

Irish Twite danger

Title

Twite face imminent extinction in Ireland according to BirdWatch Ireland (BirdLife Partner). Conservation measures have been proposed to try and save the remaining breeding population. The Twite is one of 18 birds on Bird Watch Ireland's red list because of its rapid decline in population with between 50 and 100 breeding pairs.

North Mayo and west Donegal in Ireland are the main breeding areas. Dr Derek McLoughlin, an expert on the species, said that the Twite has disappeared from most of Ireland, and that special conservation areas need to be set up. Although the winter population grows to about 1,000 birds with the arrival of birds from Scotland, the Irish breeding birds are being hit by loss of habitat, with overgrazing and undergrazing posing real threats.

He proposed measures which include maintenance of traditionally-managed meadows, where late cutting, and sustainable management of upland habitat would help to ensure the survival of the bird. Twite feed mainly on seeds from plants like dandelion, thistle, annual meadow grass, common sorrel, chickweed and sea plantain. They will normally nest in long heather and sometimes in bracken, invariably on the top of wild, north-facing sea cliffs. According to Dr McLoughlin, they nest close to Peregrine Falcons which provide protection from Ravens and Hooded Crows.

Source: [Birdwatch](#). Photo credit: David Kjaer (rspb-images.com)
