

MAYO CORNCRAKE UPDATE

6 June

The balmy nights of late May were perfect for listening out for Corncrakes, although sometimes it's surprising how, on a calm night, all the birds are quiet, not just the Corncrake, but the more usual bird calls of a night in the West of Ireland - the Grasshopper and Sedge Warblers, the occasional Cuckoo - as if they are awed by the silence.

The best performers in Mayo remain at and around Corclogh West village and Carne House on the Mullet, with two also calling from the junction of the road to Annagh, although the highest concentration is now the three Corncrakes calling from rough vegetation at the back of the derelict church at Barhauve (up the track leading to Lennon's quarry site, through the open, decorated iron gates). Others are calling at Muing, Carne Hill, Emlybeg, Clogher and Tirraun on the Mullet, however numbers are down on last year, and calling birds remain absent from the traditional site at Glebe/Termoncarragh.

In South-west Mayo, the traditional hotspot at Aghany, near Roonagh pier, is a lot hotter than last year (when there was only one here). Four can be heard calling together from near Aghany crossroads, with two very close to the road that don't seem at all put out if you drive up right beside them in the night, so perfect for anyone wanting to record one.

Elsewhere, Corncrake numbers are picking up in Connemara, with at least eight on Inishbofin, Co Galway, which is the best count there in over twenty years, and over 50 now counted in Donegal.

As ever, any new records or reports are gratefully received in the search to protect this year's crakes, some of which face being evicted (at best) by the silage harvest now beginning in parts of the West. Birds will be forced to relocate. The conservation effort will be focused on securing safe nesting meadows through payment of the grants for delayed mowing, but as ever, this relies on early notice of where crakes are heard – so please keep reporting any fresh records. (Corncrake hotline – 095 44941)