

Flevo Birdwatching

Tour date:	December 15 th , 2015
Name of area visited:	Oostvaardersplassen, 5600 ha wetland between Almere and Lelystad
Guide(s):	Robert de Groot

Remarkable: The Singing Swan, Singschwan is the German name of Whooper Swan.

Weather: Foggy, no sunshine at all during the excursion. Temperature up to 5°C, Wind 2 Beaufort from SW.

German name	Nederlandse naam	English name	Scientific name
Haubentaucher	Fuut	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
Kormoran	Aalscholver	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Silberreiher	Grote zilverreiger	Great Egret	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>
Graureiher	Blauwe reiger	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Singschwan	Wilde zwaan	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>
Höckerschwan	Knobbelzwaan	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Bläßgans	Kolgans	White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>
Graugans	Grauwe gans	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>
Weißwangengans	Brandgans	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>
Brandgans	Bergeend	(Common) Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
Pfeifente	Smient	(Eurasian) Wigeon	<i>Anas penelope</i>
Stockente	Wilde eend	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
Schnatterente	Krakeend	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
Spießente	Pijlstaart	(Northern) Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Löffelente	Slobeend	(Northern) Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Krickente	Wintertaling	(Common) Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Tafelente	Tafeleend	(Common) Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Reiherente	Kuifeend	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Schellente	Brilduiker	(Common) Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>
Zwergsäger	Nonnetje	Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>
Gänsesäger	Grote zaagbek	(Common) Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Kornweihe	Blauwe kiekendief	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>
Sperber	Sperwer	(Eurasian) Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Mäusebussard	Buizerd	(Common) Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Turmfalke	Torenvalk	(Common) Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Teichhuhn	Waterhoen	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Bläßhuhn	Meerkoet	(Common) Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Kiebitz	Kievit	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Großer Brachvogel	Wulp	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>
Bekassine	Watersnip	(Common) Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Lachmöwe	Kokmeeuw	Black headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Sturmmöwe	Stormmeeuw	(Common) Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>
Silbermöwe	Zilvermeeuw	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Mantelmöwe	Grote mantelmeeuw	Greater Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>

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Ringeltaube	Houtduif	Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Buntspecht	Grote bonte specht	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Wiesenieper	Graspieper	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>
Zaunkönig	Winterkoning	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Heckenbraunelle	Heggemus	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Rotkehlchen	Roodborst	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Amsel	Merel	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Rotdrossel	Koperwiek	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>
Singdrossel	Zanglijster	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Weidenmeise	Matkop	Willow Tit	<i>Parus montanus</i>
Blaumeise	Pimpelmees	Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
Kohlmeise	Koolmees	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Gartenbaumläufer	Boomkruiper	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>
Star	Spreeuw	(Common) Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
Eichelhäher	Gaai	(Eurasian) Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>
Elster	Ekster	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>
Aaskrähe	Zwarte kraai	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>
Hausperling	Huisemus	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Buchfink	Vink	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Grünling	Groenling	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
	54	0	54

Soorten waargenomen /
Species observed

(H) = Alleen gehoord /
Heard only

Total

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.

Meeting at a hotel in Almere, we first drive to a convenient parking spot, to leave one of the cars. Driving along the Trekweg to the north. Over the road next to the small lake, we see a Buzzard, very light, another darker one is being mobbed by a couple of Carrion Crows. It also gets into a fracas with a Sparrowhawk, too many predators per cubic meter. Mallard, Jay and in the grasslands next to the A-6 motorway we notice Barnacle-, Greater White-fronted- and Greylag Geese. Two Roe Deer in these fields as well.

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 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 prevent the grassland from becoming a mix of vegetations. Only a little part of the grasslands is in view. The fog is quite dense. We see more Buzzards and Carrion Crows. Red Deer in small groups. Not much more. But one of the wishlist species shows here: Whooper Swan, a single bird at the far range of visibility. We would have liked to have had better views of this bird.

Kleine Praambult (7): A change has been made here: it was a very small observation point, overlooking the wide grasslands. In September 2015 they did enlarge it a bit, creating more space. Now it is much bigger, though not higher. Do check this, but if it proves to have few birds, do not spent a prolonged period here. Also, check the trees behind you for songbirds. We park the car, walk up the hill, and see very little. Shelduck at a kilometre distance, the fog has temporarily lessened. But they are still not much more than light-coloured specks. So, we continue.

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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 proves to be quite attractive. Coming from the south, one drives on a road that has the railway on the left, and for about a kilometre the Oostvaardersveld on the right. Here we see Whooper Swan again, and now much closer. The pointed yellow on the bill is clearly visible. They are clearly bigger than the Greylags. Shoveler and Gadwall swim past, Near the hides there are even more Whoopers, but also Mute Swans. In between the ducks we see a Wigeon, in hiding almost. Common Pochard, more Shovelers, A female Hen Harrier flies past. The bright white rump showing clearly, but the bird does not have the almost "Caribbean" grace and flexibility that Montagu's Harrier has.

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 Foxes' den has been blocked, at least from the north. First a sip of coffee, at the Visitors Centre. Through the window we see Wren on the outside tables. The walk starts after that. Almost immediately a wishlist species shows: Willow Tit. Together with Blue- and Great Tit. Good to compare these species. A woodpecker flies off, but cannot be identified, most likely Great Spotted, but... Further on we hear more wrens and see Robin. Just before the bridge we see another woodpecker, clearly and close to us. Greater Spotted. A Greenfinch near the bridge. Chaffinches in the destroyed forest, in their hundreds they fly nervously, landing and taking off again. Again we spot some Buzzards. The bees that are nesting under the planks on the outside are not showing, too cold to fly. Neither do we see the Foxes that have their den under the building. Red Deer are visible, as well as some horses. From the hut we look over some square kilometres, the geese are present in numbers, Barnacles in thousands. Several male Pintail swim to our left. But no waders here, not even a single Lapwing, until one flies of, followed by a Carrion Crow.

Wigbels Eiland (11): Named after one of the people driving the development of the area. The path leading to it is fringed with thorny bushes, frequented by thrushes in autumn. Used to be a low hide where one had to mind one's head. Low beams are gone, it is a spacious place now. A huge congregation of ducks and geese. Mallard, Gadwall, Teal, Wigeon and Pintail. A few dozen Shelduck, (in between ducks and geese: geographically as well as taxonomically), Barnacle Geese, Greylag. There are no waders. And strangely enough, we do not see a single Egyptian Goose, not even during the whole day.

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. The shallow Keersluisplas en Oostvaardersplas have few birds visible. But on Bovenwater we see Smew, one male with five females, and some other females detached from the group. A female Goldeneye, some Great Crested Grebes and a couple of Cormorants. A group of swans flying in the distance cannot be identified properly, too far to hear the sound that the wings of Mute Swans make, and beyond our binocular views. At the western end of Knardijk we reach the Oostvaardersdijk. We turn left driving towards the south, stopping shortly at the few parkings that are available. The first one, just before the long straight road starts near the hide named "Grote Zilverreiger", gives us a resting Lapwing, the bird is not shy, or flying off, so probably an ill one. The next one is:

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. This place is nearly always a

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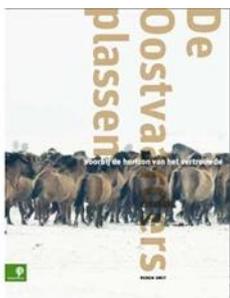
guarantee for gulls, and we are not disappointed: Black-backed Gull, Common Gull, Herring Gull. There are quite a number of diving ducks and Great Crested Grebes. Along the dike, driving further south, we spot a male Goosander, unfortunately we are not allowed to stop on the road, too dangerous. We skip the southern parking and stop near the Block van Kuffelaer pump house. A male Smew, Common Pochard and more Coots and Tufted Ducks. Then on to the next spot.

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. The furthest we get south on this excursion. We have to try this spot, but hear no Reedlings. Getting here we have looked on the breakwater opposite the marina, and next to the marina, earlier. Cormorants on the jetty as well as 5 Lapwings, Common-, Black-headed- and Herring Gulls. Tufted Ducks in the more open water, a female of that species in between the boats.

Hugo de Vries (3): Planted with Poplar, it also has Willow and Alderberry, that came in on their own. In this bit of Poplar forest there is clear evidence of the damage done by Red Deer and Konik Horse. Many trees have been stripped of their bark, and died. On some spots their trunks have been stacked to create circles in which new trees are planted. Once the old ones have rotten away, the new ones will have matured and they will be protected by the Roses and Hawthorns planted around them. The remaining trees have Golden Oriole in spring, there is a resident Goshawk, many Great Spotted Woodpeckers. The bicycle path that runs on the southern end of the park is fringed with thorny trees that have Goldfinch, Greenfinch and in the warmer months also many warblers. We only drove past this bit of forest, next to the greenhouses. Nothing spectacular but for a few more Buzzards and Blackbirds.

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. A small group of Snipe hiding in full view. These birds are so well camouflaged and keep so quiet, that we may have been past hundreds of them in our life, before even seeing the first one. The light is now getting less and less, so seeing more becomes a challenge. When a small flock of Curlews fly past, it is easy. Against the sky one can still see their bills, longer even than those of Snipe, and curved downwards. We have to leave this "Battle of the Bills", there is a ferry to catch in Den Helder. The whole day was without sunlight, but still enjoyable.

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. Première in september 2013

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Observation points in Flevoland, near the Oostvaardersplassen area.



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