

Flevo Birdwatching

Date of excursion:

21 Juni 2015

Area Visited/Bezochte gebied:

Oostvaardersplassen, 5600 ha wetland between Almere and Lelystad,
AM: 1st excursion from 08.00 until 12.30 uur
PM: 2nd excursion from 12.30 until 17.00 uur

Begeleider/Guide:

Robert de Groot

Nederlandse naam	English name	Scientific name	AM	PM
Fuut	Great Crested Grebe	Podiceps cristatus	X	X
Dodaars	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis	H	
Aalscholver	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo	X	X
Grote zilverreiger	Great Egret	Casmerodius albus	X	X
Blauwe reiger	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	X	X
Lepelaar	(Eurasian) Spoonbill	Platalea leucorodia	X	X
Knobbelzwaan	Mute Swan	Cygnus olor	X	X
Grauwe gans	Greylag Goose	Anser anser	X	X
Grote Canadese gans	Greater Canada Goose	Branta canadensis		X
Brandgans	Barnacle Goose	Branta leucopsis		X
Bergeend	(Common) Shelduck	Tadorna tadorna	X	X
Nijlgans	Egyptian Goose	Alopochen aegyptiacus	X	X
Wilde eend	Mallard	Anas platyrhynchos	X	X
Krakeend	Gadwall	Anas strepera	X	X
Slobeend	(Northern) Shoveler	Anas clypeata	X	X
Tafeleend	(Common) Pochard	Aythya ferina		X
Kuifeend	Tufted Duck	Aythya fuligula	X	X
Bruine kiekendief	Marsh Harrier	Circus aeruginosus	X	X
Buizerd	(Common) Buzzard	Buteo buteo	X	X
Zeearend	White-tailed Eagle	Haliaeetus albicilla	X	X
Waterral	Water Rail	Rallus aquaticus		X
Meerkoet	(Common) Coot	Fulica atra	X	X
Scholekster	Oystercatcher	Haematopus ostralegus	X	X
Kluut	Avocet	Recurvirostra avosetta	X	X
Kleine plevier	Little ringed Plover	Charadrius dubius	X	X
Kievit	Northern Lapwing	Vanellus vanellus	X	X
Kemphaan	Ruff	Philomachus pugnax	X	
Grutto	Black-tailed Godwit	Limosa limosa		X
Kokmeeuw	Black headed Gull	Chroicocephalus ridibundus	X	X
Zilvermeeuw	Herring Gull	Larus argentatus	X	X
Kleine mantelmeeuw	Lesser Black-backed Gull	Larus fuscus	X	X
Visdief	(Common) Tern	Sterna hirundo	X	X
Houtduif	Wood Pigeon	Columba palumbus	X	X
Holenduif	Stock Dove	Columba oenas	X	X
Koekoek	(Common) Cuckoo	Cuculus canorus	X	X
Gierzwaluw	(Common) Swift	Apus apus	X	X

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Grote bonte specht	Great spotted Woodpecker	Dendrocopos major	X	X
Boerenzwaluw	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica	X	X
Huiszwaluw	House Martin	Delichon urbica	X	X
Witte kwikstaart	White Wagtail	Motacilla alba	X	X
Winterkoning	Wren	Troglodytes troglodytes	X	X
Blauwborst	Bluethroat	Luscinia svecica		X
Nachtegaal	Nightingale	Luscinia megarhynchos	X	
Roodborsttapuit	(Common) Stonechat	Saxicola torquata	X	X
Merel	Blackbird	Turdus merula	X	X
Zanglijster	Song Thrush	Turdus philomelos	X	X
Rietzanger	Sedge Warbler	Acrocephalus schoenobaenus	X	X
Bosrietzanger	Marsh Warbler	Acrocephalus palustris	X	X
Kleine karekiet	Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus scirpaceus	X	X
Grasmus	(Common) Whitethroat	Sylvia communis	X	X
Fitis	Willow Warbler	Phylloscopus trochilus		X
Tjiftjaf	Chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita	H	X
Pimpelmees	Blue Tit	Parus caeruleus	X	X
Koolmees	Great Tit	Parus major	X	X
Staatmees	Long-tailed Tit	Aegithalos caudatus	X	X
Spreeuw	(Common) Starling	Sturnus vulgaris	X	X
Gaai	(Eurasian) Jay	Garrulus glandarius	X	X
Ekster	Magpie	Pica pica	X	X
Kauw	(Eurasian) Jackdaw	Corvus monedula	X	X
Raaf	(Common) Raven	Corvus corax	X	X
Zwarte kraai	Carrion Crow	Corvus corone	X	X
Huismus	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	X	X
Vink	Chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs	X	X
Groenling	Greenfinch	Chloris chloris	X	X
Putter	Goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis	X	
Kneu	Linnet	Carduelis cannabina	X	X
Rietgors	Reed Bunting	Emberiza schoeniclus	X	X
..	Totaal	AM PM
66 Soorten waargenomen / Species observed	3 (H) = Alleen gehoord / Heard only	Gezien	64	57 61
		Gehoord	2	3 2

Remarkable: Ruff in the morning, Water Rail in the afternoon

Weather: Rain and drizzle first half of the morning, almost no wind. Later on we got wind and sunshine.

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.

Morning (AM)

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

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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. A short stop here, we see the White-tailed Eagle's nest. Many agree that this is an overwhelming view, but with some bad side effects. 85% percent of the nesting birds have left since the introduction of the big grazers in the early 80's. House Martins fly around. Also we see the first Buzzard and Marsh Harrier. A detour to collect a client in Almere proves futile, NS has changed its schedule, trains do not stop on the Oostvaarders station. What a shame. We hurry back to the north. Still we see many Great Egrets on the way. Next to Trekweg, the fields have been harvested. The mice, voles and rats have lost their cover, an almost free meal for the long-billed predators. Some Buzzards here as well.

Zeearend (10): The path leads to a big hut, named after the White-tailed Eagle. From here, one can 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. Now it is very quiet on the path, because it is raining continuously. We walk the path for a distance, but turn around before we have reached the hut itself. On the way we see Common Redstart in the forest of dead trees. The client, so badly treated by the railway has managed to get a taxi in Lelystad. We meet in a dripping forest.

Krakeendhut (5) Combined with the following Poelruiterhut (6): These now are located in one single development area, Oostvaardersveld. 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 will 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. We first drive over Knardijk towards the sluice. This we reach after having seen the trees felled by Beavers. Bits of trunk, some 15 cm in diameter and two meter in length have been bitten off, the Beaver is a real macho. At the sluice we see House Martin and one observer sees Golden Oriole flying across the canal. A Great Spotted Woodpecker is looking out of a hole in a dead tree trunk. A bit later it flies off. Rain has now really stopped and we walk towards the hut named "Krakeend" (Gadwall). On the way we see at least one Muskrat and another rodent swimming. At a spot where Beavers are seen quite frequently, it sets our hearts racing. But we cannot be sure, the observation is short, and the animal seems too small to be a Beaver, so two Muskrats is more likely. At that spot a Kingfisher shows to only one person. Short song fragments of Nightingale, unfortunately not "the full Monty". From the hut we see a very dark Ruff, Avocet, Little Ringed Plover and Reed Warbler. The last one is certainly nesting near the hut, and it even seems the young have fledged. There are more than two birds moving in the reeds. On the way back we check the heap of plant matter, constructed to be a breeding site for Ringslang, Grass snake. They do not show. But the principle is clear, rotting provides heat, that helps to incubate the snake's eggs. Apart from a few extra Buzzards we do not see much more.

AFTERNOON (PM)

Knardijk and Krakeend (hide, 5): We use the Praamweg (road) going straight through the area. Spoonbill is foraging here, its typical behaviour is clear to us. Some Mute Swans and a herd of Konik Horses. The area is now well covered with plants, many thistles.

Grote Praambult (8) Description above: The view from here is like the African savannah. Many animals and little vegetation. It still is a bit hazy, so the White-tailed Eagle's nest is just visible. An adult bird sits in a treetop next to it. The herds of Red Deer and Konik Horse fade in and out of the haze. When it gets a bit clearer, we can estimate the number of horses to be in the hundreds; six or seven? House Martin, Swift, Barnswallow; airborne insects have to be careful. We take the Trekweg towards Almere. The cover of Alfalfa and grasses has not grown back since this morning, so the Egrets, Herons and Buzzards are still feasting. On the far end we see a Roedeer with two young, quite close to the motorway. Many people are fishing for carp in the Lage Vaart (the canal next to the road) and the lake that is connected to it.

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



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nearby water and shorelines. Raptors hunt everywhere, most of them will be Common Buzzard. We look first from the terrace outside. Great Crested Grebe. A Barnacle Goose swims in between the Greylags. Oystercatcher on the shore and in flight, their "tepiet" calls clearly audible. From the top deck we have a broad expanse of grassland in front of us. A Red Fox is eating a goose. With a Raven sitting next to it, eating is a bit awkward, the Fox has to keep in mind that Raven like goose as well. Theft is not uncommon. And yes, it happens; the Raven manages to steal a sizable bit of goose. It crops the stolen part some distance away from the Fox. White-tailed Eagle in the far distance. The young are trying their wings. In some time it should be possible to see four Eagles together, soaring. We go back, passing the middle observation deck. It is quite busy here, good to see so many people enjoying the area.

Jan van den Boschpad (not numbered on map) next to Fluitbos (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 trunks have rotten away, the new trees 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 drive along the southern perimeter of the park. We can clearly see the affected trees. We stop at the parking nearest to the Oostvaardersdijk. This lies next to a part of the bicycle path that forms the south-westernmost part of the park. First we walk north for about 200 meters. A short glimpse of Bluethroat, better view of female Marsh Harrier, sitting in top of a dead branch. Spoonbill, many Greylag Geese. Returning through a bit of forest, we hear Chaffinch, see Blackcap for a short while and frustratingly little else. On the path towards the dike, Greenfinches in the top of several trees. When we continue towards the bridge, a small dark bird flies off, red bill, long legs, Water Rail. Seconds later we reach the bridge, but the bird is gone.

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 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. This we drive past. But along this stretch of dike we see several Marsh Harriers. On the side of Lake IJssel there are only Great Crested Grebes, some Tufted Ducks, Common Tern and Black-headed Gull. And a group of fishing Cormorants. We see the whole flock travelling, the bird swim, those at the front dive, the others swim over that spot and dive as well. Then when birds surface again, they are at the rear, and start following their fellow fishermen to reach the front position shortly. Over there many terns patrol the water as well, aiming for smaller fry that try to escape near the surface.

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. One client also sees a very strange bird, flying to our east. Tailless, black with some white. Our first impression would be a giant black Pitta. But no such bird exists, so a more acceptable explanation is a Magpie that has lost its tail. A strange sight. The White-tailed Eagle's nest is from here, but initially no bird can be seen near it. The reeds in front hold Reed Bunting, clearly recognisable by their black heads and white collar. The back is streaked brown and black. We hear and see Sedge Warbler. The breakwater on the other side has Common Tern and Black-



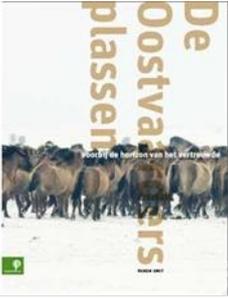
Flevo Birdwatching

headed Gull. A white bird sitting, preening itself, under some vegetation proves to be a Muskovy Duck, but with a strange plumage. Black around the eye, from the front the remainder seemed completely white, but after the animal turned, the feathers on the back were black. Lesser Black-backed Gull on the breakwater as well.

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. Not so many spectacular species in sight. If you like Mute Swan, Coot and Gadwall, you will be satisfied, but nothing else really. A bit further we pass the enormous Cormorant colony. The birds can be seen sitting on the nest, up to 10 nests in some of the trees. All these birds do mainly fish in Lake IJssel. Estimate of 40.000 kg of fish daily. We reach the parking and say our goodbyes. It was an enjoyable day.



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 with 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 hills and hides in the Oostvaardersplassen area



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