

Community Foundation Ireland

BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2025

COMMISSIONED BY INISHTURK
COMMUNITY CLUB CLG
2026

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*“The world is full of magic things, patiently waiting for our
senses to grow sharper.”*

— W. B. Yeats



A special thanks to
Jessica, Amelia and Saoirse, three talented pupils
from St Columba's National School, who
contributed this artwork and vision to the
Inishturk Biodiversity Action Plan.

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Inishturk – The Most Beautiful of Islands



The Mary Robinson Centre
Lárionad Mháire Mhic Róibín



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Summary

The report contains an account of biodiversity on the island and lists of actions to protect and enhance it. It follows the general format for Biodiversity Action Plans and was produced by Mary Tubridy, an experienced ecologist assisted by an agri environmental specialist and a consultant ornithologist.

Inishturk is a magical place with a remarkable richness of seabirds. While these birds are concentrated on cliffs at the exposed western side elsewhere on the island farming is associated with small fields bounded by drystone walls some of which regularly host the rare migratory corncrake. The BAP contains a preliminary account of island geodiversity and biodiversity and recommendations for a wide range of actions involving many sectors in the community including further studies.

There is particular potential to implement actions in this BAP on Inishturk. There is a history of support for sustainable development as evidenced by the community's role in developing tourism services. Development plans for the island (in prep.) emphasise sustainable development goals as they focus on climate resilience, protection of natural features and promotion of a circular economy.





1 Introduction

1.1 Inishturk Island

Inishturk is one of three islands off the coast of south Mayo/ north Galway (Fig.1). It is the smallest of these islands with an area of 6km² and a permanent population of sixty two in 2023. A regular all year round ferry service operates from Roanagh Pier, west of Louisburgh and the journey to Inishturk takes 40 minutes. Economic activities include principally sheep farming, fishing for shellfish and tourism. Jobs have become available in tourism in the last forty years, supported by the ferry service and development of a community centre which houses a pub, restaurant and shop. There are two B and B and three houses to rent.



Figure 1: Inishturk between Inishbofin and Clare Island

1.2 Inishturk Community Club CLG

Inishturk Community Club CLG which commissioned the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is the island's development organisation.

The core objectives of the Community Club are:

- Promoting the wellbeing and sustainability of residents
- Supporting cultural, social, environmental and economic development
- Managing, maintaining, and improving community facilities
- Representing the island to state agencies, funders and partners

It operates under the supervision of a voluntary Board of Directors drawn from the island community.

The story of community development on Inishturk began in the mid-1980s, when islanders voluntarily organised to build a community centre. The organisation was formally incorporated in 1991 as a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG). It was responsible for the development of the community centre in 1993, which is the social, cultural and civic hub of the island. The first community development worker was employed in 1996. A major extension to the community centre— including a restaurant — was completed in 2013, strengthening its role as a community anchor and tourism asset.

Development work is supported by voluntary efforts and particular state and semi-state agencies including the Department of Rural & Community Development / Gaeltacht, Pobal, Comhar na nOileáin, Mayo County Council, South West Mayo Development Company (LEADER, SICAP), Tomar Trust, The Ireland Funds, MSLETB (training and upskilling), Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Mayo Sports Partnership and HSE.

Linkages have also been established with

- NPWS, OPW
- Mayo Islands Forum
- Comhar na nOileáin
- Fáilte Ireland
- Engineers, architects, ecologists, planners, and technical specialists
- Philanthropic and corporate funders
-

Offshore island networks, peer communities, and shared learning partnerships

These relationships range from formal grant partnerships to ongoing technical collaboration and consultation.



Funding streams currently supporting development work on the island include the following:

- **RRDF Category 2 (2024/25)**

A major enabling grant for design, planning, surveys, site assessments, procurement and land negotiations for the proposed Multi-Purpose Community Hub & Glamping Pods. Five sites are being assessed, with one preferred site under option to purchase.

- **CLÁR 2024 – Community Tractor**

90% funded purchase of a new community tractor, now crucial for storm clean-up, invasive species clearance, biodiversity work, land maintenance and island operations.

- **CLÁR 2025 – Solar PV Battery Storage**

€37,956 awarded (90% funded) for battery storage to stabilise the community centre's renewable energy system and support the island's long-term sustainability goals.

- **SSE Airtricity Generation Green Community Fund** Supporting 2050 Masterplan development

- **Mayo County Council, Mayo Dark Skies & NPWS**

Supporting invasive species control, biodiversity improvements, and dark-skies designation work.

A new state-of-the-art helipad was developed at Bellavaun, co-funded by DRCD Gaeltacht and Mayo County Council, significantly improving emergency access and island safety. This development required the preparation of an ecological survey of that site. (Aniar, 2020),



Figure 2. Bellavaun Helipad – Emergency Access Infrastructure

Between 2023–2024, a large-scale visioning process, Inishturk 2050 Vision, was developed through community workshops and co-design with ACT Studio. The 2050 Vision now guides the island's major development projects, funding applications, and ongoing community planning. The vision and its development was strongly influenced by the principle of Sustainable Development. The 2030 Action Plan commits to climate risk assessment, adaptation planning, and nature-based solutions.

Biodiversity was mentioned in the context of local development among goals around population, housing, infrastructure, regenerative tourism, resilience, culture, and environmental sustainability. To support planning for biodiversity a successful application was made to Community Foundation Ireland (CFI) + NPWS to fund this Biodiversity Action Plan.

As well as managing the development of the plan development workers are currently involved in other strategic planning exercises concerned with the following:

1. **Harbour & Transport Development.** While principally concerned with safe access issue this project is also looking at coastal resilience planning.
2. **Adaptive Housing** – Barn & Cottage Conversion Initiative (Supported by SSE Airtricity)
3. **Regenerative Tourism** – Atlantic Island Escapes. This is a Community-rooted tourism initiative co-developed with Fáilte Ireland and Mayo County Council under the Clew Bay DEDP, featuring curated mid-week escapes, nature experiences, cultural storytelling, and influencer-supported campaigns.
4. **Energy & Emergency Infrastructure**
 - Solar PV upgrades and storage (CLÁR 2025)
 - Community-wide energy transition planning
 - Energy-efficiency works
 - NBI currently rolling out fibre broadband



1.3 BAP preparation

Inishturk Community Club commissioned Mary Tubridy and Associates to prepare a BAP for Inishturk in March 2025.

Mary Tubridy, B.A. Mod, PhD CIEEM, MIPI is a qualified ecologist who has run an environmental consultancy since mid 1990's specializing in biodiversity and sustainable development. She has worked for Connemara West /Forum on the mainland on projects concerned with community based heritage tourism and sustainable farming. The BAP she produced for Ballymun in 2007 was the first for a suburb in Dublin. In recent years she has worked with communities in Dublin (Clontarf, Blackrock, Raheny, and Crumlin. Santry Phibsboro), in Carlow (Myshal), Kilkenny (Coon), Waterford (Clashmore), Mayo (Ballyhaunis) to produce Biodiversity Action Plans. For this project she acted as the project manager and ecologist.

The brief was based on guidelines provided by the funders Community Foundations, consultants experience of the production of BAP'S elsewhere and early discussions with the Development Office. These discussions emphasised the importance of community involvement, the role of farming and the integration of biodiversity objectives with other local development goals articulated in local development plans produced by the community. Other members of the team included John Staunton (agri-environmental expert, Connemara) Mick Hogan (ornithologist, Westport) and Ciaran Gray, Dublin.

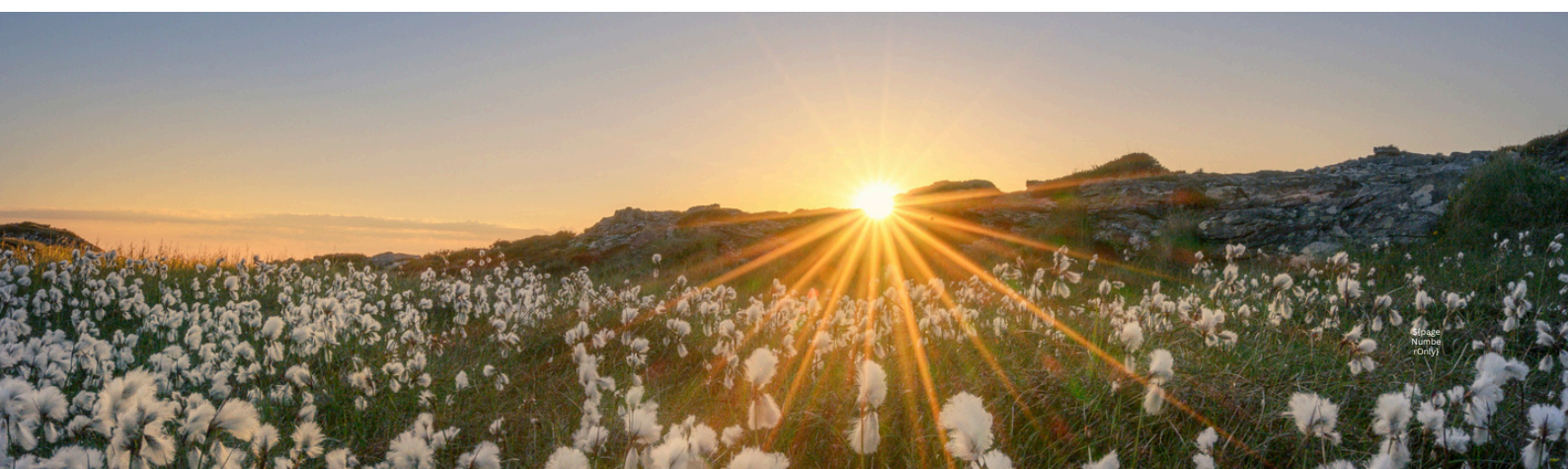
John Staunton, BAgSc has a background in farming and together with Mary Tubridy set up a REPS service for NW Connemara. In recent years he has worked as technical specialist to the freshwater pearl mussel EIP. Michael Hogan, Westport is a consultant ornithologist and carried out survey work on birds to inform the Ballyhaunis BAP produced by Mary Tubridy. Ciaran Gray is an Irish speaker with an interest in research on placenames.

The work programme was broken down in the following stages:

Stage 1

Assembly of background information. See Appendix 1 for details of background information and people and organisations consulted during the development of the BAP.

Preliminary field based survey of biodiversity on June 25th and 26th by John Staunton and Mary Tubridy. Principal habitats were identified according to Fossitt (2000) and notes taken of principal plant species. Following preliminary fieldwork a public meeting was held on the island which focused on local biodiversity and farming management issues.



Production of a draft SWOT (Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Weaknesses) following the first site visit, consideration of results of desk research, and preliminary local consultations. This informed initial consultations with the Development Office. During the duration of the research programme SWOTS were regularly updated based on feedback received.

Stage 2

Focused fieldwork took place on particular aspects of biodiversity in August and September. Habitat assessments and botanical recording by Mary Tubridy, concentrated on the commonages, reservoir vicinity, roadside verges, publicly managed spaces and improved land managed by particular island farmers. This took place over three days in August and September and resulted in plant species lists, photographs and preliminary recommendations about management.

Mick Hogan carried out an island wide bird survey over two days in July 2025. Ciaran Gray closely examined results of placename carried out by islanders.

Focused consultations took place with particular island farmers. These consultations complemented fieldwork and revealed past and current management practices and aspirations.

Stage 3

Following discussion of penultimate SWOT the first and final draft of the BAP was produced for the community.



2 Inishturk Biodiversity Action Plan/SWOT

2.1 Background rationale/SWOT

The rationale for the BAP was informed by a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. This went through several iterations and thus the final version below provides a critical assessment of current biodiversity and potential for management.

2.1.1 Island strengths for biodiversity, people and organisations

Strengths for biodiversity are the presence of 1) diverse populations of important seabirds (11/12 species) and 2) the consistent presence of the Corncrake. The report from the NPWS provides an expert assessment of the status of sea birds and useful recommendations for management actions. Species commonly on the island include Fulmar, Black Guillemot, Kittiwake, Razorbill and Puffin. The following species have also been recorded: Manx Shearwater, Storm Petrel and Arctic Tern. Barnacle Geese have been present over the winter foraging along the shore and on grassland.

Through the commissioning of a bird survey in 2025 the island now has a comprehensive account of birdlife and recommendations for action. (See Appendix 2). The presence of Corncrake was highlighted in the report and maps produced of lands which have potential as nesting sites.

Fieldwork by Mary Tubridy on the commonage and enclosed land reveals that the island contains a diversity of semi-natural habitats such as acid grassland, wet grassland, dry heath, wet heath, drainage ditches, cutover bog, and exposed siliceous rock. The table below (Table 1) provides a preliminary account of the nature of these habitats.



Table 1 Biodiversity interest of island habitats examined by Mary Tubridy

Habitat (Fossitt Code)	Location	Typical plant species
Dense bracken (HD1)	Throughout island but particularly in recently abandoned gardens and in acid grasslands where grazing pressure (probably) by cattle reduced.	Pteridium aquilinum (Bracken) Arrhenatherum elatius (False oat grass) Juncus conglomeratus (Compact rush) Trifolium repens (White clover) Rumex acetosa (Common sorrel) Dacyllus glomerata (Cocksfoot grass)
Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2)	In an abandoned field below club, along all ungrazed road verges. Good corncrake habitat in fields.	Agrostis sp (Bent grass) Hypericum androsaeum (Tutsan) Arrhenatherum elatius (False oatgrass) Blechnum spicant (Hard fern) Centaurea nigra (Knapweed) Cirsium vulgare (Creeping thistle) Cotoneaster sp Calluna vulgaris (Ling heather) Erica cinerea (Bell heather) Hypericum sp (St Johns wort sp) Montbretia Plantago lanceolata (Ribwort plantain) Potentilla erecta (Tormantil) Pteridium aquilinum (Bracken) Rubus frut agg (Bramble) Salix sp (Willow species) Solidago virgaurea (Golden rod)

Habitat (Fossitt Code)	Location	Typical plant species
Exposed siliceous rock (ER1)	Occasional throughout island. Obvious on roadsides such as above harbor where it is adjacent to tall grassland (GS2) Good flora where there is no grazing pressure	<i>Thymus polytrichus</i> (Wild thyme) <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> (Birds foot trefoil) <i>Jasione montana</i> (Sheeps bit) <i>Potentilla erecta</i> (Tormentil) <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> (Ling heather)
Drainage ditch (FW4)	Beside football pitch	<i>Mentha sp</i> (Mint sp) <i>Myosotis sp</i> (Forget me not sp)
Depositing lowland river (FW2) Rare habitat on the island	Small natural streams. Some forming townland boundaries.	<i>Mentha sp</i> (Mint sp) <i>Potamogeton natans</i> (Common pondweed) <i>Ranunculus flammula</i> (Lesser spearwort) <i>Hypericum sp</i> (St Johns wort sp)
Reservoir (was FL2 now FL7)	Principal lake on the island (FL2) was developed as a reservoir (now a FL7). Source of island's drinking water. Preliminary ecological survey only.	<i>Potamogeton natans</i> (Common pondweed) <i>Myriophyllum sp</i> (Water milfoil) <i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i> (Bogbean)
Wet heath (HH3)	In hollows in commonages, probably cut for turf as turf banks obvious.	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i> (Sweet vernal grass) <i>Drosera rotundifolia</i> (Round leaved sundew) <i>Erica cinerea</i> (Bell heather) <i>Eriophorum sp</i> (Bog cotton) <i>Molinia caerulea</i> (Purple moor grass) <i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i> (Lousewort) <i>Potentilla erecta</i> (Tormentil) <i>Sphagnum sp</i> (Bog moss) <i>Tricophorum caespitosum</i> (Deergrass)

Habitat (Fossitt Code)	Location	
Dry humid acid grassland (GS3) Common habitat in upland areas	Most common habitat in commonages associated with wet heath and outcropping rock.	<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i> (False oat grass) <i>Nardus stricta</i> (Mat grass) <i>Thymus polytrichus</i> (Wild thyme)
Stone walls (BL1)	Throughout the island.	Foliose lichens in south facing walls. Occasional <i>Sedum acre</i> (Biting stonecrop) <i>Umbilicus rupestris</i> (Pennywort) <i>Polypodium sp</i> (Polypody fern) <i>Asplenium ruta-muraria</i> (Wall rue)

There is particular potential for action on biodiversity through the involvement of the Development Office and implementation of the community developed local plan which stresses sustainable development principles and actions.

Studies of island biodiversity have a particular appeal to field naturalists, following the tradition of Praeger on Clare Island in the early 20th century. The famous Clare Island survey work has recently been updated by field biologists more than a hundred years later and reported in Feehan (2019).

Complementing biodiversity the island offers insights into local geodiversity which describes rocks, soils, watercourses and landscape history. Geodiversity is linked to local culture as the examination of results of placename survey by Ciaran Gray showed that some place names are related to features on the landscape such as

Aill =cliff

Iarann=iron

Staca dubh=black stack

Fan na gCailleach =slope of the witch

An fan fada =the long slope

An coirc=the cauldron

Srath=a holm or river meadow

An gob= Lair=snout

An cheim=leim-a step, a pass



Four different types of Ordovician rocks are found on Inishturk. On the north side of the island (mauve coloured area) are mudstones, sandstone and tuff. The southern half has these rocks and conglomerate

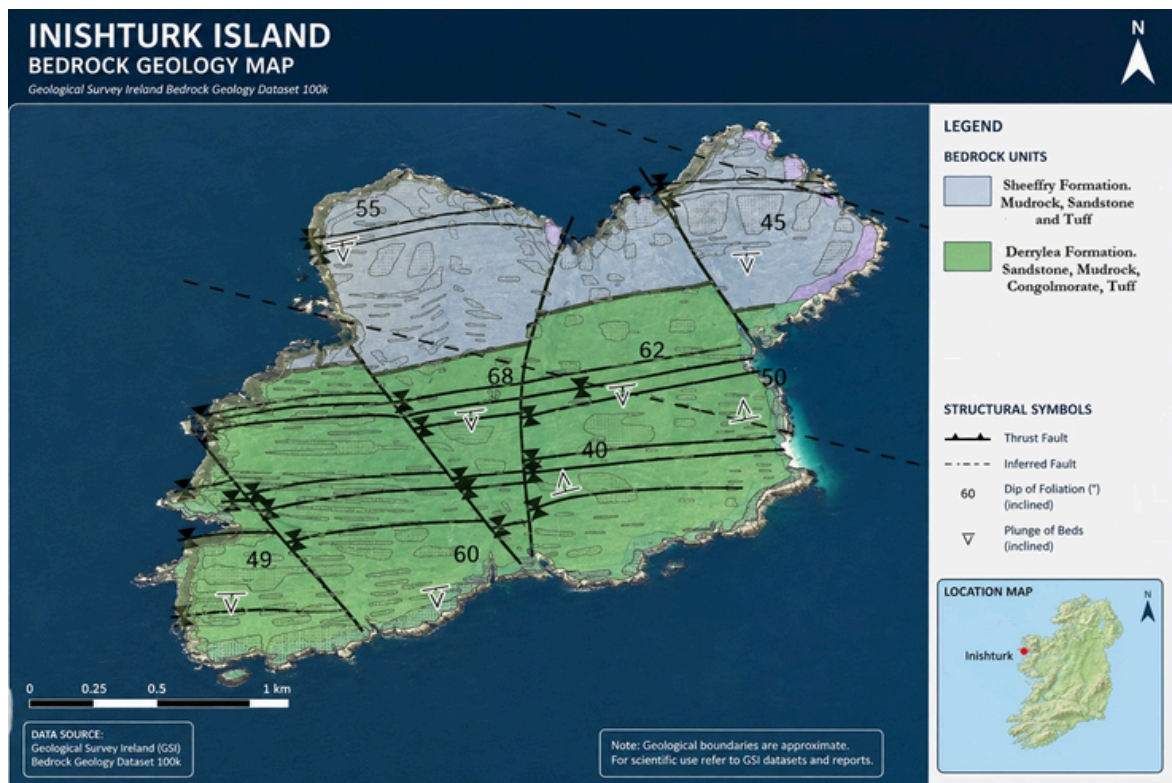


Figure. 3 Bedrock geology map (from GSI Map viewer Bedrock geology dataset 100k)

Based on the results of landscape studies on the adjacent mainland it is possible to determine the original vegetation in Inishturk before the arrival of humans.

During the last Ice Age which ended c. 12,000 years ago the entire island was covered by a thick (kms deep) layer of ice. After the ice melted vegetation was very sparse but Juniper (a shrub still found on the island) appeared. This was followed by the return of Birch, a tree which produces a huge amount of seeds. Other tree and shrub species probably occurred before the first farmers arrived including Hazel, Scots Pine, Elm and Oak, Rowan, Holly and Ivy, some of which are still on the island.

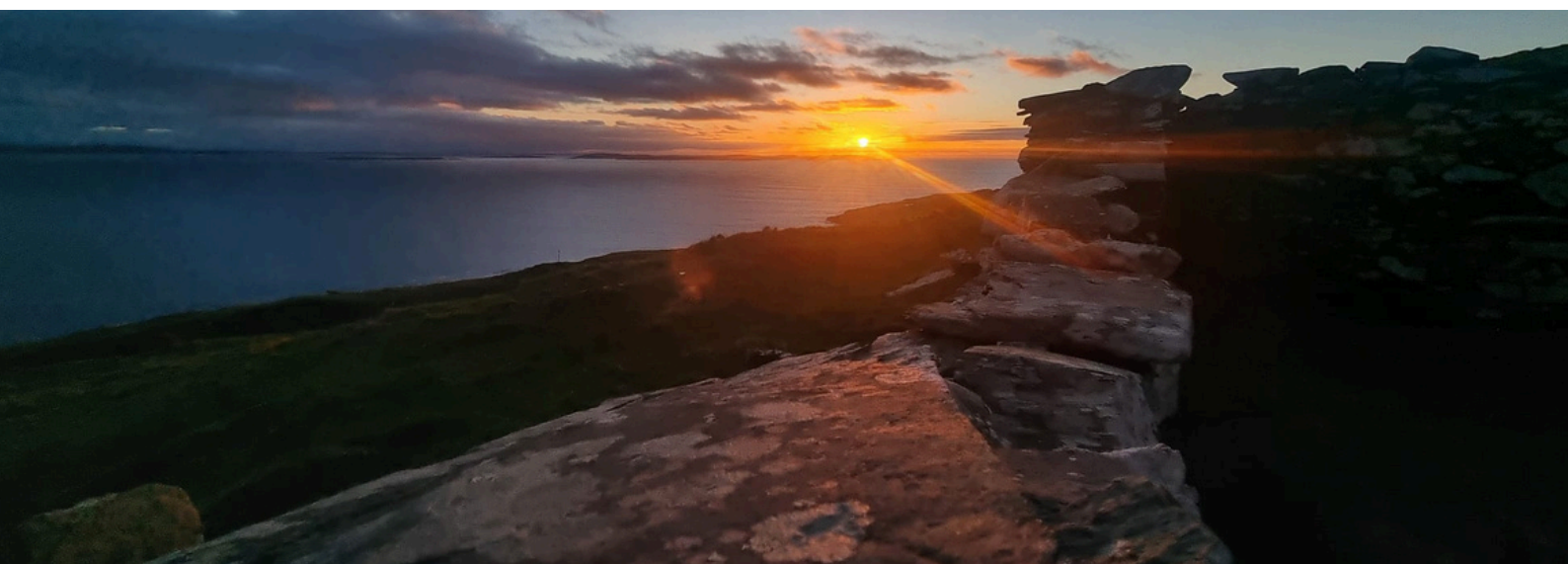
Around the time farming expanded on the island c. 5,000 years ago peat started to accumulate as a result of tree removal and a wetter climate. The rate of peat accumulation depended on location on the island. In depressions deeper deposits were found forming a type of habitat now called blanket bog or wet heath. Elsewhere a shallow layer was found forming a habitat called dry heathland which supported heather.

Where land was well drained, peat did not accumulate to any particular depth. Pollen analysis studies elsewhere have highlighted the significance of Royal Fern, a species which has been around for the last 11,500 years and is still found in Inishturk.

Tree removal and peat cutting combined with grazing resulted in the removal of almost all trees, and all peat in deep and shallow depressions. Grazing on the commonages changed the original dry heathland dominated by heather into a grassland.

At the beginning of the 19th century Inishturk was visited by the most important field naturalist of that time in Ireland, RL Praeger. Praeger was the force behind the Clare Island study which brought the complete range of fieldworkers, botanists and zoologists to record biodiversity to that island. Associated with this work he spent a week on Inishturk in 1907 recording plants and resulted in one of his island publications (Praeger,1907).

Interest in the theory of island biogeography led Matthew Jebb, Director of the National Botanic Gardens to produce a comparison between the total flora of Inishturk with that of other islands for a NPWS report on rare plant species (Wyse Jackson et al, 2016).



In this century the most dramatic negative change to biodiversity occurred through the conversion of the shallow lake in the centre of the island to a reservoir. This resulted in flooding an area of grassland and creation of a new watercourse taking water from the reservoir to a treatment plant. A positive result of this development for biodiversity was the fencing off of the land  (wet heath /originally blanket bog habitat) between the reservoir and treatment plant to exclude grazing sheep.

Fieldwork associated with the helipad development (Aniar Ecology, 2020) has produced a list of habitats at that site. A recent survey commissioned by Mayo County Council has provided details of invasive species, particularly *Montbretia* on and adjacent to public roads. (O' Ceallaigh, 2025)



2.1.2 Island weaknesses for biodiversity and society

Grazing has negatively impacted the quality of biodiversity in the commonages. This has been a feature of farming for hundreds of years and has recently been promoted by support payments which favoured sheep numbers.

Changing farming practices and island depopulation has led to less cultivation of tilled land and thus a reduction of habitat diversity. In the past farmers grew potatoes, turnips, carrots, parsnips, cabbage and onions. Crops grown for farm animals included oats, barley and wheat. Farming practices relied completely on island resources. New grasslands were established by spreading seeds from hay. Until recently there was a more diverse range of stock. Each farm had cows, usually 4, serviced by a local bull. The nature of farming changed c 60 years ago, due to agricultural policy changes and depopulation. Cow husbandry became difficult as testing for TB was required but vets were reluctant to travel, similarly for routine treatments. As a result sheep have become the principal grazer on the island in addition to a few ponies. At present there are c1,400 sheep on the island, generally kept outdoors all year round on the commonages.

Food growing is now rare. Bracken or fern cover has spread. Bracken requires good quality dry soil. It has spread quickly into the abandoned gardens and fields.

A particular issue for biodiversity on the island is the inappropriate national and local policies for biodiversity and biodiversity friendly farming. As an example of this the Organic supplement is only available for private land not commonage. Advisory services for agri- environment schemes are not consistently available on the island. Despite their obvious relevance only two farmers on Inishturk are participating in current agri-environmental scheme Acres. Two farmers are in the NPWS Corncrake scheme. This weakness is a feature of all offshore islands and has resulted in the development of specific agri environmental schemes for some islands. On the Aran Islands AranLIFE operated for several years passing on good practices developed in the Burren. When funding ended the programme sought and received funding as a European Innovation Partnership project.

While NPWS has carried out sea bird monitoring there is no systematic monitoring of other aspects of local biodiversity.

The lack of a good map is also a weakness but also an opportunity for a modern form of interpretation.

The low population in the island has an impact on pupil numbers in the school and thus reduces the potential for involvement of school children in biodiversity initiatives.



2.1.3 Opportunities to improve biodiversity

Through the implementation of the islands development plan there are particular opportunities to support actions which will protect and enhance biodiversity in co-operation with state agencies.

Actions in the BAP will involve close co-operation with state agencies including NPWS (on sea bird monitoring), Uisce Eireann (water quality monitoring and catchment management) and Mayo Co Co's Biodiversity Officer (Invasive species control). It is likely that this experience should lead to new opportunities to support many new biodiversity related actions on Inishturk.

The Development Office has potential to facilitate linkages with local NGO's's. Local NGO's can support small-scale improvements in habitat diversity and pollination services. Trees on the Land promotes small scale tree establishment on public and private land. It offers professional advice (by forester and ecologist) on species and suitability of location. Native trees and shrubs can be provided such as Hawthorn, Willow, Hazel, Rowan, Guelder rose, Scots pine, and Oak. Assistance is provided with planting, monitoring and replacement if necessary. The organization Food Forest promotes small scale establishment of fruit and nut bushes, following the layered approach in a food forest. Species available include Gooseberry, Blackcurrant, Raspberry and Apple (heritage varieties). Areas planted could be 2mX 3m for children and 5mX 15m for adults. Plants will be provided and assistance with planting from local horticulturist.

Liaison should be established with a local member of the Irish Native HoneyBee association to exploit the islands potential as a safe refuge. This could involve the transfer of hives to Inishturk and bee keeping training to adults and children. This development would need to be associated with island wide agreement to ban external bee products to protect genetics and biosecurity. All these local NGO's would provide ongoing support to the island to manage these initiatives.

Contact should be established with the Irish Dry Stone Wall Association to highlight the presence of substantial lengths of Stone walls, now recognised as intangible heritage by Unesco. Dry Stone Wall Construction is Ireland's fifth inscription on the UNESCO Representative List. Stonewalls are important landscape features, shelter for stock, symbols of cultural history, and biodiversity.



As Irish Water plan to do catchment risk assessment for the reservoir (Lorraine Gaston, pers.comm. 2025) the opportunity should be taken to involve local farmers and consider a nature based solution around the reservoir to reduce the risk of contamination.

Liaison should be established with ferry operators as travelling over gives opportunities for monitoring and interpretation of island biodiversity during the 40-minute journey.

The Development Office could take particular responsibility for

- 1) introducing some aspect of biodiversity to all events and media targeting island residents and visitors
- 2) providing local education on threats to biodiversity and
- 3) developing a community garden which will demonstrate sustainable practices and promoting the preparation of a Marine Biodiversity Action Plan.

2.1.4 Threats to biodiversity, people and organisations

Expansion of Bracken (in improved fields) and Montbretia are threats as these species are shading out species associated with semi-natural grasslands. Fig. 3 shows location of Montbretia along public roads. Expand map for specific locations.

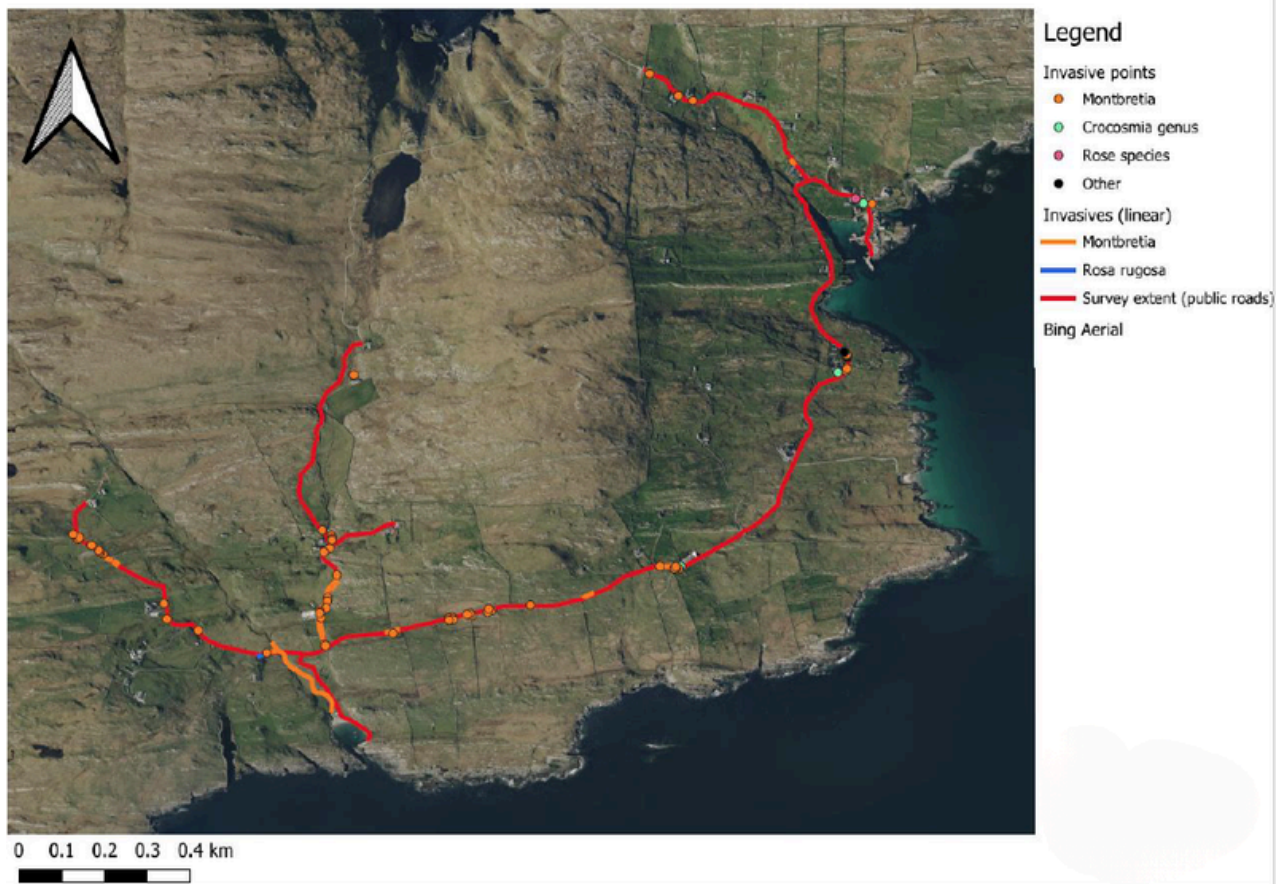


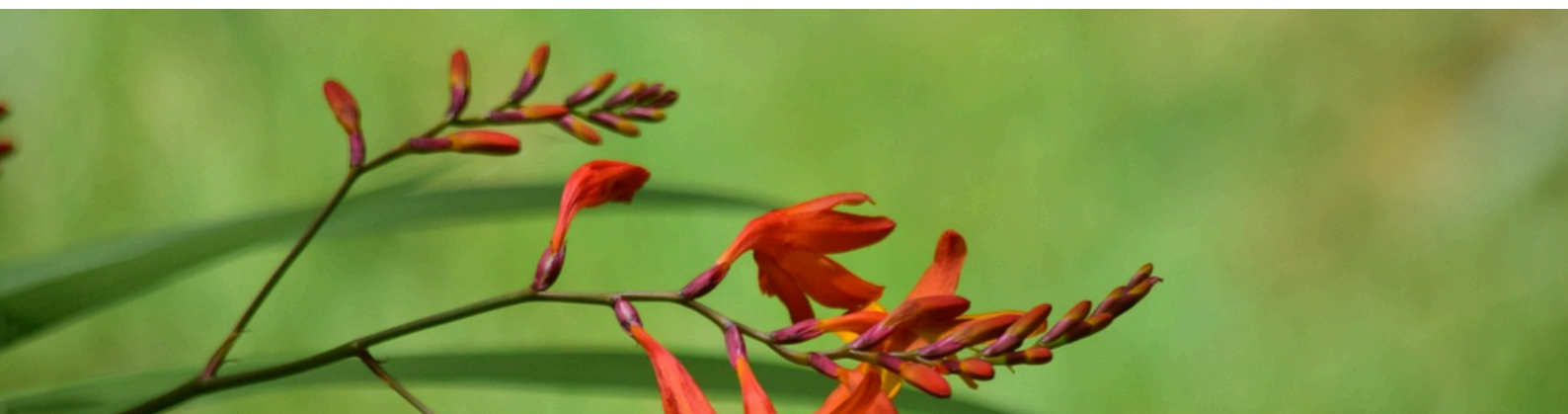
Figure. 4 Location of invasive Montbretia along roads with statutory agencies

Climate change is a threat as it is likely to affect populations of sea birds directly and indirectly. It also threatens the only sandy beach which is an important amenity and harbour infrastructure facilities which are essential for access.

Current management of commonage is a threat as it is preventing the re-appearance of dry heath, the original vegetation in this area.

The loss of traditional knowledge concerning livestock and land management threatens the re-establishment of sustainable land management practices.

Further depopulation is a threat as there will be fewer people available to manage the land and livestock.



2.2 Biodiversity Action Plan Vision and objectives

That all residents and visitors would be able to learn about their local biodiversity and appropriate management actions so that the condition of their local biodiversity is maintained, monitored and enhanced.

The realization of this vision requires the achievement of the following objectives:

- 1 Improve awareness of local biodiversity
- 2 Ensure local development is sympathetic to biodiversity
- 3 Monitor status of invasive to support island wide County Mayo initiative
4. Record traditional farm practices with regard to stonewalls, tillage, livestock and pasture management
- 5 Develop working relationships with statutory agencies to deal with biodiversity and climate change issues
- 6 Protect and enhance important biodiversity sites and features for their biodiversity and climate resilience values.
- 7 Improve biodiversity value of enclosed farmland
8. Improve management of gardens to increase their value for biodiversity and to demonstrate circular economy practices
- 9 Improve habitat for common resident birds
- 10 Monitor biodiversity so that learning will contribute to long-term island stewardship beyond the life of the plan.

The tables which follow list specific actions to realise these objectives. An indication is provided for the timescale required for these actions using on a scale from 1-3.



1= Desirable 2= not urgent but desirable 3= Urgent

General Objective	Habitats/ Species affected	Specific Actions	Whose responsibility Key Group underlined	Urgency (on scale of 1-3)
1 Improve biodiversity awareness	All	Organise event in Biodiversity week each year. Inform school about ESKER box available through the local library service. If not available fundraise to provide necessary resources for field studies. Erect and monitor bird boxes in school and local public buildings. Arrange for pupils to carry out survey such as Hop it (frog survey managed by Irish Peatland Conservation Council). Ensure pupils participate in all development projects. Suggest they carry out these projects. Tree seed saving Encourage their households to feed birds Set up nature table Feature a flowering plant X season Do projects related to local environment and biodiversity such as Use of seaweed as fertilizer Trials of survival of native trees Impact of composting on school and pupils households. Engage with schools programme associated with NPWS corncrake project.	Inishturk Development Club Sub committee Mayo BO School community HSE (Health Centre)	3

General Objective	Habitats/ Species Affected	Specific Actions	Whose responsibility	Urgency
2 Ensure local development is sympathetic to biodiversity	All	Biodiversity protection and enhancement measures should be integrated into the design, delivery, and management of local projects such as those concerned with coastal erosion and harbour improvement. Guidelines should be developed for biosecurity measures associated with construction, landscaping, machinery and imported materials.	<u>Inishturk Development Club Sub committee</u>	3

General Objective	Habitats/ Species Affected	Specific Actions	Whose responsibility	Urgency
3 Monitor status of invasive to support island wide County Mayo initiative		Carry out a comprehensive invasive species survey of the island in co-operation with landowners. Map private land and gardens which need Montbrietia removal.	<u>Mayo BO Inishturk Community Club Sub committee</u>	2

General Objective	Habitats/ Species Affected	Specific Actions	Whose responsibility	Urgency
4.Record traditional farm practices with regard to stonewalls, tillage, livestock and pasture management	GS3 (Dry humid acid grassland) GS2 (Dry meadows and grassy verges) HD1 (Dense bracken) WS1 (Scrub)	Describe age and style of walls, possibly linked to families or areas. Research stonewalls, age, style, depth of soil under them, relationship to barony and town land boundaries. Compile report on these aspects of farm management based on interviews with island farmers Commission breeding bird survey Continue to work with NPWS and ACRES on monitoring of Corncrake and improving agricultural habitat. Obtain funding to prepare a Marine Biodiversity Action Plan	Inisturk Community Club Sub committee	2



General Objective	Habitats/ Species Affected	Specific actions	Whose responsibility	Urgency (on a scale between 1-3)
5 Develop working relationships to deal with biodiversity and climate change issues with statutory agencies	All	Discuss opportunities to exchange information, advice and provide grant aid for island projects. Arrange for results of Irish Water monitoring to be communicated to the Development Office. Establish relationship with the following individuals and organisations Community Foundations (to discuss implementation of recommendations and arrange for liaison with other community based biodiversity groups in the region) University College Galway (currently assisting Kylemore Abbey with biodiversity management on their estate) Atlantic Technological University (Dr James Moran, national expert on agri-environment). Trinity College Dublin (Prof. Marcus Collier, on biodiversity of dry stonewalls) Irish Dry Stone Wall Association Local Leader Company Irish Water (Lorraine Gaston)	Inisturk Community Club	2

Objective	Habitats/ Species Affected	Specific Actions	Whose responsibility Principal <u>agency</u> underlined	Urgency (on a scale of 1-3)
6 Protect and enhance important biodiversity sites and features for their biodiversity and climate resilience values.	Important semi natural habitats And stone walls Sea birds Coast	Inform landowners about importance of the semi-natural habitats (streams, heath, dry and wet grassland, dry stone walls and acid grassland) in their land. Commission preliminary proposal for an action research project examining the potential for converting acid grassland to dry heathland. Consider offering a prize or award for work to restore dry stonewalls. In the absence of a dedicated Marine Biodiversity Action Plan, biodiversity protection, marine litter reduction, monitoring, and stewardship measures relevant to the marine environment should be addressed within the scope of this BAP where feasible, and in partnership with statutory agencies and community initiatives.	Landowners Development Office Leader company funding under biodiversity enhancement and climate resilience	2



Objective	Habitats/ Species Affected	Specific Actions	Whose responsibility Principal individual/ organisation underlined	Urgency (on a scale of 1- 3)
7 Improve biodiversity value of farmland	Semi-natural habitats	Develop guidelines to control Bracken Promote small farm woodlands/shelter belts Erect approx' 5 small (5x5m) enclosures on the commonage to provide habitat and biodiversity corridors for flora and fauna on the commonage, as a measure to restore dry heath habitat. Investigate potential for islands EIP (Clare, Inisbofin and Inishturk to develop support system for nature friendly farming.	Development Office Local NGO's Farmers on the commonage ATU Galway	2

Objective	Habitats Species Affected	Specific Actions	Whose responsibility Principal agency underlined	Urgency (on a scale of 1- 3)
8. Improve management of gardens to increase their value for biodiversity and to demonstrate circular economy practises	WL1(treeline s) Ga2 Good Farmland BC4 (Flower beds)	Make available copies of Gardening for Biodiversity written by Juanita Browne (free publication produced by the Biodiversity Data Centre). Follow best practice in community garden and carry out workshops to communicate best practice to all gardeners.	Inishturk Community Club Sub committee	3

Objective	Habitats Species Affected	Specific Actions	Whose responsibility Principal agency underlined	Urgency (on a scale of 1-3)
9 Improve habitat for common resident birds	GA2 WL2 BL3	Erect appropriate types of nest boxes on buildings. Monitor their occupancy. Install bird feeders in areas where they can be watched easily. Encourage establishment of small woodlands/shrubberies.	Inishturk Community Club Sub committee BirdWatch Ireland	3

Objective		Specific actions	Whose responsibility Principal agency underlined	Urgency (on a scale of 1-3)
10 Monitor biodiversity so that learning will contribute to long-term island stewardship beyond the life of the plan.		Discuss monitoring which could be carried out by households related to status of habitats/species or implementation of actions in the BAP Communicate and discuss implications of results. Highlight biodiversity in all promotional leaflets and digital media.	<u>Inishturk Community Club Sub committee</u>	3



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Fossitt (2000) A Guide to Habitats in Ireland, Heritage Council (accessible on line)

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O Ceallaigh ECO (2025) Invasive species survey report: Inishturk (Inis Toirc), unpublished report produced for Mayo Co Co. and funded by NPWS

Power A, Mc Greal E and Tierney TD (2024) Monitoring of seabird populations on Inishturk, 2024. NPWS Report

Praeger , RL (1907) The Flora of Inishturk, the Irish Naturalist, March 1907

Wyse Jackson, M., FitzPatrick, Ú., Cole, E., Jebb, M., McFerran, D., Sheehy Skeffington, M. & Wright, M. (2016) Ireland Red List No. 10: Vascular Plants. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Dublin, Ireland.



Appendix 1 Background information sources and consultees

Background sources of information

Websites

1 Geological Survey of Ireland for bedrock geology

<https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/data-and-maps/Pages/Bedrock.aspx>

2 EPA for watercourses

[https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/Water?](https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/Water?gext=162197,65608,165755,69195&lid=EPA:WFD_RIVERWATERBODIES_CYCLE3)

[gext=162197,65608,165755,69195&lid=EPA:WFD_RIVERWATERBODIES_CYCLE3](https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/Water?gext=162197,65608,165755,69195&lid=EPA:WFD_RIVERWATERBODIES_CYCLE3)

3 National Biodiversity Data Centre for species records in the vicinity of Inishturk and map showing proposed NHA. Most recent records (sent in by recorders and validated by NBDC) of particular value to BAP. Map shows particularly sensitive sea area

<https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map>

4 National Parks and Wildlife Service

Location of Natura site (West Connacht SAC) bordering the island to east, brief account of its general interest and conservation objectives.

[https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/search/by-county?](https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/search/by-county?county=Mayo&designation%5B0%5D=375&page=5)

[county=Mayo&designation%5B0%5D=375&page=5](https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/search/by-county?county=Mayo&designation%5B0%5D=375&page=5)

5 Ordnance Survey (Topography, townland boundaries, historic mapping and some local names)

[https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?](https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3ae19cc156bf4706a929304bf8fcc4f6)

[id=3ae19cc156bf4706a929304bf8fcc4f6](https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=3ae19cc156bf4706a929304bf8fcc4f6)

Unpublished reports

Aniar Ecology (2020) Article 6 Assessment: Statement for Screening for Appropriate Assessment, report prepared for Mayo County Council to inform proposal for helipad .

Seabird survey carried out for NPWS.

Published reports

O'Connell, M. 2021 Post-glacial vegetation and landscape change in upland Ireland with particular reference to Mám Éan, Connemara. Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology, 290, 104377, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.revpalbo.2021.104377>
22 pp + 7 supplementary online files, i.e. 1 Overview file (docx); Tables SM 1–5 (1 doc & 3 xlsx files); Plates SM-I to VI and SM VII–IX (in 2 pdf files).
Coxon, P. and O'Connell, M. (eds). 1994. Clare Island and Inishbofin. Field Guide No. 17. Irish Association for Quaternary Studies, Dublin, 108 pp.
(includes contribution by O'Connell, M. and Ní Ghráinne, E. Palaeoecology [of Inishbofin], pp. 60–103) .

Praeger, R. L. (1907), The flora of Inishturk, The Irish Naturalist, xv1, pp.113-125, 1907
Listed and provided details of 323 plant species. Vegetation divided into heathland, cultivated area and maritime areas.

Praeger, R.L (1937), in The Way that I Went an account is provided of a week spent botanising on Inishturk in 1907

Consultees

Development Office Inishturk

Zoom with Development Office to commence the project on 1st April

Direct meetings in June August and September on the island

Regular phone and email contacts

Mayo Co Co

Heritage Officer Dr Deirdre Cunningham (in person and by phone)

Biodiversity Officer Sheila Murphy (in person and by email)

Community

Public meeting with interested members of the community particularly farmers evening of 25th June.

Island individuals

Farmers (3) identified by Development Office (in person and on their farms)

Aoife O' Toole head of Net Zero / Environment pillar of Vision 2025 strategy (by phone)

Statutory sector

Schoolteacher in island primary school (in person)

Acres workers involved in recruiting farmers to the scheme (in person)

Corncrake Life project officer (in person)

NPWS Corncrake scheme (by phone). Met at the Open Day in Connemara National Park June 2025..

Irish Water (Lorraine Gaston) re management of water treatment (by phone and email).

NPWS Ranger Robert O' Dwyer (by phone)





Inishturk Bird Survey Report

Introduction

This report was produced at the request of Mary Tubridy by Michael Hogan, consultant ornithologist to inform the BAP for Inishturk. The brief requested a bird list for the island's farmed land and recommendations to improve its value. Fieldwork took place on the 14th and 15th August potential to maintain and improve habitats for birds.

Methodology

The survey took place in good weather conditions on 14th and 15th August. The island was broken into 5 sections corresponding with the 5 named common named areas of the island. Each was traversed along routes shown on Fig. 1. All birds seen or heard were noted.



Fig. 1 Routes followed in five distinct zones



Summary assessment of bird interest in zones on the island

Section 1. **Garranty** - Townland covering NE area of Inishturk.

Mostly open mountain terrain, leading to low bird species and number densities.

Section 2. **Mountain Common** - Townland covering NW area of Inishturk.

Mostly open mountain terrain, leading to low bird species and number densities. Lough Cúil a Chnuic holds breeding Mallard and Little grebe. Early breeding season survey could possibly see breeding Moorehen and Common sandpiper as the habitat is suited to those species around Loch Cúil a Chnuic.

Section 3. **Ballyheer** - Townland covering SW area of Inishturk.

To the westside it's mostly open undulating terrain with small areas of pooled water bodies which could attract a variety of species if the feeding within and around the water bodies was sufficient. Closer to the eastside of the townland there are areas of rough improved agriculture pastures with strands of tall vegetation and herbaceous plants. Excellent habitat for a variety of breeding passerine species.

Section 4. **Craggy** - Townland covering S area of Inishturk.

Is mainly rough improved agriculture pastures with isolated areas strands of tall vegetation and herbaceous plants. The habitat is suitable for a variety of breeding passerine species.

Section 5. **Ballyvaum** - Townland covering E area of Inishturk.

Is mainly rough improved agriculture pastures with isolated areas strands of tall vegetation and herbaceous plants. The habitat is suitable for a variety of breeding passerine species. There are also various structures which house breeding barn swallow nests.



Further details from the survey in the individual zones are in Tables 1 below.

Table 1 Records of bird species in areas within the island

Note No.	Species	Garranty	Mountain common	Ballyheer	Craggy	Ballyvaum
1	Common Blackbird			X	X	X
2	Wren			X	X	X
3	Robin			X	X	X
4	Hooded crow	X			X	X
5	Meadow pipit	X	X	X	X	X
6	Skylark	X	X	X	X	X
7	Barn Swallow			X	X	X
8	Mallard		X	X		
9	Little Grebe		X			
10	Pied Wagtail			X	X	X
11	Chough	X	X	X		X
12	Common Snipe		X			
13	Common Starling			X	X	X
14	Northern Fulmar	X	X	X		
15	Northern Wheatear	X	X	X	X	X
16	Common Raven	X	X	X	X	X
17	Feral pigeon			X	X	X
18	Goldfinch	X		X	X	X
19	Stonechat		X	X	X	X

Table 2 Summary assessment of habitats used by bird species

Note No.	Species	Latin name	Activity
1	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Restricted to areas of decent shrub coverage
2	Wren	<i>Troglodytidae</i>	Restricted to areas of decent shrub coverage
3	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	Restricted to areas of decent shrub coverage
4	Hooded crow	<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Uncommon. 8 birds only observed
5	Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Widespread across the entire island
6	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	Widespread across the entire island
7	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Restricted to open buildings for nesting, which are mostly in the Bellavaum area between the community club and Ocean view house B&B
8	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	6 Observed at Lough Cúil a Chnuic
9	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	4 Observed at Lough Cúil a Chnuic
10	Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	
11	Chough	<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>	2 observed in the common mountain area. 3 observed in Ballyheer area. 4 observed on Cairn hill area.
12	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Heard chipping at 53.7069744 -10.1115109 in the Mountain come area

Note No.	Species	Latin name	Activity
13	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	Widespread in the south Garranty; Bellavaum & Craggy areas. Near human habitat.
14	Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Large numbers breeding at the Ballyheer sea cliffs 53.705136 -10.124104. A count of 107 visible chicks on the cliff faces
15	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Widespread across the entire island
16	Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	5 pairs observed.
17	Feral pigeon	<i>Columba livia domestica</i>	
18	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Widespread across the E & SE of the island
19	Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	Widespread across the island but low numbers.
20	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	Restricted to areas of decent shrub coverage
21	Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	Widespread across the E & SE of the island
22	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	2 birds observed on the island.
23	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Observed on shore lines
24	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	Most observations occurred along the road verge where there was good shrub coverage.

Corncrake

Particular attention was paid to areas of potential interest to breeding corncrake. These are shown on Figs. 2.and 3.



Fig. 2 Areas of potential value to corncrake (assessed in July 2025)



Fig. 3 Areas of potential value to corncrake (assessed August 2025)

Conclusions

Sheep are the dominant animal on Inishturk and over time have shaped the open mountain commonage vegetation.

Ecologically, the intensive grazing has led to suppression of heather, native trees, shrubs and other vegetation which in turn possibly reduced the diversity of bird species.

It would be beneficial in the context of bird biodiversity if a number of specified areas were given over to regeneration of heather and other low growing plant species to increase the volume and number of ground breeding bird species.

A crucial positive for breeding ground nesting birds on Inishturk is that there are no mammalian predators on the island. This also benefits greatly the success of breeding corncrake on the island.

Also, if agreed by the community of Inishturk and funding is in place. It would be an interesting community project if experimental acreage (site selection by suitable experienced experts) on the open mountain commonage or within sheltered areas from the prevailing winds to be given over to plant small copses across the Island with native trees such as ash, hazel, willow, alder to spur on greater biodiversity of both flora and fauna.

This planting of native shrubs, tall grasses and trees would give shelter to breeding species such as song thrush, willow warblers, chiffchaff and many other species.

The improved management of plantations and existing hedgerows should also be considered as a mechanism to increase of bird biodiversity.

Inishturk lies within the eastern atlantic flyway zone. Which is an area that stretches from the high Arctic breeding areas in Canada/Greenland/Scandinavia/Siberia as far south as South Africa.



During spring and autumn bird migration there are large numbers of migrant birds passing the west coast of Ireland.

Some of the passerine species, unlike their wader counterparts, need to feed more often on their migration journey. One of the most important migration sources other than food, is shelter. With an increase in woodland and hedgerows the chances of migrant passerines landing and feeding on Inishturk would increase.

Therein lies an opportunity to possibly increase the tourist numbers to the island from a birding prospective. The seabird breeding colony at the cliffs around 'An Buachaill Mór' could be promoted along with the possibility of finding rare (or not) passerine passage migrants on the island.

In comparison to Inishbofin, very little bird survey has been done on Inishturk across a full summer and winter season. Looking back at records from irishbirding.com, Inishbofin has vastly greater reported birding sightings than that of Inishturk. Hence birders are travelling to Inishbofin rather than Inishturk looking for birding rarities, as Inishturk does not have a reputation for rare sightings. Yet the islands are just a few km apart. With an increase in the flora biodiversity suggested and less disturbance there would be a greater possibility of having passing migrants landing on Inishturk during the migration seasons. There is also the appeal and the opportunity to look for various species of birds on the ferry journey over to Inishturk. shearwaters, petrels, gannets and many more, which is a big plus to birders on a day out.



Community Foundation Ireland

