



4th East Atlantic Flyway Seminar

Hallig Langeneß, 16–20 April 2026

Introduction

Following three previous seminars on Hallig Langeneß—in 2023 (resulting in a [book on the East Atlantic Flyway](#)), in 2024 (marking “50 Years Schutzstation Wattenmeer”), and in 2025 (celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park)—VISION 52, Schutzstation Wattenmeer, and the WWF Wadden Sea Office are organising a fourth seminar in 2026, once again in conjunction with the Brent Goose Days (“Ringelganstage”).

The year 2026 marks the 50th anniversary of the storm surge of 3 January 1976, a turning point that fundamentally changed perspectives on coastal protection and nature conservation in the Wadden Sea. It contributed to a shift away from large-scale land reclamation towards recognising the ecological value of tidal flats, ultimately leading to the establishment of national parks and the designation of the Wadden Sea as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Today, new alliances between coastal engineers, conservationists and local communities have emerged. At the same time, new and shared challenges have become apparent:

However, new and shared challenges have emerged:

- **How can the Wadden Sea and other key tidal flat systems along the East Atlantic Flyway be preserved in the face of accelerating sea level rise due to climate change?**
- **How can the global “30x30” target be achieved by 2030 by establishing a coherent network of effectively protected areas along the flyway?**

- **How can new coalitions between local communities, economic stakeholders and conservation actors be built to complete this “string of pearls” of protected sites?**

To address these questions, the seminar brings together experts and practitioners from seven countries along the Flyway—including conservationists, scientists, coastal engineers, administrators, and communicators—who can contribute experience, insights, and strategies for building effective alliances.

Venue

Seminar House of the Schutzstation Wattenmeer
Peterswarf, Hallig Langeneß

Programme

Thursday, 16 April

- **18:00** – Ferry departure from Schlüttsiel (route via Hallig Hooge and seal banks at low tide; dinner available on board and included in the seminar fee)
 - **19:45** – Arrival at Hallig Langeneß (Rixwarf), bicycle rental
 - **20:00** – Transfer by bicycle (~8 km) to Peterswarf (luggage transport and car transfer available if needed)
 - **21:00** – Informal gathering with snacks and drinks
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Friday, 17 April

Morning Programme

- **08:00** – Breakfast
 - **09:00–12:00** – Excursion to Hunnenswarf
Observation of high-tide roosts, including large flocks of Red Knots, Bar-tailed Godwits, Grey Plovers and Dunlins gathering on the Hallig during rising tide (high tide approx. 13:30)
 - **12:00** – Field lunch
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Session I (13:00–15:30)

(15 min presentation + 5 min discussion each; for all presentations during the seminar)

Peter Prokosch & Harald Förster (VISION 52 / Schutzstation Wattenmeer)

The storm surge of 3 January 1976 and its influence on conservation in the Wadden Sea

This presentation reflects on the storm surge of 3 January 1976—now 50 years ago—as a historic turning point in how the Wadden Sea came to be understood and valued as a unique international ecosystem. For centuries, the region's worth had been measured primarily in terms of land reclamation, with salt marshes and mudflats converted into agricultural land through embankment. In contrast, the events of 1976 helped shift perspectives toward recognising the ecological importance and vulnerability of this dynamic coastal landscape. Today, the Wadden Sea is protected by a network of national parks across several countries and has been designated a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site. The presentation also includes a welcome from the host organisation, Schutzstation Wattenmeer, whose ongoing work supports the conservation and awareness of this exceptional environment.

Kees Weevers (The Netherlands)

How action in 1965 against dam construction near Ameland led to the establishment of the Waddenvereniging

This presentation tells the remarkable story of how, in 1965, opposition to plans for dam construction between Ameland and the Dutch mainland mobilised public awareness and engagement. The initiative eventually led to the creation of the Waddenvereniging and marked a decisive shift away from land reclamation toward protecting the Wadden Sea as a valuable natural ecosystem.

Jannes Fröhlich (WWF Wadden Sea Office)

The challenge of sea level rise for a climate-adapted Wadden Sea region

This presentation provides an overview of the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea Strategy 2100, highlighting its goal of preserving the Wadden Sea both as a natural ecosystem and as a buffer for coastal protection in the face of climate change. It reviews progress since 2015, ongoing research and pilot projects, and emphasises the importance of integrated, nature-based solutions—particularly sediment management and adaptive coastal measures—to ensure long-term resilience for both ecosystems and human communities.

Wenyan Zhang (Helmholtz-Zentrum Hereon)

Co-design of climate impact modelling of coastal wetlands along the East Atlantic Flyway

This presentation will most likely focus on how collaborative (“co-design”) approaches can improve climate impact models for coastal wetlands by integrating scientific modelling with stakeholder knowledge and management needs. It is expected to highlight how advanced numerical models are used to simulate changes in sea level, sediment transport and habitat distribution, and how these outputs can support decision-making for conservation and coastal protection. A key emphasis will likely be on making models more relevant and usable by involving practitioners, policymakers and local actors in their development, thereby strengthening the link between science and practical adaptation strategies along the East Atlantic Flyway.

Karsten Reise (Sylt, Germany)

Bleak or bright futures for the life of tidal flats in the Wadden Sea?

With 4000 km², the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site comprises the largest coherent tidal flat area of the planet. For tidal flat organisms, (1) there is no ongoing negative trend, and (2) an ecological collapse is not in sight for the next few decades. (3) There is room for major improvements at the upper shore by dispensing brushwood groins and by trying sand nourishments instead, and (4) at the lower shore, there is a fair chance that introduced species could mitigate aggravating sediment mobility.

Hans-Ulrich Rösner & Bernd Scherer (Wadden Sea experts; Germany)

Nature conservation visions for the Wadden Sea

This presentation builds on the guiding principle of trilateral Wadden Sea policy: *to achieve, as far as possible, a natural and sustainable ecosystem in which natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way*. It reflects on how this principle—formulated decades ago—remains both highly relevant and increasingly challenging under current conditions of climate change, sea-level rise and intensified human use.

- **15:30** – Coffee break
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Session II (16:00–18:30)

Gwenal Hervouet (Conservatoire du Littoral, France)

Nature-based solutions and coastal restoration in France

France plays a central role along the East Atlantic Flyway, with its Atlantic and Channel coasts hosting major tidal flats, estuaries and salt marshes. Through the work of the Conservatoire du Littoral, innovative approaches such as managed realignment—reconnecting former polders to the sea—have been implemented. Sites such as the Baie de l’Aiguillon demonstrate how these approaches enhance biodiversity, strengthen coastal resilience and support migratory bird populations. Supported by national and European funding and strong local partnerships, these projects offer a forward-looking model for climate adaptation.

Even Moland (Institute of Marine Research, Norway)

Effectively protected marine areas: global and Norwegian experiences

This presentation argues that no-take zones must form the ecological core of marine protected areas if global conservation targets such as “30x30” are to be achieved. Drawing on case studies from the East Atlantic Flyway and beyond, it demonstrates that such areas lead to ecosystem recovery, increased biodiversity and improved fish stocks. Although often initially opposed, these measures frequently gain long-term support due to their ecological and economic benefits.

Andrew St Joseph (UK)

Balancing coastal protection and nature conservation

This presentation explores England’s estuarine coasts as a complex system shaped by centuries of land reclamation and engineering. It highlights their importance for migratory birds while addressing current pressures such as sea-level rise and ageing flood defences. Adaptive strategies—including managed realignment and integrated coastal planning—are discussed as key approaches to balancing competing land-use interests.

Hyeseon Do (RSPB, UK)

The relationship between the East Atlantic and East Asian–Australasian Flyways

This presentation examines differences in governance and conservation approaches between the two major flyways. It highlights how international recognition, such as UNESCO World Heritage designation in the Yellow Sea region, can catalyse conservation success, and emphasises the value of knowledge exchange between regions.

Wei Chen (Helmholtz-Zentrum Hereon)

The CoastShape project

The CoastShape project investigates how coastal landscapes respond to natural processes and human interventions under changing environmental conditions, particularly in the context of sea-level rise and climate change. By combining field observations, remote sensing and numerical modelling, the project aims to better understand sediment dynamics, morphological change and the resilience of coastal systems such as tidal flats and estuaries. A key objective is to support the development of adaptive, nature-based coastal management strategies that enhance both ecosystem integrity and coastal protection along the East Atlantic Flyway.

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- **19:00** – Dinner
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Saturday, 18 April

- **08:00** – Breakfast
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Excursion and Participation in the Brent Goose Days (“Ringelganstage”)

- **09:00** – Departure by bicycle to the western part of Hallig Langeneß

Participants cycle across the Hallig landscape towards the western end, providing an opportunity to experience the characteristic features of this unique coastal environment, including salt marshes, tidal flats and traditional Hallig settlements.

- **Approx. 10:45** – Transfer by boat (*MS Seeadler*) to Hallig Hooge
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Participation in the Brent Goose Days on Hallig Hooge

Participants will join the official opening and selected programme elements of the annual Brent Goose Days (“Ringelganstage”), a well-established regional event celebrating the return of migratory Brent Geese to the Wadden Sea.

The event reflects a remarkable cultural and ecological transformation: species once perceived as agricultural pests have become symbols of successful conservation and of cooperation between local communities and nature protection organisations. Today, the Brent Goose Days represent an important platform for environmental education, regional identity and sustainable nature tourism.

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- **17:00** – Dinner at “Friesenpesel”, Backenswarf (Hallig Hooge)

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- **19:15** – Return by ferry from Hallig Hooge to Hallig Langeneß

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- **Approx. 20:00** – Return to the seminar house (Peterswarf, Langeneß)
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Evening Programme

- **Informal gathering with snacks and drinks**

The evening provides space for informal discussions, networking, and reflection on the day's experiences, particularly the interaction among conservation, local culture, and public engagement observed during the Brent Goose Days.

Sunday, 19 April

- **08:00** – Breakfast

Session III (09:00–11:00)

(15 min presentation + 5 min discussion each)

Barwolt S. Ebbinge et al. (Wageningen Environmental Research, The Netherlands)

Down and up again: population size changes of Dark-bellied Brent Geese – a classic case of density dependence

This presentation analyses long-term population dynamics of Dark-bellied Brent Geese, illustrating how density-dependent mechanisms regulate population size. It provides insights into fluctuations driven by food availability, breeding success and environmental conditions, offering a classic example of population ecology relevant for migratory waterbirds along the flyway.

Veronika Mohr (Helmholtz-Zentrum Hereon, Germany)

Seagrass meadows in the Wadden Sea: ecosystem functions and coastal protection

This presentation focuses on the ecological importance of seagrass meadows in the Wadden Sea, particularly their role in stabilising sediments, enhancing biodiversity and contributing to carbon sequestration. It also explores their function as a nature-based solution for coastal protection under changing climatic conditions.

Ulf Bauchinger (LIFE Godwit Flyway, Germany)

The southern dimension of the East Atlantic Flyway: conservation of the Black-tailed Godwit

This presentation explores conservation efforts for the Black-tailed Godwit as an umbrella species. It highlights the importance of coordinated action across breeding, staging and wintering areas, demonstrating how targeted measures can support broader ecosystem conservation along the flyway.

Naïd Mubalegh (BirdLife Asker og Bærum, Norway)

Key tidal flat sites in Norway: status, trends and conservation challenges

Norway is presented as a country with strong international environmental ambitions but significant gaps in domestic implementation. The presentation highlights Norway's ecological importance as a breeding and staging area for migratory birds, focusing on habitats such as Arctic tundra, coastal wetlands and scattered tidal flats. Key areas such as Varanger Peninsula and Porsangerfjord illustrate both the country's responsibility and the vulnerability of these ecosystems. The contribution calls for more effective protection measures, including no-take zones and hunting-free reserves, and notes recent positive developments, such as fishing-free areas in the Oslofjord.

- **11:00** – Coffee break
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Session IV (11:30–13:00)

Peter Prokosch (VISION 52)

Visions for Svalbard

Svalbard represents a uniquely important High Arctic region, where highly productive marine systems and tundra habitats support globally significant wildlife populations, including migratory birds of the East Atlantic Flyway. The archipelago has evolved from a history of overexploitation to one of extensive protection, with large areas now safeguarded under Norwegian management in regard to the Svalbard Treaty of 1920. International research, regulated tourism and conservation policies contribute to a vision of Svalbard as one of the best-managed wilderness areas in the world. Achieving this vision, however, requires strengthening marine protection and addressing emerging geopolitical and environmental challenges.

Henning Thiessen (Kiel, Germany)

Impressions from Grand-Béréby: coastal conservation in Côte d'Ivoire

This presentation highlights Côte d'Ivoire's lagoon-dominated coastline as an important but often under-recognised part of the East Atlantic Flyway. A network of lagoons, mudflats and mangroves supports migratory birds while sustaining local livelihoods. Conservation progress includes national parks, Ramsar sites and the newly designated Grand-Béréby Marine Protected Area. Future success will depend on maintaining ecological processes, improving monitoring and strengthening the integration of conservation and community needs.

Thurid Otto (Landesamt für Umwelt Schleswig-Holstein, Germany)

Wetland management in Beltringharder Koog and its effects on bird populations

The Beltringharder Koog, the largest terrestrial nature reserve in Schleswig-Holstein and part of the Natura 2000 network, is intensively managed for conservation purposes. Management measures include water level regulation, grazing, vegetation control and predator management. These targeted actions have significantly improved breeding conditions for endangered meadow and coastal bird species, leading to measurable population increases.

- **13:00** – Lunch

Session V (14:00–18:00)

(with coffee break)

Inge Charlotte Jensen (Aarhus University, Denmark)

Conflict resolution and coalition building along the East Atlantic Flyway

This presentation explores how conflicts between conservation goals and local interests can be addressed through dialogue, participation and trust-building. Drawing on past experiences, it identifies key factors for successful cooperation and outlines strategies for strengthening alliances between stakeholders in the future.

Britta Diederichs (National Park Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea)

Bridging tradition and innovation in conservation planning

This contribution discusses how conservation strategies can integrate traditional land use and cultural landscapes with innovative approaches to ecosystem management, addressing both ecological and social dimensions.

Tatyana Kirikova (Ukraine / Denmark)

Update from the Sivash lagoon system under current geopolitical conditions

This update presents the Sivash lagoon system as a wetland of global importance—comparable to the Wadden Sea—serving as a critical “lighthouse” for millions of migratory waterbirds along the Mediterranean/Black Sea flyway due to its vast shallow feeding areas and rich food resources. It documents how hydrological changes and habitat transformations have already led to significant declines in bird numbers and diversity, and adds the sobering reality that today this unique ecosystem lies within an occupied war zone, where monitoring has largely ceased, management has broken down, and future conservation depends on the end of the conflict and the restoration of ecological processes and international protection efforts.

Jens Gregersen (Denmark)

A life in birds and art

In this personal and reflective contribution, the Danish ornithologist and artist shares his lifelong engagement with nature through fieldwork and artistic expression. He reflects on changes in landscapes and conservation attitudes over decades and emphasises the importance of reconnecting with natural processes, including restoring coastal dynamics.

Kristine Meise (Common Wadden Sea Secretariat)

Integrating monitoring and research into management: perspectives from the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative

This presentation highlights how scientific data and long-term monitoring can be effectively translated into practical conservation measures. It outlines current plans and approaches within the Wadden Sea Flyway Initiative to strengthen the link between research, policy and on-the-ground management.

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- **1600** – Final discussion: synthesis of key findings and perspectives for future communication, including the development of a second East Atlantic Flyway book focusing on future perspectives and visions.
 - **19:00** – Dinner

Monday, 20 April

- **07:00** – Departure by ferry from Langeneß (arrival in Schlüttsiel approx. 09:30)

Field Programme

- **10:00–12:00** – Excursion to Beltringharder Koog
Guided visit to one of the most important wetland reserves in Schleswig-Holstein, illustrating practical conservation management and habitat development.
 - **13:00–15:00** – Visit to the Multimar Wattforum (Tönning)
Introduction to the exhibition and educational work of the Wadden Sea visitor centre, providing broader context on ecosystem dynamics, conservation and public outreach.
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