

## 11. North Norfolk Coast

**Geographical Coordinates** 52°58'N 0°53'E

**Area** 7,700ha

**Location** The coastal zone approximately 20km either side of the town of Wells-next-the-Sea, in the county of Norfolk, eastern England.

**Date of Ramsar Designation** Originally designated 5 January 1976; site extended from 5,559ha on 20 January 1989.

**Other International Designations** UNESCO (MAB) Biosphere Reserve; Special Protection Area under EC Directive 79/409; twinned with the Wadden Sea (Denmark/Germany/Netherlands).

**National Designations** National Nature Reserve<sup>P</sup> (NNR); Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); Heritage Coast.

**Principal Features** A 40km stretch of coastline, including shingle beaches, sand dunes, saltmarsh, intertidal mud and sand flats, brackish lagoons, reedbeds and grazing marshes. Outstanding examples of one or more of these habitats occur at Cley, Blakeney Point, Holkham, Scolt Head, Brancaster, Titchwell and Holme. Most of the designated area is managed by the National Trust, Norfolk Naturalists' Trust, Norfolk Ornithologists' Association, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and English Nature. There are several large nature reserves with visitors centres, trails and hides. The complex holds internationally important numbers of breeding *Sterna sandvicensis* (3,000 pairs in 1990) and *S. albifrons* (425 pairs in 1988), and wintering\* *Anser brachyrhynchus* (9,576), *Branta bernicla bernicla* (10,378), *Anas penelope* (8,978), *A. acuta* (991), *Calidris canutus* (8,566) and *Limosa lapponica* (1,072). Several other species occur in nationally important numbers and the total number of wintering water birds regularly exceeds 20,000 individuals (63,417\*). The area also incorporates several important botanical sites, provides breeding localities for the toad *Bufo calamita* and supports several nationally rare breeding birds such as *Botaurus stellaris*, *Circus aeruginosus*, *Recurvirostra avosetta* and *Panurus biarmicus*. (1a,2a,2c,3a,3b,3c)

\*Figures for wintering birds are average peak counts for the five winters 1987/88 to 1991/92.

**Conservation Issues** The North Norfolk Coast is a centre for tourism and general recreation. Integrating public access with nature conservation objectives is a fundamental management challenge in many parts of the site. The 1990 UK National Report noted that studies were being undertaken to measure the impact of visitor pressure. A project has been established to develop a visitor strategy for the North Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (which embraces the Ramsar site).