



# Jersey islands red-billed chough (Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax) reintroduction project

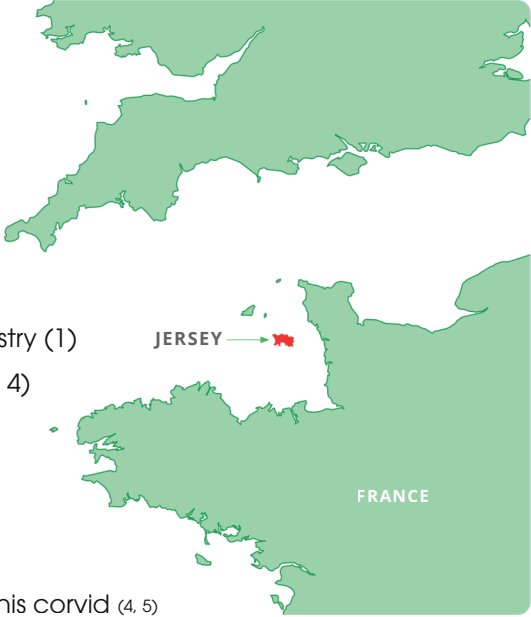
DURRELL

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## HISTORY

The island of Jersey, part of the British Isles is located 14 miles off the coast of France. Formerly inhabited by the charismatic red-billed chough until the late 19th century when they became extinct. The main drivers of the choughs extinction on the island were:

- The collapse of the local wool industry (1)
- Changes in farming practices (2, 3, 4)
- Abandonment of coastal management (2, 3, 4)
- Colonisation of Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* (3)
- Lack of interest and education in this corvid (4, 5)



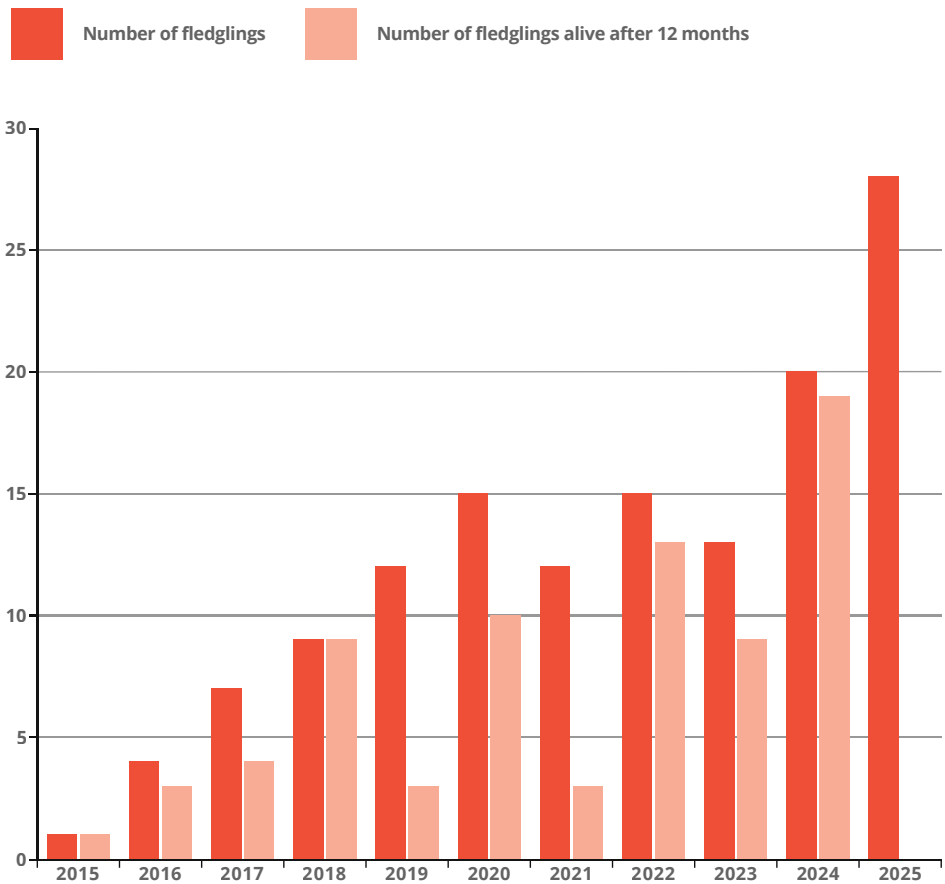
## THE PROJECT

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (Durrell) established a project in 2010 to reintroduce the chough back to Jersey as a flagship species to aid local restoration of land and bird species diversity. The project, Birds On The Edge, was initiated in collaboration with local partners notably the Government of Jersey, National Trust for Jersey and other stakeholders. Along with captive-breeding and release experts to release captive-bred birds to create a new wild population on the island.

## PROJECT PHASES

- 1 Jersey Zoo collaborated with Paradise park, Cornwall to captive breed choughs to be released in 2013.
- 2 Choughs were released in small cohorts between 2013 and 2018 and were recall trained for supplementary feeds to record and monitor individuals in the flock.
- 3 Choughs were ringed for identification and given VHF transmitters to monitor their location around the island.

## FLEDGLING SURVIVAL OVER A TWELVE MONTH PERIOD



**FIGURE 1.** Chough fledgling success since breeding began in 2015 to 2025. The number of fledged chicks arriving at the aviary (red) in comparison to the number of fledged chicks surviving after 12 months (light red).

## CURRENT WILD POPULATION

**TABLE 1** The current wild population size, ratio of captive released to wild hatched choughs and the number of known breeding pairs.

POPULATION	CAPTIVE RELEASED	WILD HATCHED	BREEDING PAIRS
84	10	74	17



## FUTURE RESEARCH

- To assess the land's invertebrate diversity.
- To investigate if the wild population can sustain itself from land resources.
- To examine their genetic diversity to prevent future genetic bottlenecks.

**References:**

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(2) Kerbinou, C and Julliard, R. 2007. 'Demographic consequences of prey availability and diet of red-billed choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*'. Bird Study, 54. Page 296-306. SS 06.35 (researchgate.net)

(3) Leung, S. H. 2012. 'The evaluation of energy content in captive diet and prey availability of release sites for reintroducing red-billed chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* population in Jersey, Channel Islands'. Nottingham Trent University, Pages 1-66.

(4) Mucherek-paramore, I. F. 2013. 'An assessment of captive winter and summer diets of red-billed chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*): nutrient profile and associated reproductive parameters'. Nottingham Trent University, Pages 1-87.

(5) Johnstone, L, Mucklow, C., Cross, T., Lock, L. And Carter, I. 2011. 'The return of the red-billed chough to Cornwall: The first ten years and prospects for the future'. British Birds. 104(8).



## PROJECT SUCCESS

- Releases stopped in 2018 due to breeding success in the wild population.
- Chough adventures to Guernsey, France and Alderney.
- 2024 has been the most successful year of fledglings surviving after 12 months so far.
- Since breeding began in 2015 the choughs have fledged 179 chicks.
- 'Best conservation project 2025' awarded by Insurance corporation.

