

A6.81 Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus* (breeding)

1. Status in UK

Biological status		Legal status		Conservation status	
Breeding	✓	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	General Protection Schedule 1(1)	Species of European Conservation Concern	SPEC 4 Favourable conservation status (secure) but concentrated in Europe
Migratory	✓	Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985	General Protection	(UK) Species of Conservation Importance	Table 4
Wintering	✓	EC Birds Directive 1979	Annex I Migratory	All-Ireland Vertebrate Red Data Book	

2. Population data

	Population sizes (pairs)	Selection thresholds	Totals in species' SPA suite
GB	31	1	23 (74% of GB population)
Ireland			
Biogeographic population	184,000	1,840	23 (<0.1% of biogeographical population)

GB population source: Ogilvie *et al.* 1996

Biogeographic population source: Hagemeyer & Blair 1997

3. Distribution

The global distribution of Mediterranean Gull is highly restricted, with breeding limited to just a few localities in Europe, particularly along the northern coast of the Black Sea, from the Danube Delta in the west to the Gulf of Sivash in the east. Breeding occurs very locally elsewhere: some parts of inland Russia, Turkey, the north coast of the Mediterranean including the Aegean and Adriatic Seas, The Netherlands, Britain, and locally in the Baltic. The species is monotypic.

In the UK, which is at the north-western limit of the species' world range, breeding first occurred as recently as 1968 on the south coast of England (Lloyd *et al.* 1991).

It is not known where the birds that breed in England spend the non-breeding season, but it seems likely that they use coastal areas near to the nesting colonies in south-east and south England. The few records from the Seabirds at Sea survey programme all come from the English Channel (Stone *et al.* 1995).

4. Population structure and trends

The European population is estimated at between 183,925–339,963 pairs. This comprises most of the world population with just a further 600–18,300 pairs occurring in Russia and Turkey (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997; Siokhin *et al.* 1988). Most of the world population breeds around the Black Sea and spends the winter in the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean Gull was first recorded breeding in Britain in 1968 (Taverner 1970), and since 1979, pairs have bred successfully each year, reaching a current peak of 31 pairs. This expansion to Britain was a natural progression from a spread in range and increase in numbers across central and western Europe from the species' stronghold. There are no obvious causes of this spread and increase in population, though climate change must be an obvious possible factor. There is every indication that the expansion is set to continue.

5. Protection measures for population in UK

SPA suite

During the breeding season, the UK's SPA suite for Mediterranean Gulls supports, on average, 23 pairs. This amounts to about 74% of the British breeding population, and less than 0.1% of the international population. The species does not regularly breed in Northern Ireland. The SPA suite contains five sites (Table 6.81.1) where Mediterranean Gull has been listed as a qualifying species.

6. Classification criteria

All sites in the UK that were known to support more than 1% of the national Mediterranean Gull breeding population were considered under Stage 1.1, and all (The Swale; Poole Harbour; Dungeness to Pett Level; Solent and Southampton Water; and North Norfolk Coast) were selected after consideration of Stage 2 judgements.

The sites within the suite include all regular breeding localities in the UK, including sites on the south and east coasts of England. All these sites are multi-species SPAs, of importance also for a range of other breeding seabirds.

As the selection of sites under Stage 1.1 resulted in a suite which gives very good coverage of the population and breeding range Mediterranean Gulls in the UK, there was no need to consider additional sites for selection under Stage 1.4.

Distribution map for Mediterranean Gull SPA suite

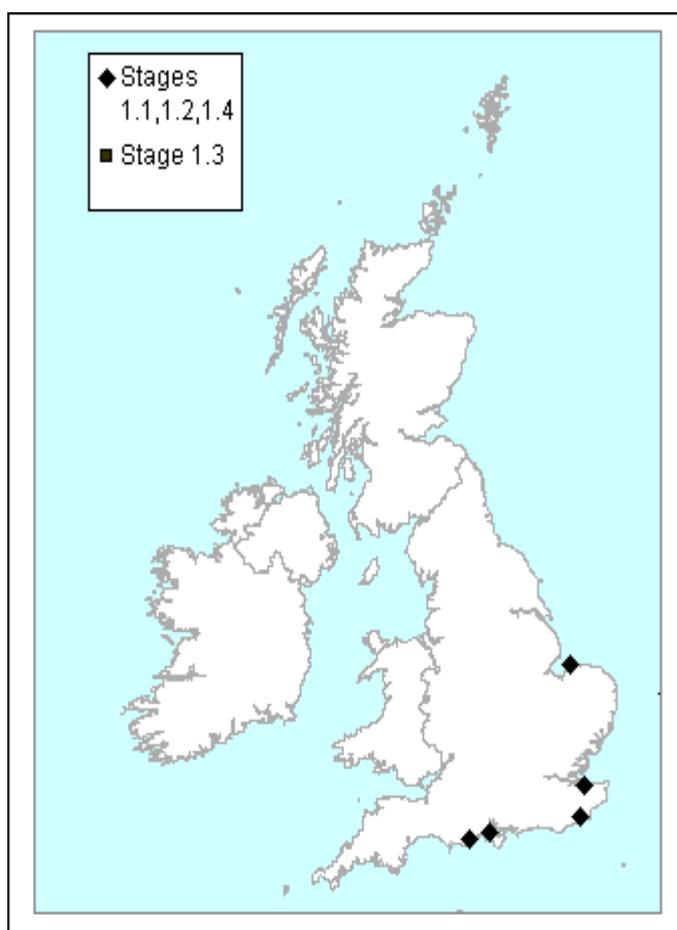


Table 6.81.1 – SPA suite

Site name	Site total	% of biogeographical population	% of national population	Selection stage
Dungeness to Pett Level	2	<0.1	6	1.1
North Norfolk Coast	2	<0.1	6	1.1
Poole Harbour	5	<0.1	16	1.1
Solent and Southampton Water	2	<0.1	6	1.1
The Swale	12	<0.1	39	1.1
TOTALS	23	<0.1%	74%	