

" Birds!

Look at the troubles happening in our world!

Anarchy – discontent – upheaval!

*Desperate fights over territory, water,
and food!*

Poisoned air! Unhappiness! "

The Conference of the birds,

Attar, Farid Al-Din, (1177)



The Conference of the Birds is an interdisciplinary and socially engaged art project that explores creative ways to coexist with birds in a more than human world. It begins with Nests, site-specific collaborations between artists, birds, researchers and local people (2019-2023) and ends with public events and exhibitions in the Nordic countries (2023-2024). The project focuses on ecology and local interactions between place, people and birds. It will be a contribution to the debate about the biggest challenge of our time and provide inspiration and important input for more sustainable relationships between people and birds.

A BIRD PERSPECTIVE THROUGH THE ARTS

In recent decades, we in the Nordic region have lost over 30% of the total bird population and many species are in danger of disappearing for good. The loss will have unimaginable consequences, also for our human existence. Birds have existed on Earth for 150 million years. In our human culture, birds have a special meaning that is reflected in our mythology, arts and crafts, literature, music, dance and ceremonies worldwide.

This was the inspiration and starting point for creating the project *The Conference of the Birds* in 2018. We wanted to unite art and science to put the spotlight on our relationship with the birds and what is now happening to them. With art at the centre, we explore how tactile, emotional and intuitive values can cultivate empathy and strengthen our connection to our surroundings and to the birds. The Finnish author Yrjö Kokko's book "*Laulujoutsen/ The whooper swan- The bird from the North*" (1950) is a splendid example of the influence art can have on birds. Through his fictional novel, Kokko has been credited with saving the whooper swan population in Finland from extinction. The book changed the attitude towards the once hated bird to become Finland's national symbol. Through the project, we want to highlight such examples and create an emotional commitment among the public with ripple effects elsewhere in society.

CURATORS

The Conference of the Birds is initiated by artist and curator [Eva Bakkeslett](#) (NO) and curated together with artist and curator [Ulrika Jansson](#) (SE). The Finnish part of the project has been curated by Ulla Taipale (FI) and Karoliina Lummaa (FI) and the Danish part by researcher/co-curator Oleg Koefoed (DE).

This report is written by Eva Bakkeslett and Ulrika Jansson January 2024. Image credits for photos in the report can be found on our website www.theconferenceofthebirds.net.



NESTS – MULTIDISCIPLINARY PLATFORMS WHERE BIRDS, ARTISTS, RESEARCHERS, AND LOCAL BIRD EXPERTS MEET

The core of the project is Nests, which are site-specific platforms in the Nordics and Russia* where artists, researchers and local bird experts together with a curator explore issues related to birds. The Nests take place in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Russia*. Many birds migrate through the Nordic countries towards the northern regions of Russia. Throughout history, we in the Nordics and the Barents region have lived side by side with the same bird species. Over time, we have developed close relationships with the birds that have shaped and influenced both culture and ecology in the various countries. Through the various phases of the project, we want to share experiences across national borders, identify and specify our common challenges that can lead to positive changes for the birds.

The Nests have independent production formats and processes. The different forms of artworks, which is the result of the various Nest collaborations, has been shown in national public activities and will gather in joint exhibitions in the coming years. The artworks will give an insight into more-than-human relationships and reflect on different problems connected to certain places and bird species. We have invited artists with strong and sensitive expressions who create everything from installations, video and soundwork, to bodily and participant-based works with a clear awareness of ecology, materiality, body, place and relationships.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES AND EXHIBITIONS

As a part of the processes in the Nests, different outreach activities such as workshops, talks and exhibitions have been arranged nationally. The project in its entirety has been presented to the public in a few seminars as well as on our website and in social media. In collaboration with [NOBA](#) (Norwegian BioArt Arena) the curators have produced a seminar series and made a strategy together towards a larger exhibition presentation of the project in its entirety in 2024-2025. Extensive work has been put in to contact and apply to institutions to collaborate with. The first joint exhibition will be opening at [Österängen Konsthall](#) in Jönköping summer 2024. We are currently planning exhibitions with Hanaholmen Cultural Centre in Espoo, Finland and Terminal B, Kirkenes, Norway as well as having a dialogue with other institutions in the Nordic countries.

*The Russian part of the project is put on hold according to the regulations of our funder BarentsKult



Finland: Chorus sinensis, Bothnian Sea



[Chorus sinensis](#) is an audio-visual choral work dedicated to the **Great Cormorant** (*Phalacrocorax carbo sinensis*). The artwork emerges from the bordering territories of Great Gormorants and humans in the coastal areas of Bothnian Sea in western Finland. The situation between cormorants and humans in Finland provides a vivid demonstration of human-avian conflict, where birds are met with antipathy and a lack of understanding of the contextual drivers. This Nest translates the ecological debate raised by cormorants through the lens of art and culture, thereby generating new perspectives for public contemplation.

Chorus sinensis is conceived and curated by **Ulla Taipale** and combines moving images, photographs and recordings by artist **Jan Eerala** with a choral composition by composer and sound artist **Lau Nau** and the essay [The Great Cormorant – a Bird Worthy of a Song](#) by literary scholar **Karoliina Lummaa**. The audio-visual choral work and photographs are shown as an exhibition with the possibility of a live performance of the choir, depending on the venue.

The idea was to commune and applaud the Great Cormorants by giving them their first and only song. To quote Karoliina Lummaa: “Everything that is important gets a story, a song of its very own. Nature and all its animals and plants are meaningful to us, and that meaning is reflected in art and culture. And what has been depicted and written about remains in our minds as something worth cherishing”.



Between 2019 and 2022, our team tracked cormorant communities in their nesting areas in the Bothnian Sea and Archipelago. They were recorded on rugged, distant outer islets, in a port area reserved for industrial activity, and on an inland lake where they nested for the first time in the summer of 2020. Living on these islands, the colonies carefully build nests from branches and twigs gleaned from far and wide. In the nests, they lay their eggs and hatch their young, whilst fishing in nearby waters. They migrate in the autumn, often returning to the same islands the following spring to nest once again. Cormorants do not attack people nor other predators to defend their nests and offspring.

However, cormorants are unwelcome in human territory. Their droppings transform the colour of their nesting island to brilliant white over the summer; this does not interfere with their lives but offends local people. As a protected seabird the number of cormorants have risen during the last 20 years and their population is stable. After the nesting season and the birds fertilising the terrain, the barren cormorant islands convert to beautiful meadows and become a flowering oasis in the middle of the Baltic Sea.

The working group also includes **Merja Markkula**, a biologist and artist who designed the choir costumes, as well as the 8-member **Poseidon Choir**: Kristina Bakić, Eeva Bergroth, Anna Jussila-inen, Tuija Kuoppamäki, Aleksi Pihkanen, Sami Siitjoki, Teemu Suuntamaa, Susanne Ådahl and Iina Ukkonen. The National Cormorant Working Group and numerous Finnish cormorant researchers also provided their support and expertise in order to realise this Nest.

In August 2021, the choir and working team travelled to the outer archipelago of Luvia in the Bothnian Sea to photograph the choir's landing and to film a performance of two specially composed choral pieces: *Chorus sinensis* and *Elements*. The recordings happened on a rocky island called Pohjankalliot, which is a habitat of cormorants and other seabirds. In October 2021, a studio recording of the choral work took place, and the first exhibition of the work was shown at [Pori Art Museum](#) in June-September 2022, consisting of the video and photographic works, texts and a real nest of a Great Cormorant, exhibited with a special permission of Finnish Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment. There was also a live choir performance for the finale of the show. The exhibition was very well received with many visitors, among them hundreds of school kids.

Chorus sinensis has since been invited to the Stazione di Topolò, Art Festival in Italy in July 2022, presented as the IHME Helsinki online lecture in November 2022, shown at Mänttä Art Festival during summer 2023 and had a screening during the show "I Love Seagulls" at Tromsø Art Society in Norway, August 2023. *Chorus sinensis* is due to show in March 2024 in Hanaholmen Cultural Centre in Espoo, Finland and in Österängens konsthall in Jönköping, Sweden in summer 2024.

TIMELINE OF THE NEST CHORUS SINENSIS / FINLAND

Participants in working group: Ulla Taipale, curator, Jan Eerala, artist, Laura Naukkarinen (Lau Nau) sound artist, Poseidon choir, Karoliina Lummaa, literary scholar



The project started in spring 2020 and have been developed according to the planned schedule:

2020

- Researching and writing the concept around the project (Taipale)
- Production of the first Nest at Ouraluoto (Taipale)
- Nest at Ouraluoto island at Merikarvia archipelago (Eerala, Lummaa, Lau Nau, Taipale): brainstorming and planning the project contents for 2020-22
- Recordings and photographing the colonies in Bothnian Sea (Eerala)
- digging to the existing image archives and creating new ones (Eerala)
- Co-funding applications (Taipale)
- Production of the second Nest at Puorkari at Luvia Archipelago (Taipale)
- Nest at Puorkari island at Luvia archipelago (Eerala, Lau Nau, Taipale): brainstorming and planning the project contents for 2022
- Composing the piece for the choir starts (Lau Nau)
- Meetings with Pori Art Museum curator and director (Taipale)
- Selecting the choir singers and rehearsals with a choir of 9 (Lau Nau)
- Research and writing an essay (Lummaa)
- Design and realizing the costumes (Markkula)

2021

- Filming, recording and editing at Bothnian Sea (Eerala)
- Filming and recording the choir piece at Pohjankalliot island at Luvia archipelago, August 2021 (Naukkarinen, choir, Taipale, Eerala, film crew)
- Post-editing the audio and visuals (Lau Nau and Eerala)
- Curating the Chorus sinensis exhibition for Pori Art Museum (Taipale)

2022

- Production of the exhibition material (Lau Nau, Eerala, Taipale)
- Exhibition opening at Pori Art Museum 17.6.2022
- Parallel activities at Pori Art Museum
- Presentation of the artwork at the Stazione di Topoló, Art Festival in Italy in July 2022
- Exhibition vernissage and choir concert at Kirjurinluoto 25.9.2022
- Presentation at the IHME Helsinki online lecture in November 2022

2023

- Artwork exhibited at Mänttä Art Festival during summer 2023
- Screening during the show "I Love Seagulls" at Tromsø Art Society in Norway, August 2023



Norge: Ahoo Ahoo - Eider ducks and people exchanging cultures



Selvær is an island on the outer skerries of the Helgeland archipelago in North Norway. For centuries, islanders in this area have built houses for and tended to the eider ducks while they are nesting and hatching their eggs, receiving eiderdown as a gift in return. In this Nest, we focus on this interspecies collaboration and the close-knit relationships between humans and eider ducks. [Ahoo Ahoo](#) is the title of the project which is also the captivating sound of the male eider ducks. Their call engulfs the island shores like a choir in early spring in the breeding season.

HISTORY

The unique and unbroken tradition of caring for the eider ducks and collecting the down is kept alive by bird carer **Eivind Hanssen** on Selvær and **Jann Sandøy** on Sandøy, a nearby island. When the eider ducks have hatched their chicks and left their houses Eivind and Jann collect the eiderdown and give it to **Gerd Jakobsen** who spends her winters meticulously cleaning it by hand and making it into beautiful down duvets. For 20 years the biologist **Thomas Holm Carlsen** has also worked closely with the eider duck carers. Thomas has been a link between us and the community of humans and birds on the island and has generously shared his knowledge with us.

Through this long term engagement with the people and birds on Selvær we realised that this project is about a lot more than just the relationship between eiders and people. Like the mycelium network of the fungus, there is so much here that is seamlessly connected. Through the different artworks that have been made, and still are in the process of being made, we are hoping to convey some of this finely tuned connection with the birds and nature as a whole.



ARTWORKS MADE IN THE NEST

In 2022 the curator and artist **Eva Bakkeslett** and the invited artists **Karoline Hjorth** and **Riitta Ikonen**, aka [Eyes as Big as Plates](#), were in Selvær for 10 days working with the people and the eider ducks on the island. Hjorth and Ikonen have made a new body of work that engaged the local community on Selvær as active participants. The work consists of a series of large scale photographs, combined with sculptural elements and objects of significance to each participant. The bird carers have been “dressed” in materials relating to their relationship to the place and the eider ducks and photographed in places of significance to themselves and the eiders on the island. The photographs will be exhibited together with some of the eider duck houses and sound works of recorded stories told by each of the bird carers. These will also be available as text in a pamphlet.

In 2023 **Eva Bakkeslett** returned to for another working period to make a poetic [documentary](#) about the close relationship between humans and birds on the island. The film is exploring the communication and collaboration between humans and eider ducks, the way the relationships have developed over time and how it affects both humans and birds.

Eva has also initiated and is setting up the socially engaged project **E-state agency**, a website that connects the eider duck carers on the island of Selvær with potential volunteers. The carers themselves are now getting old and in need of help with some of the labour intensive jobs involved in the maintenance and yearly preparations of the eider duck houses. The only down cleaner on the island also needs help with this job. An important part of the E-agency is to spread and communicate this old tradition and connect with people who are interested to come and learn and help in order to keep it alive. The agency will connect, organise and fund the volunteer program and also be an information base about this work. This is an ongoing project, rooted in the Conference of the Birds, but in time aiming to be an independent organisation run by the islanders. The first two volunteers of the E-state agency came to Selvær together with Eva Bakkeslett in 2023 and the E-state agency is planned to open in 2024.

For the exhibition presentation of this Nest, Eva is also making an [eiderdown suit](#). The suit is inspired by the “Sleeping pyjamas” from the North pole-1 polar expedition in 1937-8. The eiderdown is a marvellous and magical material, carefully plucked from the mothers chest to line her nest. It is almost weightless but still has the ability to keep you warm even on very cold winter days. The process is very much a part of the work, carefully rinsing the down and dyeing the cotton brown with stone lichen collected from the shores before sewing it into a one-piece eider suit. The suit will be incorporated into an outside, place specific and meditative experience during exhibitions.

The result of these creative and scientific explorations and interventions, will be shown together with work from the other Nests. In 2024 exhibitions are planned at Österängens konsthall in Jönköping, Sweden and in Hanaholmen Cultural Centre in Espoo, Finland and at Terminal B, Kirkenes, Norway.

TIMELINE OF THE NEST AHOO AHOO / NORWAY

Participants in working group: Eva Bakkeslett, artist and curator, **Karoline Hjorth** and **Riitta Ikonen**, (**Eyes as Big as Plates**), artist group, **Thomas Holm Carlsen**, biologist, **Eivind Hanssen**, eider warden, **Jann Sandøy**, eider warden, **Gerd Jakobsen**, eider down textile handcrafter



The project started in 2020 and changes had to be made in the planned schedule due to Covid - 19:

2020

- Researching and concept development (Bakkeslett)
- Applying for co-funding (Bakkeslett)
- Inviting artists and scientists and corresponding with them (Bakkeslett)
- Organising the artist in residency on Hysværet, Vega Archipelago (Bakkeslett)
- Canceling the artist in residency that was supposed to take place in April 2020 and also 2021 due to Covid 19. (Bakkeslett)
- Rescheduling and reorganising co-funding (Bakkeslett)

2021

- Preparing the first residency with the eider duck carers, scientist and artists Karoline Hjorth and Riitta Ikonen for 2022. (Bakkeslett, Hjorth/Ikonen, Holm Carlsen)

2022

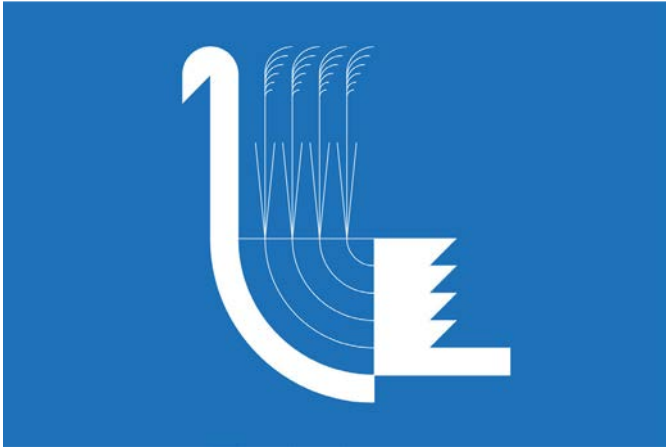
- The first residency Nest took place on 1st-10th May in Selvær, Træna archipelago.
- Organising filming on the island with the eider duck carers (Bakkeslett)
- Organising press and social media (Bakkeslett)

2023

- Production of photographs made during the first residency (Hjorth/Ikonen)
- Preparing the second residency with the eider duck carers (Bakkeslett)
- Organising volunteers to come and help the eider carers with their work (Bakkeslett)
- Organising filming at the residency with the photographer Olav Sjøla (Bakkeslett)
- The second residency Nest took place in Selvær 5th – 15th of May 2023 (Bakkeslett, Hansen, Sandøy, Jakobsen)
- Editing Ahoo Ahoo film (Bakkeslett)
- Planning the making of eider duck suit (Bakkeslett)
- Planning the show of the work from Ahoo Ahoo in Österängen konsthall, Pikene på Broen Kirkenes, Bergen kunsthall and other potential venues (Bakkeslett, Hjorth/Ikonen)



Sweden: Negotiating land use in between birds and human



The Swedish Nest is working with the theme of territory/space and the negotiation of land use between birds and humans, and is situated in two places: In **Göteborg/Frihamnen** with a focus on birds in cities and in **Koster islands** on the Swedish west coast focusing on the rural/coastal perspective. The Nest began with guided walks and public events in [Frihamnen](#) and in [Koster islands](#) summer 2021, helping to orient artists, scientists and local practitioners invited to work in the Nest.

ARTWORKS AND PUBLIC ACTIVITIES IN FRIHAMNEN, THE NEST IN GÖTEBORG

In **Göteborg** the project has focused on Frihamnen, a part of the former industrial harbour that has transformed from former bird-rich reeds and wetlands, to industrial environments and future residential areas. How can we create an understanding of the needs for birds that encourages people to make habitats that also benefit other species in cities? For the Frihamnen Nest, artists, designers, art students, landscape architects, and bird experts from different fields, were invited to investigate the site and what coexistence between species in the city can mean.

Artist and curator **Ulrika Jansson** has created a framework for the participatory contextual reading of Frihamnen and it has materialised in several public events and a seminar in 2021-2023. The common aim at the public events in Frihamnen was to embody an understanding of this multi-species place, in the past, now and in the future. This was made via site investigation, workshops and facts presented by researchers combined with artistic, emotional and bodily experiences. The public events have also functioned as prototypes to test ideas together with the public and an artist in residence period to deepen methods and artworks from time to time. Ulrika Jansson produced the installation and sound work *Varelse / Værelse*, with a point of departure in the teeming birdlife in the historical city reeds. The installation has since been shown at Konsthallen Trollhättan in 2023 and will be shown, together with other participatory artworks developed in this Nest, at Österängen Konsthall summer 2024 and further upcoming exhibitions.

STADEN MED ETT FÅGELPERSPEKTIV, PUBLIC EVENT AND SEMINAR OCTOBER 2022

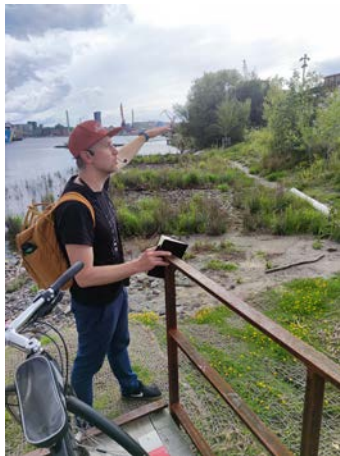
[Staden med ett fågelperspektiv](#) was one of the public events that took place out in Frihamnen and it was arranged together with a seminar at Norges hus in Göteborg.

[Pernilla Ljungkvist](#), artist, held the participant-based performance "[Andefågeln - Becoming Spirit Bird](#)" where the audience standing together in a plow formation like migrating birds listening to a sound piece in headphones and transform into their inner spirit bird.



[Christoph Matt](#), eco-social designer (AT) created all the communication design for the Swedish Nest. In *Staden med ett fågelperspektiv*, he developed the design concept "[Bring Birds Back](#)", where the audience got involved with the birds of the place in the past, present and future by talking about bird species linked to the site via a designed communication material. The workshop aimed to bring back birds that disappeared from the area to people's consciousness with educational talks, and physically by creating birds using a stencil tool with materials from the site.

At the event, the invited specialists, **Anita Campbell** associate professor of neurochemistry, spoke about bird cognition and zoologist **Leif Lithander** about human's historical relationship with birds in Gothenburg. Paralell with the event, a seminar was organized at Norges hus about problems and opportunities for birds in cities with **Jan Westin** zoologist and **Håkan Billing** BirdLife Oslo. The lectures will be published on our website. Filmmaker **Kristina Meiton** and **Ulrika Jansson** made the 20 min video [Staden med ett fågelperspektiv](#) (password Ulrika) about the event in Frihamnen.



VARELSE / VÆRELSE, PUBLIC EVENT IN FRIHAMNEN SEPTEMBER 2023

Værelse means room in Danish and varelse means creature in Swedish. [Varelse / Værelse](#) two words from the same linguistic stem. Creatures are completely intertwined with their space and the vegetation there - and as humans take over more and more surface, those spaces disappear.

In the event, bird friendly landscape architect **Martin Allik** took participants to a guided walk in Jubileumsparken made by [Mareld Landscape architects](#). In their design they have made interesting examples of how urban landscapes could provide habitats for bird species by re-creating bits of wetlands and the ruderal areas of the past. Together with Martin Allik, **Christoph Matt** held the workshop "Bird-Human Space", an interactive walk to advocate bird's need of space in urban landscapes using diverse design methods.

Another activity during the event was The Council of All Beings a communal ritual by Joanna Macy, that was held in a developed format by poet **Kennet Öhlund**, and designer **Thomas Laurien**. The workshop explored the notion of speaking from the perspective of other species about their needs in the development of the place. Following the workshop, a panel discussion delved into the challenges and possibilities of incorporating other species into landscape architecture and urban planning, featuring insights from **Olof Olterman**, a landscape architect at URBIO, **Jonas Ulvdal**, architect from the City Planning Department of Gothenburg.



VARELSE / VÆRELSE, EXHIBITION AT SKOGEN, GÖTEBORG SEPTEMBER 2023

Parallel with the events in Frihamnen a sculpture and sound installation by artist Ulrika Jansson and a participant-based performance by Pernilla Ljungkvist were shown in the performing arts platform [Skogen Masthuggsterassen](#). The installation Varelse / Værelse has its point of departure in the teeming birdlife in the historical city reeds. It features baskets made from local plant fibers such as reeds, grasses and willows, recreating old fish catching tools found on the site. Clay is also characteristic of the site and ceramics is used to make heads and feet of bird species that have lived in the area. In a soundwork visitors could listen to a guided visualisation using hypnosis techniques to open their senses to access to the inside of the site: the memory and emotions of the place, a dreamlike existence where plants, creatures and relationships from different times and places merge. Pernilla Ljungkvist held the participatory performance "[Spirit Bird Revival](#)" inside of this installation, going even deeper in to the inner landscape looking for the inner bird of the participants, followed by a drawing session of the birds they met during the session.



ARTWORK BY GYLLEBOVERKET IN THE NEST IN KOSTER ISLANDS

In **Koster Islands**, on the Swedish west coast, the artist collective [Gylleboverket](#), aka **Etta Säfve** and **Jona Elfdahl** has been developing a video installation together with the local population. Gylleboverket works with site-specific installations, performance, sound, video and ritual investigations. In summer 2021 Gylleboverket carried out an Artist in residence period at Koster islands and they have returned various times to film and work with the residents.

Gylleboverket is working with a series of cinematic rituals, together with the local population on the Koster Islands and develop the work where they live in Österlen, Skåne. In the work they examine a co-existence with place and land and how, by trying to sync up with the bird as beings, the possibilities to approach an extended ecological self that goes beyond time and space. Can birds, which with a few beats of its wings, seamlessly move across national borders, provide a key to a different relationship to belonging, to place, land and earth? An earth that belongs to everyone or no one.

The work consists of film recordings where they let a camera record the transformations. Their work will be developed site-specifically and be presented as a video installation for the first time at the exhibition at Österängen konsthall, 2024 and also be included in the further upcoming exhibitions.

TIMELINE OF THE NEST NEGOTIATING LAND USE IN BETWEEN BIRDS AND HUMANS / SWEDEN

Participants in working group, Frihamnen, Göteborg: Ulrika Jansson, artist and curator, Pernilla Ljungkvist, artist, Christoph Matt, eco-social designer. Koster islands: Etta Säfve/Jona Elfdahl, Gylleboverket, artist group, as well as invited guests



The project started in 2020 and changes had to be made in the planned schedule due to Covid – 19. The number of public activities expanded when we recieved more co-funding than planned:

2020

- Concept development, project planning and applying for co-funding (Jansson)
- *Våra grannar fåglarna* – workshop about birds in cities for children at Frihamnen (Jansson)

2021

- Public event in Frihamnen with invited artists, ornithologist and designers, May (Jansson and invited guests)
- Public event Koster island at Koster trädgårdar with artist group Gylleboverket and Ulrika Jansson. Guided walks in Koster island with ornithologist and local practitioners, June
- Artist in residence period for Gylleboverket at Koster island. Filming for art work. August.
- Preparations for public event 2022 in Frihamnen and applying for co-funding (Jansson)

2022

- Workshop in Frihamnen about birds in cities for KV art college, Göteborg (Jansson)
- Staden med ett fågelperspektiv, public seminar, with bird experts from Sweden and Norway about birds in cities at Norges Hus, Göteborg October
- *Staden med ett fågelperspektiv* Frihamnen, two day public event with workshops, performance and lectures with invited artist, designer and bird experts, October
- Production of video documentation of *Staden med ett fågelperspektiv* by Kristina Meiton
- Applying for co-funding Göteborg stad for public event 2023 (Jansson)

2023

- Workshop in Frihamnen about birds in cities for KV art college, Göteborg (Jansson)
- Producing sculpture installation and soundwork *Varelse / Værelse*, Ulrika Jansson
- Preparations for *Varelse / Værelse* public event in Frihamnen August 2023 (Jansson)
- *Varelse / Værelse*, two day public event at Frihamnen with workshops and guided walks with invited designers, city planner and bird experts.
- *Varelse / Værelse*, three day exhibition of installation and soundwork, performance, screening of video documentation and talks at Skogen performing art platform, Göteborg
- *Varelse / Værelse*, exhibition of installation and soundwork at Konsthallen Trollhättan
- Production of article *Temporal Ecosystem Services in Art: Informing Design Strategies for Urban Industrial Heritage Sites* for Design issues, MIT Press 2024, with the events in Frihamnen as case study, by Susanne Fredholm, dep. of Conservation, Gothenburg University and Ulrika Jansson
- Production of video installation by Gylleboverket for exhibition at Österängen konsthall



Denmark: Avian/Human



[The Danish Nest](#) has explored the entanglement and encounters between humans and birds in the city. By looking at how humans and birds co-exist, our intention has been to contribute to a re-consideration of the value of birds in the city and how a city might be designed to better accommodate both human and avian needs.

As a growing capital region, Copenhagen is the home of around 1 million human inhabitants – and around 400 different species of birds. Some species are abundant in numbers, like the magpie or the ringed gull. Others are only passing through, and some are few and far between (like the sea eagle). Human ways of intertwining with our avian co-inhabitants are many, and emotions vary from fear and irritation to awe and compassion. Several zones of the city are important for migrating bird species, but birds are never actually included in big scale planning.

Th Nest has focused on spaces, movements, territories, how to increase sensitivity, and how to understand bird perceptions and patterns. The overall approach has been to explore with participatory means what entanglement means in this place through workshops, walks and art forms such as movement/body; photography; sound; incorporated mapping, and text.

The Danish Nest is co-curated by Action-Philosopher **Oleg Koefoed** and bird expert [Nikolaj Noel Christensen](#) of the Danish Society of Ornithology at the University of Copenhagen LIFE sciences and the Danish Conservationist Society.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEST

From 2020-2022, the group around the Danish Nest had an on-going conversation and planning on the possible contributions of the artists under the Conference of the Birds umbrella; carried out a couple of internal workshops, such as a 2-hour workshop by bird and nature expert, Nikolaj Noel Christensen on birds in the city of Copenhagen. We did eleven national applications for co-funding that were denied, and this forced to change the initial plans of the Nest.

In the end, the realisation of the public activities in the Avian/Human project at and around Islands Brygge during spring 2023 was enabled when we finally gained some support from Sharing Copenhagen, the culture committee of the city of Copenhagen, and the local council of Amager Vest, as well as partnerships with Kulturhuset Islands Brygge and Njord Green, the latter offering us to rent a 'dome of life' to perform the activities in.

THE NEST AVIAN/HUMAN

The public activities of the Nest Avian/Human were carried out in Copenhagen in spring 2023 from early February till early June. It took place on and near the former industrial pier of Islands Brygge, in the middle of Copenhagen. Today, the pier is part of a residential and business neighbourhood, and the program Avian/Human was aimed at triggering the attention of inhabitants and users of the pier area toward their (human) inter-existence with the birds of the area (Avian).

The Avian/Human project included the work of [Nana Francisca Schottländer](#) (performance) and [Laura Winge](#) (co-designer and anthropologist), [Becoming Species](#) (collective of performance artists), and **Maiken Vibe Bauer** (sound artist), as well as bird expert **Nikolaj Noel Christensen**; curated by **Oleg Koefoed** (action-philosopher and author), who also contributed to Maiken Vibe Bauer's and Nikolaj Noel's activities. The specific activities are described below.

THE AVIAN/HUMAN PUBLIC PROGRAM IN THE DOME OF LIFE AT ISLANDS BRYGGE 2023

Reading circle around *Living As a Bird* - facilitated by **Nana Francisca Schottländer & Oleg Koefoed** 12+26/2 + 12/3 // The Belgian philosopher and writer Vinciane Despret has for decades moved between birds and behaviourists, writing books and articles about how we can understand the world through the behaviour of birds. *Living as a Bird* (2020) was read with interested participants, often spontaneous, and had talks after the reading sessions.



Talk, conversation and equinox walk on birds, migration, and time - with **Nikolaj Noel Chistensen**, curated and facilitated by **Oleg Koefoed** 14+21/3 // The first session was a lecture and conversation in the dome, inviting a reflection on wars, migrations, and coping strategies of birds in times of conflict. The equinox walk took us through the commons of Amager, with dialogues on how birds manage and find their way during times of construction, climate change etc.

Bird Traces (Going Visiting the Subject-Object-making Dance) with **Nana-Francisca Schottländer** and **Laura Winge** 25/3. // The event took place as a workshop, where the audience was invited to explore the surroundings, observe and try to sense movements and behaviour of local birds, and perform certain actions such as offering seeds and drawing how we sensed the birds, the space, and the conditions of life. At the end of the session, a linen tableau and a clay egg was created, where visions were dug in, and which was later brought to a 'nesting site' on the other side of the inner harbour channel, at Sydhavnstippen.





Nesting- citizen engagement workshop /performance, with Becoming Species 22-23/4 // For two days, the artists turned the inside of the dome into a nest, drawing on knotting traditions and shredding. First day was with adults and the next with small children and their parents. The nesting activity started in the dome, but also stretching out of it and into public space. The artists and the participants went through the life stages of a bird, from egg to hatching, chicken and young birds, trying off its new capacity to fly and its wings. Audiences were invited to paint themselves, create costumes, and sharpen their sensual understanding of life in the city as a bird.



VOICES - Embodied Knowledge of Place with Maiken Vibe Bauer, feat. Oleg Koefoed 30/5-1/6 // VOICES is a site-specific sound installation and radical space for collective listening, based on the 119 different and often unnoticed bird species belonging to the shared urban landscape of Islands Brygge, Copenhagen. VOICES invites participants to a dawn listening session, giving space and time to the singular voices of the birds. Conceived as a parliament of diverse voices, the piece encourages the discernment of each bird's individual expression played out in order of appearance—whether verbal or non-verbal. This sound installation is conceived as a radical space for collective listening, opening up a space for attentiveness, reflecting on listening together as an act of care and how vibrant relations connect us to place.

The artworks and workshops made in the Avian/Human project in the Danish Nest will be developed further and presented at the exhibition and be part of a public program at Österängen Konsthall 2024 as well as in the future joint exhibitions.

We do not include a specific timeline for the Danish Nest since it is described here in the text.

FINLAND - WINGED WORDS NEST

[The Winged Words Nest](#) dives into the historical context of nature writing in the current context of environmental change. It is curated by Karoliina Lummaa together with the main curators.



An example of the influence that literary works have had on bird culture in Finland is the veterinarian and writer Yrjö Kokko. Through his famous book "Laulujoutsen" Kokko is widely credited with having saved the Whooper swan population in Finland from extinction and now thriving as the national symbol.

In this Nest invited writers have explored environmental and literary history, changes in Scandinavian bird populations and their habitats, as well as global environmental problems and mass extinctions. There was a plan to have much more activities in the Winged words Nest but Covid 19 delayed the plans and we could not manage to get more co-funding.

TEXTS AND VIDEO PRODUCED IN THE WINGED WORDS NEST

Karoliina Lummaa (FI)

Birds in Finnish literature

Karoliina Lummaa is a postdoctoral researcher specialised in literary studies and environmental humanities. This essay was originally published in German in Jahrbuch für finnisch-deutsche Literaturbeziehungen Nr. 54, 2022. Translated into German by Stefan Moster. Translation for The Conference of the Birds into English by Karoliina Lummaa, with poems and fiction translated by Emily Jeremiah, Fleur Jeremiah, John Abercromby and Karoliina Lummaa.

Jessica Sunnebo (SE)

Birdpoetic Worlds

The Swedish poet Nina Södergren's writings are multi-species events. Birds in particular feature strongly though, with her poems being animated by around 275 different bird varieties. How can Södergren's birdpoetics function as an invitation to sense a relational experience with the more-than-human world? Following the bird through Södergren's poetry Jessica Sunnebo takes the reader on an illuminating journey.

Katri Aholainen (FI)

[Katri Aholainen](#) is a literary historian at Turku University. In her thesis, she wrote about the involvement of non-human actors in art-making processes. Her material includes the veterinary and writer Yrjö Kokko's books where whooper swans are the main characters. At the time of their publication (1950 and 54) of the books the swans were rapidly disappearing from Finland due to human interventions. Thanks to the popularity of Kokko's books, the attitudes towards swans gradually changed and the living conditions of the swans began to improve. In her dissertation, she reflects on how whooper swans participated in the process of creating books to save them.

We interviewed Katri about her work and the video will be shown in our website and has also been shown in the seminar in Tromsø.

The texts and video produced in the Nest so far will be published on our web site soon. They will also, together with other texts, be published in the anticipated The Conference of the Birds Anthology and be part of the final exhibitions together with a workshop for the public, based on the same theme.

TIMELINE OF THE NEST WINGED WORDS / FINLAND

Participants in working group: *Karoliina Lumma*, literary scholar, *Katri Aholainen*, literary historian, *Eva Bakkeslett*, artist and curator, *Ulrika Jansson*, artist and curator.

The project started in 2020 and changes had to be made in the planned schedule due to Covid – 19 and not finding enough co-funding:

2020

- Planning of the Nest and applying for national co-funding (Lumma, Bakkeslett, Jansson)

2021

- Applying for national co-funding (Lumma)
- Cancelling and rescheduling the planned Nest activities due to Covid 19 and not receiving co-funding. Contacting venues and writers. (Lumma)

2023

- Re-planning of the Nest to produce texts mainly for web page and videos to show on seminars and exhibitions (Lumma, Bakkeslett)
- Translation of the text by Karoliina Lummaa Birds in Finnish literature
- Production of video about the research of Yrjö Kokko of Katri Aholainen (Aholainen, Bakkeslett)
- Commission of re-writing of essay Birdpoetic Worlds by Jessica Sunnebo (Jansson, Bakkeslett)
- Screening of the video about the research of Yrjö Kokko of Katri Aholainen, at the seminar ***Kan Folk og fugl bli venner***, at Tromsø Kunstforening,
- Upcoming: Publishing on web site of the texts and video produced in the Nest so far. Publishing of the texts in the anticipated The Conference of the Birds Anthology.

OTHER ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS

SEMINARS

The Conference of the Birds have been presented to the public in a few different seminars:

- **Ålekråkans dag**, seminar about cormorants, November 2021, arranged by Bohusläns museum, Uddevalla, Sweden. Lecture about *The Conference of the Birds* by Ulrika Jansson and screening of the video *Chorus sinensis*.



- **Staden med ett fågelperspektiv**, October 2022, seminar at Norges hus in Göteborg about problems and opportunities for birds in cities. It was arranged as a part of the Nest in Frihamnen Göteborg. The lecturers in the seminar were Ulrika Jansson artist, Jan Westin zoologist, Leif Lithander zoologist and Håkan Billing BirdLife Oslo.

- **Club Antropocen - Animals**, March 2023 at Skogen performing arts platform, Göteborg. Lecture about *The Conference of the Birds* by Ulrika Jansson and screening of the video *Chorus sinensis*.



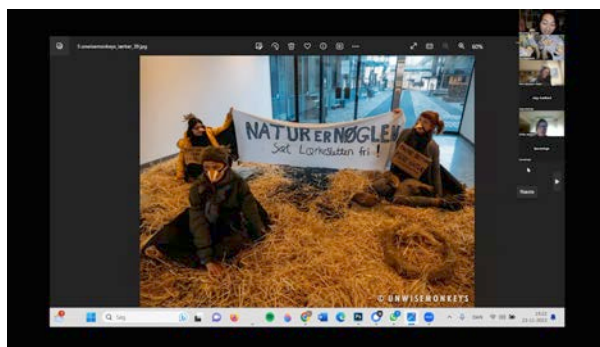
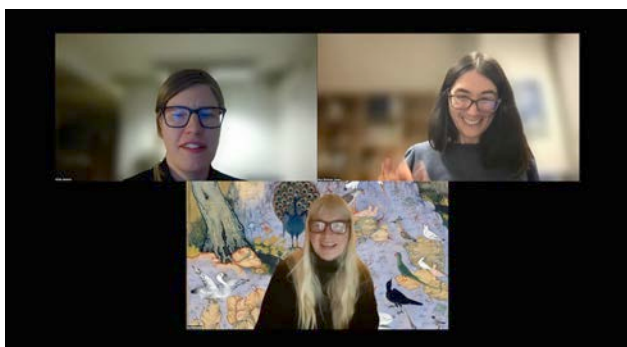
- **Kan folk och fugl bli venner?** As part of the exhibition "We love seagulls" at Tromsø Contemporary Art Society (Tromsø kunstforening) August 2023 The Conference of the Birds held an interdisciplinary seminar on how to coexist with kittiwakes. Artists, architects, and researchers presented their insights into how it is possible to collaborate across disciplines and species to lift an apparent problem of birds migrating into cities into new and more empathetic spaces of possibility. Presentations and performances by David Rothenberg - philosopher and musician (US), Tone Kristin Reiertsen - seabird researcher at NINA (NO), Irene Kaltenborn - artist (NO), Katri Aholainen - researcher of literature (FI), Lawrence Malstaf & Kjeld Nash - artist & architect (NO), Kåre Grundvåg & Camilla Fagerli - artist & curator (NO), Bente Sundsvold & Anniken Førde - researchers, UiT (NO), Eva Bakkeslett - artist and curator (NO). Funded by Norsk Kulturråd.

SEMINARS ARRANGED TOGETHER WITH NOBA - NORWEGIAN BIOART ARENA

The Conference of the Birds have during 2022-2023 collaborated with [NOBA](#) (Norwegian BioArt Arena) creating out-reach activities such as the seminar series and making a strategy together towards a larger exhibition presentation of the project in its entirety in 2024-2025. NOBA is a project at Vitenparken Ås and is an artistic hub and public arena for bioart. NOBA's main focus is on projects where art meets science, and *The Conference of the Birds* is just such a project, which asks how art and research together can give a new look at the drastic decline of birds.



- **Fugleperspektiver**, seminar at Vitenparken Ås, November 2023. The seminar offered a screening of the video *Chorus sinensis* and lectures by Eva Bakkeslett - artist and curator (NO), Ulrika Jansson - artist and curator (SE), Karoline Hjort - artist (NO) and Cecilie Sachs Olsen - professor art in society, OsloMet (NO). Funded by Norsk Kulturråd.



- **Collaboration and contempt: Birds Eye Views** - online seminar, November 2023. Presentations by Nora S. Vaage/NOBA (NO), Eva Bakkeslett - artist and curator (NO), Ulrika Jansson - artist and curator (SE), Ulla Taipele - curator (FI), Oleg Koefoed - action philosopher and curator (DE), Linh Tuyet Le/Becoming species - performance artist collective (DE), Laura Winge - artist and design anthropologist (DE), Maiken Vibe Bauer - sound artist (DE), Riitta Ikonen and Karoline Hjorth - artists (NO), Pernilla Ljungkvist - performance artist (SE), Christoph Matt - eco social designer (AT), Etta Säfve and Jona Elfdahl/Gylleboverket - artist and permaculture collective (SE). Funded by Norsk Kulturråd.

WEB/SOCIAL MEDIA

During the project we have produced a web site and an Instagram account which is an important part of spreading the work made in the different countries to an international audience. We are continuously filling it with new content.

Webpage: www.theconferenceofthebirds.net Instagram: [@the.conferenceofthebirds](https://www.instagram.com/the.conferenceofthebirds)