

Corncrake

Description

The corncrake is highly secretive and is rarely seen in the open, concealing itself effectively in long grass and herbaceous vegetation. When they do break cover, the birds appear quite slender, with a longish grey neck, grey breast, strongly barred flanks, short stubby bill and long legs. If seen in flight, which is generally a short fluttering affair, the rich chestnut wing panels and dangling legs are distinctive.



The corncrake arrives at its breeding grounds in Britain and Ireland from mid-April through to the end of the year. Eight to twelve eggs are laid in a simple, well-concealed nest on the ground. On hatching, the all-black chicks are able to feed themselves after several days and are independent within a few weeks. As a ground-nesting bird, the corncrake is especially vulnerable to mammalian predators such as rats, mink, stoats and cats.

Distribution

Though not easy to spot, the best opportunity to see the Corncrake is on Tory Island in County Donegal when the birds first arrive in mid-April. During that time, the turf is short and the birds find hiding difficult.

Action

RSPB has been leading on research into the corncrake for many years and should be contacted on any specific research or habitat management issues. In Northern Ireland the RSPB is managing some fields on Rathlin Island, County Antrim for the species.

Further Information

<http://www.habitas.org.uk/priority/species.asp?item=23>

MLA Species Champion