



Foto: Stiftung Naturschutz

Floating chick room for the Westcoast birds in Rickelsbüll Koog

With a bit of luck, the first little shorebird chicks, such as the little river tern or Arctic tern, will flutter over the Rickelsbüller Koog, northwest of Niebüll in the district of Nordfriesland, this summer. This is because the conservationists of the Stiftung Naturschutz Schleswig-Holstein, together with the Integrierten Station Westküste of the Landesamts für Umwelt (LfU) and the Naturschutzverein Wiedingharde e.V., launched a breeding raft there today. The Integrierte Station Geltinger Birk also provided assistance. It is intended to provide a safe breeding place for the endangered and rare shorebirds on the west coast. When these long-distance flyers return from their wintering grounds on the southern coast of Africa or even Antarctica, they will already see the perfect nesting sites from the air as they approach.

The floating chick room - with a size of 16 square metres - offers plenty of space for about 20 breeding birds. In the EU-funded project "LIFE Wadden Sea Birds", the conservationists of the Stiftung Naturschutz Schleswig-Holstein have been working for three years to improve living and survival conditions for the endangered and protected shorebirds as well as waders and meadow birds in the Koog.

Their biggest enemies are nest predators such as foxes and raccoon dogs. In recent years, they have considerably disturbed the family planning of the ground-nesting shorebirds, either by stealing the eggs from the nests or eating the newly hatched chicks. The breeding rafts now offer them another refuge - which the four-legged predators cannot reach. But the increased spring and summer floods also cause problems for the ground nesting birds. On the breeding raft they are safe from these dangers. "Our experience is that the breeding rafts are very well accepted and the shorebirds can breed here in peace and quiet, so there will be a happy ending here with many little fledged chicks," predicts project manager Oliver Granke from the Stiftung Naturschutz Schleswig-Holstein.

Here in Schleswig-Holstein, we have a special responsibility for the Arctic tern, which is threatened with extinction, adds Granke. Because: of the approximately 3,300 breeding pairs in Germany, about three quarters of all pairs breed in Schleswig-Holstein.

