



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Holland: Birds & Art 2019**

Nov 30, 2019 to Dec 8, 2019  
Godfried Schreur & Jay VanderGaast

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*A typical Dutch landscape with a windmill and birds. Photo by guide Godfried Schreur.*

The first Birds & Art tour to Holland was designed and build upon two main pillars: Birding and Art, and one secondary theme: Water-management and Engineering.

The birding was great! Highlights were the fantastic observations of Bearded Reedling, Smew, Red-crested Pochard, Red-breasted Goose and the obliging Tawny Owl, and the massive numbers of waterfowl in general. We must have seen over a hundred thousand birds! We saw a reasonably good variety of species, having in mind that it's a winter tour in a northern destination.

The art experience was awesome, as we visited 4 top-notch museums of the Netherlands: the Mauritshuis, Kröller Muller, Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh museum. The Mauritshuis was appreciated enormously, with some outstanding paintings of Vermeer like the “Girl with the Pearl Earring” and “View of Delft” in combination with a good guide and a pleasant ambiance. The Kröller Muller museum was also a positive surprise with a fantastic collection of paintings and sketches of Van Gogh, based in the heart of a National Park.

On the other hand, we visited some impressive dikes, dams, sluice-locks, polders, windmills and the natural dunes, all elements which play an important role in the battle of the Dutch against the water, the never ceasing struggle in order to keep the feet dry in the lowlands.

Furthermore, while traveling through Holland, I realized that there was another theme that surprised you and attracted your positive attention. That theme is the way the Dutch deal with nature in such a small and densely populated country like the Netherlands. We saw examples of the new development of nature in agricultural areas, the opening of the dams for conservation purposes, the creation of new islands for wildlife to take over. It seems like in Holland, we really take it seriously. Everyone was delighted to see that the conservation, regeneration and development of nature, wildlife and biodiversity is put into practice.

This was the first Field Guides Birds & Art tour to Holland, and I must admit that I was a bit nervous at the start, but I think that I may conclude that the tour was hugely successful. The program, the itinerary, the birding areas, the museums, the logistics, the hotels, restaurants, the transport, the balance

and the flow, it all worked out very well. Even the weather was great! Thanks to Christine, our perfect tour manager, our ground agent, our friendly and safe drivers and Jay VanderGaast who did a great job co-guiding this tour with me!

And last but not least, I loved our group. I couldn't have wished for more friendly, patient and good humored guests! You were all great! A big thank you to you all!

Godfried

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## KEYS FOR THIS LIST

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a = austral migrant, b = boreal migrant

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## BIRDS

### *Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)*

**GRAYLAG GOOSE (EUROPEAN)** (*Anser anser anser*) – Every day bird. We must have seen thousands of them.

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** (*Anser albifrons*) – Very common winter bird in The Netherlands.

**TUNDRA BEAN-GOOSE** (*Anser serrirostris*) – We saw dozens of them flying at Texel Island.

**BRANT (DARK-BELLIED)** (*Branta bernicla bernicla*) – Present at almost all coastal wetlands. On Texel Island and in the southwestern delta we must have seen hundreds of dark-bellied Brants. This subspecies breeds in the Arctic coast of Siberia.

**BRANT (ATLANTIC)** (*Branta bernicla hrota*) – Jeroen, our local guide on Texel, found one "Pale-bellied" Brant. This Atlantic Brant is a rare but regular vagrant in the Netherlands.

**BARNACLE GOOSE** (*Branta leucopsis*) – We saw these pretty geese almost every day in great numbers. On day 7 we saw over 2000 Barnacles.

**CANADA GOOSE** (*Branta canadensis*) – Introduced species in The Netherlands, expanding and in increasing in numbers. [I]

**RED-BREASTED GOOSE** (*Branta ruficollis*) – There it was, amongst hundreds of Barnacle Geese, on the very first day. Now, that was a nice surprise and a great start of the tour! We all enjoyed seeing the Red-breasted Goose a lot. Therefore it was elected as the N° 4 "Bird of the Trip".

**MUTE SWAN** (*Cygnus olor*) – Very common in almost all wetlands.

**BLACK SWAN** (*Cygnus atratus*) – We saw 4 individuals of this introduced species in the southwestern delta. [I]

**TUNDRA SWAN (BEWICK'S)** (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*) – We saw 26 Bewick's Swans on Texel and 4 individuals in the Oostvaardersplassen.

**WHOOPEER SWAN** (*Cygnus cygnus*) – Only one bird in the Oostvaardersplassen. The relatively mild winter brought only few Whooper Swans to Holland at the time of our tour.

**EGYPTIAN GOOSE** (*Alopochen aegyptiaca*) – We saw this beautiful bird almost every day of the trip. But it is an introduced species and it is now considered a pest in Holland. [I]

**COMMON SHELDUCK** (*Tadorna tadorna*) – We enjoyed good views of this attractive species almost every day. In the Oostvaardersplassen we saw hundreds of them.

**NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Spatula clypeata*) – Common wintering duck in The Netherlands.

**GADWALL** (*Mareca strepera*) – Since banning the hunting of this species, it is becoming more abundant and also more tame. It is nowadays seen swimming in canals of towns and villages like the Hofvijver, next to the governmental buildings in The Hague.

**EURASIAN WIGEON** (*Mareca penelope*) – Probably the most numerous duck in the Netherlands in winter time. At that time, the drakes are beautiful with their red heads and cream-coloured front which was very much appreciated by some of us.

**MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Common and widespread.

**NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – We saw Northern Pintails in almost all the main wetlands but always in low numbers.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL (EURASIAN)** (*Anas crecca crecca*) – The Eurasian subspecies looks very similar to the American subspecies. The lacking of the vertical white lines at either side of the breast though, does make a clear difference.

**RED-CRESTED POCHARD** (*Netta rufina*) – We were surprised by the beauty and grace of this duck species. The light was perfect when we encountered them, resulting in some nice pictures. Consequently, the Red-crested Pochard was elected the third best bird of the trip.

**COMMON POCHARD** (*Aythya ferina*) – Present at almost all wetlands and looking very similar to the Canvasback. Therefore, it might not have received all the attention it deserves.

**TUFTED DUCK** (*Aythya fuligula*) – Together with the Eurasian Wigeon, the most numerous duck species in The Netherlands during the winter season. Sometimes it was difficult to find the Scaups amongst so many Tufted Ducks.

**GREATER SCAUP** (*Aythya marila*) – We saw some Greater Scaups mixed in flocks of hundreds (or thousands) of Tufted Ducks. Because of the similarity of the two species, it was sometimes hard to point out the Greater Scaup.

**COMMON EIDER** (*Somateria mollissima*) – We observed Common Eiders at the coastal wetlands of Texel and the southwestern delta.

**COMMON SCOTER** (*Melanitta nigra*) – Two individuals seen from the beach of Texel Island.

**COMMON GOLDENEYE** (*Bucephala clangula*) – Present in low numbers in almost all the greater wetlands.

**SMEW** (*Mergellus albellus*) – The Smew was high on the target list for this tour, being one of the most sought after species. At our first birding stop, we managed to see some of them although they were a bit far out. Later in the tour we improved that observation with birds at closer range. The Smew ended as N° 2 in our Top Bird List vote.

**COMMON MERGANSER (EURASIAN)** (*Mergus merganser merganser*) – We had splendid views of drake Common Merganser (or Goosander, as we call them in Europe) just after the stunning views of the Red-crested Pochard. Later in the tour we managed some more good observations.

**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER** (*Mergus serrator*) – We enjoyed the best views of Red-breasted Merganser at the Haringvliet and the Brouwers Dam, both in the southwestern delta.

### *Phasianidae (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies)*

**RING-NECKED PHEASANT** (*Phasianus colchicus*) – Introduced species for hunting purposes; it is now a regular and resident bird in Holland. [I]

Phoenicopteridae (Flamingos).

**GREATER FLAMINGO** (*Phoenicopterus roseus*) – It was odd to see this one lonely and pink Flamingo in the grey and cold Dutch winter.

Podicipedidae (Grebes).

**LITTLE GREBE** (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) – Seen regularly along the tour.

**HORNED GREBE** (*Podiceps auritus*) – We saw Horned Grebe in winter plumage on several occasions. It was good to see them together with Eared Grebes in order to be able to compare and distinguish them.

**GREAT CRESTED GREBE** (*Podiceps cristatus*) – An almost every day species and very much appreciated by some of the guests.

**EARED GREBE** (*Podiceps nigricollis*) – We saw 10 Eared Grebes at the Brouwers Dam at reasonably close range.

Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves).

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – There were Feral Pigeons in most of the towns and cities.

**STOCK DOVE** (*Columba oenas*) – Slightly smaller, darker and shyer than the more numerous Common Wood Pigeon.

**COMMON WOOD-PIGEON** (*Columba palumbus*) – Every day bird.

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – Mainly in towns and villages.

Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots).

**WATER RAIL** (*Rallus aquaticus*) – We tried hard to see them. They were so close but also so elusive! in the end some of the group managed to see them. Good for them!

**EURASIAN MOORHEN** (*Gallinula chloropus*) – More low-profile and less numerous than the Coots, but worth a good look.

**EURASIAN COOT** (*Fulica atra*) – Thousands and thousands.

Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets).

**PIED AVOCET** (*Recurvirostra avocetta*) – Most of the Pied Avocets migrate further south but some stay in the lowlands. We must have seen over 250 individuals in total.

Haematopodidae (Oystercatchers).

**EURASIAN OYSTERCATCHER (WESTERN)** (*Haematopus ostralegus ostralegus*) – Another attractive wader wintering in good numbers in NW Europe. We spotted hundreds of Oystercatchers in the southwestern delta.

Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings).

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Some birds present on Texel Island.

**EUROPEAN GOLDEN-PLOVER** (*Pluvialis apricaria altifrons*) – A golden carpet formed by thousands of European Golden-Plovers impressed all of us. It was one of the highlights of the tour.

**NORTHERN LAPWING** (*Vanellus vanellus*) – This very attractive wader is a short distant migrant. With mild conditions, they stay in NW Europe and in severe conditions they fly further south. We were lucky to see massive numbers of them.

**COMMON RINGED PLOVER** (*Charadrius hiaticula hiaticula*) – Very similar to the Semipalmated Plover.

Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies).

**EURASIAN CURLEW** (*Numenius arquata*) – Present in low numbers in all the salt water wetlands.

**BAR-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa lapponica*) – We observed one bird that was dressed up in the bright red breeding plumage.

**BLACK-TAILED GODWIT** (*Limosa limosa*) – This is the national bird of the Netherlands, as it holds the biggest breeding population of this species in the world. In the winter, however, it is rather rare.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – This wanderer is not to be missed on any winter tour around the Atlantic Ocean.

**RED KNOT** (*Calidris canutus islandica*) – A few birds were discovered on Texel, lacking the red breeding plumage in this time of year.

**RUFF** (*Calidris pugnax*) – Some Ruffs were feeding on flooded meadows together with Golden Plovers and Northern Lapwings.

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*) – Less than 10 individuals, as most of the Sanderlings winter in Africa.

**DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*) – Some birds were discovered on Texel and in the SW delta.

**PURPLE SANDPIPER** (*Calidris maritima*) – It was fascinating to see the Purple Sandpipers as they were feeding along a shoreline of dark basalt rocks. The blend in so well! In the end we all achieved good views.

**EURASIAN WOODCOCK** (*Scolopax rusticola*) – We flushed one Woodcock in the woodland of the National Park of Texel. Unfortunately it was seen only by a few of us.

**COMMON SNIPE** (*Gallinago gallinago*) – We saw five Common Snipes in the Flauwers Inlage.

**COMMON SANDPIPER** (*Actitis hypoleucos*) – We spotted one Common Sandpiper, which is a rare bird in winter in Holland.

**COMMON REDSHANK** (*Tringa totanus*) – The only *Tringa* species that stands the cold conditions of the Dutch winter.

Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers).

**BLACK-HEADED GULL** (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) – This is a very common bird in the Netherlands. You can see it almost anywhere and anytime.

**MEW GULL (EUROPEAN)** (*Larus canus canus*) – Present in almost all wetlands but in lower numbers than the Black-headed Gull.

**HERRING GULL (EUROPEAN)** (*Larus argentatus argenteus*) – Even present in the square of the Binnenhof surrounded by the governmental buildings. One almost stole my raw herring :-)

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** (*Larus fuscus*) – Just one bird seen on Texel.

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL** (*Larus marinus*) – This huge gull was observed along the coastline of the North Sea.

**WHISKERED TERN** (*Chlidonias hybrida*) – We were lucky to see a vagrant Whiskered Tern in the Harbour of Stellendam. In the morning we saw the bird at great distance, but in the afternoon it flew very close by.

Gaviidae (Loons).

**RED-THROATED LOON** (*Gavia stellata*) – From the dunes of Texel, we saw some Red-throated Loons flying along the coastline. At the Brouwersdam we managed better views of three diving birds.

Sulidae (Boobies and Gannets).

**NORTHERN GANNET** (*Morus bassanus*) – One distant view far out in the North Sea.

Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags).

**GREAT CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) – Very common bird now in The Netherlands. Surprisingly this bird was almost extinct in NW Europe in the seventies.

Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns).

**GRAY HERON** (*Ardea cinerea*) – Present in all fresh water habitats.

**GREAT EGRET (EURASIAN)** (*Ardea alba alba*) – This recent colonizer of NW Europe is now a common appearance in meadows and wetlands.

**LITTLE EGRET** (*Egretta garzetta*) – The Little Egret is also increasing in numbers, probably because of climate change.

Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills).

**EURASIAN SPOONBILL** (*Platalea leucorodia*) – Virtually the whole breeding population of the Netherlands moves south to winter in Africa. But some Eurasian Spoonbills resist the cold and harsh conditions, staying in Holland even in winter. We were lucky to find a dozen of these wonderful birds.

Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites).

**HEN HARRIER** (*Circus cyaneus*) – We saw 3 Hen Harriers, all on Texel Island.

**EURASIAN SPARROWHAWK** (*Accipiter nisus*) – We observed 2 Eurasian Sparrowhawks in flight, both on Texel.

**NORTHERN GOSHAWK** (*Accipiter gentilis*) – A first winter Northern Goshawk perched in a tree caused a lot of panic amongst the thousands of birds in the nearby wetland.

**WHITE-TAILED EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) – We discovered three young White-tailed Eagles sitting together in the Oostvaardersplassen. While we were enjoying a good look at them we were distracted by Bearded Reedlings. Then you have to choose...

**COMMON BUZZARD** (*Buteo buteo*) – Everyday bird.

Strigidae (Owls).

**TAWNY OWL** (*Strix aluco*) – The Tawny Owl sitting in a hole of a beech tree in a misty deciduous woodland was very obliging to us. That made a good start of the day. In the end, the Tawny Owl was elected as the fifth best bird of the trip.

Picidae (Woodpeckers).

**GREAT SPOTTED WOODPECKER** (*Dendrocopos major*) – We saw the Great Spotted Woodpecker on at least 4 occasions. We achieved good views, even through the telescope.

**LESSER SPOTTED WOODPECKER** (*Dryobates minor*) – Two Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers during our morning walk in the National Park de Hoge Veluwe were a real treat.

**BLACK WOODPECKER** (*Dryocopus martius*) – Unfortunately we were not able to actually see the Black Woodpecker, although we did hear them.

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Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras).

**EURASIAN KESTREL** (*Falco tinnunculus*) – Much larger than the American Kestrel! We had several good views.

**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – On Texel, we were treated with a spectacular show of a Peregrin chasing away a Common Buzzard from a prey.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies).

**EURASIAN JAY** (*Garrulus glandarius*) – In de Hoge Veluwe we enjoyed some good looks at this attractive bird.

**EURASIAN MAGPIE** (*Pica pica*) – Common and widespread.

**EURASIAN JACKDAW** (*Corvus monedula*) – The numbers of Jackdaws gathering at the sleeping roosts are massive!

**ROOK** (*Corvus frugilegus*) – Just one brief view of this corvid from the bus.

**CARRION CROW** (*Corvus corone corone*) – Every day bird. Very common and widespread.

**COMMON RAVEN** (*Corvus corax*) – We saw and heard a couple of Common Ravens at the Hoge Veluwe National Park.

Panuridae (Bearded Reedling).

**BEARDED REEDLING** (*Panurus biarmicus*) – This lovely little bird ended as the N° 1 bird of the trip, according to our vote. We enjoyed a good look at a small flock of Bearded Reedlings in the reed beds of the Oostvaardersplassen.

Alaudidae (Larks).

**EURASIAN SKYLARK** (*Alauda arvensis*) – Their call attracted our attention.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice).

**COAL TIT** (*Parus ater*) – Seen and heard during our morning walk at the NP De Hoge Veluwe.

**CRESTED TIT** (*Lophophanes cristatus*) – Seen and heard during our morning walk at the NP De Hoge Veluwe.

**MARSH TIT** (*Poecile palustris*) – Seen and heard during our morning walk at the NP De Hoge Veluwe.

**EURASIAN BLUE TIT** (*Cyanistes caeruleus*) – Beautiful and colorful bird that we had the opportunity to enjoy on many occasions. In Marken village, we discovered a Blue Tit that was trying to escape from a house through the window, while a cat was watching him. We opened the window in order to facilitate his attempts.

**GREAT TIT** (*Parus major*) – Another nice bird that we saw almost every day, sometimes at close range.

Aegithalidae (Long-tailed Tits).

**LONG-TAILED TIT** (*Aegithalos caudatus*) – Seen and heard in the Oostvaardersplassen nature reserve.

Sittidae (Nuthatches).

**EURASIAN NUTHATCH** (*Sitta europaea*) – We had splendid views of this attractive bird.

*Certhiidae (Treetreepers)*

**SHORT-TOED TREETREEPER** (*Certhia brachydactyla*) – Seen and heard several times.

*Troglodytidae (Wrens)*

**EURASIAN WREN** (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) – This bird is common but difficult to get good views. We heard it more often than we saw it.

*Regulidae (Kinglets)*

**GOLDCREST** (*Regulus regulus*) – This is the smallest bird of Europe. In the Oostvaardersplassen two Goldcrests came very close to us and allowed good views.

**COMMON FIRECREST** (*Regulus ignicapilla*) – Almost as small as the Goldcrest but more colorful. Seen well on two occasions.

*Scotocercidae (Bush Warblers and Allies)*

**CETTI'S WARBLER** (*Cettia cetti*) – We detected this species by his explosive song. [\*]

*Muscicapidae (Old World Flycatchers)*

**EUROPEAN ROBIN** (*Erithacus rubecula*) – This charming little bird is common and widespread in the Netherlands.

*Turdidae (Thrushes and Allies)*

**MISTLE THRUSH** (*Turdus viscivorus*) – One distant view in De Hoge Veluwe NP.

**REDWING** (*Turdus iliacus*) – Common winter visitor to the Netherlands.

**EURASIAN BLACKBIRD** (*Turdus merula merula*) – Very common and widespread.

**FIELDFARE** (*Turdus pilaris*) – We saw several Fieldfares on Texel Island.

*Sturnidae (Starlings)*

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Every day bird.

*Prunellidae (Accentors)*

**DUNNOCK** (*Prunella modularis*) – Stays in the cover where it calls frequently, but rarely showing well.

*Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)*

**MEADOW PIPIT** (*Anthus pratensis*) – We saw Meadow Pipits on Texel.

*Fringillidae (Finches, Euphonias, and Allies)*

**COMMON CHAFFINCH** (*Fringilla coelebs*) – By far the most common finch in the Netherlands.

**EURASIAN BULLFINCH** (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*) – We briefly saw 2 Eurasian Bullfinches at the harbour of Stellendam.

**EUROPEAN GREENFINCH** (*Chloris chloris*) – Seen and heard in Marken village.

**EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH** (*Carduelis carduelis*) – We enjoyed good looks at this charming finch at several locations. But the closest view of the Goldfinch was in the Mauritshuis ;-)

**EURASIAN SISKIN** (*Spinus spinus*) – About 10 birds were feeding in the trees and allowed views through the scope.

*Calcariidae (Longspurs and Snow Buntings)*

**SNOW BUNTING** (*Plectrophenax nivalis*) – Five birds flew by on our first birding excursion of the trip.

*Emberizidae (Old World Buntings)*

**REED BUNTING** (*Emberiza schoeniclus*) – Three Reed Buntings were seen close to the Oostvaardersplassen.

*Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)*

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Every day bird.

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## MAMMALS

**OLD WORLD RABBIT** (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) – We saw some Rabbits on Texel Island.

**EUROPEAN BROWN HARE** (*Lepus europaeus*) – Not an uncommon species in the meadows of Holland.

**RED FOX** (*Vulpes vulpes*) – We discovered one Red Fox amongst thousands of ducks, geese, waders in the Oostvaardersplassen.

**HARBOR SEAL** (*Phoca vitulina*) – In the harbor of Stellendam a very curious but Harbour Seal enjoyed a good look at us.

**GRAY SEAL** (*Halichoerus grypus*) – On the ferry from Texel Island back to the mainland we saw a Gray Seal. At the Brouwersdam we saw some more.

**RED DEER** (*Cervus elaphus*) – Besides cattle and Konik horses, there are good numbers of Red Deer grazing in the Oostvaardersplassen in order to keep the area open and clear.

**ROE DEER** (*Capreolus capreolus*) – Three Roe Deer were discovered standing next to our hotel in Rockanje.

**MOUFLON** (*Ovis musimon*) – Mouflon are not native to the Netherlands; they originate in Sardinia and Corsica. In 1921 a group of Mouflon was introduced as a hunting species to the Hoge Veluwe. The National Park now holds a population of 200 animals. [I]

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## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

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**Totals for the tour: 122 bird taxa and 8 mammal taxa**