

Site 07: Store Egholm

7.1 Change of the site by project activities:

The project site is an island consisting partly of a natural wet salt meadow with several smaller and one large coastal lagoon and partly higher grassland on former cultivated fields. The island was inhabited and farming took place for approximately 40 years in the second half of the 19th century. The island was well grazed until recently, but the salt meadows are now slowly overgrowing.

The lack of grazing had caused a beginning of overgrowing of some lagoons with *Scirpus maritimus*, which limits breeding possibilities of *Bufo viridis* and limits feeding possibilities of avocet (*R. avosetta*).

Bufo calamita went extinct on the island in the 1990ies due to a lack of freshwater. When the small dykes on the island, made in the 1860's, were destroyed by cattle 20 years ago, the freshwater could run off from the formerly fresh meadows and fields and saltwater was entering with strong tides.

At the beginning of the project, grazing had been abandoned because in the past cattle had drowned several times during bad weather conditions. In order to prevent this in the future, two cattle shelters were erected at project start. Thus some farmers were found who trusted the better conditions enough to put their cattle on the island.

Grazing had a very positive effect for the bird life and *Bufo viridis*. Additionally, a build-up of a population of *Bufo calamita* was done in 2010 and 2011 by releasing 57 3 cm young toads in 2010 and 189 *Bufo calamita* in 2011.

The biggest challenge, to get much freshwater, is now achieved by blocking ingoing ditches and ditches going away from depressions. This was necessary for both amphibians and chicks of meadow birds, for feeding areas.

These sites were also known to host breeding *Bufo calamita* and *Bufo viridis* in 1985, so there is now a high probability that amphibians (as well as wader birds) will take great benefit from the increased amount of freshwater.

7.2 Remaining challenges and actions:

To restore more natural depressions.

7.3 Public perception:

The island is owned by 34 owners, organized in a landowner board. Initially they agreed to the concept of the project but each planned measure had to be agreed by them individually. As it was perceived by the landowners, that implementation of the individual measures could lead to a reduced entitlement for agro-environmental support (the arial photos could show a reduction of the grass cover for years after the restoration of

lagoons, natural depressions and ditches), it turned out to be quite difficult to convince the landowners to participate. The problem is that at present the ministry of agriculture holds back the support for the 34 farmers because of administrative problems in previous years until the hectares are correctly measured. Because of this problematic situation, for which the project team is in no way responsible, the actions could not yet be carried out.

Numerous meetings with the landowners, where we got strong support from the chairman of the board, were held on Ærø as well as on Store Egholm to finally agree on the implementation of the measures. The landowners are very satisfied with the actions as they were undertaken in 2011.