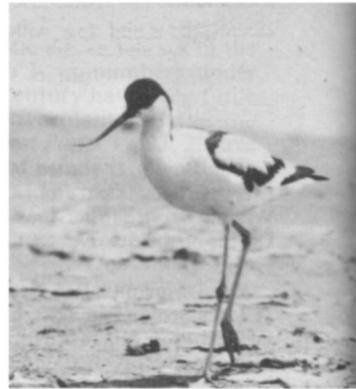




**SAND FLATS** on the delta's Alfacs peninsula, site of some of the proposed hotel development *Stephen Mills*



Flamingos have attempted to breed, and the large tern colony includes 200 pairs of little terns; 200 pairs of avocets also breed.



## The Ebro Delta

The Ebro delta, one of the most important wetlands in Europe and one of the least spoiled coasts in the north-western Mediterranean, is threatened with a 130,000-room tourist complex which could destroy it as a wildlife refuge. The major wintering ground for waterfowl in Spain, with winter counts averaging 55,000 birds, it also includes Spain's most important spawning grounds for sardines, and major fishing grounds for many other species.

The delta is already receiving punishment in the form of herbicides and pesticides, including (illegal) Dieldrin, extensive cultivation, drainage, over-fishing and virtually uncontrolled hunting despite protection laws.

Stephen Mills, who, with FPS support, recently made a study of the area, reports that the plan for the tourist complex has been delayed, but not quite killed, by opposition from local conservationists.

It is hoped that Spain, under its new more liberal government, will ratify the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (it is already a signatory), and then list the Ebro delta as a wetland reserve. Spain has already agreed to the Blue Plan for protecting the Mediterranean, under whose terms it could halt any project which might lead to excessive pollution.