

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: LADY'S ISLAND LAKE SPA

SITE CODE: 004009

Lady's Island Lake is situated on the east coast in Co. Wexford and comprises a shallow, brackish coastal lagoon separated from the sea by a sand and shingle barrier. An area of sea coast at Crossfintan Point, to the east, is also included in the site. The lagoon habitat is an excellent example of a sedimentary lagoon with a sand/shingle barrier. It is by far the largest and best example of this type of lagoon in the country and is in a relatively natural condition, despite regular breaching of the gravel barrier.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Gadwall, Black-headed Gull, Sandwich Tern, Roseate Tern, Common Tern and Arctic Tern. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands, and as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

Lady's Island Lake is of ornithological importance for both breeding and wintering birds, and is also an important stop-over point for passage migrants.

The site is notable for its tern colony with internationally important populations of Sandwich Tern (1,130 pairs) and Roseate Tern (62 pairs), and nationally important populations of Common Tern (250 pairs) and Arctic Tern (151 pairs) recorded in 1995. In 1999 a survey recorded Sandwich Tern (1,048 pairs), Roseate Tern (116 pairs), Common Tern (480 pairs) and Arctic Tern (235 pairs). The terns breed on islands in the lake. Crossfintan Point is an important roost site and crèche area for the breeding terns. In the past, Little Tern has also bred. Black-headed Gull also breed on the islands in nationally important numbers (949 pairs in 2002).

The site has one of the highest diversity of breeding wildfowl species in the country. Gadwall is resident, with at least 10 pairs breeding. It is one of the few sites in the country where Garganey have been known to breed, with probably 1-2 pairs in most years. Shoveler, another scarce nesting duck, breeds (1-3 pairs). Marsh Harrier (1-2 birds) is a regular visitor to Lady's Island in spring and summer, with Ring Marsh a favoured spot. Breeding may be attempted in some years.

Lady's Island Lake also supports wintering wildfowl including a nationally important population of Gadwall (77) – all figures are mean peaks for the five winters 1995/96 to 1999/2000. In winter 1998/99 a total of 330 Gadwall were recorded, one of the highest totals ever recorded in Ireland for this scarce duck. Other species utilising the site in winter include Whooper Swan (41), Wigeon (819), Teal (184), Pintail (7), Pochard (299), Tufted Duck (110), Scaup (46), Red-breasted Merganser (9), Coot (63), Oystercatcher (67), Golden Plover (197), Lapwing (785), Black-tailed Godwit (43), Curlew (222) and Redshank (32). Little Egret, a species which has recently colonised Ireland, also occurs at this site.

Lady's Island is a regular stop-off point, mainly in autumn, for several wader species though numbers can vary considerably between years. Species which are recorded annually are Little Stint (up to 5 birds), Curlew Sandpiper (usually between 10 and 20 birds), Ruff (10-20 birds in most years), Spotted Redshank (1-2 birds), Green Sandpiper (1-2 birds) and Wood Sandpiper (1-2 birds).

Mediterranean Gull, a typical lagoonal species, has bred in the tern colonies. Other species which are occasional visitors to the site, and which are typical lagoonal species, include Black-necked Grebe, Little Gull, Black Tern and Yellow Wagtail.

Lady's Island Lake SPA is one of the most important ornithological sites in the country. It supports one of the best examples of a lagoonal bird fauna in the country, and is of particular note for its breeding colonies of Sandwich Tern, Roseate Tern, Common Tern and Arctic Tern, all species which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. In addition, several other species that have been recorded within the site are also listed on Annex I of this directive, i.e. Marsh Harrier, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Whooper Swan, Little Egret, Golden Plover and Mediterranean Gull. The site is important both for breeding and wintering birds and is one of the top sites in the country for Gadwall. The importance of the site for terns is recognised by the designation of the islands on which they breed as a Refuge for Fauna.