

# The Netherlands in Winter

Naturetrek Tour Report

17 - 21 February 2018

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Whooper Swans



Parrot Crossbill



Lesser Yellowlegs



Lesser White-fronted Goose (middle)

Report and images by Gerald Broddez



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Tour participants: Tom Mabbett (leader) with nine Naturetrek clients

## Day 1

Saturday 17th February

London - Lille – Goes - Renesse

The tour started with a Eurostar train service from London to Lille. We met Gerald at Lille station and then drove to Vlissingen in Zeeland. Here, at the outer harbour, we had our lunch whilst admiring the first 'mega' of the tour - a Ross's Gull. At first the bird was quite distant, but then it decided to fly by, allowing us really good views of the delicate wing pattern, the small overall size and the typical tail shape. As we were leaving the harbour David spotted a Mediterranean Gull perched only metres away.

We then drove to the Inlagen on Schouwen Duiveland, a birders mecca. Here we scoped the 1000's of Barnacle Geese, Curlews and Avocets, and compared Spotted and Common Redshanks. Spoonbill and Great and Little Egrets were common, and the lakes held lots of Gadwall, Wigeon, Pintail and Teal.

Late afternoon we visited the large reserve opposite and were rewarded with large groups of Greater White-fronted and Brent Geese, more Spoonbills, a flyby Hen Harrier, several smart Smew, and a Peregrine chasing the many waders present.

We then went to our accommodation and after a great five course meal and the log, we retired to our warm rooms.

## Day 2

Sunday 18th February

Brouwersdam – Goeree – Strijen - Nunspeet

After a tasty breakfast it was only a very short drive to our first stop at the Brouwersdam. No wind and sun made for fantastic conditions for wildlife viewing. Black-necked and Great Crested Grebes, Turnstone, Purple Sandpiper, Great Northern Diver, Old Squaw (Long-tailed Duck) and Black Scoter were all seen, together with a pair of Grey Seals. A stop at the far end produced several Sandwich Terns, Black-throated and Red-throated Divers, and many waders including our first Grey and Ringed Plovers.

We made a brief stop at Barendrecht to buy lunch and to look at the male Bufflehead, another rare bird in Holland. We then spent a great part of the afternoon scanning the thousands of Barnacle and Greater White-fronted Geese, but could not find any of the rarities reported.

Next we drove north to Flevoland, but not before making a small detour to look at a smart Lesser Yellowlegs showing off in the golden evening light, surrounded by thousands of Wigeons, lots of Buzzards and a single Red Kite. What a great day!

## Day 3

Monday 19th February

### Nunspeet - Flevoland

A good deal of the morning was spent near Bunschoten. Here we drove the dykes surrounding the polders in search for some of the largest geese concentrations in the Netherlands. We were treated to a grand spectacle as thousands of Barnacle and White-fronted Geese kept us entertained. The accompanying sounds of the constant cackling of the geese whilst feeding and in flight must rate as one of the world's most special acoustic spectacles in the birding world!

We then drove to the Baarlo lake where we had lunch. En route two White Storks were a great find, but it was the great number of Smew that blew us away. At least a hundred of these smart ducks gave incredible telescope views in the weak winter sun. Goldeneye, Pochard, Teal, Wigeon and Pintail also fought for our attention.

Mid-afternoon we had a short stroll in the Pine forests near Old Willem. Our main quarry showed within minutes of arriving as at least a dozen rare Parrot Crossbills were feeding in the trees ahead and above us, giving unsurpassed views. The reddish big-beaked males got most of our attention.

We happily drove back to our accommodation, briefly stopping at one of the many bird towers near Kampen where a pair of Hen Harries said goodnight. In the evening another fine meal was accompanied by several nice beers and/or a glass of wine.

## Day 4

Tuesday 20th February

### Friesland

After breakfast we birded for a while in the car park where Short-toed Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Firecrest and a brief Crested Tit put in appearances. We then planned to spend the whole day below sea level, birding the famous Flevoland polder.

At our first stop we found a group of 66 Whooper Swans. There were adults and young birds, together with Mute Swans as a nice comparison. A group of Woodlarks and a pair of Smew were good finds nearby. In the northern part we admired large groups of Barnacle and Greater White-fronted Geese, and finally found our first groups of Bean Geese. These were all closely watched by good numbers of Golden Plover, Lapwing, Buzzard and Kestrel. Then a Rough-legged Buzzard gave a close flyby and briefly perched in a nearby tree; another target bird!

We bought lunch in Almere and then drove to the visitor centre at the Oostvaarders plassen. Here we walked to one of the viewpoints. Lots of Red Deer, Koninck Cattle and a single Red Fox were the animal highlights. Wigeon, Gadwall, Teal and Pintail were present in triple figures. Next we visited the eastern part of the reserve where a perched White-tailed Eagle finally gave good telescope views.

Late afternoon we drove back to our accommodation via the Oostvaardersdijk, where many Cormorants and Graylag Geese were seen.

## Day 5

Wednesday 21st February

### Nunspeet – Lille - London

After breakfast we drove to the Veluweforest, where we walked the mixed beech/conifer forest trails in search of some of the rarer inhabitants. It was freezing cold but the rising sun quickly made it more comfortable. We found lots of Great Spotted Woodpeckers: drumming, displaying and calling. Bird flocks held Short-toed Treecreeper, Chaffinch and Goldcrest. Crested Tits were calling overhead and showed really well, as did several Crossbill males perched on the top of some low conifers.

We then headed south to try the Strijen area again. Luck was with us as after about half an hour searching through the thousands of geese, we found a splendid Lesser White-fronted Goose, giving excellent telescope views! It was a great end to an excellent trip full of common and rarer birds, blessed by good weather!

Late afternoon we arrived in Lille where we said our thanks and goodbyes to Gerald before catching the train back to London, where another Naturetrek adventure came to an end.

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Smew

## Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted)

	Common name	Scientific name	February				
			17	18	19	20	21
1	Taiga Bean Goose	<i>Anser fabalis</i>				✓	
2	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Greater White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser albifrons</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Lesser White-fronted Goose	<i>Anser erythropus</i>					✓
5	Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Brant Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	✓	✓			
7	Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Whooper Swan	<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>				✓	
10	Common Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
11	Gadwall	<i>Mareca strepera</i>	✓		✓	✓	
12	Eurasian Wigeon	<i>Mareca penelope</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Northern Shoveler	<i>Spatula clypeata</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	✓	✓		✓	
16	Eurasian Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	✓	✓		✓	
18	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
19	Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>		✓			
20	Common Scoter	<i>Melanitta nigra</i>		✓			
21	Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>		✓			
22	Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
23	Smew	<i>Mergellus albellus</i>	✓		✓	✓	
24	Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>			✓		
25	Red-breasted Merganser	<i>Mergus serrator</i>	✓	✓			
26	Bufflehead	<i>Bucephala albeola</i>		✓			
27	Egyptian Goose	<i>Alopochen aegyptiaca</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
28	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
29	Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>		✓			
30	Red-throated Diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>		✓			
31	Black-throated Diver	<i>Gavia arctica</i>		✓			
32	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	✓	✓			
33	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
34	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>		✓			
35	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>	✓	✓			
36	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
37	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
38	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
39	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓		✓		
40	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
41	Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>		✓	✓		
42	Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓		✓	
43	Hen Harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>			✓		
44	White-tailed Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>				✓	
45	Rough-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo lagopus</i>				✓	
46	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
47	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓			

	Common name	Scientific name	February				
			17	18	19	20	21
48	Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		✓	✓	✓	
49	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
50	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
51	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓				
52	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
53	European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	✓		✓	✓	
54	Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>		✓			
55	Common Snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	✓			✓	
56	Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	✓	✓			
57	Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	✓				
58	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓	✓			
59	Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	✓	✓			
60	Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	✓				
61	Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>		✓			
62	Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>		✓			
63	Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	✓				
64	Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	✓	✓	✓		
65	Lesser Yellowlegs	<i>Tringa flavipes</i>		✓			
66	Ross's Gull	<i>Rhodostethia rosea</i>	✓				
67	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
68	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>	✓				
69	Mew (Common) Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
70	Great Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	✓		✓		
71	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
72	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>		✓	✓		
73	Sandwich Tern	<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>		✓			
74	Rock Dove	<i>Columba livia</i>			✓	✓	
75	Stock Dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
76	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
77	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>		✓	✓	✓	
78	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>			✓	✓	✓
79	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	✓				
80	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
81	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	✓				
82	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			✓	✓	✓
83	Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
84	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
85	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
86	Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>				✓	
87	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>					✓
88	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
89	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
90	Woodlark	<i>Lullula arborea</i>				✓	
91	Long-tailed Tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>				✓	
92	Common Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>				✓	
93	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>			✓	✓	✓
94	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
95	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>				✓	✓
96	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>				✓	✓
97	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
98	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common name	Scientific name	February				
			17	18	19	20	21
99	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>			✓	✓	
100	Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>			✓		
101	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>				✓	
102	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>			✓	✓	✓
103	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>			✓	✓	
104	Eurasian Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>				✓	
105	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓
106	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	✓			✓	
107	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>		✓	✓	✓	
108	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>			✓	✓	✓
109	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>			✓		
110	European Greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>		✓			
111	Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>					✓
112	Parrot Crossbill	<i>Loxia pytyopsittacus</i>			✓		
113	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>		✓			
114	Eurasian Siskin	<i>Spinus spinus</i>				✓	
115	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>			✓		

### Mammals

1	Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
2	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>			✓	✓	
3	Red Deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>				✓	
4	Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>				✓	
5	Grey Seal	<i>Halichoerus grypus</i>		2			



Evening in Schouwen