

# Flevo Birdwatching

Tour date:	January 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2016
Name of area visited:	Oostvaardersplassen, 5600 ha wetland between Almere and Lelystad, grassland, swamps and open water. We are in the area from 08.00 until 16.00hrs.
Guide(s):	Robert de Groot

**Remarkable:** Great Grey Shrike

**Weather:** Getting colder during the day, to near freezing. The wind was increasing to 3 Beaufort from the east. The clouds lost their water after 14.00 hrs, drizzle making place for solid rain on the way back.

## Nederlandse naam

## English name

## Scientific name

Fuut	Great Crested Grebe	Podiceps cristatus
Dodaars	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis
Aalscholver	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo
Grote zilverreiger	Great Egret	Casmerodius albus
Blauwe reiger	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea
Wilde zwaan	Whooper Swan	Cygnus cygnus
Knobbelzwaan	Mute Swan	Cygnus olor
Kolgans	White-fronted Goose	Anser albifrons
Grauwe gans	Greylag Goose	Anser anser
Brandgans	Barnacle Goose	Branta leucopsis
Bergeend	(Common) Shelduck	Tadorna tadorna
Nijlgans	Egyptian Goose	Alopochen aegyptiacus
Smient	(Eurasian) Wigeon	Anas penelope
Wilde eend	Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos
Krakeend	Gadwall	Anas strepera
Pijlstaart	(Northern) Pintail	Anas acuta
Slobeend	(Northern) Shoveler	Anas clypeata
Wintertaling	(Common) Teal	Anas crecca
Rosse stekelstaart	Ruddy Duck	Oxyura jamaicensis
Tafeleend	(Common) Pochard	Aythya ferina
Kuifeend	Tufted Duck	Aythya fuligula
Nonnetje	Smew	Mergellus albellus
Grote zaagbek	(Common) Merganser	Mergus merganser
Blauwe kiekendief	Hen Harrier	Circus cyaneus
Buizerd	(Common) Buzzard	Buteo buteo
Torenvalk	(Common) Kestrel	Falco tinnunculus
Slechtvalk	Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus
(H) Waterral	Water Rail	Rallus aquaticus
Meerkoet	(Common) Coot	Fulica atra
Goudplevier	(European) Golden Plover	Pluvialis apricaria
Kievit	Northern Lapwing	Vanellus vanellus
Kokmeeuw	Black headed Gull	Chroicocephalus ridibundus
Stormmeeuw	(Common) Gull	Larus canus

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Zilvermeeuw	Herring Gull	Larus argentatus
Grote mantelmeeuw	Greater Black-backed Gull	Larus marinus
Houtduif	Wood Pigeon	Columba palumbus
IJsvogel	(Common) Kingfisher	Alcedo atthis
Grote bonte specht	Great spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos major
Graspieper	Meadow Pipit	Anthus pratensis
Winterkoning	Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes
Heggenus	Dunnoek	Prunella modularis
Roodborst	Robin	Erithacus rubecula
Merel	Blackbird	Turdus merula
Koperwiek	Redwing	Turdus iliacus
Zanglijster	Song Thrush	Turdus philomelos
Matkop	Willow Tit	Parus montanus
Pimpelmees	Blue Tit	Parus caeruleus
Koolmees	Great Tit	Parus major
Boomklever	Nuthatch	Sitta europaea
Boomkruiper	Short-toed Treecreeper	Certhia brachydactyla
Klapekster	Great Grey Shrike	Lanius excubitor
Spreeuw	(Common) Starling	Sturnus vulgaris
Gaai	(Eurasian) Jay	Garrulus glandarius
Ekster	Magpie	Pica pica
Kauw	(Eurasian) Jackdaw	Corvus monedula
Raaf	(Common) Raven	Corvus corax
Zwarte kraai	Carrion Crow	Corvus corone
Vink	Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs
..	..	..
57	1	58
Soorten waargenomen / Species observed	(H) = Alleen gehoord / Heard only	<b>Total</b>

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.

Grote Praambult (8): In general, 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 now prevent the grassland from becoming a mix of vegetations. We park and have coffee while the light slowly brightens. A little bit of fog, but we see the Red Deer clearly. A ghost proves to be Great Egret. A Common Buzzard, Carrion Crow, and several Lapwings fly past. In the distance the fog seems to be covering the ground in a thin layer, but later on we have to decide that it actually is water, a lake now covers the grass. The number of birds is not too high, so we try our luck elsewhere.

Krakeendhut (5) Combined with the following Poelruiterhut (6): These now are located in the same dev elopement 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

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do not yet know how attractive this area will be in the future. And it is getting better. Mute- and Whooper Swan, Teal, Shoveler, Mallard, Gadwall, Tufted Duck and Coot. Barnacle Goose, Greylag Goose, Great Egret and Grey Heron. Konik horses, let's hope that their numbers are kept in check. Would be much better to the vegetation. Although we have seen some waders flying past, we do not see any here.

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. First to the right, the dead end road leading to the sluice. Damage by Beavers to the trees on the south side of the dike. Not unexpectedly, there are no House Martins near the colony. But a Little Grebe is found in the canal. Secretive, but we spot it. Then we go to the next spot, but after that we continue towards Bovenwater. A deeper lake along the northern side of the dike. Smew, Tufted Duck, Great Crested Grebe and a foursome of different ducks. Bright white cheeks, reddish top of the head and smallish. We are a bit in doubt, so drive a bit closer. The telescope helps out: A bluish bill and a strangely held, cocked, tail : Ruddy Duck. Tick.

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. Another coffee first. Shortly after ten we walk the newly created concrete path towards the hut. Within ten meters we see Willow Warbler. Frequent ticking noises on wood attract attention. We do find the culprit: a Nuthatch. Dark grey back, orange belly, fits the picture. Blue Tit and Great Tit are spotted, Dunnock comes into view and Wren, Blackbird, Redwing and Songthrush are seen as well. Then we leave the willow woods behind us and enter the macabre scenery of all the fields filled with dead trees. To add to the dark atmosphere a Raven flies past, so we add Thor's companion to the list. Another Great Spotted Woodpecker, many Chaffinches and Starlings. Then we reach the hut, and climb to the first floor. The view is stunning, there is a huge shallow lake, where grasslands were the norm. Some 20 cm of water on the grass. In shallower areas huge groups of Pintail, Shoveler, Mallard and smaller groups of Shelduck can be seen. An enormous flock of Lapwings and Golden Plovers flies in the distance. Thousands of individuals. When they land, the latter almost completely disappear. Later we find them and in better viewing conditions. (Blotched but) golden is a good description. At least we have seen waders now. Then we start moving back and to our delight we find a Great Grey Shrike. In the Netherlands this is no longer a breeding bird, but a winter visitor. The setting now did not remind us of the Mediterranean or tropical backdrop, so often associated with other members of the Laniidae. The views are good, the bird moves and we see it from all sides. Beauty. Shortly afterwards, a female Hen Harrier flies past, white rump clearly visible. Close to the bridge we hear a Water Rail. When we pass through the wood again, Song Thrushes, Robin and Redwing are seen.

Grote Zilverreiger (14): Park on the west side on the dead end road, be careful crossing the road. A hide inside the park boundary, at the end of a three minute walk. The walk itself can be very rewarding and then costs you more than 3 minutes. Reedling, Reed Bunting and many warblers. Listen for Savi's, Reed-, Garden- and the rare Great Reed Warbler. Blue-, Great- and Willow Tit, Bluethroat. Inside the hide are many nests of Barn Swallows. You'll notice soon enough where not to stand. Look on the floor. The birds settle easily enough once you stop moving around. The weather has changed by now, the rain started. Time for soup and bread. We remain on the parking, and with the windscreen wipers kept running we also scan the surroundings. A Kingfisher is sitting on the rocks, that line the foot of the dike. The Mallards that are on the rocks nearby are not at all impressed by the brilliant colours of the Kingfisher, but they scare the little gem. When it flies off, it is even more brilliant.

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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. We scan the area to the east, but no White-tailed Eagle. A lone Cormorant (not the only one today) flies past. And that's about it. The west side is a different story. Gadwall, Goosander, Greater Black-backed Gull, Grebes, Tufted Duck and Common Pochard have sought refuge on or behind the breakwater. A Great Egret walks on that breakwater as well.

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 wreck site. 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. The rain is now quite severe, and few birds are to be seen on the shallow lake to the east. So we pass by this stop. The stretch of dike holds a Kestrel, a Carrion Crow. On the open water more female Smew, very few males by the way. The same goes for the Goosanders, makes you think that males can keep their breath for longer periods, under water, out of view.

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. Several pairs of Shelduck and 15 Whooper Swans. The unseasonal weather must have had an influence: The swans show signs of courtship behaviour. But the show does not last very long, so we turn around and check the dead end road on a breakwater. Black-headed Gulls and Common Gulls, some are trying to catch worms. They quickly step, but remain on the same spot, the vibrations cause the worms to do something quite detrimental to their health. They move to the surface, only to be eaten by the gulls. Several Goosander, females swim on the open water. Coot, Grebe and Tufted Duck do that as well.

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. But unfortunately nothing really interesting here. We drive towards the marina at the other side and check what is to be seen there. Numerous Tufted Duck, have to be checked for grey coloured backs, but no Scaup are present. Great Crested Grebes and Common Pochard occur in small numbers. .

Oostvaarders, Nature and Environmental Education Centre of town of Almere (1): This black and yellow three storey building has a restaurant and two observation decks. The top floor offers the widest views, but can be cold in winter. The lower one has windows and heating, so it is comfortable. In front you will see large groups of Greylag Geese, in spring accompanied by goslings. Waders, cormorants and ducks can be seen on the nearby water and shorelines. Raptors hunt everywhere, most of them will be Common Buzzard. This was the last stop before going back to Amsterdam. To get here we travelled past the prison and the southern fringes of the park. The damage done to the trees is clearly visible, as well as the havoc wreaked by last August's storm. From the first floor of the Centre we can cast wide views over the area. Several flocks of Wigeon are feeding on the grasslands.

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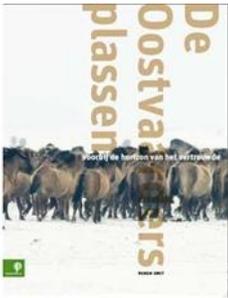
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The number of Red Deer is huge, they are all over the grasslands, Two White-fronted Geese mean another tick on the list. But with a slight blemish, a wing hangs at an awkward angle. We take close looks at some more Smew, one male with several females. Then, in light conditions that worsen by the minute, we spot a Peregrine sitting on the ground in the middle of the grasslands. The bird looks a bit muddied, or at least darker than normal, a young bird. The rain then worsens and we travel back to Amsterdam, without mishap.

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



Title: De Oostvaardersplassen, van het vertrouwde. Photography: Text: Rinske Hillen and Jan Daan met Frans Vera. ISBN 978-90-



voorbij de grenzen Ruben Smit. Hillen, in samenwerking 816300-1-6.

Title: Oostvaardersplassen, nieuwe natuur op oude zeebodem. Samenstelling: Bremer, P., Berg, L van den, Euverman, 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. Premièred in september 2013

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Observation points in Flevoland, near the Oostvaardersplassen area.



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