

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Conservation Objectives Series

Kerry Head SPA 004189



NPWS

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna
Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife
Service

**National Parks and Wildlife Service,
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage,
90 King Street North, Dublin 7, D07 N7CV, Ireland.
Web: www.npws.ie
E-mail: natureconservation@npws.gov.ie**

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Introduction

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

A site-specific conservation objective aims to define favourable conservation condition for a particular habitat or species at that site.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Notes/Guidelines:

1. The targets given in these conservation objectives are based on best available information at the time of writing. As more information becomes available, targets for attributes may change. These will be updated periodically, as necessary.
2. An appropriate assessment based on these conservation objectives will remain valid even if the targets are subsequently updated, providing they were the most recent objectives available when the assessment was carried out. It is essential that the date and version are included when objectives are cited.
3. Assessments cannot consider an attribute in isolation from the others listed for that habitat or species, or for other habitats and species listed for that site. A plan or project with an apparently small impact on one attribute may have a significant impact on another.
4. Please note that the maps included in this document do not necessarily show the entire extent of the habitats and species for which the site is listed. This should be borne in mind when appropriate assessments are being carried out.
5. When using these objectives, it is essential that the relevant backing/supporting documents are consulted, particularly where instructed in the targets or notes for a particular attribute.

Qualifying Interests

** indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive*

004189	Kerry Head SPA
A009	Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>
A346	Chough <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>

Please note that this SPA overlaps with Lower River Shannon SAC (002165). See map 2. The conservation objectives for this site should be used in conjunction with those for the overlapping site as appropriate.

Supporting documents, relevant reports & publications

Supporting documents, NPWS reports and publications are available for download from: www.npws.ie/Publications

NPWS Documents

Year :	2007
Title :	Seabird Productivity at East and South coast colonies in Ireland in 2007: Site accounts
Author :	Trewby, M.; Burt E.; Newton, S.
Series :	Unpublished report to NPWS
Year :	2010
Title :	The seasonal distribution and foraging behaviour of Red-billed Choughs <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> in north Co. Kerry, September 2008 to September 2009
Author :	Trewby, M.; Carroll; D.; Gaj-McKeever, R.; Newton, S.
Series :	Unpublished BirdWatch Ireland Report to National Parks & Wildlife Service, Kilcoole, Wicklow
Year :	2021
Title :	Estimated foraging ranges of the breeding seabirds of Ireland's marine special protected area network
Author :	Power, A.; McDonnell, P.; Tierney, T.D.
Series :	Published NPWS report
Year :	2024
Title :	Status and distribution of Chough in Ireland: results of the 2021 survey
Author :	Colhoun, K.; Rooney, E.; Collins, J.; Keogh, N.P.; Lauder, A.; Heardman, C.; Cummins, S.
Series :	Irish Wildlife Manuals No. 151
Year :	2024
Title :	Monitoring breeding Seabird Colonies of the Shannon and Fergus Estuaries: Technical Report
Author :	Le Méléder, A.; Berrow, S.
Series :	Unpublished report to NPWS

Other References

Year :	1965
Title :	The status of the Chough in Ireland
Author :	Cabot, D.
Series :	Irish Naturalists' Journal 15: 95-100
Year :	1966
Title :	Ireland's Birds: their distribution and migrations
Author :	Rutledge, R.F.
Series :	Published by HF & G Witherby, London
Year :	1983
Title :	The chough in Britain and Ireland
Author :	Bullock, I.; Drewett, D.; Mickleburg, S.
Series :	British Birds, 76: 377-401
Year :	1993
Title :	The second international chough survey in Ireland, 1992
Author :	Berrow, S.D.; Mackie, K.L.; O'Sullivan, O.; Shepherd, K.B.; Mellon, C.; Coveney, J.A.
Series :	Irish Birds, 5: 1-10

Year :	1993
Title :	Seasonal variations in numbers and levels of activity in a communal roost of Choughs <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> in central Spain
Author :	Blanco, G.; Fargallo, J.A.; Cuevas, J.A.
Series :	Avocetta, 17: 41-44
Year :	1999
Title :	Diet of the northern fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> : reliance on commercial fisheries?
Author :	Phillips, R.A.; Petersen, M.K.; Lilliendahl, K.; Solmundsson, J.; Hamer, K.C.; Camphuysen, C.J.; Zonfrillo, B.
Series :	Marine Biology, 135 (1), pp.159-170
Year :	2003
Title :	The status and distribution of choughs <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> in the Republic of Ireland 2002/03
Author :	Gray, N.; Thomas, G.; Trewby, M.; Newton, S.F.
Series :	Irish Birds, 7, 147-156
Year :	2003
Title :	Implications for seaward extensions to existing breeding seabird colony Special Protection Areas
Author :	McSorley, C.A.; Dean, B.J.; Webb, A.; Reid J.B.
Series :	JNCC Report No. 329
Year :	2004
Title :	Seabird populations of Britain and Ireland
Author :	Mitchell, P.I.; Newton, S.F.; Ratcliffe, N.; Dunn, T.E.
Series :	Poyser, London
Year :	2005
Title :	Choughs <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> breeding in Wales select foraging habitat at different spatial scales
Author :	Whitehead, S.; Johnstone, I.; Wilson, J.
Series :	Bird Study, 52:2, 193-203
Year :	2006
Title :	The breeding season foraging behaviour of choughs <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> in three Irish chough important bird areas
Author :	Trewby, M., Gray, N., Cummins, S., Thomas, G. & Newton, S.
Series :	Unpublished BirdWatch Ireland Report, Kilcoole, Wicklow
Year :	2006
Title :	Linking territory quality and reproductive success in the chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>): implications for conservation management of an endangered population
Author :	Kerbiriou, C.; Gourmelon, F.; Jiguet, F.; Le Viol, I.; Frédéric Bioret, F.; Julliard, R.
Series :	Ibis, 148 (2), pp.352-364
Year :	2010
Title :	How Representative is the Current Monitoring of Breeding Seabirds in the UK?
Author :	Cook, A.S.C.P.; Robinson, R.A.
Series :	BTO Research Report No. 573
Year :	2011
Title :	Aspects of the feeding ecology and breeding biology of the red-billed chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) in Ireland
Author :	Boylan, M.
Series :	PhD Thesis, National University of Ireland, Cork.

Year :	2018
Title :	Breeding status of red-billed choughs <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> in the UK and Isle of Man in 2014
Author :	Hayhow, D.B.; Johnstone, I.; Moore, A.S.; Mucklow, C.; Stratford, A.; Šúr, M.; Eaton, M.A.
Series :	Bird Study, 65(4), 458-470
Year :	2019
Title :	Adverse effects of routine bovine health treatments containing triclabendazole and synthetic pyrethroids on the abundance of dipteran larvae in bovine faeces
Author :	Gilbert, G.; MacGillivray, F.S.; Robertson, H.L.; Jonsson, N.N.
Series :	Nature Scientific Reports 9, 4315
Year :	2019
Title :	Desk-based revision of seabird foraging ranges used for HRA screening
Author :	Woodward, I.; Thaxter, C.B.; Owen, E.; Cook, A.S.C.P.
Series :	BTO Research Report No. 724
Year :	2022
Title :	Chough <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> counts at a Waterford coastal roost
Author :	McGrath, D.
Series :	Irish Birds 44: 103-107
Year :	2023
Title :	Seabirds Count: a census of breeding seabirds in Britain and Ireland (2015-2021)
Author :	Burnell, D.; Perkins, A.J.; Newton, S.F.; Bolton, M.; Tierney, T.D.; Dunn, T.E.
Series :	Lynx Nature Books, Barcelona

Conservation Objectives for : Kerry Head SPA [004189]

A009

Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*

To maintain the Favourable conservation condition of Fulmar in Kerry Head SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Breeding population size	Apparently Occupied Sites (AOS)	Long term SPA population trend is stable or increasing	Fulmar were first recorded as a breeding bird in Ireland in 1911 and Kerry Head was described as a new breeding site for this species in the 1960s (Rutledge, 1966). The population estimate for Fulmar at this SPA was 421 pairs in 2000 (NPWS internal files). In 2015 the population was estimated at 301 pairs, a decrease of 29% (Burnell et al., 2023). However, the most recent survey in 2024 recorded 550 pairs of breeding Fulmar which represents a peak count for this site and amounts to a population increase of 31% since 2000 (Le Méléder and Berrow, 2024). The national population between 1998 - 2002 and 2015 - 2021 was broadly stable (Burnell et al., 2023)
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per breeding pair	Sufficient to maintain a stable or increasing population	There was no productivity data available for this species in this SPA. Trewby et al. (2007) reported that the average productivity from Lambay Island SPA was 0.32 (\pm 0.05 SE) chicks fledged per Apparently Occupied Sites (AOS) in 2007 (246 pairs across three subplots). Further monitoring and research work is required in order to identify a minimum productivity rate for this species at this site and at the national level. An analysis of the breeding success of Fulmar in the United Kingdom over a 25 year period estimated a mean breeding success of 0.39 and speculated this would result in a population decline (Cook and Robinson, 2010). They estimated that a breeding success of 0.5 would allow populations of Fulmar to stabilise and potentially increase
Distribution: extent of available nesting options within the SPA	Numbers and spatial distribution	Sufficient availability of suitable nesting sites throughout the SPA to maintain a stable or increasing population	Distribution encapsulates the number of locations and area of potentially suitable nesting habitat for the breeding population and its availability for use. The suitability and availability of habitat across the SPA may vary through time. This will affect the spatio-temporal patterns of use of the habitats by Fulmar. Typically, Fulmar nest near the tops of grassy cliffs on relatively wide ledges (Mitchell et al., 2004). Nesting Fulmar are widely distributed along the coastline of this SPA
Forage spatial distribution, extent, abundance and availability	Location, hectares, and forage biomass	Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target	The colonisation of Ireland and Britain by Fulmar over the last two centuries has been largely attributed to their close association with fisheries, but contemporary dietary studies indicate that they also feed on a wide variety of prey, including sandeels, crustaceans, and squid (Phillips et al., 1999). Based on several studies, Woodward et al. (2019) provide estimates (i.e. overall mean; mean of maximum distances across all studies; and maximum distance recorded) of Fulmar foraging ranges from the nest site during the breeding season, which are 135km, 542km, and 2,736km respectively (see Power et al., 2021)



Disturbance at the breeding site	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on birds at the breeding site	Disturbance events at the nest site/breeding colony level can result in a reduction of overall productivity and even lead to the abandonment of the breeding colony. The impact of any significant disturbance (direct or indirect) to the breeding population will ultimately affect the achievement of targets for population size and/or spatial distribution. Disturbance contributes to increased energetic expenditure, which can result in increased likelihood of mortality or reduced fitness (if energy expenditure is greater than energy gain) and, in turn, negatively impact population trends. Factors such as intensity, frequency, timing, and duration of a (direct or indirect) disturbance source must be taken into account to determine the potential impact upon the targets for population size and spatial distribution
Disturbance at areas ecologically connected to the colony	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on breeding population	Seabird species can make extensive use of the marine waters adjacent to their breeding colonies for non site-specific maintenance behaviours (e.g. courtship, bathing, preening). Work carried out in the UK found that the highest densities of Fulmar performing these behaviours occurred within 2km of the breeding colony (McSorley et al., 2003)
Barriers to connectivity	Number, location, shape, and area (ha)	Barriers do not significantly impact the population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA	Seabirds, particularly during the breeding season, require regular and efficient access to marine waters ecologically connected to the colony in order to forage as well as to engage in other maintenance behaviours. Work carried out in the UK found that the highest densities of Fulmar performing these behaviours occurred within 2km of the breeding colony (McSorley et al., 2003). Based on several studies, Woodward et al. (2019) provide estimates (i.e. overall mean; mean of maximum distances across all studies; and maximum distance recorded) of Fulmar foraging ranges from the nest site during the breeding season, which are 135km, 542km, and 2,736km respectively (see Power et al., 2021)

To restore the Favourable conservation condition of Chough in Kerry Head SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Population size	Number of breeding pairs	No significant decline	A review of 1992 and 2002/03 national survey data, including count units and survey methods applied, was undertaken (NPWS internal files). The range of population estimates for the SPA are set out using 'confirmed and probable' breeding pairs only and 'all breeding pair' categories for each national survey since 1992, with 11 - 32 in 1992, 13 - 30 in 2002/03 and 1 in 2021. Applying stricter 2021 survey criteria (Hayhow et al., 2018; Colhoun et al., 2024) retrospectively to 1992 and 2002/03 records, which exclude records with no breeding evidence (NBE) as per Colhoun et al. (2024), updates these original estimates to 10 - 32 (1992), 13 - 26 pairs (2002/03), and 1 pair (2021). Note, the 2021 national survey likely had reduced coverage of key breeding areas, including Kerry Head SPA, relative to previous surveys, likely due to more birds moving inland to man-made/artificial nest sites, leading to access challenges such as difficult terrain and landowner resistance (Colhoun et al., 2024)
Population trend	Percentage change	Population trend stable or increasing	The breeding component of the population, as opposed to non-breeding flock birds, is considered a more reliable metric to reflect population change (Trewby et al., 2006). Using available data from the 1992 (Berrow et al., 1993), 2002/03 (Gray et al., 2003) and 2021 (Colhoun et al., 2024) national surveys, the population trend for the site is considered declining in the short term (i.e. 2002/03 - 2021) and declining in the longer term (1992 - 2021) based on assessments of change in the numbers of known 'confirmed' and 'probable' pair records only; and including all 'possible' breeding pair records for the site, applying 2021 criteria (Colhoun et al., 2024). For the county, the population is at least stable, with pair totals of 132 - 171 in 1963 (Cabot, 1965); 205 - 209 in 1983 (Bullock et al., 1983); 112 - 315 in 1992 (Berrow et al., 1993); 141 - 267 in 2002/03 (Gray et al., 2003); and 68 - 134 (excluding NBEs) in 2021 (Colhoun et al., 2024)
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per confirmed pair	Sufficient to maintain population size target	Most of the population nest along coastal cliffs or in sea caves. In most instances, due to the inaccessible nature of nesting locations, estimates of breeding productivity and success are based on numbers of fledged young seen with adults post-fledging, unless records are for man-made/artificial sites e.g. cattle sheds, old buildings and castles etc. Some studies have provided estimates of productivity and/or success, (e.g. Berrow et al., 1993; Gray et al., 2003; Boylan, 2011; Trewby et al., 2006), and for north County Kerry, a figure of 2.24 fledglings per successful pair was estimated by Trewby et al. (2010). However, this estimate is based on one year's data, and may not be sufficiently representative for the SPA, and wider. Overall, there is a lack of robust representative Irish data to determine a more quantitative target for breeding productivity

Foraging habitat: quality and quantity	Hectares (ha)	Maintain sufficient quality and quantity of coastal grassland and other relevant habitats to support the population of Chough at the level of breeding pairs referred to in the attribute above	Studies in Ireland (e.g. Trewby et al., 2006), Wales (e.g. Whitehead et al., 2005) and elsewhere (e.g. Kerbiriou et al., 2006) have shown that breeding Chough spend most of their time foraging near nest sites (April - June inclusive). Coastal pairs tend to commute along the coast from breeding sites, rather than inland (Trewby et al., 2006). Proximity of suitably-sized feeding areas to nest sites is likely to positively support breeding success (Kerbiriou et al., 2006). Monthly transects for this SPA had 62% of ground observations within 300m of mean high water (Trewby et al., 2010). Grazed habitats with short swards of <5cm are typically preferred and areas of bare ground, where soils are easier to probe e.g. paths, along with earth banks and stone banks. Maritime vegetation on cliffs, especially in spring, is also favoured. Thus, sufficient foraging habitat within 350m of the coastline, where Chough are known to breed, is essential to support breeding pairs
Food availability: prey biomass	Quantity per unit area	Maintain adequate levels of prey biomass (including preferred invertebrate prey items such as leatherjackets, dung beetles, etc.)	Chough feed largely on invertebrates (e.g. ants, spiders, worms, insect larvae such as crane fly larvae, leatherjackets and dung beetles), at or near the soil surface where prey items are more accessible. In warmer weather, Chough can be seen picking off surface active insects, e.g. spiders, including from heather plants (Trewby et al., 2010). The dosing of livestock with veterinary parasiticide treatments (including anthelmintics) has knock-on consequences with respect to invertebrate density in grasslands on which Chough depend (Gilbert et al., 2019)
Distribution of roosting sites	Spatial distribution	The distribution of preferred roosts is maintained	Post-breeding, Chough are highly social, forming mobile flocks that can travel several kilometres to feed (McGrath, 2022). Family groups form 'nursery' flocks in July, returning to nest sites to roost, but by summer's end, these flocks begin to converge pre-dusk, along with non-breeding sub-adults, at communal nocturnal roost sites, leaving post-dawn (Trewby et al., 2010; Blanco et al., 1993). Roosts tend to be close to good foraging habitat (e.g. grazed dune systems); and peak attendance is usually in late summer/early autumn, post-breeding. Known roosts for this SPA (as per Trewby et al., 2010) include the Glenderry (west) and Castleshannon roosts, where peaks of 20 and 14 birds have been recorded, respectively. Dreenagh and Cloganeleesh roosts typically held fewer than 12. The Glenderry (east) roost was also used during the breeding season. Outside the SPA, the main roost is at Barrow, near Tralee Golf Course (Trewby et al., 2010)
Disturbance	Intensity, timing, frequency and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact upon Chough in the SPA	Factors such as intensity, frequency, timing, duration of a (direct or indirect) disturbance source and location (e.g. if access to preferred food sources is restricted), must be taken into account to determine the potential impact upon the targets for population size, population trend, productivity rate and distribution of roosting sites. Further, site fidelity (e.g. pairs to nest sites while breeding, or flocks to roost sites at other times), weather (e.g. prolonged cold spells) and predation/competition should also be factored in. Coastal breeding pairs spend up to 80% of their time within 350m of the nest site (Trewby et al., 2006). This SPA had 62% of ground observations within 300m of mean high water (Trewby et al., 2010). Impacts are likely to be highest near nest sites (e.g. on coastal cliffs where available foraging habitats are more limited in total area) and at roost sites



 <p>NPWS An tSeirbhís Páirceanna Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra National Parks and Wildlife Service</p>	<p>MAP 1: KERRY HEAD SPA CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES SPA DESIGNATION</p> <p>Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document</p>	<p>SITE CODE: SPA 004189; version 3 CO. KERRY</p> <p>0 1.25 2.5 5 Kilometres</p>	<p>The mapped boundaries are of an indicative and general nature only. Boundaries of designated areas are subject to revision. © Includes National Mapping Division of Tailte Éireann data reproduced under National Mapping Division of Tailte Éireann Licence number CYAL50351092.</p> <p>Níl sna teorainneacha ar na léarscáileanna ach nod garshuíomhach ginearálta. Féadfar athbhreithnithe a déanamh ar theorainneacha na gceantar comharthaithe. © Folaíonn sé rannán Náisiúnta Mapála de shonraí Tailte Éireann arna atáirgeadh faoin rannán mapála Náisiúnta d'úimhir cheadúnais Tailte Éireann CYAL50351092</p>	<p>Legend</p> <p> Kerry Head SPA 004189</p> <p>Map version 1 Date: July 2024</p>
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