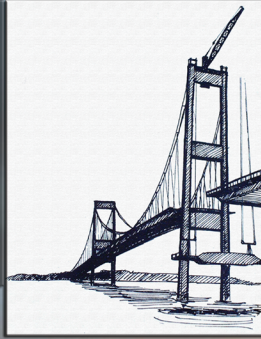


# Black Rock Facts & Features

## The Severn Bridge

Thomas Telford first conceived the idea of a bridge in 1824. Nearly 100 years later a conference held in Chepstow further advocated a similar construction but it was not until 1927 that the scheme was adopted at Government level. Even then the Forth Bridge took precedence and it was 1961 when the foundations were laid. The bridge took five years to complete and opened by H.M. Queen Elizabeth II on 8th September 1966, providing an essential motorway link.



## The Second Severn Crossing

Within just 25 years it had become apparent that the volume of traffic warranted a second bridge, and the Second Severn Crossing (S.S.C.) was opened in 1996. The new bridge was designed, built and funded by a private operating company, who also took over the operation of the existing bridge. The S.S.C. has three lanes and a hard shoulder in each direction, together with wind shielding. The old bridge has to be closed during strong winds as there is a danger of high sided vehicles being blown over, but this is not so much of a problem with the S.S.C.



## Birds At Black Rock

Text and illustrations by Gwent Ornithological Society.

Look over the estuary and you are sure to see some interesting birds, but you will usually need binoculars to get good views. The Charston Rock, where the lighthouse stands, often has wildfowl and seabirds. The Severn Estuary has the second largest tidal range in the world and the extensive areas of mud and sand attract many wading birds. The funnel shape of the estuary causes a rush of incoming tide to create the Severn bore which is most impressive at the equinox in spring and autumn.



### Cormorant

Cormorants are black and the size of geese. You can see them swimming off Black Rock all the year round. They often submerge to chase fish which form their staple diet, sometimes bringing wriggling eels to the surface before swallowing them. You will also see them roosting on the Charston Rock, often "hanging their wings out to dry".



### Curlew

Curlews are drab, brown birds but you will recognise them by their large size, long down-curved bills, and ringing coor-lee call. You will see them at all seasons, picking up crabs or shrimps from rock pools, or probing into the soft mud for shellfish and worms.



### Shelduck

These large black and white ducks are the most conspicuous birds at Black Rock. They use their large bills to sift the estuarine mud for tiny snails which form the bulk of their diet.

## Other Birds

Several other kinds of ducks, wading birds and gulls can be seen at Black Rock. From autumn through to spring you should particularly look out for flocks of dunlins flying up and down the estuary between roosts and feeding areas. Flocks of this little wading bird can contain hundreds, or even thousands of individuals. The whole estuary may hold some 25,000 wildfowl and 55,000 waders at any one time during the winter. Probably as many again pass through and stay for only a short time.

## The Black Rock Lave Net Fishery

The origin of the Lave net is obscure, J Geraint Jenkins records the use in 1636 in his book "Nets and Coracles". At this time the salmon fishery between St. Pierre Pill and Sudbrook Pill was let for 2 guineas a year and one good salmon, this was paid to the Lewis family at the Mansion House at St. Pierre.

The lave net was developed in the Severn Estuary and the "Black Rock" version consists of a rock staff, a head board, the rimes and the net itself. The whole structure hinges and folds to help walking through the water, feeling for gullies and rocks. In use, the fisherman stands up to his chest in the water with the net lowered in front of him, and requires great skill. Due to the extreme tidal range, netting is only possible for about 90 minutes around low tide.

The area fished is approximately 3 square miles off Black Rock and Sudbrook. The lave net fishermen have their own names for areas within this traditional fishing area, names like "Monkey Tump", "The Gut", "Nesters Rock" and "Light House Year" which do not appear on any estuary charts.

