



Special Report – Early Autumn Chough Update

By Claire Mucklow, Cornwall Chough Project Manager, RSPB



Chough on a Penwith wire by Geoff Rogers

Looking out the window here from the fourth-floor office in Exeter today it feels more SumAut – bright sunshine, still a few swallows and martins around on the wires (no choughs) and all the new students wandering around finding their bearings – Exeter seems to double in size at Freshers week.

The last few weeks some of the chough crew in the west have been seeing HUGE numbers, Ted holds the current record – 37 in a field above Kenidjack valley, just imagine all that chattering going on between them. Numbers must reflect survival of the youngsters in the area is high. I think these Penwith birds hang out in a couple of groups during the day coming together at times to socialise, as choughs do.

One group of about 10 is loving the Sennen-Nanquidno area at the moment, also the same number around Botallack with a group feeding a lot in the fields behind the Count House/Roscommon area. Some of these choughs are using the Moors too, with birds flying up to Woon Gumpus and Carnyorth Commons.

Two colour-ringed choughs were spotted in St Ives – even with photos we can't work out who, but narrowed it down to probably this/last year's birds. White rings are frustrating – they can look different in shade and sun, varying between computer monitors. Same with lime rings. We have a lot of each.....

Around Gwennap the three local pairs are fine and being feisty with their raptor neighbours – wonder how they react to migrating birds of prey, do they mob ospreys?? The Porthgwarra pair have been on their holidays the last few days – to the car park top of Sennen. It's all about tipulids and these short swards for them.

Up the coast the Penhale/Perranporth pairs and young (well, sightings that account for nine birds) are coming in from the gardens and grounds of cafes, campsites and holiday apartments around Crantock and Holywell, where they have been wowing visitors –lots of lovely emails and photos coming in (all of unringed young birds). As per the last few years, choughs are visiting the Newquay headlands and up to Bedruthan Steps now.



National Coastwatch

EYES ALONG THE COAST

The Trewavas family plus one of last year's Lizard birds are commuting between Mullion and Praa Sands – includes a sighting from a garden inland from coast at Porthleven.

Bosigran pair are mingling with the climbers and those gorgeous Galloway cattle.

Roseland male has been 'skydancing'. At least that's showing some visible initiative...

I had hoped to report a couple more custom-made chough nest boxes installed on the cliffs of North Devon by now, but last week's activity with Tony Cross was called off – not a good idea to have people dangling from ropes in gale force winds! No recent sightings from Devon since the bird at Abbotsham in July – the boxes are to tempt them to stay put where there are no natural nest sites.

That's about it for now folks. Thanks to those that are helping with the tracking, I will update everyone with any news in about a month or so.

All the best

Claire