

73. Dengie (Mid-Essex Coast phase 1)

Geographical Coordinates:	51°41'N 0°57'E	Area:	3,127ha
Location:	On the coast, about 18km south of the city of Colchester, between the Blackwater and Crouch estuaries, in the county of Essex, south-east England. (See also site numbers 79, 85 and 87).		
Date of Ramsar Designation:	24 March 1994		
Other International Designations:	European Union Special Protection Area		
National Designations:	Site of special scientific interest; Eutrophic sensitive area ^P ; National nature reserve ^P		

Principal Features: The Mid-Essex Coast comprises an extensive complex of estuaries and intertidal sand and siltflats, including several islands, shingle and shell beaches and extensive areas of saltmarsh. The Dengie component of the Mid-Essex Coast supports a number of rare plant and animal species. Dengie has 11 species of nationally scarce plants: *Crambe maritima*, *Hordeum marinum*, *Inula crithmoides*, *Limonium humile*, the glassworts *Salicornia perennis* and *S. pusilla*, *Spartina maritima*, *Suaeda vera*, and the eelgrasses *Zostera angustifolia*, *Z. marina* and *Z. noltii*. The invertebrate fauna includes Red Data Book Species including a weevil *Baris scolopacea*, a horsefly *Atylotus latistriatus* and a jumping spider *Euophrys browni*. The Dengie regularly supports over 20,000 waterfowl in winter. The Dengie had, in the five year period 1987/88 to 1991/92, an average peak count of 27,947 birds, comprising 3,146 wildfowl and 24,901 waders. In addition, the Dengie has over the same period regularly supported, in winter, internationally important populations of species of waterfowl: 2,250 *Branta bernicla bernicla* (1.3% of the total world population), 7,763 *Calidris canutus* (2.2% of east Atlantic flyway pop.) and 1,752 *Pluvialis squatarola* (1% of the east Atlantic flyway pop.).

Conservation Issues: The Mid-Essex Coast composite site is composed of five SSSIs: Colne Estuary, Blackwater Estuary, Dengie, Crouch Marshes and Foulness. Land tenure at the site is complex with national, county and local government, private, commercial and NGO interests. A range of land uses are recorded at Dengie including bait fishing, grazing, conservation, recreational hunting, and birdwatching and other recreation. Parts of the site have been identified as part of a proposed European Union Special Area of Conservation.