

MAYO CORNCRAKE UPDATE 29 May 2010

After a late start to the season, with few reports until mid-May, there are now at least 19 Corncrakes on the Mullet (compared to 22 by July last year), with five to seven between Carne Hill and Carne Rock church, two at Glebe, two at Corclogh West, two in silage at Tonamace, two at Belmullet (beside the Broadhaven Bay Hotel and, as in previous years, at Curlew Hill, in the rank field which this year was mowed in April) one behind the National School at Binghamstown - again in twice-cut silage, one at Emlybeg North (which may be one of those mown-out of Carne Hill - see below), one in the large early silage field beside the main road at Drum, and four or five mostly in late cut hay in Blacksod (beside the football field at Glish, in Surgeview, and two or three in Fallmore). There are at least four so far in SW Mayo, two in twice-cut silage at Aghany (one at the crossroads, one nearer Roonagh), one first found by Wendy Stringer at Emlagh, and one back in John Tiernan's safe meadow at Doughmakeon.

Following a late season for grass growth, many of these birds have chosen early-fertilized silage. The first of these fields to be mown, at Carne Hill, opposite the golf course, was on 24 March, with two more fields here to follow shortly. Three calling males were located calling on 21 May from these fields. It's hoped that at least some of the nests of these calling birds are located in Patrick Mangan's neighbouring meadow, where headlands were once again manured this Spring to provide optimum habitat and encourage nesting outside the adjacent silage. Nests can be 100 metres or more from the male's calling perch, which may be located in the field *next to* the nesting field. At least one calling male returned to a headland in Patrick's field following the silage mowing next door.

The Corncrake at Doughmakeon, and also one of the ones heard at Fallmore, both have "speech impediments", the strange vocal characteristics that have been noted before. John Tiernan had one in the same field two years ago, which same individual was later heard at Fallmore.

One has been reported between the townlands of Derrada and Derrycooldrim, west of Newport. Perhaps this is the one which was first heard in early April north-west of Westport. One was also latterly reported near Belclare, south of Westport, at the end of April. Perhaps it's the same wandering, unattached male?

There are at least four Corncrakes in Sligo, with one at Cliffoney, two on Oyster Island, and one at Low Rosses, and at least six or seven in Connemara. The scheme to locate, count and protect Ireland's Corncrakes has so far also found at least 37 to 38 in Northwest Donegal (including 18 or 19 on Inishbofin, the most counted here in years, and five on Tory) and at least one in the Shannon Callows, as well as the minimum of 33 counted so far in West Connacht.

Thanks for all your reports, 65 so far to the hotline in the West, via phone and email. Please keep them coming. Although most Corncrakes arrive in May and early June, they can turn-up anytime until early July, and this year may arrive later than usual due to the prevailing northerlies. If anyone hears one, please report it via the website or by phoning me on 095 44941.

Tim Gordon