

# The Red-billed Choughs of Iveragh

Last year, the LIVE Project carried out a research project to see which habitats Iveragh's Red-billed Choughs like to forage in during winter. We now wish to expand on this knowledge to identify the areas and habitats that are important to Iveragh's Choughs throughout the year.

During winter, Choughs often search for food in Iveragh's agricultural grasslands where cattle and sheep grazing keeps the vegetation quite short, usually around 5cm in length. These grasslands are perfect for Choughs, as the short vegetation allows them to probe their beak into the soil to search for their favourite foods such as beetles, ants, and larvae. Iveragh's unique landscape also hosts many small features which are extremely important for biodiversity. Traditional field boundaries such as grassy banks, stone walls, and earth banks provide shelter, nesting habitat, and food for many plants, invertebrates, lizards, birds, and mammals. These features are often visited by Choughs, who forage between the stones, on patches of bare earth, or within the vegetation that colonises the boundaries. Small hillocks and ant hills which are common in these habitats also host foraging Choughs in winter.



Two habitats that often host choughs: well-grazed agricultural grasslands and field boundaries.  
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Although we know which habitats Choughs like to forage in during winter, we now wish to see how their habitat-use changes throughout the year, and if this differs in certain parts of the peninsula. In other regions, Choughs are known to use different habitats in different seasons. In autumn, for example, large flocks of Choughs roost along coastal cliff faces, in sand dune systems, and in upland areas. This contrasts to the breeding season (April to June), when breeding pairs become less social and more territorial; they will sometimes mob other Choughs who enter their territory.

## Chough surveys:

LIVE wishes to run another project with the community in Iveragh. In order to build up a strong base of knowledge on Iveragh's Choughs, we would like to invite community members to conduct Chough surveys in their own locality. If you often see Choughs in nearby farmland, along coastal walks, or in your own garden we would love to hear from you. LIVE will be running workshops in 2022 where interested members of the public can learn how to conduct Chough surveys that will help to build knowledge on Iveragh's Choughs.