

## Storytelling assignment – Jan Phillipp Geißel

In this short article I want to tell you the story of one of Germany's most remote islands.

The Greifswalder Oie (literally "Greifswald's isle") is a small island in the Baltic Sea, located east of Rügen approximately 12 km from the Usedom on the German coast. The island covers an area of about 54 hectares and is the Baltic Sea equivalent to Heligoland as it is Germany's only open sea island in the Baltic Sea.

The whole island is a nature reserve dedicated to bird and especially seabird protection. It has very steep cliffs covered by forest and open grasslands forming a very good breeding habitat for great cormorants and other birds. The open land is kept open as a conservation measure to guarantee high bird biodiversity. It is a crucial stop on their migration route over the open Baltic Sea for many birds such as whinchats, robin, stonechats, chiffchaff and various warblers and the surrounding sand banks are a hauling point for grey seals and common seals and a very welcome resting and wintering ground for many water birds, seabirds and shorebirds. Thousands of tufted ducks, greater scaups, velvet scoter, long-tailed ducks, mute swans and many more are wintering around the island sheltered by its shallow reef and tidal plains.



Hundreds of cormorants resting on the Greifswalder Oie.

Through all year vast numbers of seagulls can be seen on and around the island. Little gulls, great black-backed gull, herring gull and many more rest in the emergency harbour the island is providing and around it. Seabirds like razorbills and skuas can be seen from autumn on through

winter.

The island is only inhabited by the employees and the volunteers that manage the bird observatory (four persons in winter to up to 12 during the bird ringing season) and three officers of the German Maritime Search and Rescue Service. The bird observatory, the emergency and the nature reserve are run and administered by the "Verein Jordsand" which aims to protect seabirds and their habitats.



Eider ducks resting on rocks in the intertidal of the islet.



Resting common scoter

Part of their work is to catch, measure and ring migrating birds to gain better understanding of them, their migrations routes and patterns and the connectivity of our bird populations in the western palearctic. Maybe even more important is the work to maintain the island and the ecosystem services it is providing to the animals inhabiting it, resting on it and feeding on and around it. This work includes landscape forming and conserving measures such as sheep farming, woodchopping, hedge trimming but of course also the maintenance of the infrastructure on the island to make continuous work possible.

The people working on the island are also an integral part of the coordinated seal monitoring in the Baltic sea, the water bird monitoring and report all their bird sightings. It is one of Germanys most continuous ringing station and rings approximately 20k birds a year during autumn and spring migration.

If you want to learn more about the work of the Verein Jordsand, the Greifswalder Oie or the projects and the conservation happening there check out their webpage:

<https://www.jordsand.de/schutzgebiete/greifswalder-oie/> (unfortunately only available in German)

Or

European seabird resource hub Germany

<https://www.birdlife.org/europe-and-central-asia/european-seabird-resource-hub-germany>