

**DE-20 : Weissenhäuser Brök**

SPA: 1530-491; pSCI : 1629-391

Protection status: nature reserves, NSG Weißenhäuser Brök and NSG Wesseker SeeHabitats:

*1150 Lagoon 10%

1330 Atlantic salt meadow 35%

2120 Shifting dunes along shoreline, white dune 1%

*2130 Fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation, grey dunes 8%

Animals:

Porzana porzana 78 pairs

Site description and foreseen actions:

The site in total is about 565 ha. The site consists of two subsites: a former coastal lagoon and its former salt meadows named Wesseker See and the dune system along the coastline called Weißenhäuser Brök. A strong and major flood prevention dyke separates the largest dune system along the Schleswig-Holstein Baltic coast from the hinterland. It is at the same time located in front of the former lagoon Wesseker See. This See is part of a huge brackish water complex Oldenburger Graben. It has been intensively dyked, drained and pumped below sea level since 18th century. Today the remaining water body of 57 ha named Wesseker See is partly used as storage reservoir for rain water and drainage water from the arable and well drained land around. The connection with the sea is controlled by a huge sluice. The inflow of salt water is extremely limited. The shoreline of the lake is dominated by reed, further inwards the reed is partly mowed until winter 2006/2007. At the same time it has to be stated that some birds have benefited from certain structures due to mowing and cutting. These reed-beds are breeding habitat for 3 to 4 pairs of bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*) and 2 to 3 pairs of marsh harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*).

Some 78 calling males of spotted crane (*Porzana porzana*) have been found at the reed beds in 2002 due to a unique rehumification action in 2001 of a former pumped drained area. At that year the rehumidified area offered a good habitat structure for the very mobile spotted crane.

The dune system located between the dyke and the beach is the largest one in Schleswig-Holstein and also consist of some brown dunes. It is mainly fixed and any occasionally grazing by sheep has been stopped for decades. Vegetation could develop undisturbed as tourists using the sandy beaches are limited on a few fenced paths across the dunes. *Rosa rugosa* might have been planted with the intension of fixing the sand dunes and for shore protection reasons. Together with species as *Carex arenaria*, *Festuca rubra* and *Avenella flexuosa* they have been spread out successfully on the

grey dunes, but at the same time displacing other less defensible plants on the dunes. As vegetation has fixed all sand, no bare ground and open sand could develop new dune systems and offer places for ground insects or seeds, germinating on open sand.

Grazing by hardy cattle shall open the landscape in a smooth way, graze away the decade high layers of litter and softly open bare soil for germination of rare plants seeds. A test run of grazing on the beneficiary's ground have proven positive and the animals became an additional attraction for tourists during winter season.

Directly next to the more eastern dune is the highly frequented holiday centre "Weissenhäuser Strand". The pressure on the dune, although fenced, is very high and some holiday infrastructure (Kiosk, gang way /jetty) has been set up at the foot of the dunes. Also more pathways, partly paved, crossing the dune here to the beach. The private owner of that dune section supports strongly the project idea. In cooperation with the district administration the owner starts grazing here parallel to the site owned by the beneficiary.

Further activities are under preparation and coordinated with the district administration and local reserve managers Mr. Wriedt and Mr. Kempe (both AG Geobotanik).