

## SITE SYNOPSES

**SITE NAME: THE RAVEN SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004019**

The Raven SPA extends from north of Rosslare Point to Blackwater Harbour on the coast of Co. Wexford. The seaward boundary of the site extends a maximum distance of approximately 4.5 km from the shoreline to encompass important areas of shallow water utilised by some of the species of special conservation interest.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Red-throated Diver, Cormorant, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Common Scoter, Grey Plover and Sanderling. 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.

The Raven is an important bird site, being part of the Wexford Slobs and Harbour complex. Of critical significance is that it forms the principal night roost for the internationally important Wexford Harbour population of Greenland White-fronted Goose (9,111 – five year mean peak for the period 1994/95 to 1998/99). Various other waterfowl species are also attracted to the site during winter, both for feeding and roosting. The shallow waters within the site are particularly suitable for divers, grebes and sea duck, and nationally important populations of Red-throated Diver (77) and Common Scoter (3,234) occur - figures are five year mean peaks for the period 1995/96 to 1999/2000. The Common Scoter population represents over 17% of the all-Ireland total. Nationally important populations of Cormorant (250), Grey Plover (553) and Sanderling (101) also occur – figures are four year mean peaks for the period 1995/96 to 1998/99. Other species which occur include Oystercatcher (105), Golden Plover (711), Dunlin (673), Bar-tailed Godwit (136) and Curlew (111).

The Raven SPA is a breeding site for Little Tern, with up to 30 pairs occurring in some years. The birds nest on the shingle and sandy beaches or on offshore sandbanks. Numbers vary a lot between years – this partly related to the suitability of potential nesting habitat after winter storms, which create or destroy sandbars and shingle ridges. A number of pairs of Ringed Plover also breed on the sandy beaches.

The Raven SPA is of international ornithological importance as it provides important roosting habitat for the Wexford Harbour Greenland White-fronted Goose flock. The site also supports a range of other species, including five which have populations of national importance. It is of note that five of the wintering species that regularly occur are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Red-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit. Little Tern, a species breeding within the site, is also listed on Annex I of

this directive. Raven Point is a statutory Nature Reserve and a Ramsar Convention site.

6.9.2010