

## 5 May Corncrake Update

After an unprecedently early arrival of the first few Corncrakes this season, with at least two reported on Inishturbot, Clifden Bay, earlier than 30 March, there has been a strong return in the West throughout April. Normally, the first Corncrake is heard after mid April, and only one or two are heard anywhere until May, but this year no fewer than 14 have been heard or reported by 30 April.

In Galway, there are at least three on Turbot, one on Bofin, and one at Aughrus opposite Omey Island. In Mayo, there are three around Aghany, near Roonagh, one at Doolough, East Blacksod Bay, one or two at Carne House, Belmullet, two in or next to the BirdWatch Ireland meadows at Glebe, and possibly one in Belmullet town. There are also two on Oyster Island, Sligo Bay. One reported at Claremorris is thought to have been passing through.

Elsewhere, one has returned to Tower Callow on the Shannon and there are now quite a few reports from around North Donegal too.

Most of the habitat management work planned for this Spring in the West has been completed. Preparations of key fields, through spreading farmyard manure to produce early and late cover patches, and spreading manure or fertiliser to encourage early growth of nettles and adjacent grass, has been carried out at Glebe, Termoncarragh and Carne Hill on the Mullet, and on Omey, Turbot and Bofin. In total we've spread 17 loads of manure plus one and half tonnes of fertiliser. In addition, we've subsidised the work of Inishbofin's resident vet, Jackie Jefferson, in catching and neutering the island's many cats. So far, she has neutered 30 cats and put down 12 that were in poor condition and unclaimed. The last job before the nesting season begins is the topping and treating of rushes in *juncus*-dominated fields, which we are helping to gradually return to active farming, productive both for grazing animals and Corncrakes, on Inishbofin.

As ever, all reports of calling Corncrakes are welcome and important in getting nest sites protected before early mowing or grazing destroys nests. Please pass on all records or reports, including each time you hear a bird in a new field. The Corncrake telephone hotline number is as last year, 095 44941, or send an email to this website or to me at [timogordon@hotmail.com](mailto:timogordon@hotmail.com).