



Germany

# Dixförda Gravel pits – the most important roosting sites for Whooper Swans in Germany



HEIDELBERGCEMENT

## BACKGROUND



Lower Saxony,  
Germany

The Dixförda pits are used for extraction of sand and gravel. One of the lakes is no longer mined and has turned into a very important wetland habitat for migratory birds. It is one of the largest non-coastal roosting sites for Whooper Swans (*Cygnus cygnus*) in Europe with up to 1120 individuals recorded.

<b>Location</b>	Lower Saxony, Germany
<b>Size</b>	~300 ha
<b>Mineral type</b>	Gravel and sand
<b>Habitat(s) created</b>	Lakes and wetland vegetation, agricultural areas
<b>Target species</b>	Whooper Swan, water birds
<b>Protected areas</b>	IBA and Natura 2000 site (SPA): Glücksburger Heide, Natura 2000 sites (SCI): Schweinitzer Fließ, Korgscher and Steinsdorfer Busch, Kuhlache und Elsteraue near Jessen and Semi-natural wetlands around Annaburger Heide in SE Jessen
<b>Organisations</b>	Heidelberger Sand und Kies GmbH and NABU group Wittenberg

## WHY IS THIS PROJECT NEEDED?

NABU and Heidelberg Sand und Kies GmbH have joined forces to explore the reasons why the Whooper Swans have chosen Dixförda as their roosting site. Is it the good combination of a relatively undisturbed wetland surrounded by abundant grazing areas in the agricultural landscape? How do the swans use the lake and the surrounding area? What movements do they make, where do they feed and where do they come from? What are the conditions that need to be maintained in the future at this gravel pit to support the birds?

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Monitor the number of  
Whooper swans

Study the behaviour

Support the  
implementation

- Monitor the number of Whooper Swans in the gravel pits in different periods and find out their movements and origin.
- Study the behaviour of the swans and their use of the habitats in the gravel pits and wider area using satellite transmitters.
- Support the implementation of environmental education activities at the quarry.

What are the specific ecological needs of the species that the gravel pits meet? What is the basis for these favourable conditions to exist in the long term? Is there any specific management actions required to maintain or enhance them? Beside the gravel pits, what else cause the concentration of wintering swans in the region? Local movements of the Whooper Swans?

## PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Study the long distance and local movements of the swans to help find answers to specific questions about their usage of the area.



The resulting knowledge can be used to improve the protection in nature reserves, which will benefit the Whooper Swans and by implication other species too.

Development of measures and management plan for the gravel pits to ensure long-term protection and favourable habitat conditions for the birds.



Environmental education actions/ public relation (excursions with school classes, the locals community, employees from employees from HeidelbergCement, NABU and ornithologists; elaboration of flyer/ brochure; information materials; presentation; publications etc.).



## PUBLIC BENEFITS



The project brings together the efforts of several organisations such as:

NABU – the nature conservation organisation acting locally, organising local excursions, meetings, education and PR activities.

Ornithological Institute of Hiddensee and Helgoland - carrying out scientific research on migratory birds, they ring and study Whooper Swans and produce scientific publications.

Ornithological association of Saxony-Anhalt e.V. (OSA e.V.) - monitoring and conservation activities, publish results in magazines, local newspapers, etc.

These activities are part of the BirdLife – HeidelbergCement Biodiversity Conservation Programme: Giving nature a second chance

For more information:

Boris Barov | Conservation Programme Coordinator | BirdLife Europe - HeidelbergCement  
Avenue de la Toison d'Or 67 | 1060 Brussels, Belgium | Telephone +32 (0) 479 70 16 06 | E-mail [boris.barov@birdlife.org](mailto:boris.barov@birdlife.org)