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Tour Report

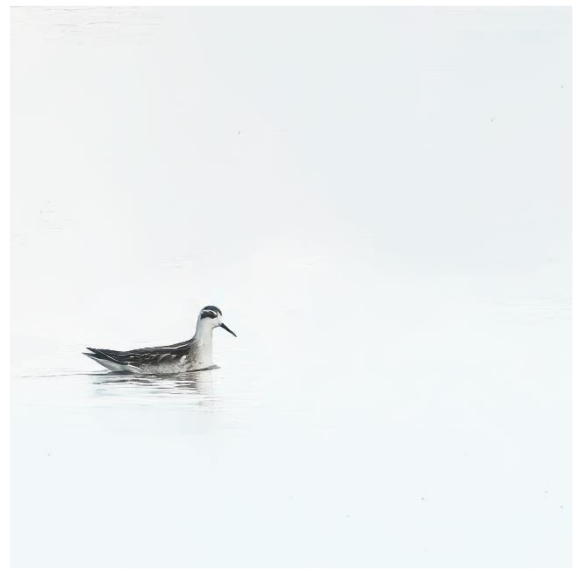
Netherlands – Waders in Friesland

17-21 August 2023

Flock of dunlin



Red-necked phalarope



Flock of mixed waders



Montagu's harrier



Compiled by Martijn Bot

Tour leader: Martijn Bot with three participants

Day 1: Pick-up and first birding hours in Oostvaardersplassen

Thursday 17 August 2023

Despite an early hiccup when a group member missed her flight from London, we had a pleasant start to the trip (after a few calls with the group member, it was arranged that she would take an afternoon flight and meet us in Groningen).

The rest of us left for the Oostvaardersplassen for our first hours of birdwatching. This area is located on the route towards our hotel and always offers a good introduction to the world of Dutch summer birding. It turned out to be an excellent start indeed with, among other things, white-tailed eagles (the first birds we saw when we got out of the minivan!), Caspian and yellow-legged gull, spotted redshank, ruff, huge numbers of ruddy shelduck, little stint, black tern and raven all showing well.

Day 2: Frisian Wadden coast

Friday 18 August 2023

One of the main reasons the English travel to the Netherlands is to see waders. Westhoek is one of the main wader sites in Northwestern Europe and this destination was on the program for today. Due to the eastern winds, the tideline stayed just a bit further away than we had hoped, so the sightings weren't as spectacular as they could have been. Though still fantastic nevertheless! We took in clouds of waders, the vastness of the Wadden Sea and quite a few migratory songbirds overhead.

It was a songbird that won the title of "rarest bird of the day." A Tawny pipit flew past, calling several times and disappearing westwards. I can't remember when I last saw this species in the Netherlands. It was a very nice encounter, although most group members didn't manage to hear or recognize the call.

In terms of waders, we saw everything you could expect, but the always hoped-for rarity did not turn up among the masses on this occasion. Of course, you can't have it all and to say "rare birds are rare" is stating the obvious, but of course very true. However, plenty of days go by without seeing curlew sandpiper, little stint, knot, golden and grey plover, bar-tailed godwit, whimbrel and many of the other more common waders, all in fine weather so, having seen these, you won't hear us complaining!

On our journey via Noorderleech and the pier of Holwerd, we saw lots of waders, but nothing we hadn't seen before. We eventually ended up in the Ezumakeeg. The afternoon light was perfect and there were plenty of birds to see. In short, it was great, good old bird watching! We found an interesting species, a juvenile white-winged Tern which was inconspicuous among the many waders! Furthermore, the group was very happy with, among other sightings, three Temminck's stints and the first Caspian terns of the trip.

Day 3: Northeast Groningen

Saturday 19 August 2023

In addition to waders, English birders seem to really look forward to seeing another Dutch speciality: Montagu's harrier. This species can't be found on the other side of the Channel, so a trip to Oldambt is an absolute must!

The group was very lucky because more young Montagu's harriers hatched this year than any other I can recall. It was a very good year for mice and that pays off immediately. Not only did we see many Montagu's harriers, of all ages and plumages, but we also saw many other birds of prey. The number of kestrels, common buzzards and marsh harriers was impressive, and we even saw a pair of hen harriers. In winter this species is omnipresent, but as breeding birds, they are unfortunately extremely scarce nowadays.

Other sightings included bluethroats, yellowhammers, a sparrowhawk, a calling grey partridge and, as we passed along one of the fields, a quail just flew up from just a metre in front of me. I was able to follow the bird for quite a long time and it therefore became my best Dutch quail sighting ever! Unfortunately, everyone in the group missed the bird, which casts a small blemish on the sighting.

In the afternoon, it was high tide in the Dollard, so we chose our next destination quickly: Breebaartpolder! This inland high-tide refuge is a bit all or nothing. If the tide does not rise high enough, the waders remain on the outer side of the dike on the Wadden Sea, at high (enough) tide they come inside in large numbers. Which is fortunately what happened today!

The spectacle was even bigger and more impressive than yesterday because large groups of birds landed right in front of us. The dynamics, the sound of thousands of waders, and the beautiful views of the different species were truly unparalleled and were received with great enthusiasm. As a bonus, two Caspian terns landed in front of the bird hide and a wryneck hopped off the path into the scrub at the visitor centre. We tried to relocate this enigmatic woodpecker, but it eluded us this time. Overall, these were some birding hours very well spent!

A last visit to the Onlanden brought a kingfisher and another Caspian tern, but the water was still a bit too high for waders.

Day 4: Wadden coast around Lauwersmeer

Sunday 20 August 2023

Lauwersmeer was on the program for today, but because it was warm (26 degrees centigrade) and a Sunday, we opted for some quiet and promising locations around Lauwersmeer instead of the traditional tour around this former sea.

We started in the Kolummerwaard, where we saw, among other species, bearded reedlings, a Savi's warbler, a hunting juvenile white-tailed eagle and... a polecat! The latter was unsuspectingly walking towards us on the same path, until suddenly it noticed us and quickly disappeared into the vegetation. I was just too late for a photo, but that doesn't really matter. Such a golden moment remains etched in the memory!

Via Holwerd, where we once again enjoyed waders nearby, we arrived at the salt marshes of Ternaard. A few weeks ago, some zitting cisticolas were found there, which now seemed to be breeding! We soon found two birds that regularly performed courtship flights above the vegetation. Taking pictures turned out to be almost impossible, but it was a nice observation, especially if you include the bonuses like wheatear, whinchat and bearded reedling!

After lunch at Paessens, during which we saw a little egret, we ended up at the Bochtjesplaat in the Lauwersmeer. Here we found many spotted flycatchers and an Icterine warbler in a bush, amongst many other songbirds. A small pool brought us mostly freshwater waders and ducks, including spotted redshanks, greenshanks, ruff, little stints, snipes and two garganeys.

We ended up in the Ezumakeeg again, the place to be for waders at the moment. And the area did not disappoint! When one of the guests asked me to help him identify a wader which was unknown to him, suddenly and unexpectedly a juvenile red-necked phalarope turned up next to the curlew sandpiper (which is what the unidentified bird turned out to be). What a nice and rare surprise! But the party wasn't over yet, because we also saw a rare pectoral sandpiper, some Temminck's stints, 50+ little stints, 9 Caspian terns and another (adult) white-tailed eagle!

Day 5: Fochteloërveen

Monday 21 August 2023

Today the group had to catch their flights back home, so we had to find a birding destination en route. With a little creativity, you can place Fochteloërveen on a straight line between Zuidhorn and Schiphol, but a better reason to choose this destination was the additions to our species list that this area could offer. Once again we got quite lucky and the last hours turned out to be very fruitful: five short-toed eagles, two white-tailed eagles, two honey buzzards, two red-backed shrikes, four cranes, several whinchats, two crested tits, three common crossbills and quite a few European tree frogs made for a smashing end to a very successful five-day tour!

Checklist for Waders in Friesland



	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	Garganey	<i>Spatula querquedula</i>				✓	
8	Northern shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Eurasian wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>			✓		
11	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Common pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	✓				
17	Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓			✓	✓
21	Grey partridge	<i>Perdix perdix</i>			✓		
25	Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓		✓	✓	
30	White stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
32	Eurasian spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
39	Great egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
40	Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>				✓	
43	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
45	European honey-buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>					✓
46	Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>			✓		✓
47	Northern goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>					
48	Western marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
49	Hen harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>			✓		
50	Montagu's harrier	<i>Circus pygargus</i>			✓		
53	White-tailed eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	✓			✓	✓
54	Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
55	Water rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i>				✓	
58	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
59	Eurasian coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
60	Common crane	<i>Grus grus</i>					✓
61	Eurasian oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
62	Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		✓			
63	Pied avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
64	Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
65	European golden plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>		✓	✓	✓	



66	Grey plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		✓		✓	
67	Common ringed plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
68	Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	✓			✓	
71	Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
72	Eurasian curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>		✓	✓	✓	
73	Black-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
74	Bar-tailed godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>		✓	✓	✓	
75	Ruddy turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>		✓		✓	
76	Red knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
77	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
79	Curlew sandpiper	<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>		✓	✓	✓	
80	Temminck's stint	<i>Calidris temminckii</i>		✓		✓	
82	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
84	Little stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
85	Pectoral sandpiper	<i>Calidris melanotos</i>				✓	
87	Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
88	Red-necked phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>				✓	
90	Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
91	Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
92	Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
95	Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	✓		✓	✓	
96	Common greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		✓	✓	✓	
97	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
100	Mew gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
102	European herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
103	Caspian gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	✓				
104	Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus michahellis</i>	✓	✓			
105	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus graellsii</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
107	Caspian tern	<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
110	Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
113	White-winged tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i>		✓			
114	Black tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	✓				
115	Stock dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
116	Common wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
118	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
126	Common swift	<i>Apus apus</i>			✓	✓	
127	Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			✓	✓	
128	Eurasian wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>			✓		
131	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			✓	✓	
134	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
138	Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		✓			
139	Red-backed shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>					✓
142	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>					✓
143	Eurasian magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	✓	✓	

144	Western jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
146	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
147	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
149	Northern raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	✓				
154	Eurasian blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>			✓	✓	
155	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>			✓	✓	✓
157	Bearded reedling	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>		✓		✓	
162	Sand martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	✓			✓	
163	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
164	Common house martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
166	Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>					✓
168	Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>			✓	✓	✓
172	Sedge warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>				✓	
173	Eurasian reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>				✓	
175	Icterine warbler	<i>Hippolais icterina</i>				✓	
177	Savi's warbler	<i>Locustella luscinioides</i>				✓	
178	Zitting cisticola	<i>Cisticola juncidis</i>				✓	
179	Eurasian blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>				✓	
182	Common whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>					✓
184	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>					✓
185	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>			✓	✓	✓
186	Eurasian nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>					✓
187	Eurasian treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>		✓			✓
189	Common starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
190	Common blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>				✓	✓
193	Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>				✓	
194	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>				✓	✓
195	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>			✓		
200	Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>				✓	✓
201	European stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>			✓		✓
202	Northern wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>				✓	
204	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
205	Eurasian tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>				✓	
207	Western yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
209	White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
212	Tawny pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i>		✓			
213	Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
217	Common chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>				✓	✓
223	Common linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>				✓	✓
226	Red crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>					✓
227	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓		✓	✓
230	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			✓		
231	Common reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>				✓	✓