

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CAHORE MARSHES SPA

SITE CODE: 004143

Cahore Marshes SPA is located just south of Cahore Point on the north Co. Wexford coast. It comprises an area of polder grassland and some arable land interspersed by canals and drainage channels. The drainage canals and sluices were installed in the mid 19th century to reclaim wetlands and land that flooded regularly behind the sand dunes. Seawater may occasionally enter the channels and create brackish conditions. The area is underlain by rocks of Cambrian age.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Greenland White-fronted Goose, Wigeon, Golden Plover and Lapwing. 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 Cahore Marshes SPA is of ornithological importance as a site for wintering waterfowl. An internationally important population of Greenland White-fronted Goose (634 - five year mean peak counts for the period 1994/95 to 1998/99), which is part of the flock that is based at Wexford Harbour, utilises this site during the winter. Both Whooper Swan (23) and Bewick's Swan (12) also occur, but in relatively low numbers - all figures are mean peak counts for four of the five winters between 1995/96 and 1999/2000. Bewick's Swan had been more numerous in the 1980s, especially in spring, but numbers have declined in line with a national decrease. The site supports nationally important populations of a further three species - Wigeon (1,661), Golden Plover (6,038) and Lapwing (3,455). The Golden Plover population is of particular note as it represents almost 4% of the all-Ireland population. The site also holds other wintering waterbirds, in smaller numbers, including Shelduck (28), Teal (417), Mallard (244), Shoveler (40), Curlew (635) and Black-headed Gull (326). The site provides excellent feeding for these species, as well as good roost/rest areas.

The Cahore Marshes SPA is of considerable ornithological importance as it provides a feeding area for an internationally important population of Greenland White-fronted Goose. It also holds nationally important populations of three other species. The regular occurrence of Greenland White-fronted Goose, Bewick's Swan, Whooper Swan and Golden Plover is of particular note as these species are all listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

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