Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax -- (Linnaeus, 1758)

ANIMALIA -- CHORDATA -- AVES -- PASSERIFORMES -- CORVIDAE

Common names: Red-billed Chough; Chough; Crave à bec rouge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>European Red List Status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LC -- Least Concern, (IUCN version 3.1)</td>
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</table>

**Assessment Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year published:</th>
<th>2015</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date assessed:</td>
<td>2015-03-31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessor(s):</td>
<td>BirdLife International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewer(s):</td>
<td>Symes, A.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compiler(s):</td>
<td>Ashpole, J., Burfield, I., Ieronymidou, C., Pople, R., Wheatley, H. &amp; Wright, L.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment Rationale**

**European regional assessment: Least Concern (LC)**

**EU27 regional assessment: Least Concern (LC)**

In Europe this species has an extremely large range, and hence does not approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the range size criterion (Extent of Occurrence 10% in ten years or three generations, or with a specified population structure). Despite the fact that the population trend appears to be decreasing, the decline is not believed to be sufficiently rapid to approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the population trend criterion (30% decline over ten years or three generations). For these reasons the species is evaluated as Least Concern in Europe.

Within the EU27 this species has a very large range, and hence does not approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the range size criterion (Extent of Occurrence 10% in ten years or three generations, or with a specified population structure). The population trend appears to be stable, and hence the species does not approach the thresholds for Vulnerable under the population trend criterion (30% decline over ten years or three generations). For these reasons the species is evaluated as Least Concern in the EU27.

**Occurrence**

**Countries/Territories of Occurrence**

**Native:**
Albania; Andorra; Armenia; Azerbaijan; France; Georgia; Greece; Ireland, Rep. of; Italy; Macedonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of; Montenegro; Portugal; Russian Federation; Serbia; Slovenia; Spain; Canary Is. (to ES); Switzerland; Turkey; United Kingdom

**Vagrant:**
Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Germany; Hungary; Slovakia; Gibraltar (to UK)

**Population**

The European population is estimated at 40,500-86,400 pairs, which equates to 80,900-173,000 mature individuals. The population in the EU27 is estimated at 21,600-25,700 pairs, which equates to 43,100-51,500 mature individuals. For details of national estimates, see Supplementary PDF.

**Trend**

In Europe the population size is estimated to be decreasing by less than 25% in 33 years (three generations). In the EU27 the population size is estimated to be stable. For details of national estimates, see Supplementary PDF.

**Habitats and Ecology**

This species is found on coastal cliffs in western Europe and in high mountain pastures with rocky crags elsewhere. Coastal populations such as those found in Ireland, Britain, Brittany, Canaries, and north-west Spain, favour sea cliffs with rocky crags, interspersed with closely grazed grassland. Populations found further inland occur in high mountain pastures above the tree-line, favouring sheep-grazed slopes. The species is monogamous and forms a lifelong pair bond (Madge 2009).
Egg-laying begins in March in Britain and in mid to late April in the Caucasus (Madge and Burn 1993). The nest is a mass of sticks, thickly lined with wool, rarely all wool and built typically in the roof of a cave, rock chimney, or disused quarry, but also uses roof spaces of disused buildings, old mine shafts or similar sites. Clutches are usually four eggs. It is chiefly insectivorous, particularly in spring and summer, but also feeds on a wide variety of other invertebrates and rarely on small vertebrates such as lizards (Lacertidae) and small mammals. In autumn and winter, when invertebrate food more difficult to find, it takes grain, seeds and small berries, including those of rowan (Sorbus), pear (Pyrus), juniper (Juniperus), sea-buckthorn (Hipppophae) and olive (Olea). The species is essentially sedentary (Madge 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habitats &amp; Altitude</th>
<th>Habitat (level 1 - level 2)</th>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Occurrence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artificial/Terrestrial - Pastureland</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>resident</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grassland - Temperate</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>resident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Coastal/Supratidal - Sea Cliffs and Rocky Offshore Islands</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>resident</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marine Intertidal - Rocky Shoreline</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>resident</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marine Intertidal - Tidepools</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>resident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky areas (eg. inland cliffs, mountain peaks)</td>
<td>major</td>
<td>resident</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrubland - Mediterranean-type Shubby Vegetation</td>
<td>suitable</td>
<td>resident</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>Occasional altitudinal limits</td>
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The most important cause of declines in the species is changes in grazing regimes (Madge 2009) and conversion of grazing habitat to forestry, tourist-related developments or intensive farming (Tucker and Heath 1994). Historically, grazing animals roamed freely over mountain slopes and coastal cliffs, keeping vegetation short and ideal for invertebrates (Madge 2009). In the Alps, it is thought competition with Alpine Chough (Pyrrhocorax graculus) and Eurasian Jackdaw (Corvus monedula) may be detrimental to the species (Madge and Burn 1993). The species has also suffered from persecution (Hagemeijer and Blair 1997) and they were shot for sport during the 19th and 20th centuries (Wilmore 1977). The conversion of grazing land to arable may also be a threat to this species (Bibby et al. 1989).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats &amp; Impacts</th>
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<th>Threat (level 2)</th>
<th>Impact and Stresses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture &amp; aquaculture</td>
<td>Agro-industry farming</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Majority (50-90%)</td>
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<td>Small-holder grazing, ranching or farming</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Majority (50-90%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biological resource use</td>
<td>Hunting &amp; trapping terrestrial animals (persecution/control)</td>
<td>Past, Unlikely to Return</td>
<td>Majority (50-90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invasive and other problematic species, genes &amp; diseases</td>
<td>Eurasian Jackdaw (Corvus monedula)</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Minority (&lt;50%)</td>
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### Threats & Impacts

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<td>Invasive and other problematic species, genes &amp;</td>
<td>Yellow-billed Chough (Pyrrhocorax)</td>
<td>Timing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Stresses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential &amp; commercial development</td>
<td>Tourism &amp; recreation areas</td>
<td>Timing</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>Stresses</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Ecosystem conversion</td>
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### Conservation Actions Underway

Bern Convention Appendix II. EU Birds Directive Annex I. A programme of rough grazing along coastal slopes and the erection of nest boxes in suitable caves or old buildings in Britain has led to the partial recovery of the species there (Madge 2009).

### Conservation Actions Proposed

The return of traditional cliff grazing techniques benefits this species (Madge and Burn 1993, Hagemeijer and Blair 1997). The conservation of surviving areas of traditional extensive pastoral farmland is also essential (Tucker and Heath 1994). Research to determine the impact of competition with other species would help inform future conservation measures.

### Bibliography


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**Map (see overleaf)**
Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax

Range

- Extant (resident)

Citation:
BirdLife International (2015)
European Red List of Birds

Map created 05/12/2015

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply any official endorsement, acceptance or opinion by IUCN.