

IRELAND'S 4TH NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN 2023-2030

Ireland is home to globally important populations of birds, fish, mammals, invertebrates, plants and fungi across a wide range of terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats. The seas and coasts surrounding our island support vast colonies of seabirds, abundant fish and cold-water coral reefs, whales and dolphins, as well as rich algal and invertebrate communities. On land, there is a wealth of species in our mountains, peatlands, turloughs, woodlands, grasslands, lakes, rivers, and coastal habitats. Over 31,000 species have been recorded in Ireland and its surrounding seas and many more have yet to be discovered.

However, despite this rich tapestry, our biodiversity is in trouble.

Scientific studies have shown that 85% of our most precious EU-protected habitats are in unfavourable status. Almost half (46%) are demonstrating ongoing declines, particularly notable in marine, peatland, grassland and woodland habitats, with only 2% improving over a 12 year period (NPWS, 2019). Almost a third of our semi-natural grasslands have been lost in the last decade, while half of our rivers and two thirds of our estuaries are not in good ecological health (Martin *et al.*, 2018; EPA, 2021).

These impacts are attributable to a wide range of threats and pressures, including overgrazing, undergrazing, land abandonment, water and air pollution, alien and problematic species, recreation, development (particularly residential, agricultural and commercial), land drainage, urban wastewater, river barriers and the modification of coastal areas.

Ireland's population of Corncrake had declined by over 96% since the 1970's. The Corncrake/Traonach LIFE project works with landowners to implement measures which are effective in improving the bird's habitat. This includes the creation of large patches of nettles or crops for them to hide in and wildlife-friendly mowing to enable them to raise broods of chicks in safety.

- 35% population increase over the past five years
- 250 farmers and landowners managing 1500 hectare of lands for corncrakes



Corncrake



In addition to species-specific threats and pressures such as overfishing or over-exploitation, declines in habitat quality are having negative impacts on the wildlife that lives, feeds and breeds in them. This is borne out in the data:

- 30% of our 60 EU-protected species are in unfavourable status, with 15% demonstrating declining trends (NPWS, 2019).
- Over half of native Irish plant species have declined in range and/or abundance (Plant Atlas, 2020).
- More than half of Ireland's 100 bee species have seen substantial declines in numbers since 1980, with 30% of species threatened with extinction (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2007).
- The latest review of Birds of Conservation Concern placed 26% of 211 bird species assessed on the Red list, i.e. considered to have a high conservation concern (Gilbert *et al.*, 2021). This assessment includes a range of national and global criteria.
- 21% of breeding and 52% of key wintering bird species were reported to have short term declining trends in 2019 (www.eea.europa.eu).
- Extinction threatens 48 species living in the Irish marine environment, including fish, crustaceans, shellfish and invertebrates (Fogarty, 2017).

In contrast, 80% of non-native species introduced to Ireland since the year 1500 have increased. While most are benign, some have become invasive, such as Himalayan balsam, Japanese knotweed and rhododendron, with negative impacts on native flora and fauna.





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10 October 2022

Reg No S0012-04

Dear Captain Moriarty

Re: Withdrawal by Port of Waterford Company of Dumping at Sea Permit application in respect of Permit Reg No S0012-04.

We are to refer to your correspondence of 6 September 2022, notifying the EPA of your wish to withdraw your Dumping at Sea Permit application which was received by the Agency on 3 February 2022.

The Agency hereby acknowledges that you have formally withdrawn the above referenced Dumping at Sea Permit application and our records have been updated to reflect that this application is regarded as being formally withdrawn. That being the case, it is no longer the function of the EPA to consider any documentation received by it which relates to the above application.

It should be clearly understood that the onus for lodging an application with the EPA rests with the person carrying on the activity. It should also be noted, for future reference, that it is an offence liable to prosecution to carry on an activity which requires a licence in the absence of such a licence.

Yours sincerely

Environmental Licensing Programme
Office of Environmental Sustainability

cc Mr Colm Sheehan, Anthony D Bates Partnership LLP