

# Jet Skiing in the Medway Estuary and Marshes and The Swale

## Impacts of Jet Skiing on the Medway Estuary and Marshes and The Swale

Whilst jet skiing can be a fun activity, jet skis need to be used responsibly to protect the environment.

- Jet skiing increases noise and turbidity in shallow water areas, disturbing and sometimes injuring birds.
- Operating a jet ski in areas close to breeding sites can result in birds leaving their nests and eggs or young, or being disturbed when feeding.
- Unauthorised access to the saltmarsh areas by jet skis and other boats can physically damage sensitive habitats.
- Sea birds use water areas around their colonies for feeding and resting, so these birds can also be disturbed by jet skis.

## Birds and habitats on the Medway and Swale are protected by law:

The Medway Estuary and Marshes and The Swale provide vital habitat for birds and marine life throughout the year and are protected by international designations. In spring and summer rare and vulnerable birds nest on the islands and along the coastline and need space to raise their young. In autumn thousands of migratory birds arrive and spend the cold winter months feeding and resting on the mudflats and marshes. These sensitive habitats and the species that depend on them are extremely vulnerable to disturbance from noise and erosion caused by jet skis.

It is an offence for any person to intentionally or recklessly damage, disturb or destroy the special interest features of the protected areas.

All wild bird species, their eggs and nests are protected by law. It is illegal to intentionally kill, injure or take wild birds or intentionally damage or destroy a wild bird's nest while it is being used or built.

**For some of the bird species in the Medway Estuary and Marshes Special Protection Area (SPA) it is also an offence to either intentionally, or by not taking enough care:**

- Disturb them while they are nesting, building a nest, in or near a nest that contains their young
- Disturb their dependant young

Each offence is punishable (under the UK Wildlife and Countryside Act and EU Birds and Habitats Directives) by an unlimited fine and up to 6 months imprisonment.

## If you are using a Jet Ski on the Medway or Swale you MUST:

- Protect the local environment by adhering to the speed limits and following navigation rules
- Only use authorised launch sites
- Not drive through or land on salt marshes, mudflats or sandbanks.
- Look out for signs that warn of nesting bird species and avoid these areas.
- View wildlife from at least 100m away and move away if they become agitated.
- Keep noise levels as low as possible and keep to the speed limits, paying attention to the appropriate 1991 Medway Ports River Byelaws:
  - 22. Vessels to be navigated with care and caution.
  - 29. Prohibition of nuisance.
  - 31. Jet skiing prohibited areas
  - 32. Navigating whilst under the influence of drink or drugs.

### References:

Picture: copyright Medway Swale Estuary Partnership.

Natural England Designated Sites View:

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/MarineSiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=UK9012031&SiteName=medway%20e&SiteNameDisplay=Medway%20Estuary%20and%20Marshes%20SPA&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=&NumMarineSeasonality=11&HasCA=1>

MMO Marine Species and Wildlife Protection <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protected-marine-species/birds>

RSPB Policy Briefing March 2015 Jet skis and birds <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/positions/marine/jet-skis-and-birds---the-rspb-position.pdf>

DEFRA Wild birds: protection and licences <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wild-birds-protection-surveys-and-licences>

Medway Ports River Byelaws 1991 <https://www.peelports.com/media/1436/medway-ports-river-byelaws-1991.pdf>

<https://northkent.birdwise.org.uk/coastal-codes/>

<https://www.pla.co.uk/assets/plapwgcguidedigital.pdf>

# Medway Estuary and The Swale Special Protected Areas

