

1. Country: Ireland
2. Date: 16 February 1995
3. Ref: 7IE024
4. Name of wetland: South Dublin Bay

This site lies south of the River Liffey and extends from the South Wall to the west pier at Dun Laoghaire.

It is an intertidal site with extensive areas of sandy flats. The sediments grade to sandy muds near the shore at Merrion gates. The main channel which drains the area is Cockle Lake. There is a bed of Eelgrass (*Zostera noltii*) below Merrion gates which is the largest stand on the east coast. Green algae (*Enteromorpha* spp. and *Ulva lactuca*) are distributed throughout the area at a low density. Furoid algae occur on the rocky shore in the Maretimo to Dun Laoghaire area. Species include *Fucus spiralis*, *F. vesiculosus*, *F. serratus*, *Ascophyllum nodosum* and *Pelvetia canaliculata*.

Lugworm (*Arenicola marina*) and Cockles (*Cerastoderma edule*) and other annalids and bivalves are frequent throughout the site. The small gastropod *Hydrobia ulvae* occurs on the muddy sands off Merrion Gates.

South Dublin Bay is an important site for waterfowl. Although birds regularly commute between the south bay and the north bay, recent studies have shown that certain populations which occur in the south bay spend most of their time there. These are Oystercatcher (806), Ringed Plover (141), Sanderling (185), and Dunlin (983) (figures are mean January counts, 1991-93). Up to 100 Turnstones are usual in the south bay during winter. Brent Geese regularly occur in numbers of international importance (average peak 240, 1984/85 - 86/87).

Large numbers of gulls roost in South Dublin Bay, e.g. 4,500 Black-headed Gulls on 21st February 1990; 500 Common Gulls on 19th February 1991. It is also an important tern roost in the autumn, regularly holding 1,000 terns including Roseate Terns.

Most of South Dublin Bay is now a Special Protection Area under the EU Birds Directive. At low tide the inner parts of the south bay are used for amenity purposes. Bait -digging is a regular activity on the sandy flats.

This site is a fine example of a coastal system and is an internationally important bird site. The occurrence of a large bed of Eelgrass is noteworthy.