

Monitoring the birds

A key aspect of our corncrake conservation work is the monitoring of the birds which happens from when the first bird is heard (usually mid-April) all the way through to the end of July.

Our team of dedicated fieldworker's respond to every report of a bird, and use an online system to map and record the locations of each calling male corncrake.

The corncrake census is undertaken at night- when the birds are most active. The fieldworkers visit the locations between midnight and 3 a.m. in the hope of hearing that elusive call.

An active site is considered when a bird calls in the same location for five nights so fieldworkers have to return to sites on multiple occasions.

Our fieldworkers cover the entire country but their main focus is in North and West Donegal, the Mullet peninsula and south-west Mayo and Connemara.

The public also have a role to play and many of the initial reports of birds come from farmers and members of the local community who contact us with records.



Habitat scoring & ACRES

The new national agri-environmental scheme (ACRES) is a results-based payment system which means farmers are paid for the quality of the habitats on their farms.

We are delighted that the DAFM ACRES Cooperation project will utilize a version of our corncrake habitat scorecard to assess farmland in the target areas.

This means that many of the farmers who work with us in the project and who entered into ACRES CP will be well-positioned for good scoring in the scheme.

In 2023, farmers who have lands in the ACRES CP will receive habitat payment from DAFM. Corncrake LIFE will work with farmers and their planners to ensure they receive the maximum available payment for their corncrake actions such as ELC creation, delayed mowing and grazing and retention of refuge areas.

Crops for crakes

In some of our project areas in we are trialing the growing of a fodder crop which will act as cover for corncrakes but also a spring crop for farmers with lambs in 2024.

This pilot approach will see farmers grow an area of crops they can graze in spring under the condition that at least a quarter of an acre of it is retained as early cover for the birds.

It's early days yet- but the results look very impressive.

It's important to note that farmers entering into the Organic programme in 2024 must remove crop ELC from their organic farm footprint as it is not eligible for an organic payment if considered a wild bird cover..



A great crop of kale which was planted this spring and will provide late cover for corncrakes, fodder for the farmer next spring and early cover for the birds too.

How did the LIFE areas do in 2023?

The good news is that all the LIFE project catchment retained breeding corncrakes in 2023.

Some sites had significant increases in birds with the Mullet peninsula in Co. Mayo seeing an increase of 23% since 2022 while some sites in Donegal such as Toraigh increased from 15 birds to 24 in 2023.

Corncrake numbers can naturally fluctuate so we like to look at long-term trends rather than focus from year to year. In the past 5 years, the number of corncrakes has increased nationally by 35%

The increased level of action for the birds is having a significant and positive effect their population though it may take longer for this to be reflected in areas with low numbers.

It's also worth noting that farmers that take actions for corncrake help a huge variety of other wildlife.

Well done to everyone on their immense effort in 2023.

Let's make 2024 the year of the Corncrake!



Catchment		County
Malin Head	7	Donegal
Fanad Head	1	Donegal
Toraigh	24	Donegal
Inishbofin & Inishdooy	32	Donegal
Marblehill to Meenlaragh	14	Donegal
West Donegal Islands	12	Donegal
The Mullet peninsula	59	Mayo
Inishbofin, Omey & Turbotlands	21	Galway

No. of birds recorded in 2023

A picture paints a thousand words

We were delighted to be involved in the creation of this magnificent mural in Belmullet Co. Mayo. The mural was a collaboration between several projects and local groups and celebrates the rare and threatened local wildlife in the Mullet peninsula.



The mural features the lapwing which nest on the Machair habitats, the rare Great Yellow Bumblebee and of course the corncrake with a few nettles for it to hide away in!



We are half way there!

The Corncrake/Traonach LIFE project is now half way through its project. Our funding from the EU LIFE programme runs until December 2025.

The good news for the project and all our participants is that the NPWS will continue to fund all our work once the project concludes.

Corncrake/Traonach LIFE will integrate into the NPWS Corncrake Conservation Programme and will retain a dedicated team to oversee all the important work we do with farmers across the country.



Bhí blian gnoitheach againn i mbliana sa tionscadáil

Tá scéal maith againn ó thaobh líon na néanacha de, le 218 éan fireann cuntaiste sa tír agus leath doibh seo i nDún na nGall.

Nach suimiúl go bhfuil na héin Eireannach seo agus ár dteanga dhúcháis ag maireachtáil, choir a bheith go hiomlán, sna háiteanna ceanna. Thiocfadh leat a rá, gur éan Ghaeltachta í an Traonach. Cosúil lenar gcultúr agus ár dteanga tá an t-éan brúite amach go h-imeall na tíre agus na hoileáin.

“Ní neart go cur le chéile” agus le tacaíocht ó Corncrake Life, tá muintir na háite ag déanamh a ndícheall leis an t-éan a shabháil. Tá ceangal laidir idir Eireannaigh agus an talamh. Is comhartha fíor mhaith gur ceantar follain atá ann, fhad agus atá an Traonach le clóisteal ag buirthí oíche Shamhraigh.

Níl cósc ar fheirmeoireacht, ach athbheochan ar fheirmeoireacht tradisiúnta atá i gceist, mar a bhí nuair a

bhí an dúlra agus muintir na háite beo taobh le taobh. Tá feirmeoirí agus úinéirí talún, go foill i gceannas ar a dtalamh fhéin, agus ag comh oibriú le Corncrake Life, le feabhas a dhéanamh don imshaol.

Tá scoileanna agus grúpaí pobail ag glacadh páirt in oideachas agus ceardlainn, le eolas agus bród a spreagadh sa cheantar speisialta in bhfuil muid agus san fhiadhúlra atá lennar dtaobh.

Welcome

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the third 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.



2023: A phenomenal year!

With such an enormous effort having gone into habitat creation and farm planning in 2022 we were hopeful that the birds would respond well to the volume of work carried out.

Thankfully they did! 2023 has seen a total of 218 calling male corncrake locations recorded nationally. This is a 10% increase on the 2022 number.

168 of these birds were associated with the LIFE project areas which is an increase of 12% on 2022.

The huge collective effort by farmers, contractors, advisors and project staff is now having a measurable impact.

The project, along with the National Parks and Wildlife Service Corncrake Programme is working with close to 250 farmers across 1,500 hectares of land in the west of Ireland.

Simply phenomenal!



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REPORT A
CORNCRAKE



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Department of Agriculture,
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Údarás na
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