

CORNCRAKE UPDATE – 20 June 2008

There have been only a few new reports of Corncrakes as the mid-season approaches. A Corncrake has again been reported at Fahy, where one was heard last month during daytime, but not confirmed at night, and two birds are now calling at Corclogh, on the Mullet, having possibly moved across the lake from Termoncarragh.

Most birds appear to have been located, with some moving to new grounds nearby, consequently the total count remains as was, in the region of 38 to 43. There is a minimum of 18 in Erris (up on 13 last year and a previous highest of 15 in 2004), which is the best place to hear them. On a calm night around Carne they can be heard in every direction and in the distance, with birds also calling at Tonamace, Corclogh and Glebe.

Following mowing at Aghany and Bunowen in South Mayo, just three of the six birds confirmed there earlier were calling on a visit last week, although another one has just been reported back at Killadoon, where one was heard several weeks ago. Birds also appear to have gone quiet around Oyster Island in inner Sligo Bay, where just one has been reported in the last week, where earlier there were at least three. In some cases birds go quiet mid-season when all the females are incubating, only to get noisy again when the first nests hatch.

Mowing is continuing, with fields adjacent Corncrakes or where a Corncrake was heard earlier in the season being cut at Carne Hill, Termon Point and Fallmore in the last week (no sightings or remains found).

Meanwhile the grant scheme is delaying mowing in many other fields, with 26 farmers signed-up to date, yielding a delay of grazing or mowing until 1 August at least on 76 hectares (183 acres), and 81 hectares (201 acres) signed-up for Corncrake-friendly mowing. Unfortunately, fields at Glebe, where two calling Corncrakes were heard on the Corncrake Walk on 7 June, are scheduled to be cut in the first week of July – the landowner is not willing to delay mowing, and as the scheme is voluntary, nothing can be done. Hopefully we will get prior notice of mowing and be able to look out for chicks during Corncrake-friendly mowing, which the landowner has agreed to do.

Reports are still very welcome as they help to establish where birds have moved, and if so when, so please keep them coming in. Sometimes it's as important to know when a Corncrake is last heard at a site as when it was first heard. This information is helpful in signing-up fields for the later delay dates of 20 August and 1 September, particularly where late-nesting is expected.

The hotline number is 095 44941, or email me at timogordon@hotmail.com