

CORNCRAKE UPDATE – 30 May 2008

The cold, breezy nights of last week haven't favoured finding Corncrakes, with birds reported at various locations not being confirmed. For instance, a visit to Inishturbot on May 23rd yielded just 3 calling birds where 5 or 6 were reported in late April this year (last year there were 7 here), so hopefully the next visit, perhaps on a warmer, calmer night, will uncover a few more.

There are a minimum of 11 in Erris, including one that's returned again to Doohoma Head, with at least 4 around Carne Hill, 2 at Termoncarragh, 2 at Glebe, at least 2 at Church Road in Belmullet town (several reports of 3 in this field, plus possibly one behind the Irish Wheelchair Association buildings, just a few hundreds yards further out of town on the same road), and anywhere between 1 and 5 at the south end of the Mullet (in the townlands of Glosh - marked Letterbeg on OS maps, at Surgeview, Fallmore and at Blacksod village), however none of these were calling when visited last Wednesday night. There are at least 4, possibly as many as 6, at Aghany and Roonagh, south of Louisburgh.

Elsewhere, the one reported at French-hill crossroads, 3 miles south of Castlebar, is still calling, and it transpires he was first heard here on April 27th, so we must assume he has a mate, despite the distance from traditional sites. (The land-owner here has agreed to leave his silage-making until August 1st.) The one calling near Coolaney hasn't been heard recently, and also no further reports from Mullaghmore, however one has just been reported at Raghly Point (near Lissadell).

The first entrants to the grant scheme are signing-up, but at the same time the first mowing of silage at Corncrake sites has been taken place, with a field opposite Carne House being cut on Thursday. Further meadows with Corncrakes calling from within are to be cut at Aghany, near Roonagh, and at Fallmore, probably within the next two weeks.

The news from Donegal is that 42 birds have been confirmed to date, with at least 8 on Tory and 7 on Inishbofin, while the count in the Callows remains at 5.

Any reports, both from new sites or those already known, are gratefully received, helping establish movements and so give an accurate count; please phone or leave a message on the Corncrake hotline, 095 44941, or via email at timogordon@hotmail.com