

78. Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay

Geographical Coordinates: 51°19'N 1°23'E **Area:** 2,183ha

Location: The site includes the majority of the coastline between the towns of Whitstable, Margate, Ramsgate and Deal, on the north and east coasts of the county of Kent, south-east England.

Date of Ramsar Designation: 28 July 1994

Other International Designations: European Union Special Protection Area

National Designations: Site of special scientific interest

Principal Features: The Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay Ramsar site includes a wide variety of coastal habitats including areas of chalk cliff, rocky shore, shingle, sand and mudflats, saltmarsh and sand dunes. As well as its value for breeding and wintering birds, the site supports outstanding communities of terrestrial and marine plant species, a significant number of rare invertebrate species, and is of considerable geological importance. The site supports a very large number of rare species of wetland invertebrates. A total of at least 15 Red Data Book species associated with wetlands have been recorded. These comprise three species listed as endangered: *Lixus vilis*, *Stigmella repentiella*, *Bagous nodulosus*. Two species listed as vulnerable: the moth *Deltote bankiana*, the dancefly *Poecilobothrus ducalis*. Ten species listed as rare: *Emblethis verasci*, *Pionosomus varius*, *Nabis brevis*, *Euheptaulacus sus*, *Melanotus punctolineatus*, *Pelosia muscerda*, the only British population of *Eluma purpurescens*, *Ectemnius ruficornis*, *Alysson lunicornis*, *Orthotylus rubidus*. A significant number of non-wetland Red Data Book invertebrates occur, as well as a large number of other notable and scarce wetland invertebrate species. Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay also regularly supports an internationally important wintering population of *Arenaria interpres*. In the five year period 1986/87 - 1990/91, an average peak count of 1,340 *Arenaria interpres* was recorded, representing 2% of the east Atlantic flyway population. Notable also are nationally important breeding populations of *Sterna albifrons* and nationally important wintering populations of the following species: *Charadrius hiaticula*, *Pluvialis squatarola* and *Calidris alba*. In addition, large numbers of passerine birds pass through the site during the spring and autumn migration periods. (Criteria 2a,3c).

Conservation Issues: Migratory birds have been monitored since 1952 by the Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory. Other land uses include harbour facilities, sewage treatment and disposal, tourism, recreational fishing, and birdwatching. Sandwich Bay and Hacklinge Marsh SSSI has been identified as a high priority site for a water level management plan. Parts of the site have been identified within a proposed European Union Special Area of Conservation.