



'Corncrake'

Commissioned as part of Dungannon Arts Festival, Co Tyrone
Summer 2009

Artist Statement

‘Corncrake earth sculpture & sound piece’

The corncrake has become almost a myth, a bird once heard over the whole of Ireland. It is now rarely if ever heard and even less likely seen. I heard the call once, a haunting cry that washed across the island of Iona like a memory.

The corncrakes plight shows just how man’s control over the environment can so easily destroy nature. The Corncrake spends the winter in Africa, returning home to Western Europe in the spring. The males arrive in April, and starts singing to attract a female. They have a distinctive rasping ‘crex crex’ call, which gives them their scientific name: *Crex crex*. The older you are the more likely you have heard this once common bird, but with the change in agricultural practices the corncrake has become a part of history.

The image and sound of the corncrake was central to the overall concept of the artwork. The work used simple lines that were marked on a field over looking Ballysagget Lough. The birds recorded cry soared out over the farmland so that the old would remember and the young might learn.

The artwork in many respects echoed the actual birds own demise. In just a few weeks the image of the corncrake on the hill slowly disappeared and was lost forever.

Kathryn Nelson