

Baby terns born in spite of bird flu

Only one breeding colony of Sandwich terns was successful in the Dutch Wadden Sea in 2022. Bird flu led to mass deaths. Around 3600 dead Sandwich terns were picked up on Texel in May and June, and many more probably died at sea. However, later in the summer a group of 600 breeding pairs settled on Texel in the Prins Hendrikzanddijk breeding area. This new start turned out to be successful: some 300 chicks ready to fly were found during a ringing effort led by Mardik Leopold of Wageningen Marine Research. This was a modest bright spot in a year full of concerning reports. The late breeding success on Texel seems to show that the removal of dead birds from infected colonies improves the chance of survival and successful breeding.

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