

**CYNGOR CEFN GWLAD CYMRU
COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES**

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST CITATION

FLINTSHIRE

SHOTTON LAGOONS AND REEDBEDS

Date of Notification 1999

National Grid Reference: SJ298709

O.S. Maps: 1:50,000 Sheet number: 117
1:10,000 Sheet number: SJ27SE, SJ37SW

Site Area: 11.9 ha

Description:

Shotton Lagoons and Reedbeds are of special interest for their breeding population of common tern, *Sterna hirundo* and their reedswamp vegetation characterised by common reed *Phragmites australis*.

Shotton Lagoons and Reedbeds are situated on former intertidal land at the head of the Dee Estuary 1 km north east of Connah's Quay. Following reclamation of the land for industrial purposes, the area has been used for storage and treatment of water prior to its discharge into the estuary.

The lagoons, with their extensive areas of open water and fringing reed swamp vegetation, provide habitat for a number of breeding bird species. Of these, the common tern population is of European importance. These birds, which originally nested on Burton Marshes where they were frequently inundated by spring tides, were encouraged to use the lagoons by the provision of artificial nesting habitat in 1969. The first terns nested in 1970. As the nesting habitat has been extended and developed, the number of tern pairs nesting has continued to increase such that in 1998, 471 pairs were present rearing nearly 600 young. This common tern colony is the largest in Wales and it forms well over 50 % of the Welsh breeding population.

The lagoons are in parts fringed by or are infilled by emergent swamp vegetation characterised by *Phragmites australis* and to a lesser extent, sea club rush, *Bolboschoenus maritimus* and reedmace *Typha latifolia*. At the western end, a large *Phragmites australis* reedbed occurs. This reedbed varies in composition from stands almost totally dominated by *Phragmites australis* to others containing a range of tall herb vegetation such as angelica, *Angelica sylvestris*, great willow herb *Epilobium hirsutum* and gipsywort, *Lycopus europaeus*. Reedbeds are uncommon in North Wales and this area represents one of the largest in North East Wales. Associated with the reedbeds are breeding birds, such as reed warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, scarce in North Wales and others of more local interest such as sedge warbler, *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*.

Two nationally scarce plants occur. Variegated horsetail *Equisetum variegatum* occurs in its only known coastal site in North East Wales, whilst white mullein *Verbascum lychnitis* grows on

basic slag waste around some of the wetland features. A wide range of locally uncommon plant species also occur including wild parsnip *Pastinacia sativa* and various orchids such as northern marsh orchid, *Dactylorhiza purpurella*.

In addition to a variety of other breeding bird species such as mute swan *Cygnus olor*, great crested grebe, *Podiceps cristatus*, tufted duck, *Aythya fuligula* and black-headed gull, *Larus ridibundus*, the lagoons can provide roosting and feeding opportunities for a range of wintering waterfowl species such as wigeon, *Anas penelope*; teal, *Anas crecca*; shoveler *Anas clypeata*; pochard, *Aythya ferina*, and goldeneye, *Bucephala clangula*.

A number of notable insect species have been recorded.

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