

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: MULLET PENINSULA SPA

SITE CODE: 004227

The Mullet Peninsula SPA comprises three separate areas situated on the Mullet peninsula in Co. Mayo. The peninsula is low-lying and exposed (rarely rising above 20 m) and is mostly underlain by metamorphic schist and gneiss, although the southern tip is granite and rises to 103 m. The three areas that make up the site are located, respectively, 5 km north-west, 2 km west and 15 km south-west of the town of Belmullet. The main habitat present is grassland, which is managed in a relatively intensive manner.

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

The Mullet Peninsula SPA supports a breeding population of Corncrake (5 pairs - five year mean peak between 2003 and 2007, based on records of calling males). The Mullet Peninsula 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 with an open structure, 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.

The Mullet Peninsula 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.

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