

Flevo Birdwatching

Excursion date:	23 rd of February 2016
Area visited:	The delta of the Rhine, Meuse and Schelde rivers. Islands of Zeeland and Zuid-Holland. Areas that were visited are characterized by the presence of water, fresh and salt. A mix of open water, mud and clay.
Guide:	Robert

Nederlandse naam	English name	Scientific name
Fuut	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Dodaars	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Geoorde fuut	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
Kuifduiker	Slavonian Grebe	<i>Podiceps auritus</i>
Aalscholver	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Roodkeelduiker	Red-throated Loon	<i>Gavia stellata</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>
Rotgans	Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</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>
Pijlstaart	(Northern) Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</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>
Brilduiker	(Common) Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
Middelste zaagbek	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>
Sperwer	(Eurasian) Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Havik	(Northern) Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
Buizerd	(Common) Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Torenvalk	(Common) Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Fazant	(Common) Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</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>



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	Bontbekplevier	Great ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>
	Kievit	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
	Steenloper	Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>
	Kanoet	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
	Drieteenstrandloper	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>
	Bonte strandloper	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
	Kemphaan	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
	Wulp	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
	Grutto	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
	Tureluur	(Common) Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>
	Zwarte ruiter	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>
	Kokmeeuw	Black headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
	Zilvermeeuw	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
	Kleine mantelmeeuw	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
	Houtduif	Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
	Holenduif	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>
	Turkse tortel	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
	Veldleeuwerik	Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>
	Graspieper	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
(H)	Winterkoning	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
	Roodborst	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
	Roodborsttapuit	(Common) Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
	Merel	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
	Pimpelmees	Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
	Koolmees	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
	Spreeuw	(Common) Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
	Gaai	(Eurasian) Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
	Ekster	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
	Kauw	(Eurasian) Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
	Zwarte kraai	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>
	Huismus	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
	Groenling	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>

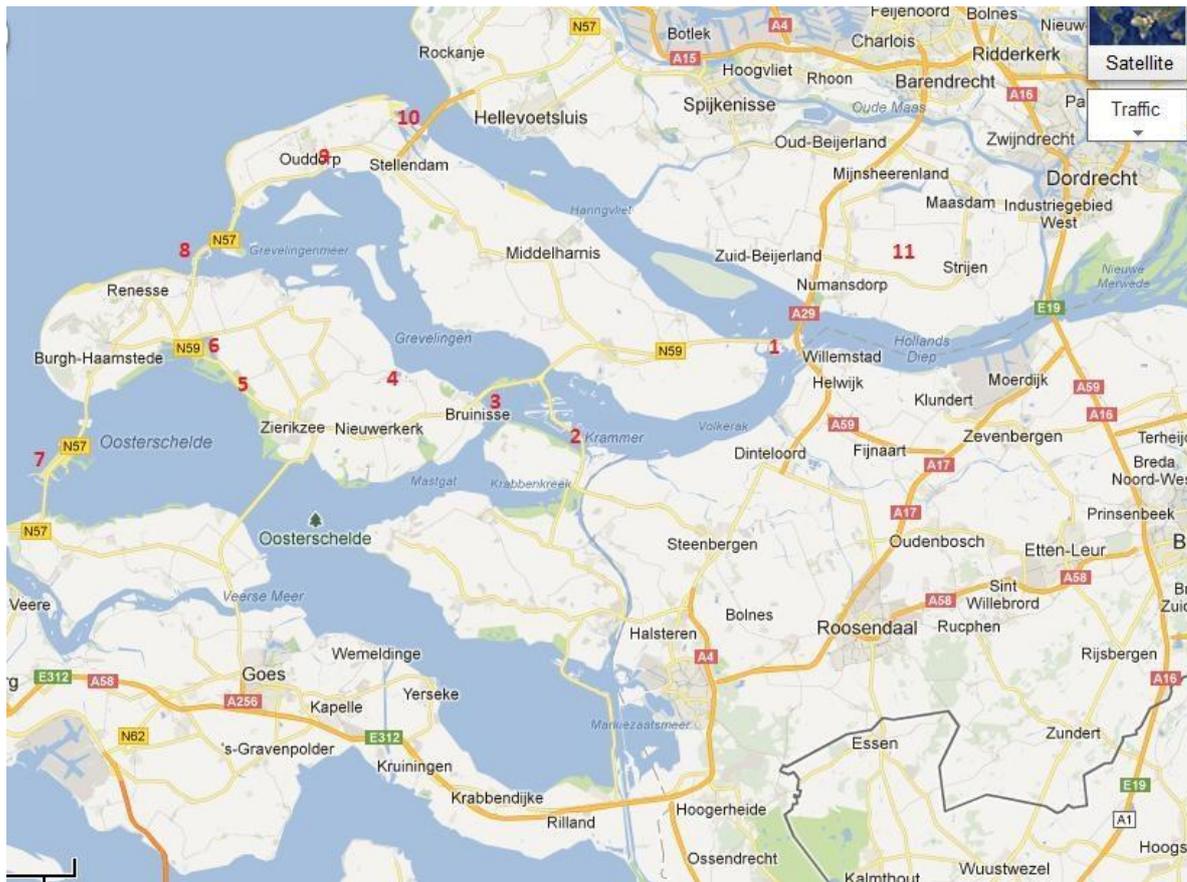
	68	1	69
	Soorten waargenomen / Species observed	(H) = Alleen gehoord / Heard only	Total

Weather: Sunny, with still quite a bit of wind. Scattered shower.

Remarkable: Black-necked Grebe



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- 1 Hellegatsplein
- 2 Observation hide Krammer-sluizen
- 3 Grevelingendam (tidal)
- 4 Dijkwater
- 5 Plan Tureluur (Flauwers en Weevers Inlaag)
- 6 Plan Tureluur (Prunje)
- 7 Pijlerdam
- 8 Brouwersdam (tidal)
- 9 Ouddorp (Kouaennoek)
- 10 Stellingendam (Buitenhaven)
- 11 Oude Land van Strijen

The North-eastern Delta. Points that were visited: 1, 3, 4, Kats, 7, 6 and 8. Kats is just south of the Zeeland Bridge (where it says Veerse Meer)

Hellegatsplein (1). This is an area that has been created to connect the island of Goeree-Overflakkee to both the mainland of Brabant and the island of Voorne-Putten. Not only roads, but bridges and locks are part of the construction. If one chooses the service roads, it is possible and allowed to stop and do some birdwatching. Taking the parallel road, we are a bit surprised by how few birds there are. Carrion Crow, Magpie and some geese in the air. We see horses, kept to graze the land and to keep the area open. They are grazing a losing battle; the part where they are was a tidal area until 15 years ago. Mud and water and clay are now creeks and hard soil with grass, trees and bushes. Just stopping at where the dam reaches the former island of Overflakkee, the counter starts ticking. Pintail Duck, Common Teal (formerly considered conspecific with Green-winged), Tufted Duck, Mallard. On the fields we see five Roedeer, in a kind of panic. But they stop at the water's edge, and dare not approach us any further. That keeps them from the road, as we are standing in between the crash barriers, just to get a better view. Crossing that busy road would have been detrimental to our health as well. A Grey Heron stands guard, and Common Buzzard patrols the area for food. During the day we see some variety in their plumage, although most birds are rather dark.

From here we drive over narrow dikes towards the next spot. Meanwhile we pick up Greenfinch, 3 kinds of the dove-family, Jay, Cormorant.

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Grevelingendam (3). At the landward end of the Grevelingen waterway. This was another estuary through which Rhine and Meuse rivers flowed towards the sea. The deeper parts did become anoxic after the dams were constructed. To increase movement of the water, two syphons have been built as culverts under the dikes, the tides run in and out now and replenish oxygen to the deeper layers. We stop at the beginning and quickly find Black-necked Grebe. Three birds in winter plumage at 25 meters distance. Red-breasted Merganser, Mute Swan, Gadwall and Goldeneye. On the shore we see a couple of Common Redshank.

Krammersluizen (2). This dam was necessary to keep the tides out of the waterways to the north and east of here. On the northern side you have fresh water, the effluent of the Rhine and Meuse river. To the south it is saltwater and tidal. At the start of this lay some small ponds, that normally have quite a number of ducks. We see many Tufted Ducks and Common Pochard, close to the road on the northern side. A male Kestrel obligingly poses on a lantern post.

We continue along the southern end of the Grevelingendam (2). Passing here at low tide. The mudflats are wide, and birds are widely dispersed. But first, we drink a well deserved cup of coffee. After that, we spot Brent, a dark goose with a white band around the neck. The mussel farms with their blue plastic floats are more commercially interesting, but less beautiful. Some people are collecting ragworms and lugworms for use as fishing bait. Shelduck, Oystercatcher and small waders (too far off), search for prey on the mudflats as well. From the tiny village of Bruinisse we follow the dike west to the next point.

Dijkwater (4). This is a relatively small area. It has been formed when the dike was breached. Two deeper gullies were scoured by the tides for some time. After the dike was mended, the creek has never been filled. It is fresh to slightly brackish, reeds fringe it and birds love it. The first creek is not as extended, but offers Wigeon, Tufted Duck, Greylag, Barnacle Goose and White-fronted Goose. OK, and Coot. The next creek is much wider, deeper and longer, actually the road has been built straight through. We find Little Grebe, very actively diving, so difficult to get into view, and a Slavonian Grebe. Egyptian Goose in a field nearby, these birds are feral, having escaped or been set free, or being descendants of such birds. They are now very much part of the Western European avifauna. Three quarters up in the trees, quietly sitting to not be noticed, a Female Goshawk. She just watches the menu card. When we are driving towards the Zeeland bridge we see more beauties. The Spoonbill is proof that even if you are big-mouthed, you can still be adorable. (I hope that Donald Trump does not read this). While we look in amazement, a female Sparrowhawk flies past at ankle level, keeping the crest of the dike between herself and possible prey.

After that we have to make some more speed. We pass over the 5 kilometre long bridge : Zeelandbrug. At the far end a commercial aquaculture grows Sole, the flatfish. Many gulls are interested. We then cross the first dam that was constructed in the Deltaplan at Katse Veer. (When it was opened, one 65-year-old inhabitant of the island of Noord Beveland left the island for the first time ever. How paroquial can one be?). Then a series of sinuous turns. And we follow the southern dike of the Oosterschelde towards Kats. That dike is not straight and in one of the bends a mudflat has formed. For a couple of weeks that was the haunt of a Pine Bunting, but not when we looked and looked. On the other side was a small growth where a bird flitted, but that was a Stonechat, not a bunting. Still, a lifer for the client. It became better as he and she both showed. Male brilliant red chested, black cap, she a bit duller. We had soup and went west.



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Pijlerdam (7). This was the last of the big dams at the Northsea end of the estuaries. Completed in the 80's, it allows the tides to enter and leave the Oosterschelde. This allows the aquaculture operation of Yerseke, mussels and oysters, to continue. Harbour Porpoise, and lately even a Humpback Whale profit from this as well. We look into the sheltered harbour near the Topshuis, the building from which the dam is operated. Red-chested Merganser, Great Crested Grebe. A handful of Seals rest on the floats of the mussel farm. We leave the dam behind us and have lunch in Burgh-Haamstede. The restaurant lies opposite a medieval castle (13th century). In the accesible part of the garden of the castle, we see another Robin. To protect the delicate plantlife, after hundreds of years of feudal gardening, most of the area can not be entered. We then take the road that goes east to Koudekerkse inlaag. A brackish water area, in between the modern and an ancient dike. Meant for agriculture, but too salty to grow any commercial crop. However, it gets us more Redshank, Curlew, Shelduck and Teal. Some good views. Then we continue towards Stompetoren (the blunt tower), an only remnant of a village that disappeared into the waves of the Oosterschelde. Only the church spire was left. An Egret having yellow toes must be a Little Egret.

Plan Tureluur (6). Another stretch of farmland converted in to an area attractive to waders and waterfowl. The deputy for the provincial government, who, against the nature of so many people from Zeeland, pushed the plan ahead, unfortunately died a few months before completion of the plan. One more Spoonbill seen here, as well as Shoveler, Shelduck and Teal. And a big group of Avocets, feeding frantically with heads swinging from side to side. Some of the waders far away do not yet get an ID. 60 times magnifications is not enough so we have to move and get closer. They are identified as Dunlin, Greater Ringed Plover and Black-tailed Godwit. Some Redshanks are very pale grey and have a telltale white line towards the eye: Spotted Redshank.

Brouwersdam (8). One of the few spots in the Netherlands where one is allowed to drive a car on the seaward side of the dike. Not only cars, but Blocarts (landsailing pleasure vehicles), kite surfers and pedestrians use the road, sand and sea. Still; Harbour- and Grey Seals close to the dike. We see a few Red-breasted Merganser, Grebes and Cormorants.



A huge group of Sanderling flock on the tarmac. At high tide their food is unavailable for a few hours.



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The Black Guillemot, present here for at least several months, is not in view. More Oystercatchers stand waiting on the tarmac and basalt side of the dike. We leave the area to go back to the hotel, time has been flying while we were doing good birding.

Koudenhoek, Ouddorp, Goose reserve (9). Now completely left by the farmers to make way for Geese. An old fortress is to be found in the SE-corner. The ramparts are clad in grass, and of course, nowadays, completely useless against modern warfare. We only drive past this area, unable to stop on the road. Some geese can be seen, but no Red-breasted. One has been seen here recently.

Haringvlietdam (10). This is a dam with visors, that open to allow water from the Rhine and Meuse river to flow into the Northsea. Until recently the visors were only opened/lifted during low tide, but recently the government had to do what they had agreed with the Germans and Belgians. These had seriously improved the waterquality and structure of the upstream rivers. The visors now open as well during moderate flood. This allows fish that migrate from sea to river, for spawning, to pass without much effort. This way Salmon, Eel, Stickleback, and other species have improved success in breeding. The first two species are economically interesting, the last is staple for Spoonbill.

From here we went back to Rotterdam. The roads were crowding, commuters going home. We reached the hotel at 16.45PM.

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