

The Register of European Sites in Northern Ireland  
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Signed G. R. Seymour.  
on behalf of the Department of the Environment  
for Northern Ireland



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

### BELFAST LOUGH SPECIAL PROTECTION AREA

Area: 432.14 hectares

Geographic co-ordinates:

05° 54' 00" W  
54° 38' 00" N

Belfast Lough is a large intertidal sea lough situated at the mouth of the River Lagan on the east coast of Northern Ireland. The inner part of the lough comprises a series of mudflats and lagoons. The outer lough is restricted to mainly rocky shores with some small sandy bays.

In the outer lough, the Special Protection Area boundary is entirely coincident with that of Outer Belfast Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest but within the immediate harbour area the boundary has been redrawn to take into account permitted port related development and landfill which has taken place since the Inner Belfast Lough Area of Special Scientific Interest was declared in 1987. Marine areas below mean low water are not included.

The Special Protection Area boundary is entirely coincident with that of the Belfast Lough Ramsar Site.

The site qualifies under Article 4.2 of EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds by regularly supporting internationally important numbers of Redshank *Tringa totanus* in winter. For the period 1991/92 to 1995/96, the five year peak mean for Redshank is 2466 (1.6% of the international population).

The site also regularly supports nationally important numbers of Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (the 5 year peak mean for the period 1991/92 to 1995/96 is 589 (8.4%)), Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* 6584 (13.2%), Purple sandpiper *Calidris maritima* 14 (1.4%), Dunlin *Calidris alpina* 1440 (1.2%), Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* 433 (4.8%), Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* 232 (1.3%), Curlew *Numenius arquata* 1271 (1.5%) and Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* 614 (2.7%).

Belfast Lough as a whole is also used by several other waterfowl species including Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, Scaup *Aythya marila*, Eider *Somateria mollissima*, Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* and Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus serrato*.