

# Flevo Birdwatching

birding tours in the Netherlands



Excursion: Oostvaardersplassen nature reserve full day tour

Guide: Pim

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I met Becky and Kevin at the trainstation of Almere Centrum around 8.30. We drove in about 20 minutes to the nature reserve "Oostvaardersplassen" between the cities of Almere and Lelystad.

We made one stop before we arrived at the nature reserve next to fields of farmland. We saw Blue headed wagtail, Common reed bunting, Stock dove, Common starling and Meadow pipet here. We were very lucky to see a hunting Hen harrier, a rare birdspecies in september.

At the viewing point we saw a large part of the Oostvaardersplassen. Hundreds of Red deer and "Konik" horses were feeding on the vegetation. We saw our first Common kestrel of the day, at the end of the day we maybe saw around 20!



### **Konikhorses with Common starling – Oostvaardersplassen.**

Our second stop was at a bird hide. Kevin discovered a Common kingfisher sitting on a fence next to the water. Some ducks here like: Common teal, Northern shoveler, Gadwall and Mallard. A group of 15 Little grebe was diving now and then. We also saw two Little egrets here, not so common as the Great egret.

The next birdhide was full of people waiting for the kingfishers to show up. Here we saw a Common greenshank, Tufted duck and our first Great crested grebe of the day.

It was a good warming up with the birding and now we started a 3 kilometres walk to a bird hide from the visitors centre. Kevin discovered a Spotted flycatcher. Everywhere we saw and heard Common chiffchaff and once we saw a Willow warbler.



Flocks of European goldfinches flew over. And we got an excellent view of a Northern wheatear.

From the large birdhide we saw about 35 Eurasian spoonbills. Also one Common sandpiper. On the field we saw some Winchats.

When we left the hut a Red fox was walking away from us.



A Northern goshawk (adult) was sitting in a tree, later on this day we saw a young (brownish) bird.



**Common chaffinch – Oostvaardersplassen.**

Then we drove to the “dyke”. Here we had almost no time to drink a cup of coffee or tea because we heard there was a Wryneck seen closeby.

This species of woodpecker is quite rare and some are now migrating through The Netherlands, here some information I’ve found on Wikipedia:

*The wrynecks (genus Jynx) are a small but distinctive group of small Old World woodpeckers. Jynx is from the Ancient Greek iunx, the Eurasian wryneck.*

*Like the true woodpeckers, wrynecks have large heads, long tongues which they use to extract their insect prey and zygodactyl feet, with two toes pointing forward, and two backwards. However, they lack the stiff tail feathers that the true woodpeckers use when climbing trees, so they are more likely than their relatives to perch on a branch rather than an upright trunk.*

*Their bills are shorter and less dagger-like than in the true woodpeckers, but their chief prey are ants and other insects, which they find in decaying wood or almost bare soil. They re-use woodpecker holes for nesting, rather than making their own holes. The eggs are white, as with many hole nesters.*

*The two species have cryptic plumage, with intricate patterning of greys and browns. The adult moults rapidly between July and September, although some moult continues in its winter quarters. The voice is a nasal woodpecker-like call.*

*These birds get their English name from their ability to turn their heads almost 180 degrees. When disturbed at the nest, they use this snake-like head twisting and hissing as a threat display.*

We walked the path to the bird hide and suddenly a Eurasian wryneck flew to a tree. It looks like some wood. Later on we saw it foraging next to the path: AMAZING BIRD!!



**Eurasian wryneck – Oostvaardersplassen.**





**(Looking at a) Eurasian wryneck – Oostvaardersplassen.**

Some groups of Bearded reedling flew over the reed fields. From the bird hide occupied by Barn swallows we saw Eurasian spoonbills, Common teal and Northern shoveler. We heard the very loud call of a Cettis warbler.



**Eurasian spoonbill – Oostvaardersplassen.**

From this spot we drove to the start of the dyke (road) from Lelystad to Enkhuizen. Just to find the Black redstart which live here. We first stopped at a replica of an old VOC ship “Batavia”

(Picture from the internet)



We've found the Black redstarts and on a big telecommunication tower was a Perigrine falcon.



Perigrine falcon – Lelystad.

Next stop: Lelystad. We took the highway back to Almere, but first got a great look at the White storks.

On the south side of the reserve we saw from the visitor centre: Eurasian wigeon, White fronted goose, Common sandpiper and Canada goose.

From the "Spotters hill" we at least saw one White tailed eagle. Also some Northern pinetails flew over and we saw the first Northern Marsh harrier of the day.

When we were back at the parking place we choose to go on a "twitch" to a really rare heron. We drove to the polder of Eemnes. The Squacco heron was found easily. It looks like a small Bittern.



### **Squacco heron – Polder of Eemnes (Province of Utrecht)**

In a group of Northern lapwing, we found at least one European golden plover. A Eurasian curlew flew over the fields. The last bird species of the day was not a Common kestrel again but a Eurasian sparrow hawk.

I think we've done well on a beautiful but windy day like this.

We saw and heard this **80 birdspecies** today:

Mute swan, Greylag goose, Barnacle goose, White fronted goose, Canada goose, Egyptian goose, Common shelduck, Mallard, Gadwall, Northern pinetail, Northern shoveler, Eurasian wigeon, Eurasian teal, Common pochard, Tufted duck, Great crested grebe, Little grebe, Great cormorant, Grey heron, Great egret, Little egret, Squacco heron, White stork, Eurasian spoonbill, White tailed eagle, Western marsh harrier, Hen harrier, Common buzzard, Common kestrel, Perigrine falcon, Northern goshawk, Northern sparrow hawk, Eurasian coot, Golden plover, Northern lapwing, Eurasian curlew, Ruff, Common sandpiper, Common greenshank, Black headed gull, Lesser black backed gull, Herring gull, Mew gull, Common tern, Wood pigeon, Stock dove, Eurasian collared dove, Common kingfisher, Great spotted woodpecker (heard), Eurasian wryneck, Sand martin, House martin, Barn swallow, Meadow pipet, White wagtail, Blue headed wagtail, Black redstart, Northern wheatear, Winchat, Winter wren (heard), Cettis warbler, Willow warbler, Common chiffchaff,

Spotted flycatcher, Great tit, Blue tit, Northern willow tit, Bearded reedling, Eurasian nuthatch (heard), Eurasian magpie, Eurasian jay, Western jackdaw, Carion crow, Northern raven, Common starling, House sparrow, Common chaffinch, European goldfinch, European greenfinch and Common reed bunting.

And also some mammals like: Red deer, Roe deer, Konikhorses, Red fox and Bank vole.



**Becky and Kevin,**

**I hope you enjoyed your day birding with me.**

**Have a safe journey.**

**Best regards,**

**Pim.**