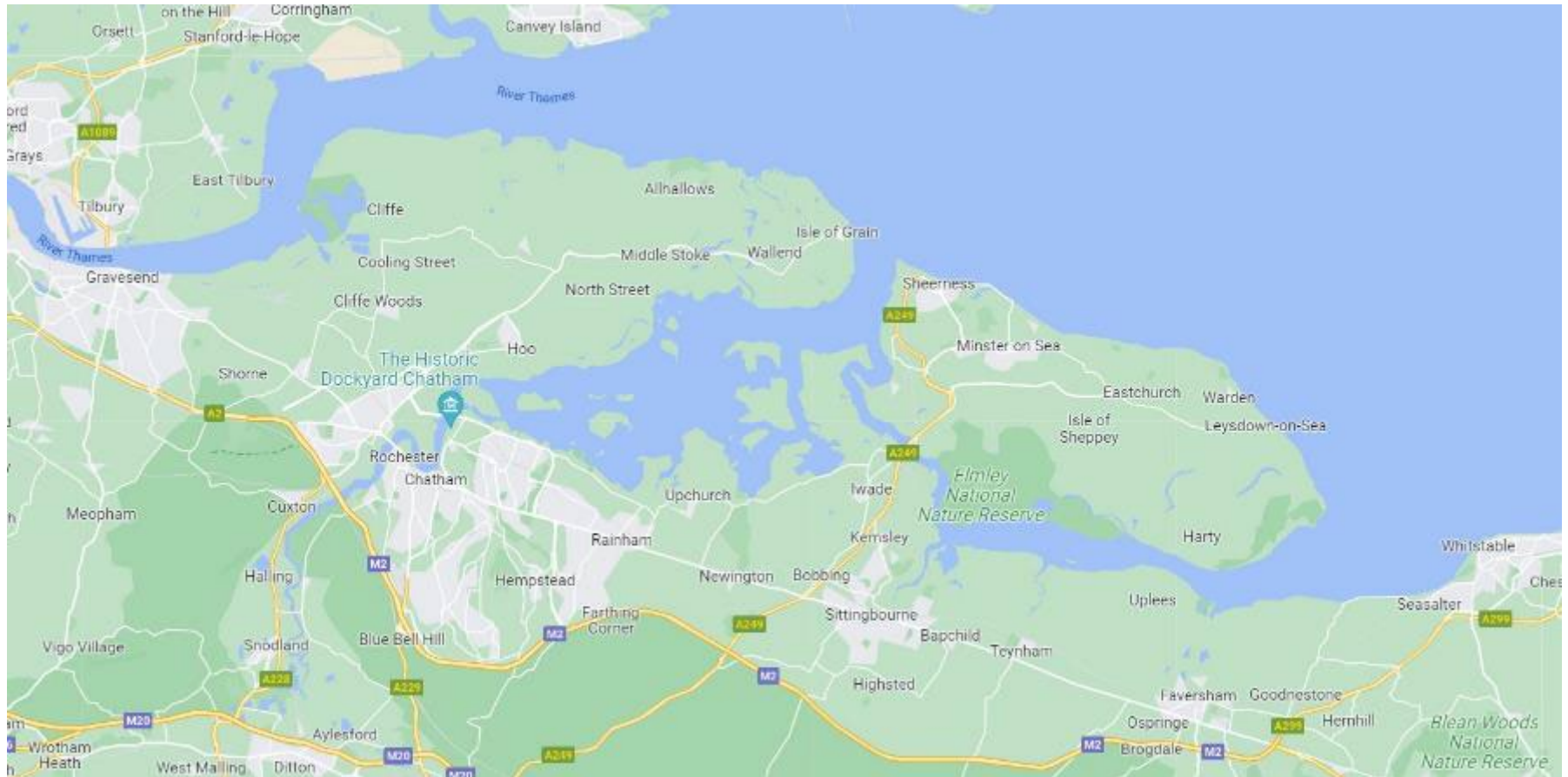




# Bird Wise North Kent

An introduction to our work for Medway Rural Liaison Committee  
5 March 2024

# Our North Kent 'patch'

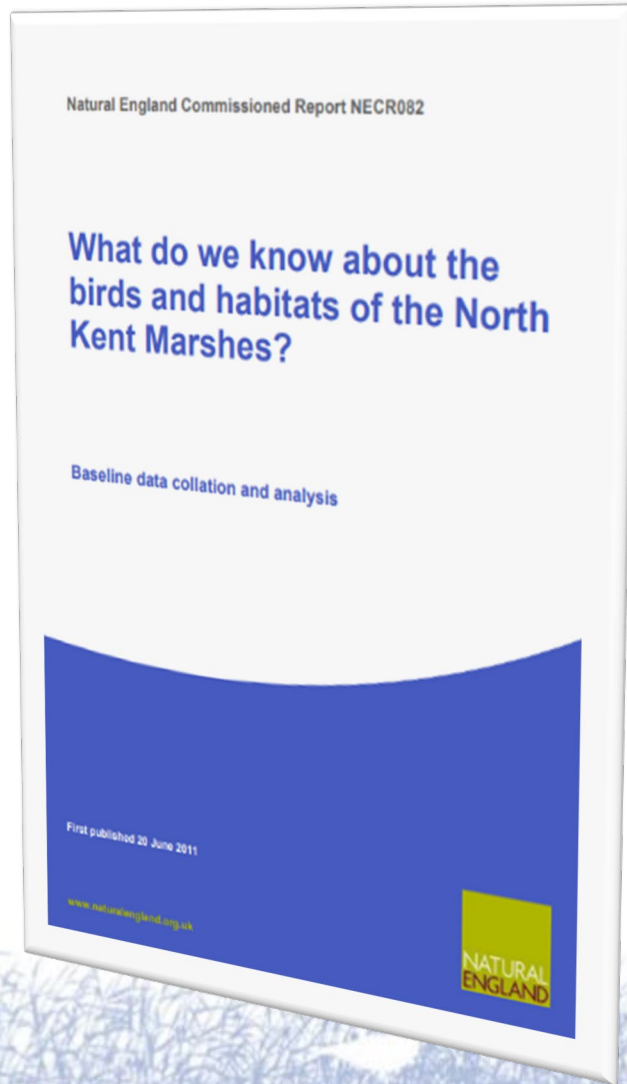






Marvellous Mudflats

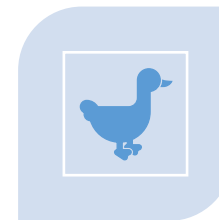
# *Let's start at the very beginning...*



BASELINE DATA  
COLLECTED 2009



CONCERNS ABOUT  
DEVELOPMENT



DECLINES IN BIRD  
NUMBERS IN BUSY  
AREAS

# A Strategic Approach

- Evidence base/ reports include:
  - Bird Disturbance Study, North Kent 2010/11 (Footprint Ecology)
  - What do we know about the birds and habitats of the North Kent Marshes? (Natural England Commissioned Report 2011)
  - North Kent Visitor Survey Results (Footprint Ecology 2011)
  - Estuary Users Survey (Medway Swale Estuary Partnerships, 2011)
  - North Kent Comparative Recreation Study (Footprint Ecology 2012)
  - Recent Wetland Bird Surveys results produced by the British Trust for Ornithology
  - Thames, Medway and Swale Estuaries – Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (Footprint Ecology 2014)

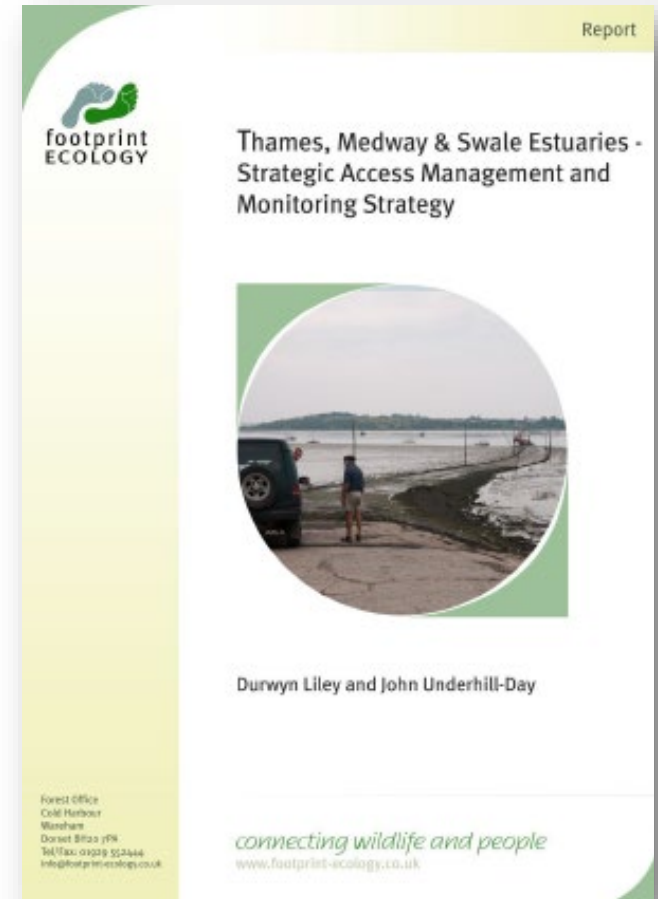


# A Strategic Approach

Provides certainty for development in terms of meeting Habitats Regulations requirements.

Strategic approach enables more efficient, co-ordinated delivery and avoids 'displacement' effects between local authority areas.

Enables strategic mitigation delivery with economies of scale.



# Who and when?

- Research 2009-2012
- SAMMS published 2014
- Mitigate recreational disturbance to birds over-wintering in North Kent.
- Funded via a developer tariff.
- Bird Wise formed 2017





## What is disturbance?

- Anything that stops birds feeding or resting
- Uses up valuable energy
- Reduces time available for feeding
- Frequent disturbance can be fatal
- Not necessarily intentional





# Mitigation measures



Signage



Face to face  
engagement



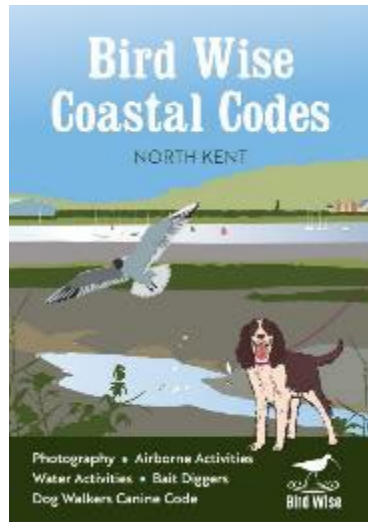
Codes of  
Conduct



Online activity



Schools



# Meet the Team





# Changes to Ranger Activity

- Work pattern changing
- Ongoing position
- Greater opportunities for training & job enrichment
- More people outdoors in summer
- Increased engagement opportunities
- Reduced recruitment & induction cost
- Continuity for project





## Summer Season



**Wild Summer Fun**



**Free nature themed activities**

22 August 10am-1pm Milton Creek Country Park, Sittingbourne

Plus, join us for a gentle guided walk out to the creek at 1pm  
book your free place at <https://northkent.birdwise.org.uk/events/>

MILTON CREEK COUNTRY PARK

Bird Wise

**Lets go wild this summer!**

The school holidays are just around the corner and we've got some free fun to keep the kids entertained

27 July	Canter Park, Meopham	
2 August	Hilly Fields Community Park, Gillingham	
3 August	Riverside Country Park, Rainham	
7 August	Seasalter	
10 August	Gravesend Riverside	
16 August	Sheerness Beach	
19 August	Jeskyns Community Woodland	
22 August	Milton Creek Country Park	

All the info is on our website  
<https://northkent.birdwise.org.uk/events/>





# Engagement Activities



## Education

- School visits – 220 pupils
- Wild Estuary – 175 pupils



## Guided Walks

- 10 events
- 78 people



## Events

- 12 events
- 1324 people



## Boat Trips

- 3 events
- 75 people

## Shellness





# The Great Coastal Birdwatch 2023



## Guided bird watching walks

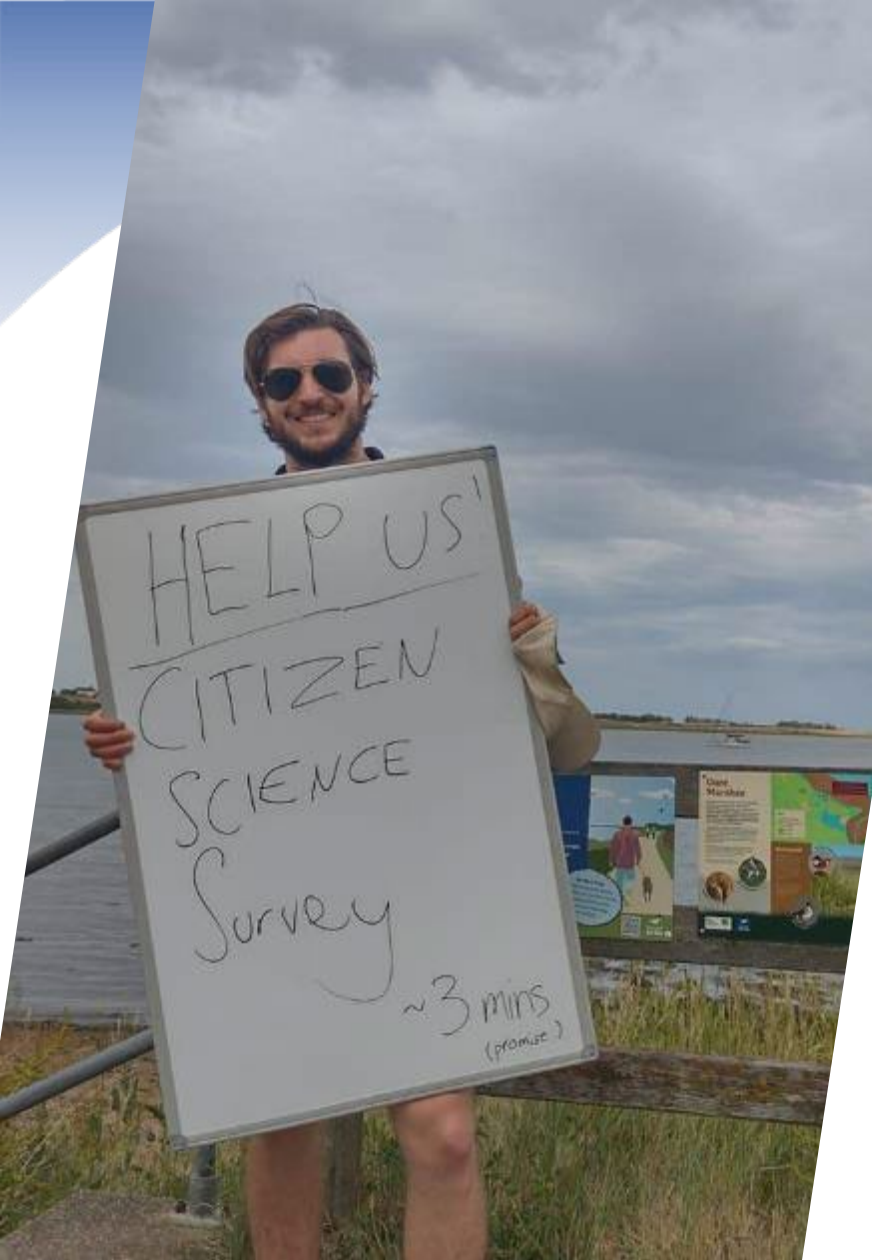
14 October Riverside Country Park	16 October Hoo Flats and Grain Coastal Park	17 October Lower Halstow Brickfields
18 October Gravesend and Higham Marshes	19 October Faversham Creek	23 October RSPB Cliffe Pools
25 October Conyer Creek	26 October Queenborough and Leysdown	27 October Whitstable and Seasalter
28 October The Great Kentish Bird off at Oare Marshes Reserve		



14 - 29 OCTOBER 2023

# Visitor Surveys

- Using Microsoft Forms
- Random selection
- Will continue through the year
- Even spread required





# Monitoring Winter 2022

- Baseline data collected 2010/11
- Bird Wise commenced 2017/18
- Surveys repeated 2021/22
- KWT Consultancy appointed to undertake disturbance surveys



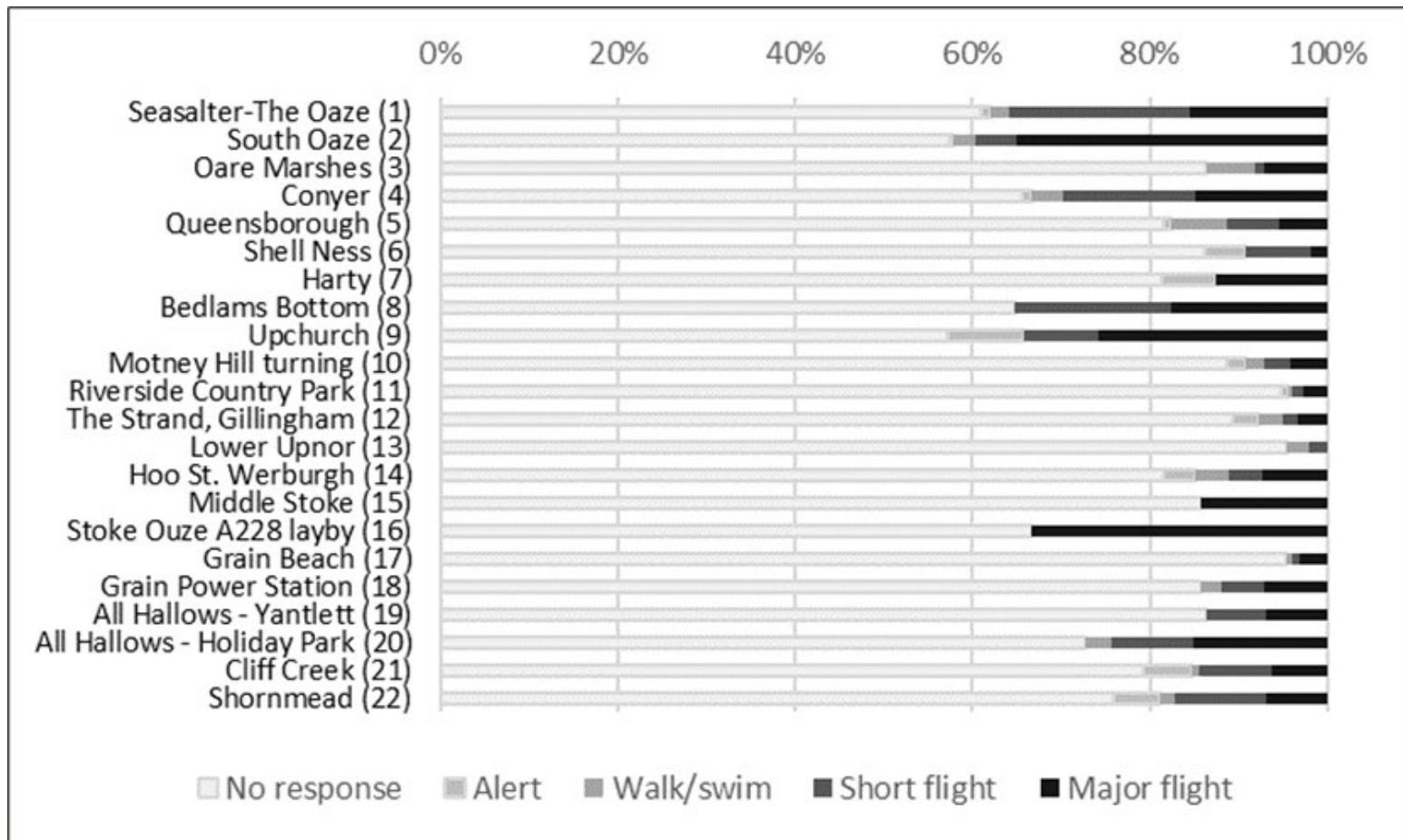


## Key Findings

- The overall number of recreational visitors to the coast has increased 36% from 3248 recorded in 2010/11 to 4438 in 2021/22.
- Walkers without dogs accounted for the greatest number of visitors (2284), followed by dog walkers (928 off-lead and 621 on-lead).
- Busiest site is Riverside Country Park but response of birds to disturbance events is low suggesting some habituation.
- More dogs being walked on a lead than before 26% 2011 and 40% now.



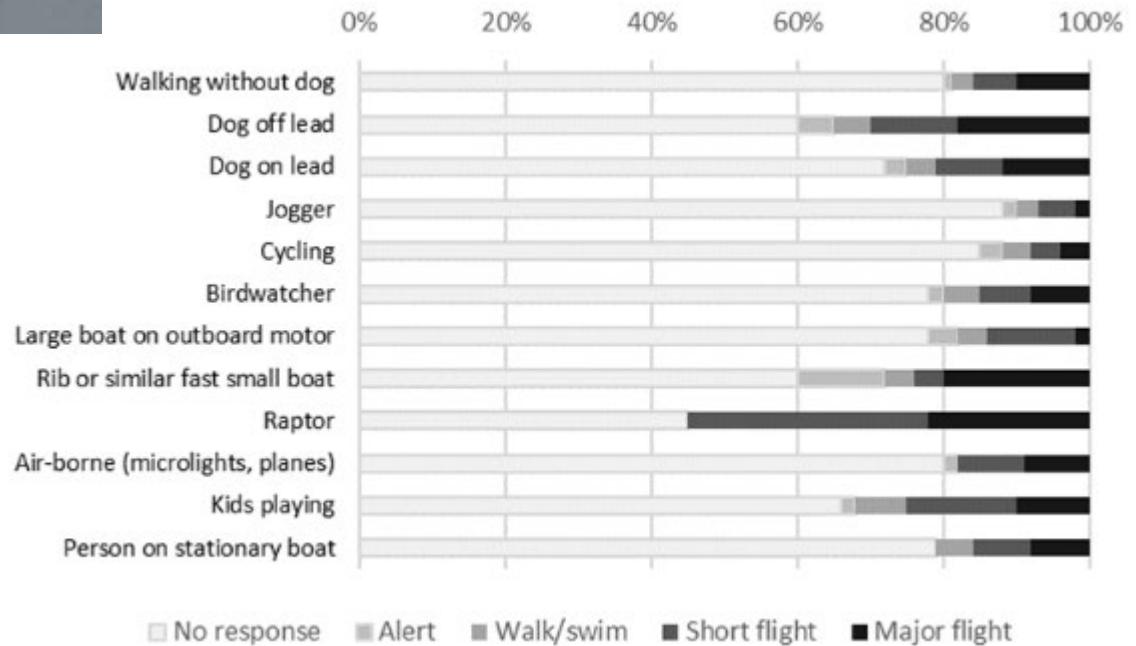
## Monitoring Findings



## Wising up to bird disturbance

- Greatest response – other birds!
- Boats
- Off-lead dogs

## Responses to disturbance





## A1 Interpretation Panels

- KWT South Swale Reserve x 1
  - RSPB Motney x 1
  - RSPB Cliffe Pools x 4
- 
- Map of site with pathways marked
  - Key species and habitat information
  - Dog specific instructions
  - Safety & behaviour messages
  - Logos and website



## Welcome to RSPB Cliffe Pools

Cliffe Pools is made up of 237 hectares of diverse habitats including saline lagoons, brackish pools, grasslands, saltmarsh, mudflat and scrub. Located on the southern shore of the Thames Estuary, this mix of habitats makes it of international importance for migratory, overwintering and breeding wetland birds.

Cliffe Pools is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA), Ramsar site\*, forming part of the wider North Kent Marshes SPA.

### An industrial past and a wild future

The lagoons and shallow pools were created through clay extraction for the cement industry. They are now carefully managed by RSPB to provide ideal conditions for wildlife to thrive. Spring sees breeding avocets, common terns and a variety of gull species enjoying the saltwater pools, while summer brings a mix of migrant birds to the reserve.

Autumn marks the arrival of winter thrushes and wintering waders, as songbirds depart for sunnier shores. As for winter, it's busy season as vast flocks of ducks, dunlins and lapwings gather for food and shelter.

\*Ramsar sites are wetlands that have international protection status



### Key



The pools are not suitable for people or dogs to swim in due to water quality and hidden machinery.

For your own safety and to avoid disturbing wildlife do not enter or allow your dog to enter any of the pools.



No swimming



No motorbikes



No bonfires



No camping



## You can help to protect birds and other wildlife

- By staying on the paths with dogs on leads or under very close control
- By keeping a good distance away from birds that are feeding and resting, and by moving away if they become alert and stop feeding.
- By never allowing your dog to chase birds.
- By always cleaning up after your dog and taking all rubbish home with you.

Find out more at [birdwise.org.uk](http://birdwise.org.uk)

#BirdWise



[birdwise.org.uk](http://birdwise.org.uk)



scan here to learn more about Bird Wise

[rspb.org.uk](http://rspb.org.uk)





# Protection of Islands

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- 'No Landing' signage at Burntwick, Chetney and Deadmans Island
- Information signs at key launch sites at Queenborough, Kingsferry, Harty Ferry, The Strand, Oare
- Peel Ports, Natural England, Landowners & Bird Wise
- Potential information on marker bouys
- Engagement with local clubs and online groups



# Dog focused events





# Get in touch



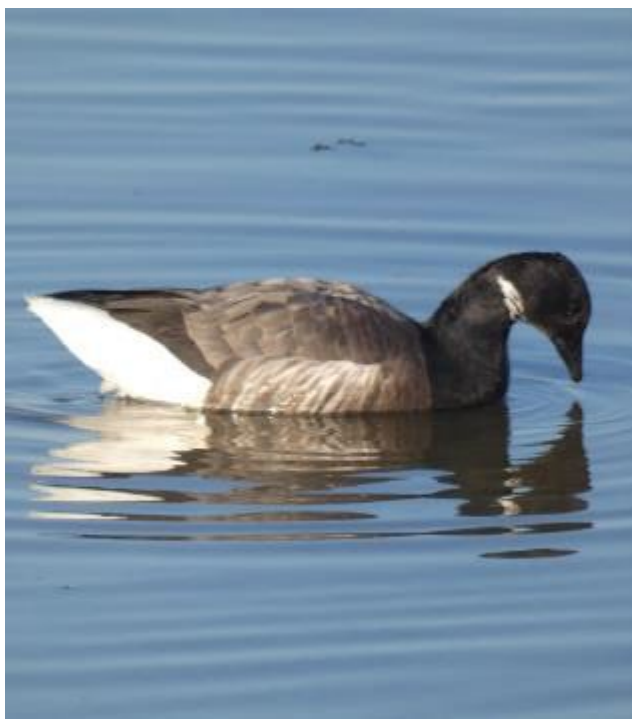
Social media @birdwisenk

Website

[www.Birdwise.org.uk](http://www.Birdwise.org.uk)

Email

[birdwise@medway.gov.uk](mailto:birdwise@medway.gov.uk)







Thank you

