curlew (max. 1138 in November),
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The combined peak counts for all species (including gulls) in between November and February was 23,352, thus maintaining the estuary at the level of International Importance for its overall bird populations..

4. Discussion

The mean midwinter monthly totals of wildfowl were lower than in recent years. Wigeon, and teal numbers showed a decline when compared with the 2000-01 season, but Shelduck showed a slight increase. Dunlin numbers recovered a little from the low of 2000-01, while curlew numbers showed a decrease. Overall wader numbers were considerably boosted by an influx of nearly 3,500 lapwing in January. Both grey herons (33) and little egrets (64) were present in record numbers in midwinter. Redshank numbers appear to have stabilised, while greenshank numbers were the highest since 1984-85.

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