

Tour Report

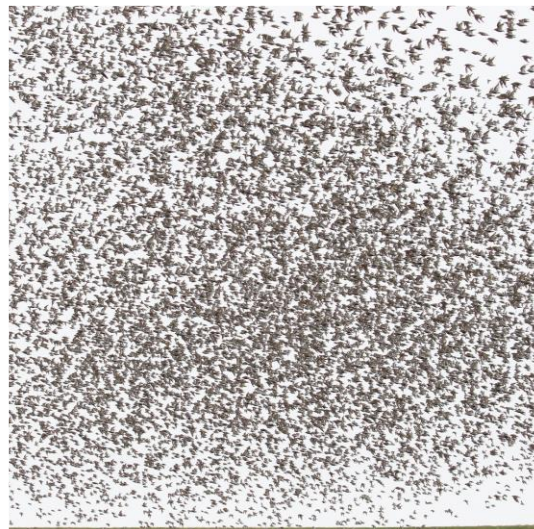
Netherlands - Waders in Friesland

17-21 August 2019

Avocet



Mixed wader flock



Honey buzzard



Whimbrel



Compiled by: Martijn Bot

Tour Leaders: Martijn Bot & Lazar Brinkhuizen (day 2, 3 and 4) with 7 participants

The third edition of this unique short birding break was once again one to remember. We had a great time with many birds and a very enthusiastic group with birders from Scotland, England, India and Australia. It's worth mentioning that the itinerary is just a guide, to give an impression of the areas we will visit. More than with any other group of birds, waders are very much dependent on weather circumstances, water level and the tides, so a few days before the actual start of the trip we (the guides) decide which order to visit the key sites is, and where to go on which day, according to the most recent predictions as well as observations of local birders.

Day 1: Arrive Schiphol & transfer to Zuidhorn; first hours of birding

Saturday 17 August 2019

Weather: Sunny, some clouds; 21°C

All flights arrived in time, so around mid-afternoon we got into the minibus for a transfer to the comfortable hotel in the northern village of Zuidhorn, the hotel which would be the 'base camp' for the rest of this birding trip.

After having checked in and refreshed, we had a welcome drink (with some 'bitterballen', a local treat) and the slightly rescheduled program for the coming days was revealed. Despite being almost dinner time, everybody was really eager to do at least some birding as a kick-off. We decided to visit the closest reserve possible, which happened to be also the best place to start (Ezumekeeg, part of Lauwersmeer National Park). The light conditions were perfect and there were many, many birds around. Too many, in fact, to check in just 1.5 hours. We managed to see some really good (and even rare) birds, for example an isabelline shrike (a true rarity which had recently been discovered and was easily re-found) but also three juvenile red-necked phalaropes at short distance as well as some Temminck's stints, little stints, whimbrels, black-tailed godwits, pied avocets, ruff and a close encounter with both a juvenile sparrowhawk and peregrine. A very good start indeed at a place that very much needed second visit later on during this trip.

Day 2: Westhoek, Holwerd & Bochtjesplaat (Lauwersmeer NP)

Sunday 18 August 2019

Weather: Cloudy with regular showers in the morning until mid-afternoon & sunny last part of the day. 20°C

Weather predictions were not too promising for today and, unfortunately, the predictions became reality. However, we had a truly amazing and spectacular day at one of the best wader spots of north-western Europe despite, but also thanks to, the weather conditions. Because of wind and rain, the tens of thousand of waders decided to choose an inland meadow instead of the usual high tide roost to rest and because we had found ourselves a strategic, front row position next to the meadow we had stunning views of the mind-blowing numbers of dunlin, curlew sandpiper, ringed plover, little stint, grey plover and some occasional golden plover coming in from the Wadden Sea. What happened right in front of us was undoubtedly already one of the highlights of the trip and a must-see for any bird lover!

After having spent most of the morning and a part of the afternoon at Westhoek, we moved east in the afternoon to the pier of the Frisian village of Holwerd, another famous wader hotspot. Here, we were treated to close views of ruddy turnstone, knot, curlew sandpiper, bar-tailed godwit, ringed plover, whimbrel, dunlin, little stint, curlew, eider and more. Last stop of the day was another part of Lauwersmeer NP, where we enjoyed sunshine as well as great egrets, and common, green and curlew sandpipers, little stint, little ringed plover, a hunting goshawk and a beautiful young male common kingfisher. Last birds of the day, on the way back, were three young black redstarts and 37 great egrets in one field.

Day 3: Zuidlaardermeer, Oldambt, Breebaartpolder

Monday 19 August 2019

Weather: Partly cloudy; 21°C

Today we visited a mixture of salt and freshwater reserves as well as some raptor hotspots. This part of the Netherlands is not only famous for its waders but also for huge numbers of raptors, including some scarce species that can (almost) only be found here. The group had already found out that the 'common' raptor species are really abundant (such as kestrels, common buzzards and marsh harriers), but today we added some specialties.

We had what you might call a kick-start because immediately after breakfast we were triggered by a bunting we saw flying out of a ditch. As we stopped the minivan, the ditch and the surrounding oak trees turned out to be a songbird hotspot (apparently there was something really tasty to be found there), because within 15 minutes we saw species such as yellowhammer (that was the bunting it all started with) common redstart, spotted flycatcher, treecreeper, chiffchaff and common linnet. The highlight, however, was a truly stunning adult honey buzzard, that came overhead at almost touching distance! This was the beginning of a series of good raptors, because not long after this beauty we found several Montagu's harriers of all plumages (male, female and juvenile). Groningen (Oldambt, to be more specific) is the stronghold of the Dutch population of this vulnerable but fantastic raptor and thanks to collaboration between nature conservation organisations and local farmers, they have returned as a breeding species and are now doing relatively well. We saw at least eight different birds along with once again a great many common buzzards, kestrels, marsh harriers and a goshawk.

Next stop was another wader reserve, situated on the border of the Wadden Sea (a UNESCO World Heritage Site): polder Breebaart. Unfortunately, the tide came in a bit too fast and therefor many waders decided to choose the surrounding farmlands to rest (out of sight...). Nevertheless, there was still enough to enjoy, including 140 spoonbills, many spotted redshanks and several groups of ringed plovers, dunlins, golden plovers and avocets. A nice bonus was 300 common seals resting at a sand bank at about 50 metres distance.

Next up was the freshwater reserve of Zuidlaardermeer near the city of Groningen. Once an agricultural area, it has recently turned into one of the largest nature reserves of the northern part of the country and the only breeding location of whiskered terns in north-western Europe. Besides that, there are always many other birds to be enjoyed and today we found out why birders should never skip this reserve while birding in this part of the country. We spent three hours on two viewing points and saw three white-tailed eagles (the local pair and a recently fledged youngster), four glossy ibises (a rarity!), many white storks, some common, spotted, wood and green sandpipers, two water rails, three Caspian terns (overhead), some black terns, several black-necked grebes and some whiskered terns. This specialty will migrate south in the weeks to come, but we could still enjoy some adults and many juveniles hunting for frogs in the many ditches inside the reserve.

After dinner, we heard the begging calls of at least two juvenile long-eared owls.

Day 4: Lauwersmeer National Park

Tuesday 20 August 2019

Weather: Partly cloudy; 21°C

Today we spent a full day in and around this famous national park, situated on the border of the Wadden Sea and in the provinces of Groningen and Friesland. We started on the Groningen side with another great nature spectacle: thousands of incoming geese, mainly barnacle geese but also greylags as well as tens of ruddy shelducks and several groups of spoonbills. After having spent the night elsewhere, they returned to Lauwersmeer during the course of the morning to feed and wash. They all come from the same direction, so when you know where to wait for them, they come flying in at very short distance and practically overhead. We spent two hours enjoying this event, also enjoying the other species present such as Caspian

terns, bearded tits, Montagu's harriers, wigeons, four white-fronted geese and a spectacular-looking leucistic white wagtail (a completely white bird).

After having lunch at the visitor centre we found the unringed Ross's goose that had been found a week earlier quite easily in the company of, once again, many barnacle and greylag geese. We spent the afternoon in the Frisian side of the national park and enjoyed birds including red-backed shrike, two red-necked phalaropes, a nice close Caspian tern, several Temminck's and little stints, curlew sandpipers, ruff, wood, common and green sandpipers, greenshanks, spotted redshanks, pied avocets, ringed and little ringed plovers, common snipe, a fly-by little gull, and several reed warblers and reed buntings.

Day 5: Oostvaardersplassen

Wednesday 21 August 2019

Weather: Sunny; 23°C

Today was the last day of the trip, but it turned out to be a day well spent because on the way to Amsterdam lies a famous reserve, perfectly suitable for an enjoyable morning/afternoon of birding before the flight in the evening. We arrived at about 10am and started off with a short hike from the visitor centre, followed by several visits to viewing points and bird hides. We immediately found out why the reserve is so famous, because a nice selection of birds was presented to us in a relatively short time: willow tits, bearded tits, ruddy shelducks (with one cape shelduck amongst them), ruff, common sandpipers, spotted redshanks, pied avocets, spoonbills, hundreds of black terns and a water rail all showed well, but the highlight of the visit here was the white-tailed eagle show. We saw no less than EIGHT individuals, including four immature birds together. Amongst them was the adult male of the local breeding pair that was actually calling to impress the young intruders: a very impressive and rarely heard sound indeed!

Last stop was a gulling site at the border of the IJsselmeer, where we could nicely compare different plumages of black-headed, common, herring, yellow-legged and Caspian gulls. After we had gone through the last of our daily checklists it was time to head to the airport and say goodbye. The last species that could be added to the trip list was a little egret we saw from the highway; we were sharp and focused until the very last minute!

Checklist



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
	BIRDS	Aves					
1	Canada goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>			✓	✓	
2	Barnacle goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	✓			✓	
3	Snow goose	<i>Anser caerulescens</i>					
4	Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Greater white-fronted goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>				✓	
6	Mute swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Common shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
8	Ruddy shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>				✓	✓
9	Northern shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓		✓	✓	
10	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Eurasian wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>				✓	
12	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Northern pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>					
14	Eurasian teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Red-crested pochard	<i>Netta rufina</i>					
16	Common pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>			✓	✓	

17	Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>			✓	✓	✓
18	Common eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>		✓			
19	Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>			✓	✓	✓
20	Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
21	Black-necked grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>			✓		
22	White stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
23	Glossy ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>			✓		
24	Eurasian spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
25	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
26	Great egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
27	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>					✓
28	Northern gannet	<i>Morus bassanus</i>					
29	European shag	<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>					
30	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
31	Western osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>					
32	European honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>			✓		
33	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	✓	✓		✓	
34	Northern goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>		✓	✓		
35	Western marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
36	Hen harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>					
37	Montagu's harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>			✓	✓	

38	White-tailed eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>			✓		✓
39	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
40	Water rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>			✓		✓
41	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
42	Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Eurasian oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
44	Pied avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
45	Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
46	European golden plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
47	Grey plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		✓	✓		
48	Common ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
49	Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	✓	✓		✓	
50	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	✓	✓			
51	Eurasian curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		✓	✓	✓	
52	Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
53	Bar-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		✓			
54	Ruddy turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		✓			
55	Red knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>		✓			
56	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
57	Curlew sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>		✓		✓	
58	Temminck's stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>	✓			✓	

59	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>		✓	✓		
60	Little stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	✓	✓		✓	
61	Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>		✓	✓	✓	
62	Red-necked phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	✓			✓	
63	Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
64	Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	✓	✓		✓	
65	Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓	✓			
66	Wood sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>	✓		✓	✓	
67	Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
68	Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		✓	✓	✓	
69	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
70	Little gull	<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>		✓		✓	
71	Common gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
72	Great black-backed gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓		✓	✓	
73	European herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
74	Caspian gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>					✓
75	Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>					✓
76	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus graellsii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
77	Caspian tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>			✓	✓	
78	Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
79	Whiskered tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>			✓		

101	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
102	Common house martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
103	Cetti's warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>					✓
104	Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
105	Sedge warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>				✓	
106	Eurasian reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	✓			✓	✓
107	Eurasian blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>					✓
108	Common whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>			✓		
109	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			✓		✓
110	Eurasian nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>					✓
111	Short-toed treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>			✓		✓
112	Common starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
113	Common blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>			✓		✓
114	Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			✓		
115	Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>		✓			
116	Common redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>			✓		
117	European stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>			✓		
118	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
119	Eurasian tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>		✓			
120	Western yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
121	White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

122	Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	
123	Common chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>			✓		✓
124	European greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>			✓		✓
125	Common linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓	✓	✓	
126	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
127	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			✓		
128	Common reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>			✓	✓	✓
129	Ross's Goose	<i>Anser rossii</i>				✓	
130	Isabelline shrike	<i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	✓				
	Introduced or escaped species (not countable):						
1	Egyptian goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>		✓		✓	
2	Ruddy duck	<i>Oxyura jamaicensis</i>			✓		
3	Common pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			✓		
4	Cape shelduck	<i>Tadorna cana</i>					✓