

61. Gibraltar Point (Wash Phase 2)

Geographical Coordinates: 53°07'N 0°20'E **Area:** 414ha

Location: About 45km northeast of the city of Peterborough, in the counties of Lincolnshire and Norfolk, eastern England.

Date of Ramsar Designation: 5 March 1993.

Other International Designations: European Union Special Protection Area; twinned with the Wadden Sea (Denmark/Germany/Netherlands).

National Designations: Gibraltar Point National Nature Reserve^P; Site of special scientific interest; Local Nature Reserve (LNR);

Principal Features: Gibraltar Point is part of the area known as the Wash (also a Ramsar site, and a vast intertidal embayment incorporating one of the largest and most important areas of estuarine mudflats, sandbanks and saltmarsh in Britain). Gibraltar Point is an actively accreting dune system which forms extensive sand dunes along the coast. Dune ridges representing all stages of dune development have formed roughly parallel to the coast and between these there are strips of salt marsh. The older dunes are extensively colonised by scrub particularly *Hippophae rhamnoides* and there are also freshwater pools, freshwater marshland and areas of grassland. Gibraltar Point is also of great importance for its coastal geomorphology. The site regularly supports over 20,000 waterfowl including 10,000 *Limosa lapponica*, 3,000 *Pluvialis squatarola* and 2,300 *Calidris alba*. Furthermore the site regularly supports over 1% of the European population of several species including *Calidris alba* of which it supports approximately 8.2% of the Western European population, *Limosa lapponica* supporting approximately 8.1% of the total for the Atlantic coast of Europe and 3,000 *Branta bernicla bernicla* which is approximately 1.7% of the Western European population. The site also supports 40 breeding pairs (1991 figures) of *Sterna albifrons*. Gibraltar Point has an appreciable assemblage and number of rare wetland invertebrate species, representing an important habitat of a number of Red Data Book invertebrates four of which are listed as endangered including, *Gymnocyba canella* and *Rhynchosia connexa* and eight species listed as rare including *Athetis pallustris* and *Eupithecia extensaria*. Gibraltar point supports a notable number of dragonfly species with up to 13 being recorded notably *Brachytron pratense*. The dune and saltmarsh habitats present at Gibraltar point are representative of all the stages of colonisation and stabilisation by plants. There is a fine example of freshwater marsh containing *Carex* spp., *Juncus* spp. and ferns, e.g. *Ophioglossum vulgatum*. The areas of open water support the nationally rare plant *Ranunculus baudotii* and is fringed by both *Phragmites australis* and *Althaea officinalis*. Notable plants occur in the Gibraltar point dune systems such as *Eryngium maritimum*, *Calystegia soldanella* and *Silene maritima*. (Criteria 1a,2a,3a,3c)

Conservation Issues: Some grasslands are undergoing a grazing regime. A draft Estuary Management Plan for The Wash and the Gibraltar Point NNR has been completed. A shoreline management plan is being prepared. Parts of the site have been proposed for designation as an European Union Special Area

of Conservation.