

# Flevo Birdwatching

Tour date:	September 18th, 2015
Name of area visited:	Oostvaardersplassen, 5600 ha wetland between Almere and Lelystad
Guide(s):	Robert de Groot

**Remarkable:** Goshawk on the rock, it stirred and shook us.

**Weather:** Sunny and hardly any wind. Towards the end we had some rain, but it did not affect the mood.  
15 °C

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>
Lepelaar	(Eurasian) Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</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>
Bruine kiekendief	Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
Sperwer	(Eurasian) Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>
Havik	(Northern) Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
Buizerd	(Common) Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>
Zeearend	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</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>
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>
Kleine mantelmeeuw	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>
Visdief	(Common) Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>

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Zwarte stern	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>
Houtduif	Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Turkse tortel	Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
IJsvogel	(Common) Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Grote bonte specht	Great spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>
Oeverzwaluw	Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>
Boerenzwaluw	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Huiszwaluw	House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>
Witte kwikstaart	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>
(H) Winterkoning	Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Heggenus	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Tapuit	Northern Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>
Merel	Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Tjiftjaf	Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>
(H) Baardman	Bearded Tit	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>
Matkop	Willow Tit	<i>Parus montanus</i>
(H) Pimpelmees	Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
Koolmees	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Staatmees	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>
Boomkruiper	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</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>
Huismus	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Vink	Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Putter	Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
Kneu	Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>
..	..	..
61	3	64
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 to the SW of Almere, off the map to the left. Always a first look here to scan the open lake and to get a first impression of the polder and how it came to be. Great Crested Grebe, Black-headed Gull, some ducks, Carrion Crow. Not very exhilarating. The fun starts near the floating blue houses. We scan the lake and find Tufted Duck and Common Pochard, White Wagtails in groups. A light coloured blob on a rock attract some attention. Expecting to see an Egret or Heron, the shape does not fit properly, too low on its feet. So take out the telescope. And jury rig the mobile phone. Result is shown below.

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A female Goshawk is quietly sitting there. It is attentive, not sleeping, but in such an unnatural habitat for this tree loving species. If the name Gos-hawk comes from Goose Hawk, it is understandable. They have been seen hunting ducks over the water. When we get a bit closer, at one hundred meter distance, it flies off. Immediately disappearing behind Willow trees and shrubs. On the grassland next to the road we see a lone Wheatear, too concentrated on feeding to be scared. At the far corner next to the deposit of stones we stop to look out over the second basin. Almost immediately a Kingfisher flies past at a few meters distance. We both see it and fail to find it again, even though it has to be sitting in the reeds at a short distance. We then drive towards the next point, checking a manure dump for passerines. Only White Wagtail and a pervasive smell. Little time is wasted here.

**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, some covered with a roof. The bushes around the area are good for warblers, Cuckoo, finches.

If ever you want to be sure to see Greylag Geese, look here. It is the dominant species. Their young are now almost the same size as the adults, they can fly as well, but their bills are not so bright orange and the plumage has a faint greyish wash over it. At the first screen we see them, but also a Pintail. This bird is in eclipse, and poses some difficulty in identifying. The rufous shade on the head and upper neck, convinces us. A Littler Grebe and some Tufted Ducks, some Common Pochard and Coot. Little Grebes swim close to the second hide as well. We pay attention to the low beams and do not do any head banging. Great Egret and Grey Heron get into view, a flight of Lapwings, but the variation is a bit disappointing. No waders. So we decide to try our luck elsewhere. Walking back a Chiffchaff calls and we manage to spot it.

**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. We do hear Bearded Reedling, but fail to see any. The wind is towards us. Over the reeds fly Barn Swallows, quite low. In all that motion, it is easy to miss one or two flying Reedlings, if they would have passed. The mudflats are covered with fresh growth, no waders can be seen here. Out on Lake IJssel we notice Black Terns and Common Terns. In quite big numbers. Some rest on the poles of the fishing nets, so we do see the differences in plumage quite well. The Black Terns are all changing into winter plumage, they have lost the black below, only some spots on the head are left.

**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. Greylags and White Wagtail. Some Sand Martins are mixed with the Barn Swallows. Once you have good lighting, it is easier to tell them apart, especially when they fly below you, when you're standing on a dike or view point. The dark sandy colour on the back is completely different from the jet black backs of Barn Swallow.

**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 wreck site. This was all dumped on a single spot, creating a round island. Originally it was

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covered with shells 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 do see Kestrel, but the Hobbies, which use this area during migration, have left. Forgot to point out the island, sorry, but you can find that on Google Earth. In the colony one can only recognise few nests. A severe storm in August must have destroyed most of the flimsy structures. Scanning the horizon, we see a big raptor soaring, its silhouette looking like White-tailed Eagle. Broad wings, at a slight dihedral, very big. But at such a distance it is not a satisfactory observation.

**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 where the nest of the White-tailed Eagle used to be until the August '15 storm. This point is closest to that location, 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. Lunchtime as well. The breakwater at the west side is covered with many Terns and Gulls. Black- and Common Terns, Common, Greater Black-backed- and Herring Gulls. Two waders speed past, probably Dunlin, but not sure. A huge flock of Cormorants is fishing Caterpillar style. The whole flock moves in one direction, birds in the front dive after fish, the rest of the flock swims over that point and when the diving birds reemerge, they either swim or fly to the front again. The fish below are constantly herded in front of the diving Cormorants, which numbered a few hundred. Some shapes on the other horizon look like an Eagle, but no certainty.

**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. On Bovenwater we see Great Crested Grebes, and a smaller grebe, maybe a Black-necked. But the latter one disappears behind the vegetation before we can point the optics towards it. None of the winter visitors have arrived yet. Mute Swan is shiningly visible. We move on.

**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 fox has built a den underneath the concrete foundation. In the first small lake on the right we see a Muskrat. In the forest, at the beginning of the path, we find a mixed flock of passerines. Willow Tit, Great and Long-tailed Tit, Short-toed Treecreeper and Chaffinch get added to the list. The wardens have recently constructed a concrete walking path towards the hut. That takes away a bit of the "wilderness-experience". But now, even wheelchairs can reach the hut. The Konik horses still mark their existence by dropping manure in the middle of the path. But it is much easier to push it over the side of the concrete slab.

With clean and dry shoes we enter the hut. A large herd of Konik horses and spread out groups of Red Deer. Barnacle Geese mixed with Greylags, a Sparrowhawk flies low over the field and settles close to some geese, very useful for size comparison. But soon a big group of people arrive in the hut and we flee. On the way back we see Common Linnet and more Goldfinch.

**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.

There are many Wigeon here as well as Gadwall, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Mallard and Teal. But it is quite busy on the road so we do not stay parked at the side of the road for long.

**Kleine Praambult (7):** This is now being reconstructed. We do not stop here.

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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. Clear to see the impact of the grazers on the vegetation. Yes we do see those grazers, but do we really need such a savanna in Western Europe? Is it a natural landscape, belonging in this part of the world with an Atlantic temperate climate? Some big black birds get our attention, but they have square cut off tails, so they are not the hoped for Ravens. When they get closer, their size is also too diminutive. We move on past Trekweg the road between the Lage Vaart canal and the Motorway A6. In the fields we find two groups of Roedeer, two and four in number. Other Buzzards, quite unlike a strangely patterned one earlier. It now starts raining.

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. Still having time we also visit this education centre. Rain has stopped and some light sky shows in the distance. Not a bad move, as we find Spoonbills, some seven or eight, well recognisable in the telescope. More good views on Sand Martins. When we do kind of a last scan over the fields in front of us, a huge dark shape is sitting at some 500 meters distance. With 60x magnification it clearly proves to have a white tail, not bad for an eagle named after that extension of the body. A nice last species to be added to the list.

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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.

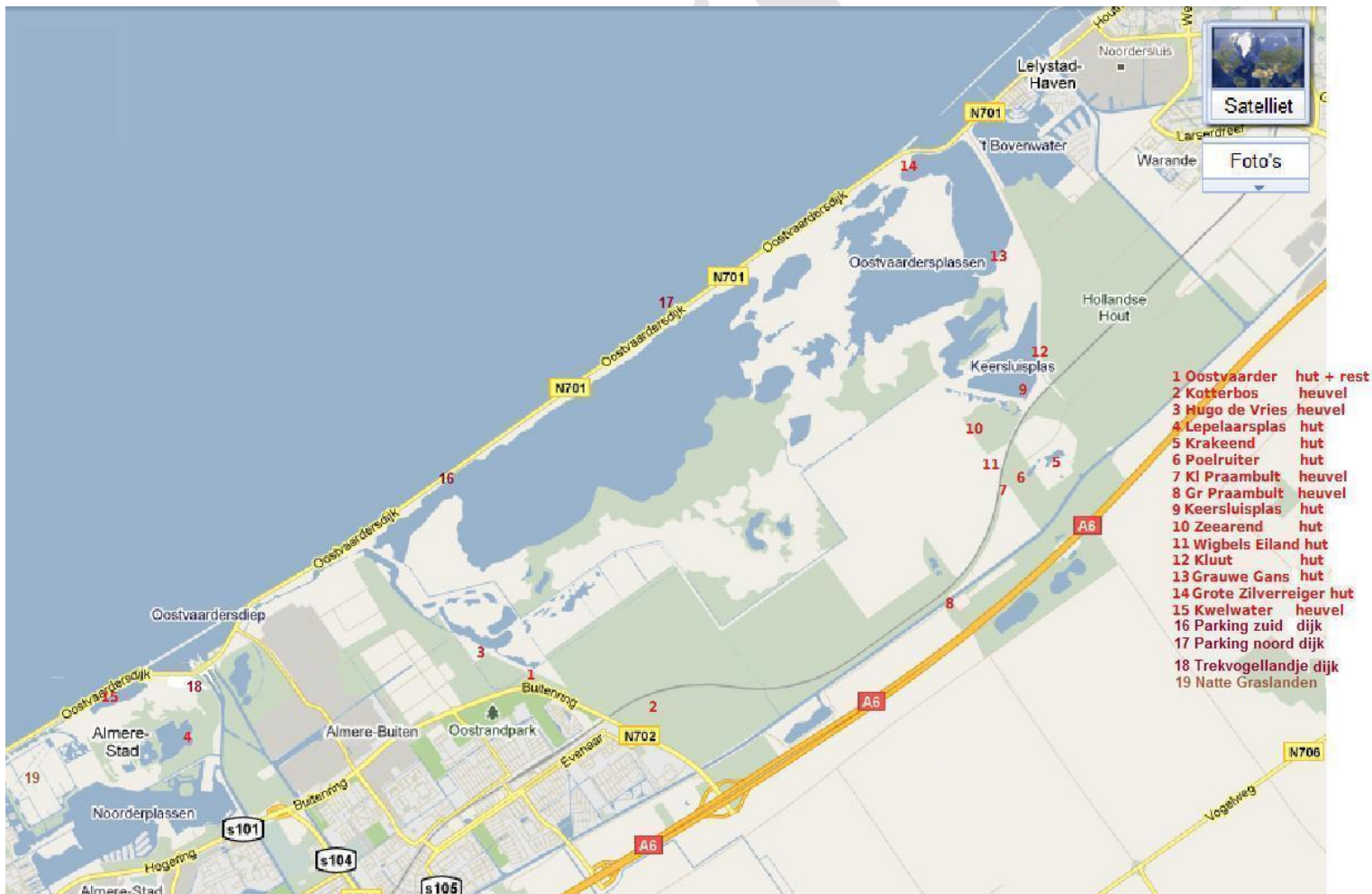
Title: Oostvaardersplassen, nieuwe natuur op oude zeebodem. Samenstelling: Bremer, P., Berg, L van den, Euverman, G., Wigbels, V., Tempel, J. Publisher : Staatsbosbeheer

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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