

CORNCRAKE UPDATE – 20 May 2008

Lots of Corncrake activity at and around Termoncarragh, Belmullet, in the last week, with two males seen fighting in one of the BirdWatch Ireland meadows at Glebe (the north field) and males and females seen flying into the nettle patch next the road at the junction just before the graveyard in the stripes running down to the lake. (All these are visible from the road - please never enter a field in search of Corncrakes.) At least 4 calling males here, and at least three at Carne, at least two in Belmullet, and two or three at Fallmore and Glosh, at the southern tip of the peninsula, giving a minimum total of 11, the same number as at the end of last season and suggesting there's a good chance of an increase this year in Erris.

One at Frenchill crossroads, 2.5 miles south of Castlebar, is the first confirmed calling around Castlebar for several years. Having been heard for the last week, it will be interesting to see if it continues from the same place, indicating that it has a mate, despite the fact that the nearest other calling male is probably about 30 miles away. One reported from near Coolaney, in Carrownagleragh townland, north of the Templhouse crossroads on the Coolaney-Tubbercurry road, and is another turning-up at a new site and miles from the nearest rival.

Counts at Rosses Point, Sligo and at Aghany and Roonagh, as well as on the Connemara islands, will give a better idea of numbers at these spots and overall in the coming weeks. The census, which started last night, and which will see a systematic search of the Erris area, the North Mayo and South Sligo coasts and the Connemara coast adjacent the islands, as well as these islands themselves, will hopefully reveal a few more.

Better news from the Callows, where 5 calling males have now been confirmed. Numbers in Donegal also look encouraging, but no figures are being estimated there yet.

Tim Gordon