

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: FANAD HEAD SPA

SITE CODE: 004148

Fanad Head SPA comprises two areas of extensively managed grassland on the Fanad Head peninsula on the north coast of Co. Donegal. Included within the site is an area of grassland between Kinny Lough and Shannagh Lough, and another area around the village of Doagh Beg on the western shore of Lough Swilly south of Fanad Head. The principal habitat present is grassland but small areas of scrub and wetlands also occur.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Corncrake.

Fanad Head SPA supports a breeding population of Corncrake (4 pairs - five year mean peak between 2003 and 2007, based on records of calling males). Fanad Head 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.

Fanad Head SPA is of high ornithological importance as it supports a nationally important population of Corncrake, a globally threatened species. Corncrake is also listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

5.11.2014