

Tour Report Holland's Summer Birding 21 – 25 August 2025

Curlew sandpiper



Eurasian dotterel and Ringed plover



Montagu's harrier



Red knot



Compiled by Martijn Bot

10th Anniversary Tour in the Northern Netherlands

Ten years ago, at the British Birdfair, I first met the director of Wildlife Worldwide—then still operating under the name *Travelling Naturalist*. At that time, I had just taken over the name *Birding Holland* and launched *Birdingholland.nl*. We started chatting, and he immediately expressed interest in a short summer birding trip for British guests to the northern provinces of the Netherlands.

As a complete newcomer in this field (and still working full-time in education), I was honoured to be asked. He could easily have chosen a more established company, but instead, he gave me the chance. The following summer, I welcomed my very first group, and since then, this trip has become an annual highlight I always look forward to.

It's an intense week—organising picnic lunches on the go, staying with the group right through dinner—but it's always rewarding and full of birds. Knowing the north like the back of my hand, I never struggle to fill five days with great birding.

Thursday 21 August 2025

Day 1:

Oostvaardersplassen

This year's 10th edition was fully booked. I picked the group up from Schiphol on Thursday, and we headed north via the Oostvaardersplassen. The drought had left much of the reserve drier than usual, but the first white-tailed eagles were quickly on show—a great way to kick off the trip, especially as they're still scarce in England. Spoonbills, marsh harriers, caspian gulls, great and little egrets, black-tailed godwits, golden plovers, and black terns gave us a gentle introduction before the real birding began.

Friday 22 August 2025

Day 2:

Northeast Groningen

I never finalise the itinerary until the last minute—tides, weather, and recent sightings all shape the plan. With Montagu's harriers (a key target) soon due to migrate, and favourable tides, the northeast seemed the best choice for our first full day.

At Breebaartpolder and Punt van Reide, we watched large numbers of waders pushed close by the rising tide. Although most stayed at a distance, the sheer spectacle of swirling flocks—dunlin, curlew sandpiper, knot, bar-tailed godwit, grey and golden plover, whimbrel, ringed plover, greenshank, and spotted redshank—was unforgettable. A juvenile Caspian tern dashed through at speed.

From the hide, we had wonderful close views of dunlin, curlew sandpipers, spotted redshanks, and best of all, a Caspian tern preening just in front of us.

Out in the polders, things quickly got even better: a field crammed with hundreds (possibly thousands) of ringed plovers, along with little stint, sanderling, curlew sandpiper, and dunlin. To our delight, a dotterel in fresh winter plumage was hiding among them. Add in a peregrine devouring prey and a juvenile Montagu's harrier tussling with a kestrel, and it was a feast for the eyes.

Lunch under the sea dyke brought yet another highlight: an adult white-tailed eagle drifting in and landing in a field beside its partner. Later, a short drive easily produced several Montagu's harriers—males, females, and juveniles—likely the last I'll see this year before they head south.

A final stop at the Dannemeer was quieter, but after such a day, no one was complaining.

Saturday 23 August 2025

Day 3:
Drenthe

Time for a change of scenery: forests, heathlands, and bogs in Drenthe. On the way, we checked on a night heron lingering in a Groningen park—seen but not especially well.

At Dwingelderveld, raptors stole the show. Within minutes we had a short-toed eagle, quickly followed by two more! Honey buzzards, another white-tailed eagle, hobbies, buzzards, sparrowhawk, peregrine, and marsh harriers added to the tally. A raven, a late cuckoo, and swifts were nice bonuses.

Onward via Oude Willem to Fochteloërveen, where another short-toed eagle hovered right by the car. At our lunch stop, three more short-toed eagles soared overhead, bringing the day's total to seven! As if that weren't enough, four black storks glided in high, circling before drifting southwest. Quite the lunchtime spectacle.

En route to Fochteloërveen we also picked up eleven cranes, another target species. From the viewing tower, deteriorating weather limited activity, though a hobby plucking a swallow was memorable. The surrounding woods added willow and marsh tits, goldcrest, firecrest, and crested tit—much appreciated by our British guests, who rarely see them outside Scotland.

By afternoon, the air felt distinctly autumnal. Time to head back.

Sunday 24 August 2025

Day 4:
Westhoek & the Wadden Coast

One of the trip's highlights: the famous high-tide roost at Westhoek. With spring tide and onshore winds forecast, I made sure we arrived early. The light was magical, the sea calm, and the birds gathered steadily closer.

The spectacle was everything we'd hoped for: avocets, curlews, bar-tailed godwits, dunlin, curlew sandpipers, little stints, knot (in higher numbers than usual), grey plovers, ringed plovers, oystercatchers, sanderlings, golden plovers, black-tailed godwits, and turnstones. Thousands of moulting shelduck dotted the Wadden Sea, joined by Ruddy shelducks overhead and fresh pintails arriving from the east.

A Red-necked phalarope put in a frustratingly brief appearance, seen only by me before it flew off east. At Zwarte Haan, conditions were similar, but drought meant outer-dike Friesland was quieter. Holwerd pier was lively at first, but then overrun by roaring motorbikes and flashy sports cars—sending the waders fleeing. We followed soon after!

At Lauwersmeer, peace returned: bearded tits, Cetti's warblers, kingfisher, white-tailed eagles, and three red-backed shrikes rounded off the day beautifully.

Monday 25 August 2025

Day 5:
Afsluitdijk

As in past years, we returned to Amsterdam via the Afsluitdijk, a perfect route to add a few more species. At Hegewiersterfjild, wheatears, bearded tits, and marsh harriers greeted us, with Ruddy shelducks, ruff, spotted redshanks, black-tailed godwits, spoonbills, pintail, little grebes, and masses of greylag geese on the pools. A Caspian tern flew low overhead, silent and majestic.

On the Frisian side, vast flocks of curlew and golden plover, plus an astonishing 220 red-crested pochards—the largest number I've ever seen here.

On the other side of the dike, instead of cars and motorbikes, we encountered fishing boats and celebrations for Den Oever's Fishery Days. Lunching further along the dyke, we enjoyed superb views of mudflats packed with waders, including many more sanderlings. In the bushes, reed and marsh warblers and chiffchaffs were active, but best of all were two zitting cisticolas performing their characteristic 'display flights'.

A final stop at some flooded bulb fields added wood sandpiper to the list. By then, the group was thoroughly satisfied—not just with the birds but also with the variety of landscapes and experiences.

Here's to the next decade!

Little stint



Barn swallow



Caspian gull



Caspian tern



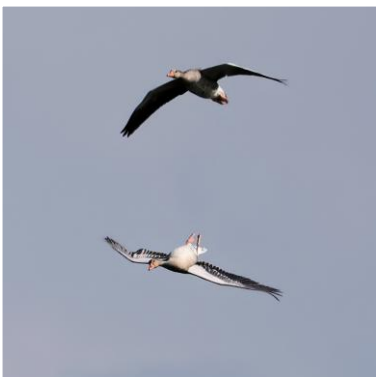
Crested tit



Red-crested pochard



Greylag geese



Marsh harrier



Montagu's harrier



Sign up to our e-news

Sign up to our e-news to find out more about our tours, events, late availability, offers and tour reports at <https://www.wildlifeworldwide.com/subscribe>

Checklist for Holland's Summer Birding



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
	BIRDS						
1	Canada goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓	✓		
2	Barnacle goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	✓			✓	
3	Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Mute swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Common shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>		✓		✓	✓
6	Ruddy shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>				✓	
7	Northern shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>				✓	✓
8	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>				✓	✓
9	Eurasian wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>		✓			
10	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Northern pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>				✓	
12	Eurasian teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>		✓		✓	
13	Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		✓			✓
14	Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		✓			
15	Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓	✓			
16	Black stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>			✓		
17	White stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
18	Eurasian spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
19	Black-crowned night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>			✓		
20	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
21	Great egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
22	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓			✓	
23	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
24	European honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>			✓		
25	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	✓	✓	✓		

Find out more about our [Holland's Summer Birding trip](#) or [contact us](#)
 01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

26	Western marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
27	Montagu's harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>		✓			
28	White-tailed eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
29	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
30	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
31	Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
32	Common crane	<i>Grus grus</i>			✓		
33	Eurasian oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		✓		✓	✓
34	Pied avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
35	Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
36	European golden plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
37	Grey plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		✓		✓	✓
38	Common ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
39	Eurasian dotterel	<i>Charadrius morinellus</i>		✓			
40	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		✓		✓	
41	Eurasian curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
42	Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓			✓	✓
43	Bar-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		✓		✓	✓
44	Ruddy turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		✓		✓	✓
45	Red knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>				✓	✓
46	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>		✓		✓	✓
47	Curlew sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>		✓		✓	✓
48	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		✓		✓	✓
49	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
50	Little stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>		✓		✓	✓
51	Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓
52	Red-necked phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>				✓	
53	Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓	✓		✓	
54	Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	✓				✓
55	Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		✓		✓	
56	Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>					✓
57	Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>		✓		✓	
58	Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
59	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Find out more about our [Holland's Summer Birding trip](#) or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

60	Mew gull	Larus canus		✓		✓	✓
61	Great black-backed gull	Larus marinus	✓	✓		✓	
62	European herring gull	Larus argentatus	✓	✓		✓	✓
63	Caspian gull	Larus cachinnans	✓	✓			
64	Lesser black-backed gull	Larus graellsii	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
65	Caspian tern	Hydroprogne caspia		✓	✓		
66	Common tern	Sterna hirundo	✓		✓		
67	Black tern	Chlidonias niger	✓				
68	Stock dove	Columba oenas		✓	✓	✓	
69	Common wood pigeon	Columba palumbus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Eurasian collared dove	Streptopelia decaocto	✓	✓		✓	✓
71	Common cuckoo	Cuculus canorus			✓		
72	Common swift	Apus apus			✓		
73	Common kingfisher	Alcedo atthis				✓	
74	Great spotted woodpecker	Dendrocopos major		✓	✓		
75	European green woodpecker	Picus viridis			✓		
76	Common kestrel	Falco tinnunculus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
77	Eurasian hobby	Falco subbuteo			✓		
78	Peregrine falcon	Falco peregrinus		✓	✓		
79	Red-backed shrike	Lanius collurio				✓	
80	Eurasian jay	Garrulus glandarius			✓		
81	Eurasian magpie	Pica pica		✓		✓	✓
82	Western jackdaw	Corvus monedula	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
83	Rook	Corvus frugilegus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
84	Carrion crow	Corvus corone	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
85	Northern raven	Corvus corax			✓		
86	European crested tit	Lophophanes cristatus			✓		
87	Marsh tit	Poecile palustris			✓		
88	Willow tit	Poecile montanus			✓		
89	Eurasian blue tit	Cyanistes caeruleus			✓	✓	
90	Great tit	Parus major			✓		
91	Bearded reedling	Panurus biarmicus				✓	
92	Eurasian skylark	Alauda arvensis			✓		
93	Sand martin	Riparia riparia	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Find out more about our [Holland's Summer Birding trip](#) or [contact us](#)
01962 302086 sales@wildlifeworldwide.com www.wildlifeworldwide.com

94	Barn swallow	Hirundo rustica	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
95	Common house martin	Delichon urbicum	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
96	Cetti's warbler	Cettia cetti				✓	
97	Common chiffchaff	Phylloscopus collybita	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
98	Eurasian reed warbler	Acrocephalus scirpaceus				✓	✓
99	Marsh warbler	Acrocephalus palustris					✓
100	Zitting cisticola	Cisticola juncidis					✓
101	Eurasian blackcap	Sylvia atricapilla			✓		
102	Common whitethroat	Sylvia communis			✓		
103	Common firecrest	Regulus ignicapilla			✓		
104	Goldcrest	Regulus regulus			✓		
105	Eurasian wren	Troglodytes troglodytes			✓		
106	Eurasian nuthatch	Sitta europaea			✓		
107	Short-toed treecreeper	Certhia brachydactyla			✓		
108	Common starling	Sturnus vulgaris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
109	Spotted flycatcher	Muscicapa striata			✓		
110	European stonechat	Saxicola rubicola			✓		
111	Northern wheatear	Oenanthe oenanthe	✓	✓			
112	House sparrow	Passer domesticus	✓			✓	✓
113	Eurasian tree sparrow	Passer montanus		✓			
114	Western yellow wagtail	Motacilla flava	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
115	White wagtail	Motacilla alba	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
116	Meadow pipit	Anthus pratensis	✓	✓		✓	
117	Common chaffinch	Fringilla coelebs			✓		
118	Common linnet	Linaria cannabina		✓		✓	
119	European goldfinch	Carduelis carduelis		✓	✓		
120	Common reed bunting	Emberiza schoeniclus		✓			
121	Short-toed eagle				✓		
122	Egyptian goose			✓	✓	✓	