

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: SEAS OFF WEXFORD cSPA

SITE CODE: 004237

The marine waters off the coast of County Wexford mark the boundary between the Irish and Celtic Seas. These waters constitute a valuable feeding resource for the seabirds that return every spring to Wexford's coastal and island colonies to breed. Outside of the summer months these relatively shallow coastal waters provide safe feeding and roosting opportunities for a range of marine birds overwintering here or on passage.

The Seas off Wexford cSPA extends offshore along the majority of the county Wexford coastline and is approximately 3,054 km² in area. This SPA abuts, and is ecologically connected to, four breeding seabird SPAs namely Lady's Island Lake SPA, Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA, Keeragh Islands SPA and Saltee Islands SPA.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Common Scoter, Red-throated Diver, Fulmar, Manx Shearwater, Gannet, Shag, Cormorant, Kittiwake, Black-headed Gull, Mediterranean Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, Little Tern, Roseate Tern, Common Tern, Arctic Tern, Sandwich Tern, Puffin, Razorbill and Guillemot.

The breeding seabird species listed [or, in the case of Mediterranean Gull at Lady's Island Lake SPA, under consideration for listing] for the SPAs which abut the Seas off Wexford cSPA are: Little Tern (Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA), Roseate Tern (Lady's Island Lake SPA), Common Tern (Lady's Island Lake SPA), Arctic Tern (Lady's Island Lake SPA), Sandwich Tern (Lady's Island Lake SPA), Black-headed Gull (Lady's Island Lake SPA), Mediterranean Gull (Lady's Island Lake SPA), Cormorant (Keeragh Islands SPA, Saltee Islands SPA), Fulmar (Saltee Islands SPA), Gannet (Saltee Islands SPA), Shag (Saltee Islands SPA), Lesser Black-backed Gull (Saltee Islands SPA), Herring Gull (Saltee Islands SPA), Kittiwake (Saltee Islands SPA), Guillemot (Saltee Islands SPA), Razorbill (Saltee Islands SPA) and Puffin (Saltee Islands SPA).

Based on a summer aerial marine bird survey conducted in 2021, an estimated 28,611 individuals occurred within this SPA. The following species formed a significant proportion (i.e. $\geq 1\%$) of the overall marine bird assemblage: Guillemot, 47.2%; Manx Shearwater, 28.9%; Razorbill, 9.6%; Sandwich Tern, 3.1%; Gannet, 2.7%; Herring Gull, 2.0%; Common Tern, 1.8% and Arctic Tern, 1.4%.

Based on a series of surveys focused on the northern section of this SPA during the non-breeding period of 2018/2019 population estimates of up to 1,078 Common Scoter, 499 Red-throated Diver and 180 Cormorant were recorded, all of which are of national importance.

9.1.2024