

## **Wetland Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge Reserve:**

Slimbridge Reserve was developed as a direct result of Peter Scott's visit to Slimbridge to look at the Wild Geese. Currently, there are up to 6-7000 EU white fronted geese at the reserve although numbers have decreased. This reflects a change in their worldwide distribution caused by the decreasing need for European wildfowl to travel west to take advantage of the warmer Gulf Stream climate.

The Severn is an important fly way for migratory birds but also noted how patterns are changing. Within the upper reaches of the Estuary where Atlantic saltmarsh is dominant (short grassy habitat with few flowering plants) the area is a rare, restricted and an extreme environment although its short grass is suitable for grazing wildfowl. However, large amounts of saltmarsh have been claimed for intensive grassland farming. More intensive grass growth is being experienced due to wetter winters and longer summers. The decrease in area of saltmarsh is having an effect on European wildfowl.

Species which have maintained or increased in number, including:.

- Wigeon - these have maintained their numbers
- Teal - numbers have increased (big mid-winter features) because they do not travel so far west (to Ireland)
- Waders such as Lapwing - these are increasing in number, travelling less further west (e.g. France)
- Golden Plover counts - these are increasing massively, settling in new flood waters and roosting on saltmarshes.
- Dunlin - he noted that there have been over 10,000 of these visiting Slimbridge over the winter
- Redshanks - there have increased numbers of breeding pairs recorded in the region



Dave Paynter - Wetland Wildfowl Trust