

## EC DIRECTIVE 79/409 ON THE CONSERVATION OF WILD BIRDS

### STRANGFORD LOUGH SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA

Area: 15,580 hectares

Geographic co-ordinates: 05° 35' 40" W  
54° 26' 40" N

Situated on the east coast of Northern Ireland, Strangford Lough is a large shallow sea lough with an indented shoreline and a wide variety of marine and intertidal habitats. The west shore has numerous islands typical of flooded drumlin topography. The Lough contains extensive areas of mudflat and also sandflats, saltmarsh and rocky coastline.

This is Northern Ireland's most important coastal site for wintering waterfowl, and it is important for breeding terns.

The landward boundary of the Special Protection Area (SPA) is entirely coincident with the landward boundary of the following five Areas of Special Scientific Interest: Strangford Lough Part 1, Strangford Lough Part 2, Strangford Lough Part 3, Killard and Ballyquintin Point. Marine areas below mean low water are also included. The Quoile Pondage Nature Reserve is also included in the SPA.

The site qualifies under Article 4.1 of EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds by supporting internationally important breeding populations of both Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis* and Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* and nationally important breeding populations of Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*. The five year means for the period 1993 to 1997 are: Sandwich Tern - 593 pairs which is 1.2% of international population (13.5% of the all-Ireland population) and Common Tern 603 pairs which is 1.2% of the international population (22.3% of the all-Ireland population). The site also supports nationally important numbers of Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*. The five year mean for the period 1993 to 1997 is 210 pairs (8% of the all-Ireland population).

The site qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive by regularly supporting in winter over 20,000 waterfowl. The five year winter peak mean for the period 1992/93 to 1996/97 was approximately 70,200 waterfowl, comprising 48,700 waders and 21,500 wildfowl. These numbers include the following internationally important species: Light-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota* (the five year peak mean for the period 1992/93 to 1996/97 was 10,527 which comprises 52.6% of the international population), Knot *Calidris canutus* 8,723 (2.5%) and Redshank *Tringa totanus* 3,176 (2.1%).

The following nationally important species contribute to the overall population of overwintering waterfowl: Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* (the five year peak mean for the period 1992/93 to 1996/97 was 1,058 which comprises 6% of the all-Ireland population),

Black-tailed Godwit *L. limosa* 138 (1.5%), Coot *Fulica atra* 410 (1.6%), Curlew *Numenius arquata* 1,980 (2.3%), Dunlin *Calidris alpina* 6,900 (5.5%), Eider *Somateria mollissima* 33 (1.0%), Gadwall *Anas strepera* 110 (18.3%), Great-crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* 94 (3.1%), Greylag Goose *Anser anser* 420 (10.5%), Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* 57 (6.3%), Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* 298 (2.7%), Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* 8,277 (4.1%), Grey Plover 284 (7.1%), Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* 9,108 (3.6%), Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* 1,562 (3.1%), Mute Swan 129 (2.4%), Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* 8,248 (16.5%), Pintail *Anas acuta* 214 (3.6%), Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrator* 338 (16.9%), Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula* 305 (2.4%), Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* 2,358 (33.7%), Shoveler *Anas clypeata* 140 (2.2%), Teal 1,662 (2.6%), Turnstone 350 (1.6%) and Wigeon *Anas penelope* 1,975 (1.6%).