



Huge community effort

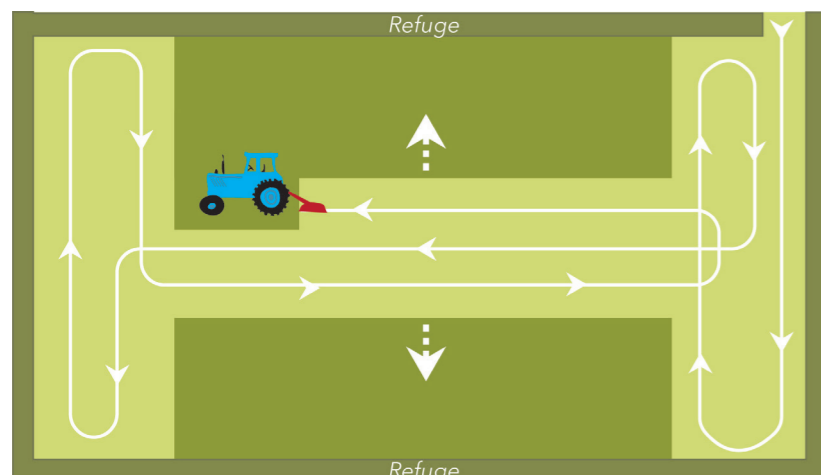
The increase of the corncrake population nationally has all been down to massive effort by local landowners and the community in our project areas.

For the success to continue we are asking for everyone to do as much as they can in 2023. Every nettle plot, every strip of crops and every meadow left for a few extra weeks can make difference.

A gentle reminder that all the incredible preparation work can be easily undone if fields are mown incorrectly.

Our contractors have been amazing so far and strictly adhere to wildlife-friendly mowing. This simple action can save up to 60% of the chicks from being killed.

Remember - mow from the middle and save the corncrake!



Ensuring that fields are mown from the centre out reduces the chance of the small chicks being killed by 60%



Schools programme

2022 saw the project roll out its very successful school Programme. Our community engagement officers Caitriona and Pat visited 8 schools in the project area and over 130 pupils participated in the Programme.

The programme consists of two classroom sessions where the pupils learn all about the corncrake and its habitat. On the third session pupils make a field trip to a local farm to see the project in action.

If you are interested in hosting a school visit or having your local school participate then please feel free to contact us.



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Natural cover for corncrakes is always their preferred option. Seen by many as weeds these native plants support loads of other wildlife like small birds and pollinators.

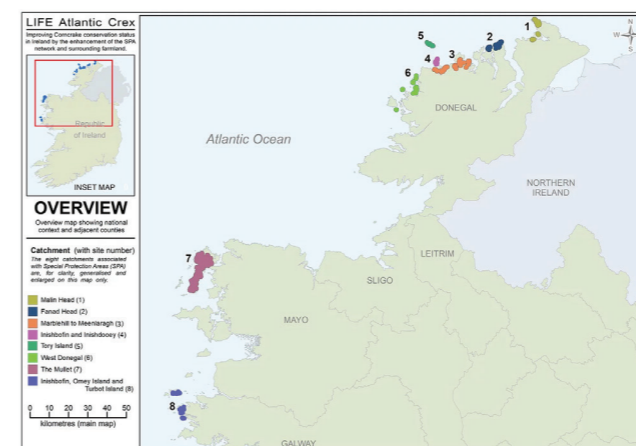


WELCOME

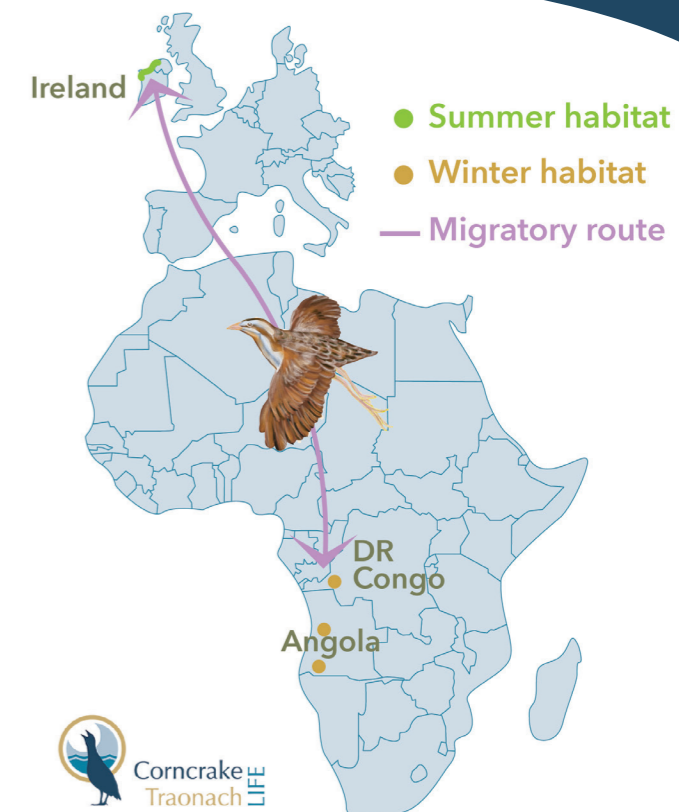
Dear Readers,

Welcome to the second issue of the Corncrake/Traonach LIFE newsletter!

Corncrake/Traonach LIFE is a 5-year EU-funded project aimed at improving the conservation status of one of Ireland's most iconic farmland bird species. The project works across counties Donegal, Mayo and Galway and is co-operating with farmers, landowners and local communities (see map below).



The Corncrake/Traonach LIFE project areas



Tá siad ag teacht!

In 2011, the RSPB in Scotland satellite tagged around 50 corncrakes on the isle of Tiree. The following year 11 of those birds were recaptured and an amazing discovery was made. Unlike corncrakes in continental Europe, the Scottish birds did not fly to South Africa. Instead, they flew to the Congo. This remarkable journey is likely made by our own Irish birds too.

Right now, the corncrakes are on their way home. 6,500km across jungle, desert, mountains and oceans. They will return to within 5-10km of where they were born.

Thanks to the 140 project participants in Corncrake/Traonach LIFE, these birds will have more habitat than ever; and an increased chance for their chicks to survive to adulthood and make the journey to Africa in the autumn.

DID YOU KNOW?

Nettles are the food plant for these butterflies:

- Comma
- Peacock
- Red admiral
- Small tortoiseshell



An Roinn Tithíochta, Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage



National Park & Wildlife Service



An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine



Údarás na Gaeltachta



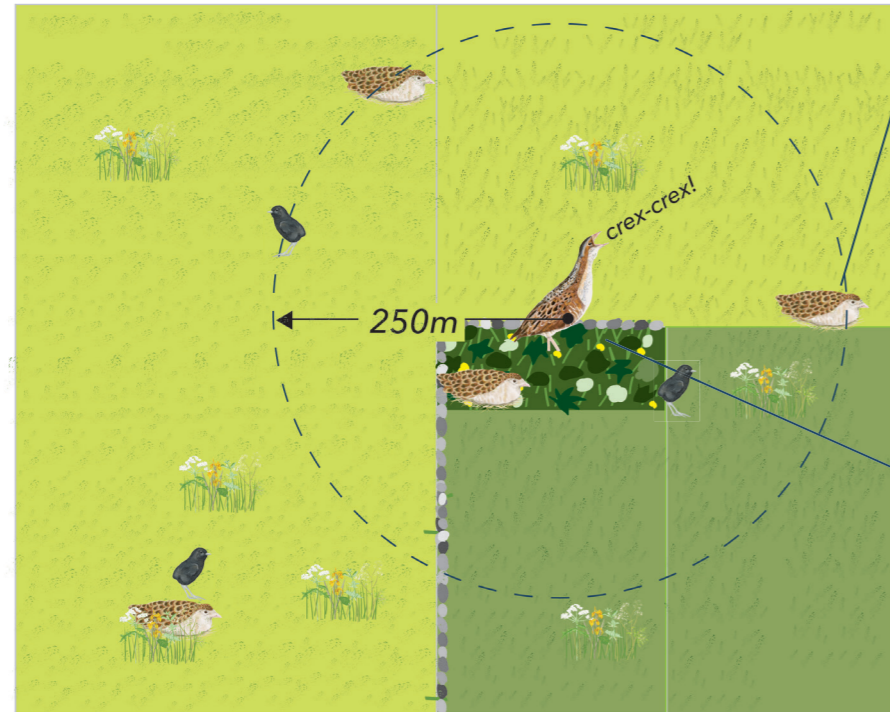
This project has received funding from the European Union's LIFE programme under Grant Agreement No. LIFE18 NAT/IE/000090 LIFE Atlantic Crex



Corncrake breeding habits

Throughout the breeding cycle, corncrake require continuous cover of tall vegetation, at least 20cm in height, which retains an open structure that allows the birds to move along the ground.

crex-crex!
Males attract mates with their loud and distinctive rasping song, calling most consistently for several hours from midnight onwards, from shortly after arrival until mid-July.



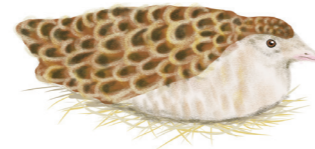
A male's territory can sometimes encompass several nests over many acres, creating local concentrations of breeding birds.

Corncrakes are generally found in taller vegetation in traditional late cut fields and rough pastures.

Nests are difficult to locate and are usually found within a 250m radius of a calling male, but both nests and young chicks can be much further away.



Arriving back to Ireland in April each year, the birds preferentially seek out stands of herbaceous species such as nettles, cow parsley or common hogweed.



HOW TO CREATE EARLY COVER

Natural cover *the Rolls-Royce option!*

- **Cultivate the area** to reduce grass burden
- **Do not use any sprays** as this will kill insects the corncrake feed upon.
- **Lay washed nettle rhizomes (roots) and hogweed seeds** on the cultivated ground
- **Cover with a thick layer of farmyard manure and/or rotten bales.** A minimum of 10cm (6 inches) deep.
- **Secure from grazing and allow to establish.**

Crop cover *a great option*

- **Plough the ground and prepare a good seed bed** using a power harrow or cultivator.
- **Do not use any sprays** as this will kill insects the corncrake feed upon.
- **Cultivate again 4 weeks after ground preparation,** to further reduce grass and weeds.
- **Lightly sow oats/kale** which are provided by the project.
- **Lightly cover seeds with a layer of soil and roll.**
- A month after sowing, add fertilizer if required.
- **Secure from grazing and allow to establish.**



crex-crex!

Early & late cover - *the key to success*

When corncrakes arrive home to Ireland each year they seek out stands of vegetation that are at least 20cm tall. This gives them shelter and concealment, and the hen bird will often lay her first clutch of eggs there.

Natural vegetation like nettles, common hogweed and yellow flag iris are preferred. But the birds would traditionally have used crops that were sown over the winter like kale and oats.

The project has worked with landowners and farmers across the target areas to deliver a total of 13 hectares of new early cover for the birds.



A great crop of kale which grew over the winter and will now provide cover and shelter for the corncrake and her chick

HAVE YOU HEARD A CORNCRAKE?

Every year we receive hundreds of reports from across the country from people who have seen the corncrake.

The birds will arrive in mid-April and the males distinctive 'crek crek - crek crek - crek crek' is unmistakable. They call mostly at night but calling during the day is often a sign that there is a nest close by.

The female bird is generally very quiet and sits on the nest within 250m of the male. She is not usually found too close to his racket!



It's imperative that the area around the male is afforded some protection and we never know exactly where the nest is - it is brilliantly hidden away.

If you hear a corncrake please report it to our local project team or via our website or social media.

Every report makes a massive difference to saving this wonderful creature.

Corncrake Hotline: 085 878 4648

