



MILFORD HAVEN WATERWAY
ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEILLANCE GROUP

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Milford Haven Waterway
and Cleddau Estuary
Wetland Bird Survey
2004-05

Report prepared for the Milford Haven Waterway Environmental Surveillance Group

by Annie Haycock

on behalf of the Wildlife Trust South and West Wales
and the Pembrokeshire WeBS team.

WILDFOWL AND WADER COUNTS on the MILFORD HAVEN WATERWAY 2004-05

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 have reached levels of "national importance" in recent 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 during the 2004-05 season.

3. Results

Fifty-six species of waterfowl were recorded (including gulls), with eight species of and twenty-two of waders. Divers, grebes, herons, cormorants and geese were also represented, together with mute swan, water rail and moorhen. Unusual species included snow goose (probably feral), and ring-billed gull.

During the peak winter period between November 2004 and February 2005, mean monthly totals of 7562 wildfowl and 10030 waders were present. The peak monthly count for wildfowl was 10914 in November, and for waders was 14503 in February.

Nationally Important species:	Wigeon (max. 8468 in November), Teal (max. 2269 in January)
Species now below the level of National Importance	Little Grebe (max. 43 in December), Shelduck (max. 757 in January) Dunlin (max 4251 in December) Curlew (max. 877 in December),

4. Discussion

The mean midwinter monthly totals of waders and wildfowl were higher than in the 2003-05 season. Most wildfowl species were present in higher numbers than last winter, giving the highest total (max counts of each species combined) since the hard winter of 1986-87. Wigeon was the most numerous waterfowl species, with over 50% more than in recent years. Waders had the highest total since counts began, largely due to an influx of over four thousand golden plovers. The peak count of curlew rose after five years of decline.

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