

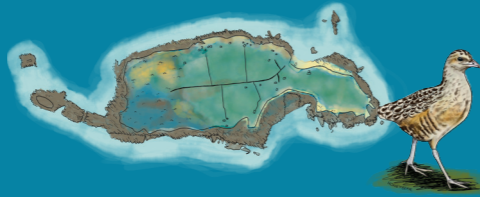


## Turbot Island

Turbot Island is the most southerly site included in the Corncrake Traonach LIFE project. There are currently seven land owners on Turbot island participating in CorncrakeLIFE either as active farmers or through Land lease agreements. Additional landowners are welcome to express their interest in joining CorncrakeLIFE.

In 1978 the Island was evacuated and all the residents were provided with a house and parcel of land on the mainland. Nowadays it has just a number of holiday homes.

The east end of the island consists of rich Machair soil which produces excellent Corncrake habitat each summer. In the past the bird also appeared along the central part of the island.



The islanders are always happy to recall how they cherished and protected the Corncrake along with other ground nesting birds especially when harvesting their meadows.

The graveyard which is still used by some of the island families is also located on the east end or "Ceann an Oileann" as this area is locally known.

A bird has not appeared on Turbot island since 2021. CorncrakeLIFE are preparing for the birds return by working with the community to enhance habitats available to the bird, agreeing delayed grazing



CorncrakeLIFE's new informative sign erected at Turbot Island pier

dates with farmers and by implementing a predator control programme. The island is served by high speed broadband and a weather forecast site specific to Turbot island can be found on line.



Example of fertile Machair soils found on Turbot Island



### Cúla TG4

Clár nuachta do dhaoine óga a ghlac Caitriona Ní Cheallaigh (Oifigeach Tionscadal) agus Seanie Ó Baoill (feirmeoir agus rannpháirte i gCorncrake Life) páirt ann le goirid, ag céiliú iarrachtaí na bhfeirmeoirí chun an Traonach a chósáint.



### "Calling all Young Scientists"

We are looking for innovators with tech solutions for wildlife conservation. Talk to your teacher, and please get in touch with us if you are interested, we would love to hear from you!



CorncrakeLIFE have created a short video outlining best practice for creating Early and Late cover (ELC) for Corncrakes:

<https://youtu.be/upBchgK7HKE>

### Employment opportunity

**Position available:**  
West Donegal Seasonal Fieldworker 2025

### News

**Tender for the Provision of services for Seasonal Contract Fieldworker for Corncrake Traonach Conservation Programme:**

1 X Corncrake Census Field Worker in the Corncrake Traonach Conservation Project - Location West Donegal & Islands 03/03/2025-30/9/2025

See [www.corncrakelife.ie](http://www.corncrakelife.ie)



## CORNCRAKE IN NUMBERS:



No. of birds RECORDED in 2024

Catchment	SPA TARGET number	County
Malin Head	1 6	Donegal
Fanad Head	2 3	Donegal
Toraigh	21 25	Donegal
Inishbofin & Inishdooley	46 13	Donegal
Falcarragh to Meenlaragh	6 7	Donegal
West Donegal Islands	16 13	Donegal
The Mullet peninsula	33 4	Mayo
Inishbofin, Omev & Turbot Islands	11 9	Galway

Totals: 136 80

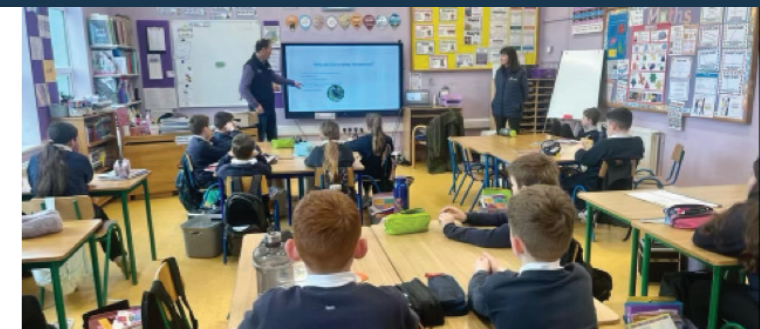
A total of 233 calling male corncrake territories were recorded nationally in 2024

## Schools programme

2024 saw the CorncrakeLIFE project continue its very successful primary schools programme. The programme will continue during 2025 and is aimed at primary school pupils aged between 9 and 13yrs.

The schools programme, which is bilingual, is available to schools via our website, under resources tab. The schools programme consists of two classroom sessions and one field trip to the farm of a CorncrakeLIFE participant.

First session the participants learn about the ecology of the Corncrake and oats, wild flowers and other plants are propagated. Second session covers bird migration, activities and nature quizzes. On the third visit, which is a field trip, the children transplant their propagated seeds into an existing corncrake cover plot, participate in a wildflower scavenger hunt before enjoying a well deserved healthy snack in the outdoor landscape.



Class room presentation at Claddaghduff NS, Co Galway



Wild plant seeds germinate on windowsill awaiting transplanting at Claddaghduff NS



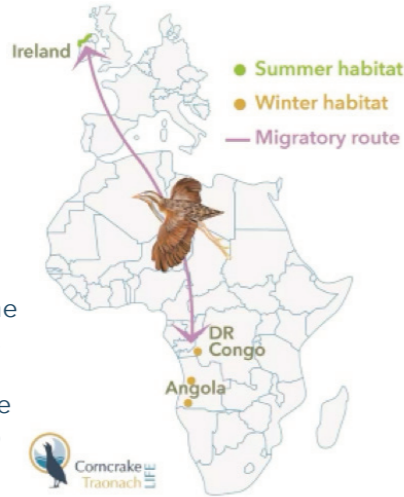
Children from Scoil Bhreandáin, Eachleim, Belmullet transplanting wild plants into an Early and Late Cover plot.



## Se do bheatha bhaile “Welcome home”

As we start our new year it is interesting to think that the corncrake are also commencing their new season at this time.

We believe that Irish born corncrakes overwinter in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They migrate home to Ireland each spring, a distance of over 7,000 Km across sub-Saharan Africa, the Iberian peninsula and western Europe, arriving home early April onwards. Based on most recent data we think the birds might make the return journey to Ireland in as little as 2 weeks.



## Why do birds migrate?

As winter approaches, food and suitable nesting sites go into short supply. As a result, many birds will migrate to warmer climates in search of food and to increase their chance of survival.

Flight paths used by birds in their annual migrations are called flyways. Scientists are not entirely sure how birds navigate their flyways. They seem to have an internal global positioning system (GPS) that allows them to follow the same pattern each year. A young bird imprints on the sun and stars to help orient it. Some researchers think a bird may also recognise landmarks.



## Networking

Corncrake/Traonach LIFE Island, networking event in Inishbofin Island Co. Galway, September 2024.

### Background

One of the overall aims of Corncrake Life is to monitor and assess the socio-economic impact of the project actions on the local economy and populations, as well to build the capacity of local people to value the Corncrake as an asset particularly in terms of ecotourism. As part of its community engagement strategy and in response to the needs identified in its project areas, Corncrake/Traonach LIFE Project organised and facilitated a visit by Donegal islanders to Inishbofin, Co Galway over two days 16th September / 17th September 2024.

Following extensive and active outreach work with Islanders to identify needs, which were confirmed by the initial Corncrake LIFE socio economic baseline questionnaire for the project participants, it was evident that the Donegal Islanders' experience of eco-tourism remains underdeveloped in comparison to the Galway Islands. The baseline questionnaire also highlighted economic and educational differences. The islanders will testify to the lack of economic opportunities and the devastating impact of losing fishing and farming traditions which supported the islands for generations. The participants indicated to the project in person, at meetings and at events that they would welcome the opportunity to visit and learn from other islands in order to develop sustainable, economic opportunities for their islands in a way that was mindful of their special protected areas status.

The group participants came from three Donegal Islands; Inis Bó Finne, Oilean Thoraigh and Inis Mean as well as one land owner from Turbot island off the Galway coast.

### The event

The Corncrake/Traonach LIFE Island exchange provided islanders an opportunity to share information on practical levels such as available funding and successful business models which could be replicated. Comparisons between approaches to the creation and maintenance of Corncrake habitat were imperative, the bird numbers are increasing in the Donegal Islands and remain stationary in the Galway islands. The emphasis was also on creating a sustainable tourism income stream with respect and cognisance of the special protected areas, and its inhabitants, in particular the Corncrake.

There was a heritage and culture information walk around Inishbofin and local business showcased their work including: accommodation services, microbrewery, bike rentals, restaurant and food services, book shop, craft shop and community led grocery shop etc. The islanders found many commonalities e.g. fishing, and one big difference the Donegal Islanders present speak Gaeilge on a daily basis as their first language.

### Learnings

It is clear that Inishbofin Island is further developed than the Donegal islands in terms of tourism, infrastructure and funding. There is a lack of employment opportunities present on the Donegal islands, and there is also a vast difference in the level and availability of transport services in general. All of the Donegal islands remain inaccessible to people of limited mobility or disabled. Neither the piers nor boats are wheelchair accessible.

The connections made during this event will long outlive the Corncrake LIFE Project and will serve the islanders and the conservation of the Corncrake well into the future.



Traditional Farming on Tory Island Photo by Anton Meenan

## Restoration of traditional farming practices in Donegal

Evidence indicates that the intensification of farming practice is one of the main factors in the loss of habitat for Corncrake and its subsequent population demise. To improve and create habitat for the Corncrake the project endeavours to restore and encourage traditional farming practices across the target sites.

One strategy is planting a diverse patchwork of traditional crops on the Donegal Islands which have been largely abandoned, from a farming perspective. Following initial cutting (or grazing) of swaths of rank grassland and with the collaboration of the landowners a plan for Toraigh, Inis Bó Finne and Inis Meán was implemented.

An initial cutting of the rank grass required machinery in some parts and Galloway cattle were used in other areas (conservation grazing). On the islands the work is carried out where possible by local people.

Feedback from the landowners has been very positive with people happy to see the land being brought back to life. The increased Corncrake numbers on the islands are testament to the success.



Galloway cattle barely visible in an overgrown meadow at Malin Head

## Raised Nettle Bed Belmullet Tidy Towns



CorncrakeLIFE in co-operation with the Belmullet Tidy Towns Committee created a raised nettle bed with adjoining educational sign at Belmullet.



This nettle bed garners much attention as it is not what you would expect in a Tidy Towns setting.

The amazing nettle plant presents a habitat for over 40 species of insect. It also provides shelter, protection from predators and is a rich source of food e.g. invertebrates for our native corncrakes.

The nettle bed also received positive comment from the Tidy Towns adjudication team under the environmental section.



Martin Clinton, Fanad Lighthouse. Valais Blacknose Flock enjoying the crop which was planted as early cover for the Corncrake.



Working on Inis Bó Finne