

Flevo Birdwatching

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| Tour date: | June 2nd, 2016 |
| Name of area visited: | Oostvaardersplassen, 5600 ha wetland between Almere and Lelystad |
| Guide(s): | Robert de Groot |

Remarkable: White-fronted Geese

Weather:

SPECIES LIST

| Nederlandse naam | English name | Scientific name |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Fuut | Great Crested Grebe | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> |
| Dodaars | Little Grebe | <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> |
| Aalscholver | Great Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> |
| Kleine zilverreiger | Little Egret | <i>Egretta garzetta</i> |
| Grote zilverreiger | Great Egret | <i>Casmerodius albus</i> |
| Blauwe reiger | Grey Heron | <i>Ardea cinerea</i> |
| Lepelaar | (Eurasian) Spoonbill | <i>Platalea leucorodia</i> |
| Knobbelzwaan | Mute Swan | <i>Cygnus olor</i> |
| Kolgans | White-fronted Goose | <i>Anser albifrons</i> |
| Grauwe gans | Greylag Goose | <i>Anser anser</i> |
| Grote Canadese gans | Greater Canada Goose | <i>Branta canadensis</i> |
| Brandgans | Barnacle Goose | <i>Branta leucopsis</i> |
| Bergeend | (Common) Shelduck | <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> |
| Nijlgans | Egyptian Goose | <i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i> |
| Smient | (Eurasian) Wigeon | <i>Anas penelope</i> |
| Wilde eend | Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> |
| Krakeend | Gadwall | <i>Anas strepera</i> |
| Slobeend | (Northern) Shoveler | <i>Anas clypeata</i> |
| Wintertaling | (Common) Teal | <i>Anas crecca</i> |
| Tafeleend | (Common) Pochard | <i>Aythya ferina</i> |
| Kuifeend | Tufted Duck | <i>Aythya fuligula</i> |
| Bruine kiekendief | Marsh Harrier | <i>Circus aeruginosus</i> |
| Buizerd | (Common) Buzzard | <i>Buteo buteo</i> |
| Waterhoen | Moorhen | <i>Gallinula chloropus</i> |
| Meerkoet | (Common) Coot | <i>Fulica atra</i> |
| Scholekster | Oystercatcher | <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> |
| Kluut | Avocet | <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> |
| Steltkluut | Black winged Stilt | <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> |
| Kleine plevier | Little ringed Plover | <i>Charadrius dubius</i> |
| Kievit | Northern Lapwing | <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> |
| Tureluur | (Common) Redshank | <i>Tringa totanus</i> |
| Kokmeeuw | Black headed Gull | <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> |
| Zilvermeeuw | Herring Gull | <i>Larus argentatus</i> |

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|-----|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| | Kleine mantelmeeuw | Lesser Black-backed Gull | <i>Larus fuscus</i> |
| | Visdief | (Common) Tern | <i>Sterna hirundo</i> |
| | Houtduif | Wood Pigeon | <i>Columba palumbus</i> |
| (H) | Koekoek | (Common) Cuckoo | <i>Cuculus canorus</i> |
| | Gierzwaluw | (Common) Swift | <i>Apus apus</i> |
| | IJsvogel | (Common) Kingfisher | <i>Alcedo atthis</i> |
| | Oeverzwaluw | Sand Martin | <i>Riparia riparia</i> |
| | Boerenzwaluw | Barn Swallow | <i>Hirundo rustica</i> |
| | Huiszwaluw | House Martin | <i>Delichon urbica</i> |
| | Graspieper | Meadow Pipit | <i>Anthus pratensis</i> |
| | Witte kwikstaart | White Wagtail | <i>Motacilla alba</i> |
| | Gele kwikstaart | Yellow Wagtail | <i>Motacilla flava</i> |
| | Winterkoning | Wren | <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i> |
| | Heggemus | Dunnock | <i>Prunella modularis</i> |
| | Gekraagde roodstaart | (Common) Redstart | <i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i> |
| | Merel | Blackbird | <i>Turdus merula</i> |
| | Zanglijster | Song Thrush | <i>Turdus philomelos</i> |
| | Rietzanger | Sedge Warbler | <i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i> |
| | Grasmus | (Common) Whitethroat | <i>Sylvia communis</i> |
| (H) | Zwartkop | Blackcap | <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i> |
| | Fitis | Willow Warbler | <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> |
| | Tjiftjaf | Chiffchaff | <i>Phylloscopus collybita</i> |
| | Baardman | Bearded Tit | <i>Panurus biarmicus</i> |
| | Matkop | Willow Tit | <i>Parus montanus</i> |
| | Pimpelmees | Blue Tit | <i>Parus caeruleus</i> |
| | Koolmees | Great Tit | <i>Parus major</i> |
| (H) | Staatmees | Long-tailed Tit | <i>Aegithalos caudatus</i> |
| | Spreeuw | (Common) Starling | <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> |
| | Ekster | Magpie | <i>Pica pica</i> |
| | Kauw | (Eurasian) Jackdaw | <i>Corvus monedula</i> |
| | Raaf | (Common) Raven | <i>Corvus corax</i> |
| | Zwarte kraai | Carrion Crow | <i>Corvus corone</i> |
| | Huismus | House Sparrow | <i>Passer domesticus</i> |
| | Vink | Chaffinch | <i>Fringilla coelebs</i> |
| | Groenling | Greenfinch | <i>Chloris chloris</i> |
| | Putter | Goldfinch | <i>Carduelis carduelis</i> |
| | Kneu | Linnet | <i>Carduelis cannabina</i> |
| | Rietgors | Reed Bunting | <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i> |
| | .. | .. | .. |
| | 68 | 3 | 71 |
| | Soorten waargenomen / Species observed | (H) = Alleen gehoord / Heard only | Total |

Locations that were visited in chronological order. Numbers in brackets correspond to numbers on the map below. In green, a general description, in black the actual observations.

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Area to the southwest of Almere, looking out over the old coastline (not on map). A short stop on the dike gets us some Great Crested Grebe, some Black-headed Gulls and Mallard. Near the floating blue houses we find White Wagtail, Great Egret and some 2000 Cormorants. The Cormorants form an impressive umbrella of birds flying overhead. Some Tufted Duck, a family of Egyptian Geese that do not know whether to cross in front of us or evade. They cross behind us. Some groups of Greylag Geese, consisting of only a few adults and a whole flotilla of goslings. We check the manure deposit but find nothing exciting.

Natte Graslanden (19): Reclaimed agricultural land. The area is kept open using cattle. But these are just for grazing. The open, treeless, area offers opportunities for waterfowl, waders and herons. The White-tailed Eagle uses this area for hunting, as well as do Goshawk, Marsh Harrier and, in winter, Peregrine. Water level drop slightly during summer, exposing mudflats and freshwater mussels. A number of observation screens is available, one is covered with a roof. The bushes around the area are good for warblers, Cuckoo, finches. We hear Cuckoo, enomatopoeically, in a self-conscious way calling its name. The path leading to the dike has birdsong, but we see few birds. Looking from the crest of the dike is no fun, quite windy. Going back we turn towards the hides. The first one is reached after seeing a Whitethroat, Coot and Mallard, not even a Common Pochard. This we see at the next hide. But there is more: Spoonbill, even in flight, Lapwing, Redshank. Also several species of duck: Shoveler, Gadwall, Wigeon and Teal. Further off are Shelduck. While listening to the yodelling song of Little Grebe, which the English call Dabchick, several come into view. The first of several Marsh Harriers flies in the distance, later we see others closer by. Black-tailed Godwit On the way back we have good looks of a Common Linnet, a ruby in the top of a branch. Coffee at the car.

Kwelwater (15): One of the better spots for Bearded Reedling and, during spring, Bluethroat. The fresh water lake, at one of the lowest points in the polder, dries up partly in summer. Avocets, Black-tailed Godwits, ducks make good use of it at those times. On the water Shelduck, Avocet, Greylag Geese. The reeds move a lot because of the wind. Still, from time to time, Bearded Reedlings fly over them, and drop back into the vegetation. Reed Bunting with black head and white collar, show themselves better. Their song will never win a contest, but it is clearly recognisable.

Trekvogellandje (18): Opposite the oldest building in this polder. The plot is next to the Lepelaarplassen and has been landscaped from agriculture to nature. In spring the area is largely flooded, giving feeding possibilities to waders and ducks. During summer it dries out, but autumn sees it going green again. Geese love it that way. We move to the spot where a bench could offer some rest. It is out of the wind, so lots more comfortable. The water level is not all that high, so Little Egrets and their bigger cousins hunt the shallows. Barn Swallows and Sand Martins fly overhead. Greenfinch sings from a Willow tree. Another Whitethroat sings from the brambles and a Kingfisher zooms past a few times.

Parking Zuid (16): From this point you can look over large reed beds. A line of bushes growing on a shallow ridge forms a breeding colony for Cormorants and Spoonbills. Recently Great Egret have started nesting in the area, so check for these as well. Listen for booming Bittern, look for Marsh Harriers, Raven and Common Buzzard. The line of trees along the dike going to the north offers good chances for Hobby and Kestrel. A little round island close to the dike, is a leftover of a project that unfortunately started in the Second Worldwar. A Liberator bomber, returning from Germany, had been damaged, and it crashed into what was then still Lake IJssel. Only one of the crew survived. After the polder dried out, the wreckage stuck out above the water. It was recovered, together with the remains of five of the crew. When the dragline returned after having pulled out the wreck, it also took with it all the sand and clay that were used to build a temporary dam to the wrecksite. This was all dumped on a single spot, creating a round island. Originally it was covered with shell and pebbles to facilitate breeding for terns and plovers. But plants had it their way, so now it is overgrown and probably safely holds other species. We did not stop here, but along the dike we saw several Marsh Harriers.

Parking Noord (17): Next to a breakwater and jetty at the IJsselmeer side of the road. On that side we normally see many gulls, ducks and terns. The breakwater itself is a resting area for terns and gulls. The sheltered water has some vegetation that is used by Snipe, ducks and geese. On the land side we can cast a distant view towards the nest of the White-tailed Eagle. This point is closest to that nest, if you are not the forester. The wide expanse of shallow open water at that side is normally sparsely occupied by birds. During periods of strong wind however, flocks of ducks and geese congregate here. Common Tern on the

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breakwater and jetty. Lesser Black-backed Gull, Herring Gull, some Great Crested Grebe. The latter are very present all along the shore of the open lake. Groups of, easily, twenty can be found anywhere. What will happen when their food source will improve due to the fish-river? The fish-river is a project that will create an easily passable opening through the Barrier-dam (Afsluitdijk) in a couple of years. On the east side of the parking we scan the nest of the White-tailed Eagle, but fail to find any of the occupants.

Knardijk with adjacent lakes: Keersluisplas and Bovenwater (9): The Keersluisplas is shallow, muddy and frequented by Great Egret, Shoveler, and Spoonbill. On the opposite, northern, side of the road lies Bovenwater, far deeper, with a lot of submerged vegetation. Different birds here, Goldeneye, Goosander, Great Crested Grebe, Tufted Duck and Pochard in winter, Black-necked Grebe, Black Terns in summer. Little more than Coot, Tufted Duck, Greylag and Egyptian Goose we could not find. Lines of Cormorants fly over Bovenwater, but their numbers do not in any sense impress as much as those earlier today. A few more Marsh Harriers and a very shy Roedeer, young male specimen, on the side of the forest outside the park, inside the first of many Red Deer.

Zeearend (10): The big hut, named after the White-tailed Eagle. From here, one could see its' nest. The glass windows block the wind, but in summer it can be quite hot inside. The favourite of many, it is hardly ever a quiet place during the weekend. Shallow ponds nearby hold waders, like Godwit, Avocet, Little Ringed and Golden Plover, Lapwing. A Red Fox has built a den underneath the concrete foundation. In summer 2015 the hut has been made accessible by improving the path, which is now lined with concrete, but the entrance to the den has been blocked, at least from the north. First, we have lunch at the visitors centre. Then, what started as a short walk, just to check the bit of Willow forest, becomes a nice walk through that forest and the remains of what was another bit of Willow forest (until the deer and horses became hungry). We see Common Redstart, which, actually, is uncommonly beautiful. Willow Tit, the counterpart of Chickadee on this side of "the drink". Just close to the zigzag bridge, a Sedge Warbler sits not quietly singing long enough to be picked up in the telescope. Streaked back, white eyebrow. The dead forest looks like Cambodian killing field, but Red Deer and Konik horse use the area. The horses drop a lot of manure on the path, scent marks. That makes you pay a lot of attention to where you walk. We do, however, reach the hut without picking up any scent. From the hut we see several hundred Red Deer, an overdose. The numbers of Konik and Heck cattle are far lower. Greater Canada Goose, some Barnacle Geese .

Krakeendhut (5) Combined with the following Poelruiterhut (6): These now are located in the same development area. This is disused agricultural land. By now, the JCB's, Caterpillars and assorted yellow machines have converted it into an area with a bit more differentiation in level. Shallow lakes, reed beds, open grassland and forest represent the landscapes found inside the park. But here one is allowed to enter, using the footpaths. This landscaping has happened during Autumn of 2014, so we do not yet know how attractive this area will be in the future. We check the sluice at the Lage Vaart. The colony of House Martins is in full swing. A Moorhen tries to sneak away undetected, but we notice it. At the ponds near the hides we notice a Kingfisher, entering the nest opening. Little Ringed Plover and even better: Black-winged Stilt, a couple even, one of them sitting so very still on one spot, it might be breeding. To compare an Avocet comes into view as well. Yellow Wagtail takes a bit of searching, but it is like a single lemon in a grocer's stall filled with lettuce. We wait, Swarovski aimed at the nest opening for a closer view of the Kingfisher, but have to concede defeat after some time.

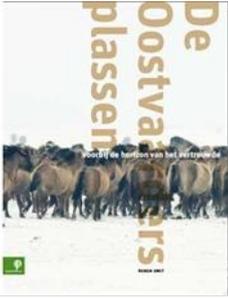
Grote Praambult (8): Generally, you are looking towards the west, over large expanses of grassland. Check the herds of Heck Cattle. This breed is the result of attempts by the brothers Heck, directors of the Berlin Zoo, to recreate the Aurochs, the primeval species of cattle in these countries. They look similar but are about 2 thirds of the length. Also Konik horse, reminiscent of the Tarpan, the horse of yesteryears. The third big grazer is Red Deer. Their numbers swelled to over 2000 in this area. The big grazers prevent the grassland from becoming a mix of vegetations. Another try for White-tailed Eagle, but in vain. Some more coffee, Nothing gets added to the list. We start heading for Amsterdam, only 24 hours in a day.

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If you want to read more or see more pictures? Books about the " Oostvaardersplassen":



Title: De Oostvaardersplassen, voorbij de grenzen van het vertrouwde. Photography: Ruben Smit.
Text: Rinske Hillen and Jan Daan Hillen, in samenwerking met Frans Vera. ISBN 978-90-816300-1-6.

Title: Oostvaardersplassen, nieuwe natuur op oude zeebodem. Samenstelling: Bremer, P., Berg, L van den, Euveman, G., Wigbels, V., Tempel, J. Publisher : Staatsbosbeheer

ISBN: 90-805009-2-5



The movie poster of "De Nieuwe Wildernis", a film by Ruben Smit. Very nice images, but a tear jerking story. Première in september 2013

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Observation points in Flevoland, near the Oostvaardersplassen area.



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