

# Flevo Birdwatching

Tour date:	May 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2017
Name of area visited:	Oostvaardersplassen, 5600 ha wetland between Almere and Lelystad. In the area between 08.00 and 16.30.
Guide(s):	Robert de Groot

<b>Nederlandse naam</b>	<b>English name</b>	<b>Scientific name</b>
Fuut	Great Crested Grebe	Podiceps cristatus
Dodaars	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis
Aalscholver	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo
Kleine zilverreiger	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta
Grote zilverreiger	Great Egret	Casmerodius albus
Blauwe reiger	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea
Lepelaar	(Eurasian) Spoonbill	Platalea leucorodia
Knobbelzwaan	Mute Swan	Cygnus olor
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
Krooneend	Red-crested Pochard	Netta rufina
Tafeleend	(Common) Pochard	Aythya ferina
Kuifeend	Tufted Duck	Aythya fuligula
Bruine kiekendief	Marsh Harrier	Circus aeruginosus
Buizerd	(Common) Buzzard	Buteo buteo
Zeearend	White-tailed Eagle	Haliaeetus albicilla
Meerkoet	(Common) Coot	Fulica atra
Scholekster	Oystercatcher	Haematopus ostralegus
Kluut	Avocet	Recurvirostra avosetta
Steltkluut	Black winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus
Bontbekplevier	Great ringed Plover	Charadrius hiaticula
Kleine plevier	Little ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius
Kievit	Northern Lapwing	Vanellus vanellus
Temmincks strandloper	Temminck's Stint	Calidris temminckii
Kemphaan	Ruff	Philomachus pugnax
Tureluur	(Common) Redshank	Tringa totanus

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	Zwarte ruiter	Spotted Redshank	Tringa erythropus
	Groenpootruiter	(Common) Greenshank	Tringa nebularia
	Bosruiter	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola
	Oeverloper	(Common) Sandpiper	Actitis hypoleucos
	Kokmeeuw	Black headed Gull	Chroicocephalus ridibundus
	Stormmeeuw	(Common) Gull	Larus canus
	Zilvermeeuw	Herring Gull	Larus argentatus
	Kleine mantelmeeuw	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Larus fuscus
	Visdief	(Common) Tern	Sterna hirundo
	Houtduif	Wood Pigeon	Columba palumbus
	Holenduif	Stock Dove	Columba oenas
(H)	Koekoek	Cuckoo	Cuculus canorus
	Halsbandparkiet	Rose ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri
	Gierzwaluw	(Common) Swift	Apus apus
	Boerenzwaluw	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica
	Huiszwaluw	House Martin	Delichon urbica
	Witte kwikstaart	White Wagtail	Motacilla alba
	Gele kwikstaart	Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla flava
	Winterkoning	Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes
	Heggenus	Dunnock	Prunella modularis
	Roodborst	Robin	Erithacus rubecula
	Paapje	Whinchat	Saxicola rubetra
	Merel	Blackbird	Turdus merula
	Grote lijster	Mistle Thrush	Turdus viscivorus
	Rietzanger	Sedge Warbler	Acrocephalus schoenobaenus
	Bosrietzanger	Marsh Warbler	Acrocephalus palustris
(H)	Kleine karekiet	Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus scirpaceus
	Tuinfluitier	Garden Warbler	Sylvia borin
	Zwartkop	Blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla
	Fitis	Willow Warbler	Phylloscopus trochilus
	Tjiftjaf	Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita
	Pimpelmees	Blue Tit	Parus caeruleus
	Koolmees	Great Tit	Parus major
	Staartmees	Long-tailed Tit	Aegithalos caudatus
	Spreeuw	(Common) Starling	Sturnus vulgaris
	Gaai	(Eurasian) Jay	Garrulus glandarius
	Ekster	Magpie	Pica pica
	Kauw	(Eurasian) Jackdaw	Corvus monedula
	Zwarte kraai	Carrion Crow	Corvus corone
	Huismus	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus
	Groenling	Greenfinch	Chloris chloris

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Putter	Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis
Kneu	Linnet	Carduelis cannabina
Rietgors	Reed Bunting	Emberiza schoeniclus
..	..	..
76	2	78
Soorten waargenomen / Species observed	(H) = Alleen gehoord / Heard only	<b>Total</b>

**Remarkable:** Two Temminck's Sandpipers

**Weather:** Fair, clouded, but with sun later, breezy (from 4 going to 3 Beaufort from NW). Temperatures rising to 16°C.

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.

**Area SW of Almere (off the map in lower left corner).** Close to the dike and orange trunks of the windmills. We first park on a dead-end bit of road. How often is the first species you see when you stop a stunning threesome of Red-crested Pochard? At fifteen meters! Other species are Great Crested Grebe, Black-headed Gull, Coot, Gadwall and Mallard. We keep seeing these at numerous locations during the remainder of the day. Near Pampushaven, a sheltered part of Lake IJssel we find Yellow Wagtail and White Wagtail. A few Linnet forage in the short grass. Quite a number of Greylag Geese and Tufted Duck on the water here. The geese have plenty of goslings, in different sizes. The geese do also use the grasslands inside the dike, they apparently feel secure there, away from the water. In other parts, where foxes threaten them, they want to keep the goslings close to the water. We drive towards a dungheap, where insects thrive, often attracting birds as a consequence. A Mistle Thrush sits on top, like a biblical Job, but better dressed. It takes some time before we also see a Common Sandpiper, well camouflaged in that smelly environment.

**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 reach this place by driving through the suburb of Almere. Jackdaw, Magpie and Starling can be added to the list. Then it is a walk to the dike, hoping for Bluethroat and Little Grebe, but they cannot be found here. A dogleg later we take the main path towards the screen. Wren, Marsh- and Reed Warblers call, and a Marsh Harrier flies past. It is hunting, the way it tilts and swerves makes that clear. From the first screen we spot some quick birds passing, it takes time to get a view of a Dunnock in the telescope. Little Grebes are fishing in front of the viewpoint. The nesting pole does not have an Osprey or Stork on it, but a Carrion Crow. It is territorial, but not nesting. Swifts fly above and past us, as well as Great Egrets. Along the path to the next hide, we find evidence of Beaver. One of these is glimpsed by the client from out of that hide. Great Tit and Blue Tit along the path as well as Goldfinch. Most birds however remain deep in the vegetation, because of the wind. From the hide the spectacle unfolds: Spoonbill immediately opposite the hide, and then waders, one after another: Lapwing, Ruff and Reeve (a.k.a Mrs Ruff), Redshank, Spotted Redshank as well, Greenshank, two Temminck's Sandpiper, Wood Sandpiper, Greater Ringed Plover and its smaller brethren, Little Ringed Plover. Ducks: Pintail, Teal, Wigeon, Shelduck and Shoveler are seen. We see several Foxes here, and that is bad news; as previously the ground breeding birds had been quite safe from this menace. Barnacle Geese in small numbers. It takes some time to properly see them in the telescope, but at one moment you have to turn back to the car. To visit the Oostvaardersplassen proper. This is only an appetizer, although a filling one.

On the way back to the dike, we find a Willow Warbler on the road, most likely killed by a car. Further on another Mistle Thrush flies across our path. We then reach the outer dike again and head NE, past mountains of spare rocks. A Wheatear sits on one of these stones, but not long enough to be seen by the clients. Unfortunately we do not find it back.

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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. This is not a stop with much result. We see the rookery of Cormorants, and some quick flitting down in the reeds. We cannot identify or scope any of those, the wind is still a bit too powerful, scaring the birds down. The waterlevel is high, and that keeps all waders away. Their legs are not that long.

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. People at the visitors' centre pour a good cup of coffee. And the mounted specimens together with the maps and pictures require time to enjoy them all, but our time is a bit limited. We head out again. Little Egret, a single bird, is at the far end of the field. But its crest is blown sideways by the wind, and is clearly identifying it. A few Lapwings on the grass, a Coot, and a Mallard. Such a change from two weeks ago. A Greenfinch is heard but not seen, we tick Linnet here again. A couple asks us whether we have seen the Long-eared Owl. They had heard about its presence here. We search the trees, discover, likely, the nest, but fail to find the birds. By now the nestlings may already be flying, and probably have moved. They are always difficult to spot anyhow, apart from their winter roosts, once these get reported.

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 drive past the "Block van Kuffelaer" pumping station and the locks. Only then we reach the protected park. The first stop here gives us far away views of breeding Cormorants, some Marsh Harriers and a number of questions from passers-by. No, we are not looking at the Osprey (which always replaces the White-tailed Eagle in the question), Egrets get named White Herons, instead of their proper name Zilverreiger, literally translated "Silver Heron". But in their way, people are interested. And answering helps to keep them interested and the area protected. Here again, no Bearded Reedling or any other dweller of the reed beds. We continue.

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. The first few minutes we look on the westside of the parking spot. Common Terns and a single Common Gull sit on the breakwater and jetties. A Common Pochard, several Great Crested Grebes and Greylag geese use the shelter here, as offered by the breakwater. This is where we eat our lunch, but at the 'dry' side with the sun in our faces. At the same time we check on the White-tailed Eagle's nest. A bird can be seen, but at a great distance. We see Whinchat closer by. And fast flying LBJ's, the wind is still fierce. Barn Swallows pass, until now the only representative of the group of Swallows and Martins. Some look more rufous on the belly than others. But that is about it, no reason not to continue.

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

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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. A walk towards the hut here through high reeds and past some Willow trees. Wren, in view, and singing in the undergrowth. The only species in that group that ever made it across the Atlantic, all other wrens occur in the Americas and the Caribbean. Many Barn Swallows inside the building, at a close enough distance to make a 300 mm lens useless. Outside are many Avocets, much closer by than at Natte Graslanden. We see Shoveler and Teal, and on the way back a beautiful male Reed Bunting poses for the camera. A Willow Warbler also likes its picture taken, close to the gate. We carefully cross the road, and get back into the car.

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. There is a big number of gulls resting on the Bovenwater, but they all seem to be Black-headed. We see other birds as well, but none that we have not seen before. And it is already getting to four o'clock. So we continue, towards the visitors' centre near number(12). It is possible here to obtain the sought after memento, we pay, admire the mounted White-tailed Eagle and walk back to the car. A quick stop near the sluice at Lagevaart, to get views of House Martins. And then back to the next point.

Oostvaardersveld, 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. It is worth stopping here, we see Barnacle Geese, closer than before, together with Greylag. They are not scared, but as soon as some people walk past, the whole group starts walking, away from the road. To our big surprise we find a Black-winged Stilt,.. and another,.. and a third even. In one view of the telescope. More Avocets, and ducks as well. Good views now of Common Pochard and Teal. The sun has come out from behind the clouds. A Garganey is visible for a short while, the clients miss it, and however much we try, it does not come back from behind the ridge it was hiding behind. That means it cannot be reported as being seen or heard in the list. Two Yellow Wagtails fly past quickly and Common Sandpiper together with Little Ringed Plover search the shore for edibles.

Kleine Praambult (7): Very small observation point, overlooking the wide grasslands. Do check this, but if it seems empty, do not spend a prolonged period here. Also check the trees behind you for songbirds. In September 2015 they did enlarge it a bit, creating more space. We drive past this one, but stop on the road a bit further: The Konik horses are in the southern part of the Krakeend-area, a herd of some thirty is visible. The blue and yellow rain coats of some visitors contrast sharply with the drab grey and ashy brown of the horses.

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 re-create 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. Loads of Barnacles, Red Deer, Konik and Heck. The barren landscape, where there was a bushy forest earlier, evokes questions and disbelief, but yes 85% of the breeding birds here have gone. There is nowhere to sit in trees or to hide in the vegetation. It is a sobering thought, but the view of all those birds that use it (mostly during the winter) is impressive. And there are few places in the Netherlands where you have such views over land without people, disregarding the railway line in one's immediate front. The White-tailed Eagle sits next to the nest, on the tip of a dead tree. When driving back, we reach Amsterdam Airport, with no more mishap than a missed turnoff. Sorry about that.

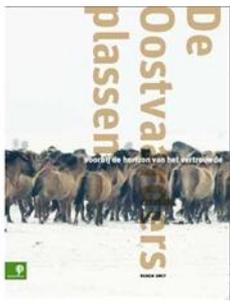
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If you want to read more or see more pictures? Books about the "Oostvaardersplassen":



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, 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



Observation points in Flevoland, near the Oostvaardersplassen area.



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