

A6.11b Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo carbo* (non-breeding)

1. Status in UK

See section 6.11a.

2. Population data

	Population sizes (pairs)	Selection thresholds	Totals in species' SPA suite
GB	13,200	130	4,434 (34% of GB total)
Ireland	5,000	50	551 (5% of all-Ireland total)
Biogeographic population	120,000	1,200	4,986 (4% of biogeographic population)

GB population source: Kirby 1995a

Ireland population source: Way et al. 1993

Biogeographic population source: Rose & Scott 1997

3. Distribution

Section 6.11a outlined the general breeding distribution of Cormorants in Europe and the UK. Outside the breeding season (August to February), some Cormorants remain in the vicinity of their colonies, while others move to sheltered, coastal or inland locations – mostly south and east of their breeding sites. Ringing analyses (Wernham *et al.* in press) show that Cormorants from Britain and Ireland move to continental Europe, and birds from the continent also spend the winter on the coasts of south-east England.

There is significant movement of coastal breeding birds inland in winter. Kirby *et al.* (1995) analysed British count data in different seasons. Whilst in September, 71-75% of Cormorants counted in Britain were on coastal sites, this had fallen to 50-54% by February, with numbers on inland sites increasing significantly.

In the marine environment, they are largely absent from inshore waters any significant distance from the coast (Stone *et al.* 1995).

4. Population structure and trends

There is little historical information on trends in the non-breeding population, with the first survey of distribution in this season only carried out in the early 1980s (Lack 1986). Trends monitored by the WeBS counts indicate approximately stable numbers following an increase in the late 1980s, shortly after Cormorants were included in the scheme, (Kirby *et al.* 1995; Pollitt *et al.* 2000). It is likely, however, that the non-breeding population of this species has increased in parallel with that of the British breeding population (Lloyd *et al.* 1991). These increases are reflected elsewhere in the species' range (Van Eerden & Gregersen 1995; Debout *et al.* 1995; Lindell *et al.* 1995), and are possibly attributable to a general relaxation in levels of illegal persecution in many countries, as well as an increased provision of food sources such as fish farms and hatcheries.

5. Protection measures for population in UK

SPA suite

In the non-breeding season, the UK's SPA suite for Cormorant supports, on average, 4,9286 individuals (calculated using WeBS January site totals for the period 1992/93 to 1996/97 — see section 4.4.1 and Appendix 2 for further explanation). This total amounts to about 34% of the British, about 5% of the all-Ireland, and about 4% of the international flyway populations. The suite comprises 32 sites distributed throughout the UK at which Cormorant has been listed as a qualifying species (Table 6.11b.1).

6. Classification criteria

No sites in the UK regularly support more than 1% of the international total of Cormorants in winter (Stage 1.2). However, 32 sites in the suite were identified under Stage 1.3 (see section 5.3); where Cormorants are important components of a non-breeding waterbird assemblage. All sites thus identified were included within the suite. By definition, all are multi-species SPAs, also of importance for a range of other waterbirds. There is a long recorded history of occupancy at most of these sites (Prater 1981).

As the selection of sites under Stage 1.3 resulted in a widely spread suite of sites holding key resorts for non-breeding Cormorants in the UK, it was not considered necessary to select additional sites using Stage 1.4.

Distribution map for non-breeding Cormorant SPA suite

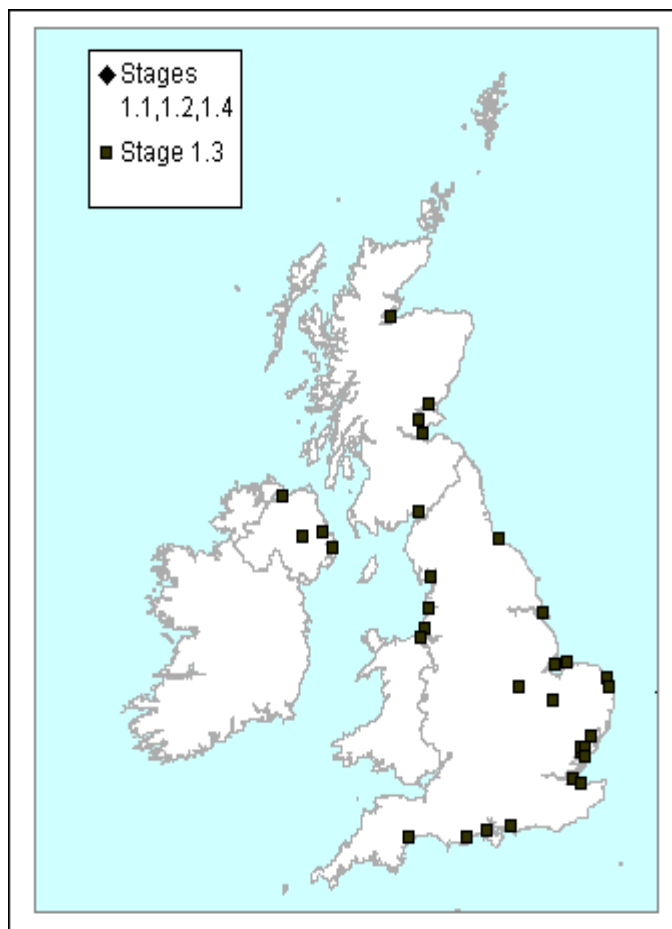


Table 6.11b.1 – SPA suite

Site name	Site total	% of biogeographical population	% of national population	Selection stage
Abberton Reservoir	400	0.3	3.0	1.3
Belfast Lough	346	0.3	6.9 (Ire)	1.3
Blackwater Estuary	555	0.5	4.2	1.3
Breydon Water	139	0.1	1.1	1.3
Broadland	633	0.5	4.8	1.3
Chichester and Langstone Harbours	155	0.1	1.2	1.3
Colne Estuary	313	0.3	2.4	1.3
Dengie	200	0.2	1.5	1.3
Exe Estuary	138	0.1	1.1	1.3
Firth of Forth	697	0.6	5.3	1.3
Firth of Tay and Eden Estuary	230	0.2	1.7	1.3
Humber Flats, Marshes and Coast	130	0.1	1.0	1.3
Inner Moray Firth	418	0.4	3.2	1.3
Loch Leven	374	0.3	2.8	1.3
Lough Foyle	118	0.1	2.4 (Ire)	1.3
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg	728	0.6	14.6 (Ire)	1.3
Medway Estuary and Marshes	231	0.2	1.8	1.3
Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore	289	0.2	2.2	1.3
Morecambe Bay	879	0.7	6.6	1.3
North Norfolk Coast	140	0.1	1.1	1.3
Ouse Washes	259	0.2	2.0	1.3
Poole Harbour	348	0.3	2.6	1.3
Ribble and Alt Estuaries	296	0.3	2.2	1.3
Rutland Water	619	0.5	4.7	1.3
Solent and Southampton Water	214	0.2	1.6	1.3
Stour and Orwell Estuaries	225	0.2	1.7	1.3
Strangford Lough	183	0.2	3.7 (Ire)	1.3
Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast	191	0.2	1.5	1.3
The Dee Estuary	238	0.2	1.8	1.3
The Swale	187	0.2	1.4	1.3
The Wash	256	0.2	1.9	1.3
Upper Solway Flats and Marshes	502	0.4	3.8	1.3

TOTALS	4,986 (in January)	4.2%	34.1% 5.3% (Ire)
---------------	--------------------	------	---------------------

