

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: INISHBOFIN, INISHDOOEY AND INISHBEG SPA

SITE CODE: 004083

Inishbofin, Inishdooley and Inishbeg SPA consists of three small to medium-sized islands located between 1 km and 4 km off the north-west coast of Co. Donegal. Inishbofin is inhabited during the summer months. The marine waters between and around the islands, to a distance of approximately 200 m, are included within the site.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Barnacle Goose, Corncrake, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Arctic Tern.

Inishbofin, Inishdooley and Inishbeg SPA supports a nationally important wintering population of Barnacle Goose (322 individuals – 4 survey mean between 1993 and 2003). The birds use the islands for both feeding and roosting but at times also commute to other sites in the region.

The site also supports a breeding population of Corncrake (13 pairs - five year mean peak between 2003 and 2007, based on records of calling males). Inishbofin, Inishdooley and Inishbeg SPA is one of a suite of sites along the western seaboard that is regularly utilised by nationally important numbers of breeding Corncrake.

Corncrake winter in southern and eastern Africa, migrating northwards to arrive on their breeding grounds from early April onwards, departing again in August and September. They require the cover of tall vegetation throughout their breeding cycle and are strongly associated with meadows which are harvested annually, where they nest and feed. Annual cutting of these meadows creates a sward which is easy for the birds to move through. Other habitats, which can provide cover for Corncrake in the early and late stages of the breeding season, are also important for this species.

Corncrake is listed on the 2010 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. This is due to population and range declines of more than 50% in the last 25 years across significant parts of its range.

Inishbofin, Inishdooley and Inishbeg SPA also supports nationally important breeding populations of Common Gull (25 pairs on Inishdooley in 2002), Lesser Black-backed Gull (81 pairs on Inishdooley in 2002) and Arctic Tern (44 pairs on Inishbofin and 28 pairs on Inishdooley in 1995).

Inishbofin, Inishdooley and Inishbeg SPA is of high ornithological importance as it supports a nationally important population of Corncrake, a globally threatened species. The site also supports nationally important populations of wintering Barnacle Goose and breeding Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Arctic

Tern. Also of note is that three of the regularly occurring species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Barnacle Goose, Arctic Tern and Corncrake.

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