

## **SITE SYNOPSIS**

**SITE NAME: FALCARRAGH TO MEENLARAGH SPA**

**SITE CODE: 004149**

Falcarragh to Meenlaragh SPA is located on the eastern and western sides of Ballyness Bay on the north-west coast of Co. Donegal. This large site follows the coastline from Falcarragh to Meenlaragh and encompasses three areas of mixed agricultural grassland.

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

Falcarragh to Meenlaragh SPA supports a breeding population of Corncrake (9 pairs - five year mean peak between 2003 and 2007, based on records of calling males). Falcarragh to Meenlaragh 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.

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

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