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## REVIEWS

Tubbs, C.R. 1991. *The Solent. A changing wildlife heritage.* Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust. [£4.95].

This booklet draws on Colin Tubbs' considerable experience and knowledge of the Solent estuarine ecosystem. At first glance, its small size suggests that its contents might be limited, but on delving in, a wealth of information and detail is given on the coastal ecology and habitats which comprise the Solent.

The booklet is organised into chapters which, amongst other topics, address the origin, tides, sediments and future for the Solent. A full historical account is given, dating from its development interlinked with sea-level changes since the last Ice Age, to the history of man's

settlement from Iron Age times. The complex tidal pattern is described, as are the physical nature of the sediments which create favourable conditions for an abundant benthic fauna. Details of the high densities and international importance of the overwintering waterfowl are illustrated by use of data from counts organised by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and the British Trust for Ornithology. Fish resources are, as Tubbs points out, less adequately assessed with little information on population sizes and trends. Vegetation changes are concisely documented with accounts of alien species such as the Japanese seaweed Sargassum, thought to have been introduced by shipping or as packing for imported oysters. These could potentially have far-reaching consequences for the marine environment.

The real beauty of this publication is that, while enthusing the reader about the natural wealth and nature conservation importance of the Solent, it does not ignore the problems that the site faces - both currently and in the future. Tubbs points out that, although some of the area is protected by statutory designation, including the Ramsar and EC Special Protection Area status of Langstone and Chichester

Harbours, urban development threats loom along the shoreline. This does not deter the author, and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, from maintaining a positive and realistic approach to the safeguard of the Solent.

The booklet is superbly illustrated with high quality photographs. At £4.95 it is excellent value for anyone with an interest in the south coast of Britain or the huge problems facing the conservation of our internationally important estuaries.

Joanne Ferns

