

Dear friends,

mid of May 2011 we went counting nests at Pionierinsel Lühe, average number of breeding Mediterranean Gulls since 2005 is about 140 pairs. But we hardly found any of them this year. Also we felt that there were less Common Gulls than about 4000 pairs but it was impossible to proof. We figured out that a raccoon dog was the problem.

Following week we documented the decline of ground-breeding Common Gulls at the colonies of the harbour in Hamburg-Hohe Schaar. These gulls were exhausted by red foxes and their number is at minimum.

At the end of May 2011 some members of Hamburg study group (“Arbeitskreis”) entered a Cessna 172 for a flight over the central eastern part of the town. On the flight they managed to take photos of flat roofs that looked suspicious because of gulls in the air and on the buildings. Back home at the desk the number of birds has been counted, one photo offered approx. 900 Common Gulls.



Picture of flat roof in Hamburg-Moorfleet taken from the airplane by Simon Hinrichs.

A satellite photo located the building, it's a distributors Mega Center with 70.000 square meter surface. We kindly asked for permission to count the nests and did it a week later, one person was busy reading colour rings only.

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|----------------------|-----------|---|-----------------|
| ○ Common Gull | 553 nests | / | 7 colour rings |
| ○ Herring Gull | 9 nests | / | no tagged |
| ○ Mediterranean Gull | 37 nests | / | 33 colour rings |

Also we found Lapwing (5/0), Oystercatcher (1/0) and Little Ringed Plover (1/0) breeding.



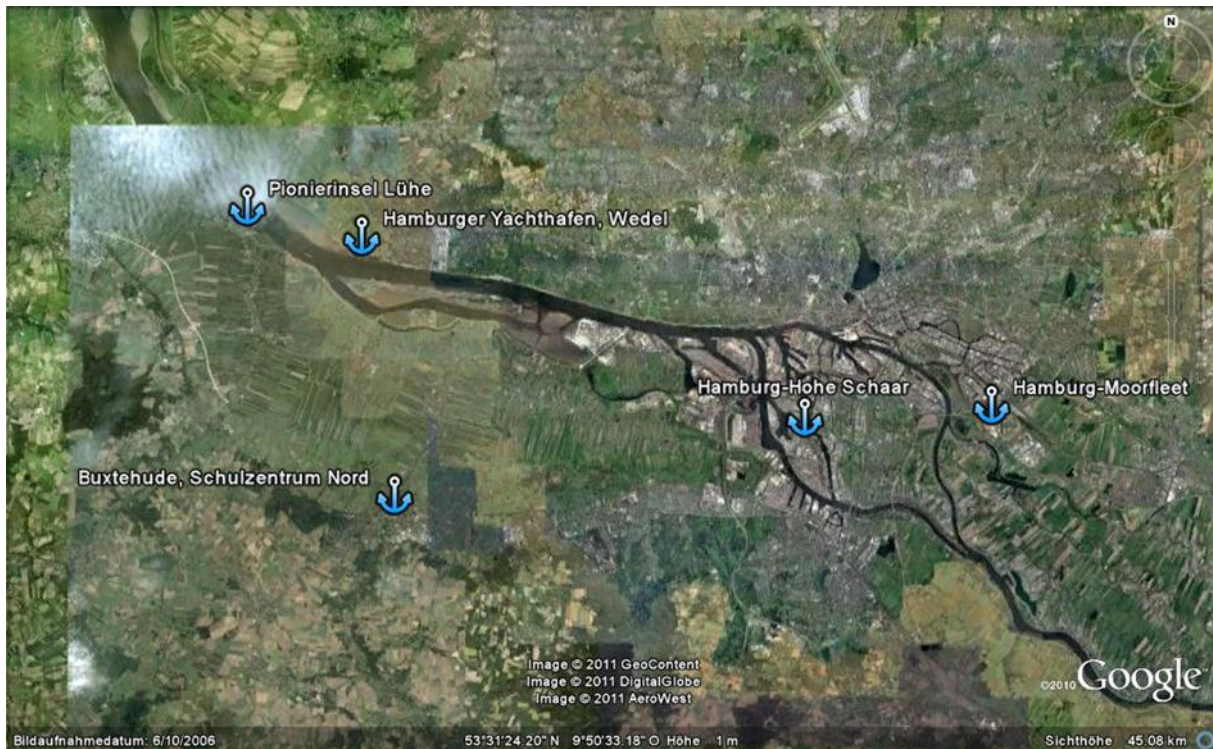
Counting nests, see the main cluster of Med Gulls on the top. Photo: Simon Hinrichs.

Talking to the company we found out that the complex was built in 2006 and authorities made the condition that it has to “look green” from above. The only serious problem we discussed was the birds Guano resulting in spending more money for washing the cars quite often.

Back home at the desk we checked the Med Gulls’ life lists and it was simply amazing: all birds have been colour ringed at Pionierinsel. Five birds have been documented at their home colony in spring – before the raccoon dog had entered the island! Obviously Mediterranean Gulls decided to start breeding on this flat roof at the same time. We found our lovely beauties simultaneously, when Common Gulls sat breeding or had chicks in the age of up to three weeks old.

Now this is an excellent example for the scientific use of colour rings on birds! We found a quarter of the population of Pionierinsel 33 kilometers away from home, and we conceived why they had left the colony!

Another dozen pairs of Mediterranean Gull settled on the middle mole at Hamburger Yachthafen, Wedel which is located in Elbe river opposite the Pionierinsel. Yet we did not manage to have a look at it. They also breed in neighbourhood to Common Gulls.



Satellite photo of the main colonies in lower Elbe estuary in 2011.

On this map you also can find Buxtehude, where on the flat roofs of school-center Nord 9 kilometers from Elbe River a single pair of Common Gull started breeding in 2008. Pupils and teachers liked this kind of real biology lessons until the number increased up to more than one hundred pairs in 2010. Since this years' spring the care-taker is busy taking away any nest found in the morning – by permission of the authorities.

POLITIK & HINTERGRUND *Neue Buxtehuder Wochenblatt* 21. Mai 2011

Es wird ernst im „Möwenkampf“

Mit Netz und Sprinkler: In Buxtehude werden die Vögel so von einem Schulzentrum vertrieben

tk. Buxtehude. Das laute Schreien der Möwen am Himmel über dem Schulzentrum Nord in Buxtehude soll bald verstummen. Die Stadt macht jetzt ernst im Möwenkampf. Am Mittwoch haben die Vogel-Vergrämer aufgerüstet: Eine Sprinkleranlage soll es auf einem Teil der Dachfläche nass und ungemütlich machen.

Der Lieblingsplatz der Möwen auf dem Flachdach des Schulzentrums wird auf rund 1.000 Quadratmeter mit einem stabilen Netz abgesperrt. Dort ist das Geschrei besonders störend, weil ringsum Klassenräume liegen. Das Öffnen der Fenster ist kaum noch möglich

Aron Mans von der städtischen Gebäudebewirtschaftung setzt auch weiterhin auf „Nahkampf“: Die Hausmeister sind



ein bis zwei Mal pro Tag auf dem Dach. Ihre Aufgabe: Sie sammeln alle Nester ein, solange kein Ei drinnen liegt. Das ist erfolgreich. Aron Mans: „In diesem Jahr haben die Möwen noch keinen Nachwuchs.“

Was derzeit auf dem Dach des Schulzentrums läuft, soll die Vögel vertreiben. Eine endgültige Problemlösung ist das noch nicht. Wenn es den Möwen auf dem Dach des Schulzentrums zu ungemütlich wird, werden sie anderswohin ausweichen. Die Auswahl an Flachdächern macht den Möwen einen Umzug innerhalb Buxtehudes leicht.

Das Dach hinter Aron Mans wird mit einem Netz abgesperrt. Die Möwen sollen damit vom Schulzentrum Nord vertrieben werden Fotos: tk

“It is getting serious in fighting gulls...” – thanks to Walter Marbes.

Now where to go? On June 1st the island of Pionierinsel has been counted again, after authorities and hunters started searching for the raccoon dog a week before and did not find it. 2100 pairs of Common Gulls were found and most birds were breeding on three eggs – we can see that this species is patiently waiting to finally breed in their home colony when Mediterranean Gulls are very sensitive about the security and leave for a better place soon.

Still we are missing up to hundred pairs of Mediterranean Gull, at least 60 per cent of them colour-ringed. We are very thankful for observations that we did receive from colonies in Europe yet, though it does not seem that we can trace the way the majority of our missing beauties went.



Our team at work – see the Belgian ringing tube in the authors hand. Photo: Guido Seemann.

We started to ask in bird watchers' news groups for new colonies of gulls that could be located on flat roofs somewhere in the country in any industrial zone - not being identified by the working staff as an ornithological jewel that it is and we collect any useful information as well.

Also we put a lot of effort into the good relation to the Mega Centers' management - still it is possible that they decide to get rid of the seabirds on their top. Having found Lapwing, Little Ringed Plover and Mediterranean Gull breeding on their flat roof makes it very difficult to get the authorities permission though. As this is a political issue we will get into details in autumn.

29 juvenile Mediterranean Gulls have been colour-ringed on July 1st - we will continue to do research on these birds now fitted with the series AKxx and are looking forward hearing from you:



Non-fledged *Larus melanocephalus* AKEH practices for europe's observers. Photo: Simon Hinrichs.

27th July 2011, thanks to Annika Hagen

Mediterranean Gull Team Hamburg

Andreas Zours

andreaszours at yahoo.de

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