

Flevo Birdwatching

Tour date:	January 17th, 2017
Name of area visited:	Oostvaardersplassen, 5600 ha wetland between Almere and Lelystad
Guide(s):	Robert de Groot

Remarkable: Kingfisher

Weather: Cold, with huge powercut in Amsterdam area. Visibility about 1 kilometer, temperature -5 to -2°C, wind from east, 2 Beaufort, so some windchill.

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>
Grote zilverreiger	Great Egret	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>
Blauwe reiger	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Kleine zwaan	Tundra Swan	<i>Cygnus columbianus</i>
Knobbelzwaan	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>
Kolgans	White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</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>
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>
Tafeleend	(Common) Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>
Kuifeend	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>
Nonnetje	Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>
Grote zaagbek	(Common) Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>
Buizerd	(Common) Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Torenvalk	(Common) Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Waterhoen	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Meerkoet	(Common) Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Kievit	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>
Watersnip	(Common) Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>
Kokmeeuw	Black headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Stormmeeuw	(Common) Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>
Zilvermeeuw	Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
Houtduif	Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
IJsvogel	(Common) Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Winterkoning	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Roodborst	Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>

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Merel	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Kramsvogel	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>
Zanglijster	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>
Matkop	Willow Tit	<i>Parus montanus</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>
Huisemus	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Vink	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Groenling	Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>
Kneu	Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
Rietgors	Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>
..
50	0	50
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.

Area SW of Almere, not on map. On a bit of dead-end road, we have a look over the southernmost part of lake IJssel. Someone is doing observations on migratory birds here, and he apparently feeds the gulls. The beneficiary gulls know this and wait in anticipation, Common- and Black-headed Gull. Great Crested Grebes swim on the open water, as well as some Gadwall and Tufted Ducks. We continue towards the west and see more of these species, adding Mallard as well. Buzzard (the Americans' Hawk, *Buteo buteo*), sits on poles in the field. They are lazy raptors, waiting for small mammals to show up. Near Pampushaven, an elongated, sheltered harbour we find our first Greylags, Barnacle Geese fly over and big groups of diving ducks (Tufted Duck and Common Pochard) are resting on the water. Some are diving, but most of them are at rest. Two Little Grebes at the end of the breakwater, too far to be enjoyed, really. The first of many Robins are seen, we see many during the whole trip, everywhere, apart from on the ice itself. On the stones, kept in reserve for eventualities, sits a Kestrel. Unfortunately, we cannot stop on this road.

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. But this is winter, most of the lake is frozen over. A small area of open water holds two swans, with yellow on the bill. The shape of the spot tells us these are Bewick's. We hear nothing here, no Reedlings, so we quickly continue, windchill is still a factor. The jetty in the nearby marina has a Lapwing standing forlorn between some gulls, and a Cormorant. A Kingfisher is suddenly noticed, just four meters from the car. It looks around, but is not scared. After a minute it flies a few meters off and continues scanning the water below it. Such blue!

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

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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 saw the island, and the breeding colony, which was not occupied, of course. As the shallow water here was frozen over, we continued without stopping.

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 (in summer) 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. A two-score of Pintail, males as well as females past the breakwaters. With the eastern wind of that moment, they were nicely sheltered, but not near their food. Two Shelduck swam closer by, as well as Great Crested Grebe. Other species of duck, only adding to the number of individuals, not of species. Apart from some Black-headed Gulls, no other gulls were present. The nest of the White-tailed Eagle was not visible from here, due to some light fog. And in the reeds we did not see, nor hear, birds. On on.

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. As the lake was frozen, we did not go to the hut itself, just checked the parking and immediate area around it. A second Kingfisher was seen here, on the big boulders of the dike, brilliant blue on darker stone. In the far distance we could see groups of ducks, close to where the Knardijk meets the Oostvaardersdijk. Smew, with males this time, swimming between more Pintail, Shelduck, Tufted Duck and Common Pochard. We drove to that spot, but parking there is forbidden, so we drove past, slowly. Normally turning to the right at the roundabout, we now went straight on and took the turnoff to the left some few hundred meter further on. Next to the housing is a playground where we had a good look over the lake. Hundreds of Shoveler, many Mallard, some Smew, a Goosander female and Cormorant were visible. Behind us, next to the houses were some bushes and trees. Magpie, Great Tit, Robin and Song Thrush showed themselves.

Knardijk with adjacent lakes: Oostvaardersplas, Keersluisplas and Bovenwater (9): The Keersluisplas and oostvaardersplas are 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. Keersluisplas, as well as Oostvaardersplas, were completely frozen over. The eastern part of Bovenwater as well. So, no birds here, apart from 7 Shelduck flying over the dike and lake. So we concentrated on the open water of the latter lake, with more ducks and grebes as a result. No additions to the species list.

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 warm cup of coffee, (nobody ordered Iced Coffee ;-)), we walked through the bit of Willow forest that was left standing by the deer and horses. Almost immediately a pair of Willow Tit was spotted by the clients. Blue- and Great Tit here as well, and Robin, of course. The path to the hut was blocked, we could have gone to another hut (Schollebaar, but that would have been a long, cold walk. So we opted to return via the newly created Oostvaardersveld (the area around 5 and 6, see below).

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,

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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. Nice group of Barnacle Geese, as well as more Greylag. Some open water, but the birds were concentrated behind the bushes. Two Mute Swans on the west side of this road. Driving towards the next point we first found the herd of Konik horses, now well camouflaged in greys, camels and ochres. Next, we spotted two single Fieldfares, which had their backs turned towards us. Showing the grey on the back, together with a relatively long tail was enough to identify them, but "en-profil" would have been better.

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. Indeed, we see big herds of Deer and two dozen cattle. The former brown and the latter black, so very evident. Two Buzzards sit in different trees, a very light one and a very dark one. A Snipe flying off to the west quickly disappeared. On some grassland between our road, Trekweg, and the A6 motorway we see 9 Roedeer. These lands are kept green yearlong with grass and alfalfa and so attract those mammals as well as geese. Egrets and herons forage after each harvest, when the mice, voles and moles have lost their cover. There is just one Great Egret now. On the way back to Amsterdam we see flocks of geese in other fields, Greater White-fronted with them in the distance. Had we been the only car on a minor road, we could have feigned car trouble and stopped, but it was getting quite crowded on the motorway. Another reason to come back, maybe?

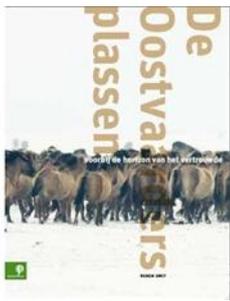
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If you want to read more or see more pictures? Books about the " Oostvaardersplassen":



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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