

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: INISHBOFIN, OMEY ISLAND AND TURBOT ISLAND SPA

SITE CODE: 004231

Inishbofin, Omev Island and Turbot Island SPA comprises parts of three islands lying off the coast of Connemara in Co. Galway. Inishbofin, the largest of the three islands, is situated c. 5 km from the mainland and some 20 km north-west of Clifden. It is composed of metamorphic schists and gneiss, and rises to a maximum height of 89 m above sea level. The Special Protection Area (SPA) includes approximately one fifth of the island and mostly comprises agricultural grassland used for cattle and/or sheep pasture and fodder. Omev Island is a small island situated 10 km west-north-west of Clifden. It is underlain by granite, which is partly covered by blown sand. The area within the SPA is along the southern coast and takes in about one third of the island. The island is accessible from the mainland for a few hours at low tide. Turbot Island is a flat, low-lying island situated less than 1 km off the coast and 8 km west of Clifden. The island is approximately 1.5 km in length and is underlain by granite. Almost all of the island is included within the SPA. The habitats on the island are mainly enclosed agricultural grassland - damp to wet peaty pasture with patches of Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and small areas of machair.

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

The Inishbofin, Omev Island and Turbot Island SPA supports a breeding population of Corncrake (10 pairs - five year mean peak between 2003 and 2007, based on records of calling males). Inishbofin, Omev Island and Turbot Island 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, Omev Island and Turbot Island 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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