

A6.33b Shoveler *Anas clypeata* (non-breeding)

1. Status in UK

See section 6.33a.

2. Population data

	Population sizes (individuals)	Selection thresholds	Totals in species' SPA suite
GB	10,000	100	3,461 (35% of GB total)
Ireland	6,500	65	120 (2% of all-Ireland total)
Biogeographic population	40,000	400	3,582 (9% of biogeographic population)

GB population source: Kirby 1995a

Ireland population source: Way et al. 1993

Biogeographic population source: Rose & Scott 1997

3. Distribution

The global breeding distribution of the monotypic Shoveler is summarised in section A6.33a. Birds from the extensive breeding areas throughout the taiga and steppe regions of Ukraine and Russia migrate south and west to winter in western Europe (Scott & Rose 1996). Here, the distribution is predominantly coastal, although Shovelers also occur inland along major river systems and elsewhere where they can find suitable wetland habitats.

Shovelers winter from Britain (which is the most northerly part of the winter range), south through France and Spain, to the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Those that winter in Britain originate from Russia, the Baltic States, Fennoscandia and Iceland, and are widely distributed across central and southern England. In north-west and south-west England they are more localised as suitable habitat is less widespread. Shovelers inhabit reservoirs, natural lakes, flooded mineral workings, coastal wetlands and flooded grasslands (Lack 1986).

4. Population structure and trends

Seven biogeographic populations of Shovelers are recognised (Rose & Scott 1997). Of these, two occur within Europe, birds wintering (and breeding) in the UK being part of the North-west/Central Europe population. This is currently estimated at 40,000 individuals (Rose & Scott 1997). A further 450,000 birds spend the winter around the Mediterranean and Black Seas.

Knowledge of international trends in European populations is poor – partly because of the complex migrations that can vary in intensity between years (Delany *et al.* 1999; see below). Such information that does exist indicates that the North-west European population has probably been stable over the last 23 years, although the trend is poorly defined statistically (Delany *et al.* 1999).

There is a complex movement of Shovelers through Britain after the end of the breeding season (Kirby & Mitchell 1993). Those birds that have bred in the UK move south to France, Spain and Northern Italy in early autumn. Continental birds arriving from breeding grounds in Russia, the Baltic States and Fennoscandia arrive in September, temporarily joining British breeding birds and their young. Most British breeding birds have left by the end of October.

Total numbers peak in the north of Britain earlier than in the south and west (Kirby & Mitchell 1993). There is a peak of occurrence again in spring as birds that have wintered in continental Europe migrate back through Britain at around the same time as returning local breeders (Cramp & Simmons 1977).

As with many migratory birds, there is a high turnover of birds passing through Britain, with the overall number likely to be more than the estimated British population of 10,000 (Kirby 1995a). In 1989/90 non-breeding birds were split between the following habitat types: 17–39% on reservoirs, 18–30% on natural lakes, 13–23% on flooded mineral workings, 7–22% on coastal wetlands and 6–19% on flooded grasslands (Kirby & Mitchell 1993). Numbers vary considerably from year to year. However, the Ouse Washes and Abberton Reservoir are consistently the most important sites, with peak counts regularly in excess of 600 and occasionally over 1,000. The Ouse Washes holds the record count of 1,443 in March 1988, accounting for one-third of the estimated British non-breeding total at that time.

During colder weather, Shovelers will move from Britain south and westwards to Ireland, France and the Iberian Peninsula. Britain also receives birds from the international Wadden Sea, when shallow waters there freeze (Ridgill & Fox 1990). Numbers of both breeding and non-breeding birds are affected in the longer-term by such severe weather, and there was a sharp decline during the period of frequent cold winters in the early 1960s. Numbers have subsequently recovered and there has been a steady increase in the non-breeding numbers since (Kirby *et al.* 1995) reaching a record British count of 12,153 birds in November 1995.

5. Protection measures for population in UK

SPA suite

In the non-breeding season, the UK's SPA suite for Shoveler supports, on average, 3,582 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 35% of the British population, about 2% of the all-Ireland population, and about 9% of the international flyway population. The suite comprises 26 sites where Shoveler has been listed as a qualifying species (Table 6.33b.1).

6. Classification criteria

All sites in the UK supporting more than 1% of the international population were considered under Stage 1.2, and all 12 were selected after consideration of Stage 2 judgements. A further 14 sites were considered and selected under Stage 1.3 (see section 5.3), with Shoveler being identified as an important component of the non-breeding waterbird assemblages at these sites.

The sites comprising the SPA suite for Shoveler are distributed through most of the population's UK range, from Loch Leven in eastern Scotland, to Lough Neagh and Lough Beg in Northern Ireland, sites in south Wales, and on the south and east coasts of England as well as in the Midlands. All these sites are multi-species SPAs, of importance for a range of other waterbirds. There is a very long recorded history of occupancy at most of these sites (Boyd in Atkinson-Willes 1963).

As the selection of sites under Stages 1.2 and 1.3 resulted in a suite which gives adequate coverage of the population and range of non-breeding Shoveler in the UK, and as the species is otherwise widely dispersed, it was not considered necessary to select additional sites using Stage 1.4. Indeed, most sites holding Shoveler in the non-breeding season support fewer than 50 birds (Kirby & Mitchell 1993).

Distribution map for non-breeding Shoveler SPA suite

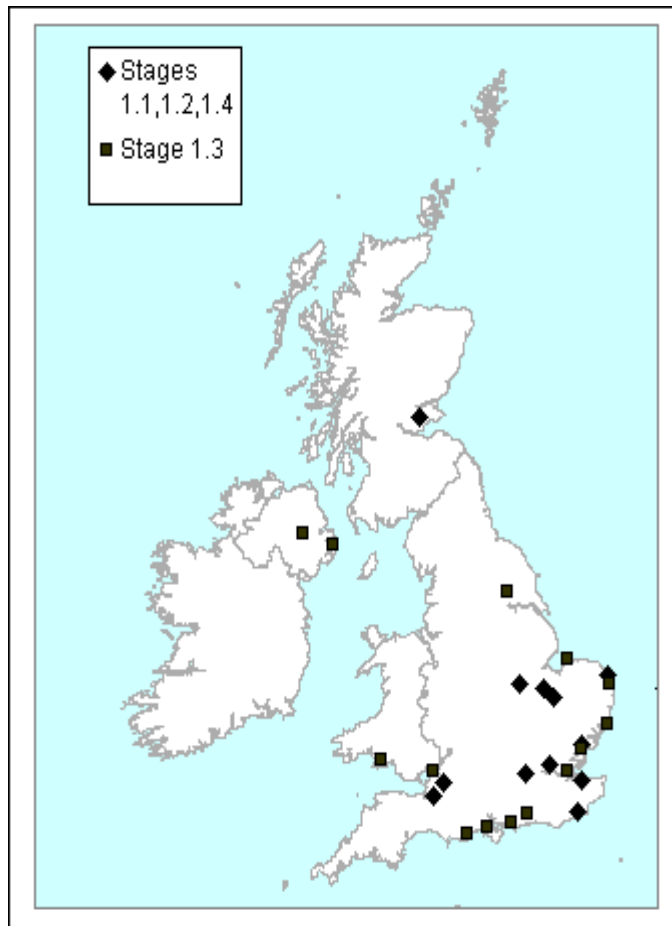


Table 6.33b.1 – SPA suite

	Site total	% of biogeographical population	% of national population	Selection stage
Abberton Reservoir	654	1.6	6.5	1.2
Alde-Ore Estuary	106	0.3	1.1	1.3
Arun Valley	199	0.5	2.0	1.3
Blackwater Estuary	132	0.3	1.3	1.3
Breydon Water	140	0.4	1.4	1.3
Broadland	401	1.0	4.0	1.2
Burry Inlet	356	0.9	3.6	1.3

	Site total	% of biogeo- graphical population	% of national population	Selection stage
Chew Valley Lake	503	1.3	5.0	1.2
Chichester and Langstone Harbours	100	0.3	1.0	1.3
Dungeness to Pett Level	419	1.0	4.2	1.2
Lee Valley	748	1.9	7.5	1.2
Loch Leven	520	1.3	5.2	1.2
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg	148	0.4	2.3 (Ire)	1.3
Lower Derwent Valley	109	0.3	1.1	1.3
Nene Washes	413	1.0	4.1	1.2
North Norfolk Coast	180	0.5	1.8	1.3
Ouse Washes	681	1.7	6.8	1.2
Poole Harbour	154	0.4	1.5	1.3
Rutland Water	526	1.3	5.3	1.2
Severn Estuary	153	0.4	1.5	1.3
Solent and Southampton Water	212	0.5	2.1	1.3
Somerset Levels and Moors	501	1.3	5.0	1.2
South-West London Water Bodies	1,075	2.7	10.8	1.2
Strangford Lough	147	0.4	2.3 (Ire)	1.3
Thames Estuary and Marshes	165	0.4	1.7	1.3
The Swale	471	1.2	4.7	1.2
TOTALS	3,582 (in January)	9.0%	34.6% 1.9% (Ire)	