

German-Danish cooperation on nature conservation.

EU LIFE project enables cross-border action to benefit Wadden Sea birdlife.

In the framework of "LIFE Wadden Sea Birds", Stiftung Naturschutz Schleswig-Holstein, with the support of the European Commission's LIFE programme, has purchased a special machine (the Brielmayer mower) which can mow reeds and other tall vegetation on wet areas and is particularly good for preparing bird islands before the breeding season. Birds such as kites, terns and gulls will only breed when the islands are open and have a clear view.

The machine is used in bird reserves and Natura 2000 areas south of the Danish-German border that Stiftung Naturschutz manage, including Rickelsbüller Koog. Here it is relatively new and has shown promising potential to complement existing management methods. For example, where other equipment is too heavy and mowing by hand too labor-intensive. In addition, a purpose-built pontoon has been purchased so that the machine can be sailed to bird islands and other hard-to-reach places.

The LIFE project has created the opportunity to exchange and gain practical experience with the machine also north of the land border.

The Wadden Sea Nature Agency carries out nature management at a number of important breeding sites along the Wadden Sea coast and, as part of LIFE Wadden Sea Birds, has been given the opportunity to test the machine for a few weeks in Danish sites. In preparation, Stiftung Naturschutz has conducted a one-day course for two Danish nature conservationists at the Wadden Sea Nature Agency to equip them to use the machine in practice.

In 2022, the Wadden Sea Nature Agency has carried out care at the following sites:

- Two islands in the clearing ditch in Margrethe Kog south.
- Two islands in Gl. Two lakes in the Hviding Engso (Rejsby clay pit)
- One island in Astrup Engso.
- One island in Sønder Farup ravine.

Several more locations were planned but had to be abandoned due to high water levels.

Demo day

On 9 February 2022, a demonstration day was held for professionals from municipalities and other units of the Nature Agency. On a specially built pontoon (raft) both machine and people were transported out to the island Gl. Hviding Engso, to experience the machine in practice and to discuss the other considerations that need to be taken into account to make the breeding islands a success for the birds.

The effort now needs to be evaluated before next year's practice can be organized.



Fotos by Naturstyrelsen Vadehavet, Mower in action at Rejsby clay pit



Foto by LLUR, Mower on purpose-built pontoon.