

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: CRUAGH ISLAND SPA

SITE CODE: 004170

Cruagh Island is located approximately 2 km west of Omey Island, off the Connemara coast in Co. Galway. It is a small- to medium sized, low-lying island (maximum height 62 m) and is uninhabited. The island is dominated by a maritime grassy sward with some exposed rock. The sea area to a distance of 500 m is included in the site to accommodate 'rafting' shearwaters.

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

The Seabird 2000 survey discovered a new colony of Manx Shearwater on Cruagh Island in 2001. Using the tape playback method, colony size was estimated at 3,286 pairs, which is one of the most important colonies in the country and of international importance. The absence of previous records at this site is not too surprising because nesting Manx Shearwater can easily go undetected as the birds nest underground in burrows and visit land only in darkness.

Cruagh Island is a regular feeding site for Barnacle Goose during the winter. The geese that frequent this island are most probably part of the internationally important Inishshark flock.

Cruagh Island also has a nationally important colony of nesting Great Black-backed Gull (30 pairs in 2001) and small numbers of Fulmar. The shearwaters are heavily predated by the Great Black-backed Gulls though it is not known how significant an effect this is having on the colony.

Cruagh Island SPA is of ornithological importance on account of its internationally important population of nesting Manx Shearwater and nationally important population of wintering Barnacle Goose. The presence of a nationally important colony of Great Black-backed Gull, a resident species, is also of note.

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