

Flevo Birdwatching

Tour date:	May 16 th , 2017
Name of area visited:	Oostvaardersplassen, 5600 ha wetland between Almere and Lelystad, excursion from 12.00 until 19.30
Guide(s):	Robert de Groot

Remarkable: 10 Black-winged Stilts, 1 Grass snake.

Weather: Getting quite warm during the afternoon, up to 24°C, 75°F. Clouded at noon, sunny later on. Wind 2 Beaufort from varying directions.

	Nederlandse naam	English name	Scientific name
	Fuut	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
(H)	Dodaars	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
	Geoorde fuut	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
	Aalscholver	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</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>
	Ooievaar	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>
	Lepelaar	(Eurasian) Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>
	Knobbelzwaan	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
	Grauwe gans	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>
	Brandgans	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>
	Bergeend	(Common) Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>
	Nijlgans	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>
	Wilde eend	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
	Krakeend	Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>
	Zomertaling	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>
	Tafeleend	(Common) Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
	Kuifeend	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
	Bruine kiekendief	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
	Zeearend	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>
	Slechtvalk	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
	Fazant	(Common) Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
	Meerkoet	(Common) Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
	Scholekster	Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>
	Kluut	Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>
	Steltkluut	Black winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
	Kleine plevier	Little ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
	Kievit	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
	Bonte strandloper	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>
	Tureluur	(Common) Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>

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	Oeverloper	(Common) Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
	Kokmeeuw	Black headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
	Zilvermeeuw	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
	Grote mantelmeeuw	Greater Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>
	Kleine mantelmeeuw	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
	Visdief	(Common) Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>
	Houtduif	Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
	Koekoek	(Common) Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>
	Gierzwaluw	(Common) Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>
	Grote bonte specht	Great spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
	Boerenzwaluw	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
	Huiszwaluw	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>
	Witte kwikstaart	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
	Gele kwikstaart	Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
	Winterkoning	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
(H)	Heggenus	Dunnoek	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
(H)	Nachtegaal	Rufous Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>
	Blauwborst	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>
	Gekraagde roodstaart	(Common) Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
	Tapuit	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
	Merel	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
	Zanglijster	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
(H)	Rietzanger	Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>
	Kleine karekiet	Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>
	Tuinfluitier	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>
	Grasmus	(Common) Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>
(H)	Zwartkop	Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>
	Fitis	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>
	Tjiftjaf	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
	Grauwe vliegenvanger	Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>
	Pimpelmees	Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
	Koolmees	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</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>
	Huisemus	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
	Vink	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
	Groenling	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
	Putter	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
	Kneu	Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>

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Rietgors	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
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68	5	73
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.

Along the Trekweg, going from the outskirts of Almere to the NE-corner of the park, parallel to the A6-motorway. We see our first birds. A glorious Reed Bunting in the top of a stalk of reed. The quality of its song is open to discussion, but he likes it, and so will she. It is a narrow band of reeds here, but apparently good enough for others: Bluethroat, a bit difficult to locate at first, but finally giving better views. The Reed Warbler is too skulking to be enjoyed. The first Common Buzzard, a *Buteo* species, like Red-tailed Hawk in the US.

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. Hundreds of Konik, the horse, and Red Deer. On a vast, almost treeless plain. We see Great Egret, Mute Swan, as white specks on the grassland. Nearby Common Whitethroat, but too quick to really enjoy long lasting views. Greylag Geese are on the fields as well, and we can spot the nest of White-tailed Eagle, using the telescope. One bird at least on the nest, and another in a nearby treetop. Two birders with telescopes have spotted a Konik mare having problems foaling. They have already phoned the warden, so we see their 4x4 arriving at the scene. A bit later, the sad news reaches us that the foal is dead, already pecked at by Crows. The corps cannot be extracted from the mothers' body. She is in real pain, so the decision is taken to euthanise her, something we do not wait for.

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. At first we look out over the area from the side of the road. Tufted Duck and Common Pochard, being obvious victims of our attention. Then looking a bit more to the right we see Black-winged Stilt, one at first, but more joining. A couple of Avocets is nearby, one is clearly sitting on a nest. Altogether a study in legs and bills, executed in black and white with some strokes of red. There are other birds present, Little Ringed Plover, Barnacle Goose, Greylag, Yellow- and White Wagtail. We see a very dark Wagtail, probably a Pied-, but fail to get good looks at it, as it flies off and cannot be found back. Another Reed Bunting is calling all the time, next to the road. Just as nice a view as the previous one. After a while we move to the Knardijk, (see description below). We park and walk to the Krakeend-hut. The bit of Willow forest gives us Chiffchaff, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Cuckoo, calls no views. Greenfinch is heard a bit further on, and we get good views of this species. A Stork is walking on the grassland to the south of the hut and Barn Swallows abound. They nest inside the hut as well, and trust upon the benevolence of its visitors. We approach one another to within 2 meters, six feet. Through the slats it is difficult to view outside with a telescope. We use the binoculars mostly. The bit of mud that held the Stilts and Avocets earlier is still occupied by them. No less than 10 Black-winged Stilts are visible at the same time, at least four of them appear to be sitting on nests. So out in the open, that it will be a wonder if any young survive. Lesser Black-backed Gull on the shore nearby could be one of the predators. Egyptian Goose will not be a threat. The Stork flies off, and another birder we meet going back reports that a White-tailed Eagle just flew past. But clearly far enough not to scare the geese into flight. We had not noticed any panic. We take another path, and see the heap of vegetation, serving as a breeding and wintering site for Grass Snakes. Not a snake in sight, but in the canal, Lage Vaart, one client spots a swimming Grass Snake, it flees from a Coot that clearly

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dislikes the snakes presence. A scene not seen very often in the Netherlands. The sluice building is surrounded by tens of House Martins, that prefer to build their nests under the overhanging concrete. Plenty of insect life around, as we see a bit later on. Walking towards the car, we see damage by Beaver, affecting healthy trees. Once in the car, we go back over the Knardijk towards the visitors centre.

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 den has been blocked, at least from the north. After a late lunch at the visitors centre we walk into the area, behind it. Common Redstart shows, but briefly so. It is about four o'clock now and birdlife is a bit quiet. Getting closer to the hut, a Wheatear is noticed by one of the clients, the white rump/tail being diagnostic. Better views of Common Redstart and two Cuckoos flying past, both birds land on different branches and sit long enough to be admired in the scope. The bees that have a nest under the planking of the building are very active, but not aggressive, so we pass unmolested. From out of the hut we see Dunlin, one individual at least with a nice black patch on the belly. Lesser Ringed Plover here as well as Redshank. Three nervously swimming Black-necked Grebe are on the shallow lake, recognisable, but not really good views. The light is not very favourable, and the hut is uncomfortably warm at that moment, there is no ventilation. That is the reason why we do not stay long in here, and walk towards the next stop.

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. .Walking towards this place, we see some Goldfinches, Carrion Crow, and more Common Redstarts. The last 50 meters one walks in between two rows of Hawthorn, very fragrant at that moment. From out of the hut a big number of Gadwall can be seen, just a few Mallard, maybe three or four Shelduck and a single Garganey. The latter bird takes some time to find back and show it at all those present. We reach the last bit of Willow forest and our attention is drawn into the tree that normally is a song post for Greenfinch. Two LBJ's in the lower branches: One is a Willow Warbler, but next to it is a bird that is slightly bigger, with a faintly streaked chest: Spotted Flycatcher. Short view, but clear enough. Then while we are in the forested area again, a Peregrine Falcon speeds over the canopy, luckily the clients pick it up as well. They, however miss four Swifts. Fortunately we see them later, at the last stop. Close to the car, we notice a Song Thrush, first on the back, but it obligingly turns to show its spotted chest, not an ID-enigma.

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. Brown, smaller and more angular than Red Deer, a Roedeer stands on the edge of the forest. The doe seems to be pregnant. She is not really scared by us, normally these shy animals disappear into the low foliage of the trees once a car stops nearby, but we get good views. A Spoonbill flies directly over the car, which makes it always difficult to see by all occupants of the vehicle, the best some see is a bird flying away from us into a bright sky. We see many Cormorants, Great Crested Grebe, but nothing new for the list. So we continue and start driving towards the SW. White Wagtails sitting on top of the boulders at the lake side of the dike, Great Crested Grebes in the water, some of them still displaying and courting.

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. .We look at the birds on the breakwater and jetty. Common Terns, several tens of them, sit on the stones and wood. A Common Sandpiper searches for food between the stones and a very dark-backed gull poses some ID-problems. Initially thought to have yellow legs, it proves to be bigger and more stubby-billed than the Herring Gulls

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next to it. Looking again, with an even higher magnification, we see that the legs are actually pinkish, so this is a Great Black-backed Gull. Normally, more often, encountered along the coast, its name in science speak is *Larus maritimus*, the maritime gull. But then again, if we see it in the Oostvaardersplassen it is often at this spot. Looking along the dike we see a faint 'smoke' originating from the crest. No fire, so it must be Green mosquitos. Swallows, Martins and Swifts like it that way. On the dry side of the dike we can look again at the nest of White-tailed Eagle. Now, with the sun in our backs, the bird in a treetop shows more detail, a lighter coloured head, brown body with broad shoulders. A second bird again on the nest itself. Black-headed Gulls fly over the lake, Some Greylag are on the lake, but as always, the density of birds here is very low. The mud on the bottom of this shallow lake is stirred up to easily, one sees a grey water column, not very good for primary production by submerged plants.

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 pass by here, the turn off being a bit dangerous with cars close behind us. Nearly all the species to be expected here were seen before. On the way we see several Marsh Harriers, males with three-coloured wings, black tips, grey, and rufous-brown nearer the body. Carrion Crow in the top of some trees.

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. After stopping shortly at the Pumping Station of the polder, Block van Kuffelaer, where we see another Little Egret, we reach this parking. The waterlevel is quite high, so there are no waders. Better views of Shelduck. Short glimpses of Reed Warbler, the brownish back and lighter front parts showing. Song of Reed Bunting and Sedge Warbler here, but not the 'ting-ting' of Bearded Reedling, and that is a pity. We then start back for Amsterdam, seeing two more Common Buzzard close to the orange and red windmills, SW of Almere (not on the map). Close to the RAI exhibition Centre there is dense traffic, an international Art Fair has just been opened.

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



Title: De Oostvaardersplassen, voorbij de grenzen van het vertrouwde. Fotography: 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

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Observation points in Flevoland, near the Oostvaardersplassen area.



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