

Flevo Birdwatching

Tour date:	December 3 rd , 2016
Name of area visited:	Oudeland van Strijen Area south of Rotterdam, consisting of grasslands, low productive due to clogged clay soils. Inhabited by sheep, mammals and birds. Biesbosch Large area with a mix of creeks, reed fields, agricultural land and reclaimed nature.
Guide(s):	Robert de Groot

Bird of the day: Bittern, and White-tailed Eagle coming closely behind as second.

Weather: Sunny and almost without wind. Very nice weather for early December.

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>
Roerdomp	(Great) Bittern	<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>
Grote zilverreiger	Great Egret	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>
Blauwe reiger	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Ooievaar	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</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>
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>
Brielduiker	(Common) Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
Nonnetje	Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>
Blauwe kiekendief	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Buizerd	(Common) Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Zeearend	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
Torenavalk	(Common) Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Slechtvalk	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Fazant	(Common) Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
(H) Waterral	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>
Waterhoen	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Meerkoet	(Common) Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>

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	Goudplevier	(European) Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>
	Kievit	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
	Wulp	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
	Witgat	Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
	Kokmeeuw	Black headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
	Stormmeeuw	(Common) Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>
	Zilvermeeuw	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
	Grote mantelmeeuw	Greater Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>
	Houtduif	Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
(H)	Grote bonte specht	Great spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
	Graspieper	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
	Witte kwikstaart	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
	Grote gele kwikstaart	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
	Roodborst	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
	Merel	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
(H)	Cetti's zanger	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>
(H)	Pimpelmees	Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
	Koolmees	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
(H)	Staartmees	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>
	Zwarte kraai	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>
	Putter	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>

	51	5	56

Soorten waargenomen / Species
observed

(H) = Alleen gehoord /
Heard only

Total

Oudeland van Strijen. An area where farming has been abandoned, only rearing of sheep is possible here. It has always been a good place for geese in winter. Greylag and a small number of Barnacles stay here during the summer as well, but numbers of species and individuals climb end of the Autumn. It is one of the three areas in the Netherlands where one can find Lesser White-fronted Goose. We do not find it, however. Neither do we find the Red-breasted Goose, reported just three days before. But looking at thousands of Barnacle, Greylag and Greater White-fronted Geese is still a good experience. A white dot in the middle of a recently plowed parcel is a Peregrine Falcon. As long as it is on the ground the neighbouring birds do not mind. They surely are scared out of their wits by a White-tailed Eagle flying at 30 meters over our car. This ruins our methodical searching for the Lesser WFG, all the flocks mix again and settle down in a new composition. But we do not mind, the sight is something to be remembered. The Peregrine did not move at all. We add species like Mute Swan, Pheasant, Moorhen, Coot and Wigeon. Then heading to the next area, we pass through the tunnel below Dortsche Kil, one of the onlt two tollroads in the Netherlands. Coffee near Dordrecht.

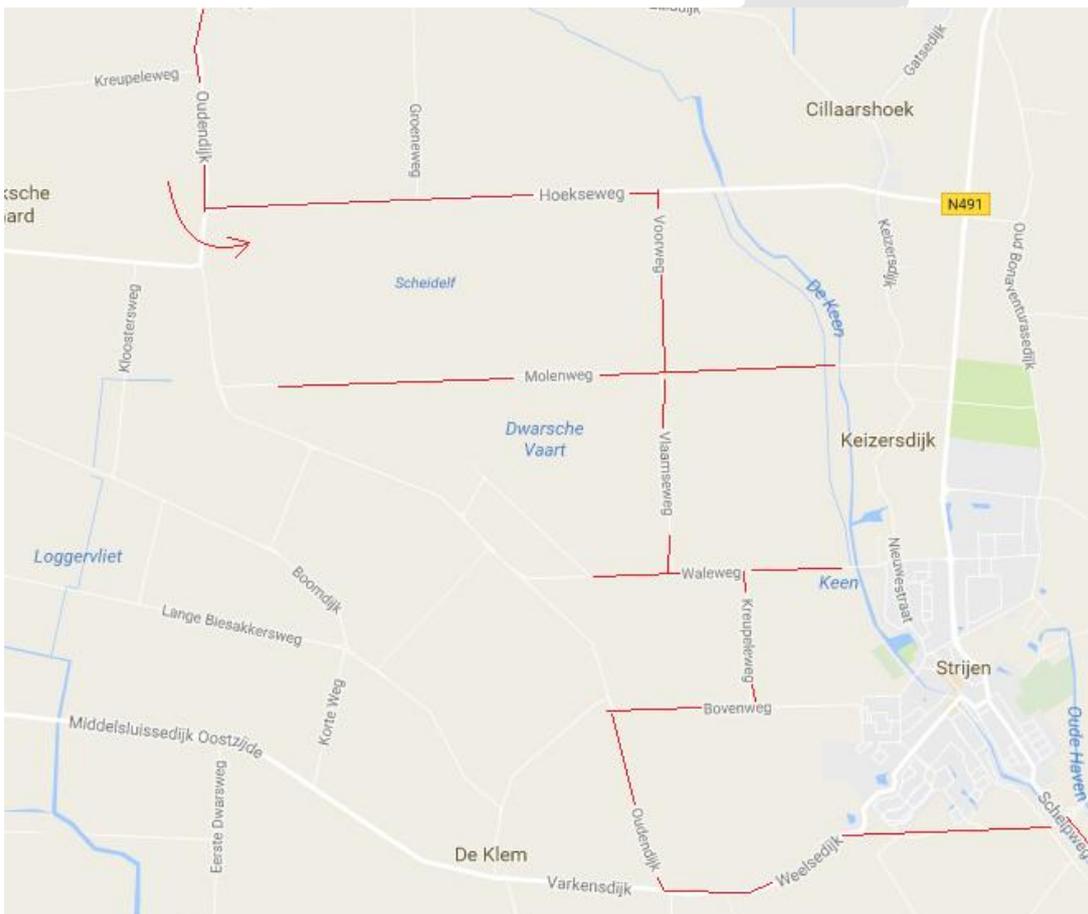
Biesbosch: Has a much older story to tell. In Mediaeval times it was a polder, or series of polders. Then on one fateful day November 19th, 1421 the dikes broke. They were weakened by a long period of internal conflict, and a flood, combined with spring tide, put an end to them. Some 30 villages were lost. The dikes

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were not repaired for a long time and floods and tides created a maze of creeks, sandbars and swamps. The tides changed water levels in between 1 and 2 meters, and one could easily be stranded up the creek, even with oars. In 1970 the Haringvlietdam, at the seaward end of the main channel (but some 40 kilometers away, was closed. The tides then, were not so important anymore. Nowadays, there is a new plan, the dam will be partly opened again allowing tides to flow. This will enable fish to migrate again, and the deep water in the main channel to be refreshed; oxygenation and flushing of mud as big benefits. We reach the area by taking the ferry near "Kop van het Land", translated as "head of the land". No wind, so the journey is uneventful. The only waves are created by the big barges carrying cargo; from Rotterdam and Germany in the direction of Terneuzen and Belgium. We see a few birds, Tufted Duck, Cormorant, Mallard and Gadwall. The sunshine and the tranquil mood of the river make up for that. Once on the other side, we enter an area where land has been given back to nature. A whole spread of creeks has been widened and connected. Uncharacteristically, the Dutch have lowered a number of dikes, to allow floodwater to pass more quickly to the sea. This way the floods will not rise as much as before. Farmers have had new houses built on artificial hills, so preventing that these are flushed each time. They still work part of the land. The creeks are used by many birds. An old road on a levee takes us towards the old lock at Steurgat (the Sturgeon's hole/creek). The battery on the camera needs changing, so we make a short stop. Just before we reach the lock, out of the corner of the eye a Bittern is seen landing at the edge of a reed bed. We quickly turn and reverse. The bird is still there, and for the next ten minutes performs everything a Bittern is supposed to do, except the booming. We are thrilled to see it climb over the reeds, walk through shallow water and finally see it disappear in a not so wide reed bed, perfectly camouflaged. It was a fortunate thing to have changed the battery. Continuing along that road we scan some shallow lakes to the east of it. Pintail, Shoveler, Little Grebe. Flocks of Teal and Gadwall. We have lunch at the far end of the road, with views over the nearby marshes. Great Egret, not the first today, and a light-coloured leaf, that gives the impression of a shrike. But it was a leaf, alas. Another view on the river gives us few birds, but the Moerdijk bridges are well visible.

Going back on the same road and then moving in a more easterly direction we come to a bridge where someone is taking photographs. As in East-Africa: the lion is always near the tourist buses: so we also stop. The object of attention is a Grey Wagtail, but as we stand and look we also hear Cetti's Warbler, Long-tailed- and Blue Tit and a hammering Great Spotted Woodpecker. A wader causes a stir. Flying towards us it shows low hanging wings (as in Common Sandpiper) and a sharp border of dark on the neck and chest and white on the belly. Rump and top of the wings are not visible, but when it sits down it looks quite dark, so when two others join, we decide on Green Sandpiper, not on its Spotted relative. A bit further we find Golden Plover at quite a distance, but the camera still makes recognizable shots. They are together with Lapwings and can be seen clearly when they take off in fright. That cannot have been our fault, more likely the silhouette of a Grey Heron. A huge new Equestrian Centre occupies a 2 hectare hill in between creeks, marshes and dikes. Here, we see Common Pochard, Goldeneye, Greylag, Great Crested Grebes. A cup of coffee at the stop where we stop to watch a Kestrel take care of its prey. A small rodent is still alive when the bird flies to a pole. But shortly afterwards we see it being devoured in smaller bits. In maybe three minutes the whole process of "redistribution of nutrients" is over. We then head back to Leiden, but within 50 meters it becomes a pursuit. A female Hen Harrier follows the road, and some shots can be taken while driving. A couple of Storks on a lamppost is the last observation before it gets too dark. We reach Leiden at 17.20 hrs.

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