

CORNCRAKE UPDATE – 7 June 2008

Good news. Its now apparent that numbers are up on last year, with increases in Erris and Sligo already confirmed and another increase in South Mayo likely.

In Erris, there are at least 17 calling Corncrakes (13 last year, and compared to the highest recent total of 15 in 2004), with 2 each at Glebe and Termoncarragh (hopefully we'll hear some of these on our Corncrake walk tonight), 1 each at Tonamace and Gladree, at least 4 at Carne, 2 at Belmullet, and single calling birds at Elly Point, Termon, Glosch and Fallmore, with others reported at Blacksod and Surgeview. One reported in East Blacksod Bay at Doohoma may have relocated 6kms south-east to Fahy.

In South Sligo, as well as the four regularly calling around Aghany and Roonagh, one has turned-up at Bunowen – sadly in fields just about to be harvested for silage, and one has just returned to the garden of John Tiernan of Doughmakeon (John was featured on the recent *"Living the Wildlife"* RTE TV series).

Four have been reported calling from Oyster Island, clearly audible from Rosses Point, Sligo, with one of these or a possible fifth on Coney Island, and one has been located on the South Sligo coast in Ardogelly townland, near Templeboy.

The one at French-hill crossroads, Castlebar, hasn't been heard in the last week, and earlier reports from Raghly Point and Mullaghmore, Sligo, and Killadoon, South Mayo, seem to refer to birds either passing through or moved-on by one or other kind of disturbance (at Killadoon, the bird allegedly stopped calling after the visit of an over-enthusiastic photographer).

Numbers are still down in Connemara, where 10 of a probable 11 have been confirmed (17 last year). In Donegal, 18 have been confirmed on Inishbofin (up from 11 last year, and the highest total here since 2001), but just 7 so far on Tory (18 last year). There remain just 5 in the Shannon Callows.

Mowing has already begun at Corncrake sites in the West, with two fields cut at Carne on the Mullet, and more silage-making is expected in the next fortnight at Fallmore on the Mullet and at Aghany, nevertheless the initial response to the mowing- and grazing-delay grant scheme is good, and hopefully after these few early-cut fields are mowed, most of the rest of the nest sites should be protected.

Please keep the reports coming in, to the hotline (095 44941) or via email (timogordon@hotmail.com).