

I would like to thank all those who have been out, often in inclement weather, watching and catching waders, and collecting corpses, for their help in compiling this report; and Dr. N.C.Davidson and Dr. M.W.Pienkowski for helpful comments on an earlier draft.

References

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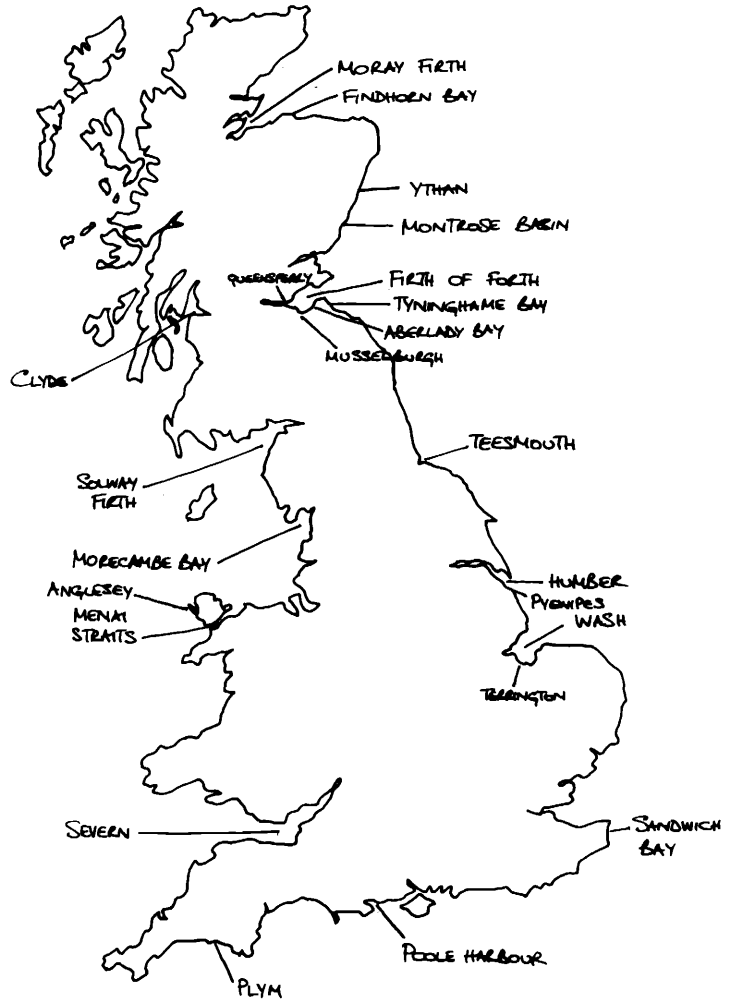


Figure 1. Intertidal areas mentioned in the text.

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

British newspapers maintained their usual record of accuracy in reporting when describing the effects of cold weather on birds, and the imposition of the ban. Scotland's 'Sunday Standard' found some difficulty in identifying the usual habitat of waders: "Mr Mower said the society had evidence of duck and geese being forced to desert frozen inland lochs and move to coastal areas in search of feed [sic]. Similarly, other wading birds [sic], like Curlews, redshanks and ring plovers were being spotted on beaches."

Even the imposition of the wildfowling ban itself went unreported in most newspapers. However, the 'Durham Advertiser', a local paper in north-east England, seemed to work on the principal of 'better late than never'. The following notice duly appeared: "Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, has signed a further order under section seven of the Preservation of Birds Act 1967 banning the shooting of wildfowl, including snipe, woodcock, redshank and golden plover and of wild ducks and geese. The ban came into effect at midnight last night and remains in operation, unless modified for 14 days until midnight on Tuesday, January 26. The Government has been advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that the continuing severe weather is having an adverse effect on all wild birds and in particular ducks and shore-waders."

Despite the reference to "last night", the notice was not published until 22 January. The ban was lifted at 0001 on 23 January.