

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: BALDOYLE BAY SPA

SITE CODE: 004016

Baldoyle Bay, located to the north and east of Baldoyle and to the south of Portmarnock, Co. Dublin, is a relatively small, narrow estuary separated from the open sea by a large sand dune system. Two small rivers, the Mayne River and the Sluice River, flow into the inner part of the estuary.

Large areas of intertidal flats are exposed at low tide. These are mostly sands but grade to muds in the inner sheltered parts of the estuary. Extensive areas of Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*) occur in the inner estuary. Both the Narrow-leaved Eelgrass (*Zostera angustifolia*) and the Dwarf Eelgrass (*Z. noltii*) are also found here. During summer, the sandflats of the sheltered areas are covered by mats of green algae (*Ulva* spp.). The sediments have a typical macrofauna, with Lugworm (*Arenicola marina*) dominating the sandy flats. Areas of saltmarsh occur near Portmarnock Bridge and at Portmarnock Point, with narrow strips found along other parts of the estuary. Species such as Glasswort (*Salicornia* spp.), Sea-purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*), Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*) and Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*) are found here.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Light-bellied Brent Goose, Shelduck, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Grey Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit. 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.

Baldoyle Bay is an important site for wintering waterfowl, providing good quality feeding areas and roost sites for an excellent diversity of waterfowl species. It supports an internationally important population of Light-bellied Brent Goose (726), and has a further five species with nationally important populations (all figures are mean peaks for the five winters 1995/96 to 1999/2000): Shelduck (147), Ringed Plover (223), Golden Plover (2,120), Grey Plover (200) and Bar-tailed Godwit (353). Other species which occur include Great Crested Grebe (42), Pintail (35), Teal (138), Mallard (46), Common Scoter (61), Oystercatcher (531), Lapwing (524), Knot (189), Dunlin (879), Black-tailed Godwit (113), Curlew (98), Redshank (224), Greenshank (11) and Turnstone (43).

Regular breeding birds include Shelduck, Mallard and Ringed Plover. In autumn, passage migrants such as Curlew Sandpiper, Spotted Redshank and Green Sandpiper are regular in small numbers. Little Egret, a species which has recently colonised Ireland, also occurs at this site.

Baldoyle Bay SPA is of high conservation importance, for supporting internationally important numbers of Light-bellied Brent Goose as well as nationally important populations of a further five species, including Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit, both species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The inner part of the site is a Statutory Nature Reserve and also designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.

25.3.2014