



# Our Native Wildlife Needs Your Help!

**WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE A DIVERSE ARRAY OF WILDLIFE HERE IN THE NORDHEIDE. TO HELP PROTECT IT, WE WANT TO SHARE INSIGHTS THAT WILL DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THIS WILD AND WONDERFUL NATURE.**

Springtime, particularly from March to around mid-July, is a busy period for wild animals, as most of them are raising their young. This time is known as the **breeding, birthing, and rearing season**. Since humans have increasingly encroached upon the natural habitats of wildlife, it's especially important to show consideration during this period.

**From April 1st to July 15th, all dogs must legally be kept on a leash.** When dogs roam freely through forests and meadows, they can seriously disrupt the breeding, birthing, and rearing of young animals. This can happen even through seemingly harmless activities like playing, licking, or sniffing. So, please keep all dogs leashed during this time, even if they "don't do any harm." Cats that roam outdoors should also wear a bell during this period or even better be kept inside.

Some wildlife species have evolved specific breeding and birthing behaviors that, unfortunately, no longer function well in our densely populated and cultivated landscapes.



For example, there are bird species like the lapwing (Bird of the Year 2024) that build their nests on the ground and hatch their eggs there. This makes them an easy target for many natural predators, such as foxes or hawks. But there are also non-natural threats, like farming machines that work the fields and plant new crops.





**UNLIKE THE WILD RABBIT, THE EUROPEAN HARE DOES NOT GIVE BIRTH IN A BURROW BUT IN A SMALL, SHALLOW DEPRESSION CALLED A 'SASSE,' USUALLY FOUND IN MEADOWS AND FIELDS. THIS MAKES THEM VERY VULNERABLE DURING THE BREEDING AND NURSING SEASON.**

Roe deer are also native to our region and often spend time in our meadows, feeding on herbs and other tasty plants. They also give birth there, to their fawns.

In the first one to two weeks of life, fawns cannot run well and are unable to escape from natural predators. **But nature has come up with a special strategy:** the mother doe hides her fawn in meadows or sometimes in forests. The fawn lies completely still, waiting for the doe to return every few hours to nurse it. In its first weeks, the fawn has almost no scent and a low body temperature. When it hears a noise, it remains motionless and curls up into a small ball. This instinctive behavior, called **'hunkering down,'** works well against natural predators.

However, fawns also face non-natural threats. When the annual grass harvest begins—providing fodder for cattle or raw material for biogas plants—tractors with mowers move in to cut the grassland. If a fawn is hidden in one of these fields, it will stay curled up and still, making it impossible for the tractor driver to see it in the tall grass. This can lead to tragic accidents.

To largely prevent accidents between tractors with mowers and fawns, young hares, or ground-nesting birds, **initiatives for fawn and wildlife rescue** have been established in recent years. These initiatives are organized by hunters and many dedicated volunteers.

The rescue operations use drones equipped with **thermal imaging cameras**. Teams work closely with farmers, scanning grassland areas with drones before mowing begins. Any discovered fawns or other vulnerable animals are carefully and temporarily secured. Once the grass has been cut, the animals are released back into the wild, where they instinctively reunite with their mothers.

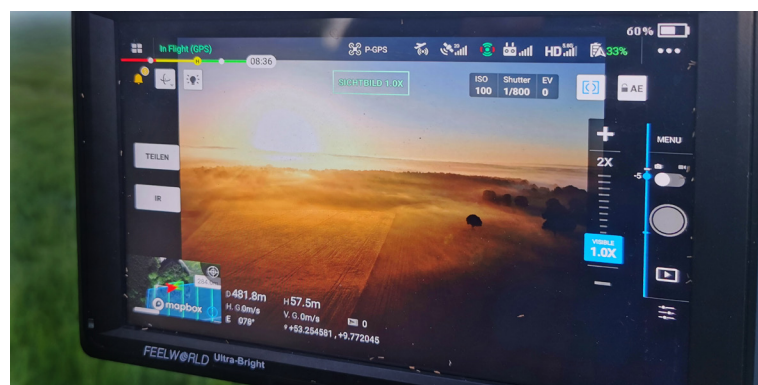
So that our wildlife has the best possible conditions for a safe life in nature, everyone can do their part. **Please do not touch wild animals!**

Even if you see a fawn crying loudly at the edge of a meadow, please walk away and leave it completely undisturbed. **If an animal appears sick or injured, contact us – die Rehkitz- und Wildtiersuche Hegering Tostedt (Fawn and Wildlife Rescue Team of Hegering Tostedt) – the responsible hunter, or the local police station.**

It is important to seek advice from people who are experienced with wildlife. Raising wild animals is extremely complex and should only be done by experts.

If you find crates or baskets hidden at the edge of a meadow, under no circumstances should you release the animals. We will take care of them as soon as the surroundings are safe again. Any interference could cause great harm.

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us. We also always welcome dedicated volunteers to help with fawn rescue.



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