

What happens if birds are disturbed?

If birds are disturbed they can:

- Modify their feeding habits.
- Take flight, preventing them from feeding (taking in energy) and cause energy expenditure to greatly increase, making it more difficult to survive.
- Leave a site permanently - this is particularly disturbing if there are few suitable alternative sites to roost or feed.

Birds are particularly vulnerable to disturbance during the breeding and wintering seasons. Whilst over-wintering between November to March birds are trying to conserve energy reserves. Consequently, using extra energy to avoid human disturbance can drastically impact on birds and needs to be avoided. Disturbance during the breeding season (Mid April to end of June) can cause birds to abandon eggs or chicks.

Bird disturbance in sensitive areas and at sensitive times of the year leads to reduced breeding success and fewer bird numbers in Poole Harbour.

Users should be aware that the whole of Poole Harbour SPA is important to birds for breeding and roosting. It is therefore important that disturbance to birds is considered at all times within Poole Harbour.

The natural environment of Poole Harbour is the reason why Poole Harbour is attractive to many harbour users. It is important that Poole Harbour is enjoyed by all but that this is done in such a way that there is minimal disturbance to wildlife.

Remember we all share Poole Harbour – try to leave it undisturbed for the wildlife and other harbour users!

Bird Sensitive Areas Do's and Don'ts:

- ✗ Avoid the use of over-wintering bird sensitive areas between November and March if carrying out activities that may disturb birds.
- ✗ Avoid the use of breeding bird sensitive areas between Mid April and the end of June if carrying out activities that may disturb birds.

Poole Harbour SPA Do's and Don'ts:

- ✗ Don't cause feeding or roosting birds to take flight.
- ✗ Don't carry out activities for extended periods of time and with large numbers of people in sensitive areas.
- ✗ When using watercraft, don't split up large rafts of birds.
- ✓ Do become familiar with and make use of the waterski, windsurf and personal watercraft designated use areas.
- ✓ Do keep noise low and speed slow around birds.
- ✓ Do use recognised landing places. Take a look at the map inside to see where the slipways are.
- ✓ Do keep dogs under control to prevent them causing birds to take flight.

For more information please contact:
Maritime Advisor, Natural England
(Tel 01929 557450)

Photos courtesy of Peter Moore
(Top left: Black-Tailed Godwit, Top right: Black Headed Gull,
Bottom left: Oystercatcher, Bottom right: Shell Duck)

This leaflet has been produced by the
Poole Harbour Steering Group

Important Information for
Poole Harbour Users

Poole Harbour Special Protection Area and Bird Sensitive Areas



The following activities can all cause bird disturbance:

Kite surfing Yachting / Yacht racing
Wakeboarding Windsurfing Water-skiing
Anchoring Canoeing / Kayaking
Motor boating Wildfowling Eel fishing
Bait dragging Bait digging
Shellfish dredging Use of Hovercraft
Dog walking Drift and set net fishing
Low flying aircraft & helicopters



Poole Harbour

Poole Harbour is one of the largest estuaries with an enclosed, lagoonal character in Britain. It is the home of a busy commercial port, a diversity of sensitive habitats and species, and the public enjoy using the harbour for a wide range of recreational activities.

The public should continue to enjoy using Poole Harbour for their recreation interests. However, this has to be managed in order to maintain and improve the wellbeing of the harbour environment and the bird populations it supports. In recognition of this, this leaflet has been produced to inform harbour users on how they can go about a diverse range of activities in a way that causes little disturbance to the birds found in Poole Harbour.

Birds of Poole Harbour

Poole Harbour (between mean high and mean low water mark) is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) which indicates it is an internationally important site for over-wintering wildfowl and waders. The mudflat, sandflats, saltmarsh, reedbeds and shallow inshore water areas within the SPA are all integral to providing key feeding and roosting habitats for the birds.

The species of birds found in Poole Harbour vary throughout the year. Species such as the Mediterranean Gull are found in the summer and waders, such as the Avocet, are found between September and March.

Poole Harbour's Bird Sensitive Areas

Wildfowl and waders are found throughout the Harbour but there are a number of locations around Poole Harbour where birds choose to roost, breed and feed, in part because these areas are mostly undisturbed by human activity.

Because of their relative isolation and the enclosed nature of these sensitive areas, disturbance from water based activities can have a significant effect on bird populations.



The locations of the bird sensitive areas in Poole Harbour are shown on the map and listed below:

Key Bird Sensitive Areas for Over Wintering Birds (November to March): Wych Lake, Middlebere Lake, Lytchett Bay (west), Arne Bay, Wareham Channel in front of Keyworth, Brands Bay, Newton Bay, Ower Bay, Holes Bay (north), Lake and Brownsea Lagoon. Key Bird Sensitive Areas for Breeding Birds (Mid April to end of June): Seagull Island, Brownsea Island

What are the threats to birds from marine users?

The die back of saltmarsh and Poole Harbour's double tide means that bird roosting sites are already under pressure, with birds having less area and a restricted time in which to feed. Consequently, disturbance from marine users could have greater impact interrupting already limited feeding time.

Birds can be disturbed by recreational activities that create high speeds, loud sounds and large visual intrusions. Examples of the types of recreational activities that can disturb birds are listed on the front cover of this leaflet.