

20 May 2009 - Corncrake Update

The heralds of Summer have certainly all arrived, and none louder than the Corncrakes now striving to keep people awake at several built-up locations, including Belmullet town and the village of Cleggan in Galway, as well as in their more usual deepest meadowland. The number of Corncrakes calling is now beginning to build. While some are clearly establishing territories and broadcasting loud and clear from the same perch every night, others appear to be moving around.

Reports arrived in a flurry after the period of bad weather, with John Tiernan at Doughmakeon first hearing the one in his garden on the morning of 9 May, Johnny King at Cleggan and Charles Healy at Belmullet on the morning of 11 May, and Chris Deane of Corclogh West and Pat Cusack at Doohoma Head on the morning of 13 May. We can expect new arrivals to continue in to early June.

In Erris, the best place to hear them presently is between Carne golf course, Carne Hill and Carne House. There are probably five at Carne, two at Glebe, three in Belmullet, one or two in Drum, one at Glosh, one at Binghamstown Creamery, and one at Doohoma Head, with others heard at Corclogh West and Aghleam possibly not yet settling.

In South Mayo, there are at least five between Roonagh and Doughmakeon, with the main cluster at the two crossroads at Accony and Aghany, and there are at least two on Sligo Bay islands offshore of the town of Rosses Point.

In Connemara, there are perhaps five on Inishturbot, one on Inishbofin, one in Cleggan and one – the first here in many years – near Tully, on the Renvyle Peninsula. Paul O'Halloran in Cleggan got some great footage of a Corncrake picking around the fish boxes outside their window yesterday morning in Cleggan village.

The period of the annual Corncrake census begins tonight, at one minute past midnight, running from 20 May to 10 July. Let's hope we find their numbers have increased. The national final tally last year was 138, of which 92 were in Donegal and 42 in the West, with 27 in Mayo, 11 in Connemara and 4 in Sligo.

Please keep listening, and passing on records and reports, on 095 44941 or via any of the BirdWatch websites.

Tim Gordon