

B.O.C Netherlands Trip May 11th to May 16th 2026

Monday May 11th. Zuid-Kennemerland NP to Texel.

We arrived in the Netherlands in the late morning, and after a short delay at the airport where we managed to lose two of our party (we didn't leave them behind!), we set off for our first destination, Zuid-Kennemerland NP which is an area of dunes, scrub and ponds. The weather was a mix of wind, rain, and sun. A Nightingale greeted us as we alighted the vehicles and we were soon spotting many small birds including Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Lesser and Common Whitethroat and Swift.



Common Whitethroat

The highlight of this location for me was watching six Black-necked Grebe, several in breeding plumage, on one of the ponds.



Black-necked Grebes in Breeding Plumage

As if that wasn't enough, on the way back to the vans, we had great views of White-spotted Bluethroat bathing in a small pool. What a treat!



White-spotted Bluethroat Bathing

On the drive to the ferry there were plenty of birds to see briefly including an Egyptian Goose with four young, and a Marsh Harrier. The brief ferry ride across to Texel Island gave us a few more birds including our first terns - Common and Sandwich, and four flying Spoonbill. A great start to the holiday.

Linda Moysey

Tuesday May 12th Texel Island

Texel is the largest of the West Frisian Islands in the Wadden Sea and is a prime hotspot for birding. Our hotel was on the western part of the Island and from the hotel we observed Brown Hare and Longhorn cattle in the field opposite. We travelled to the south-east of the island to Ottersaat. Here we saw large flocks of Dark-bellied Brent, Barnacle and families of Greylag Geese. There were also Shelduck, Avocet, Oystercatcher, Turnstone and a single Grey Plover. A pair of Common Tern were displaying to each other.



Common Tern Pair

Suddenly our guide Matt called us to see a Red-breasted Goose, an uncommon visitor from the Arctic and Eastern Europe.



Red-breasted Goose

We all had good views and when scanning the fields we saw a good number of Bar-tailed Godwits and a few Black-tailed Godwits. One of the former, was colour-ringed and flagged. I contacted the monitoring scheme, and it turned out that this male Bar-tailed Godwit had been trapped and ringed five days earlier and was thought likely to head north to breeding grounds soon.



Bar-tailed Godwit

We travelled north, up the eastern edge of the Island to the northern tip. On the way we saw a couple of Sandwich Tern colonies and nesting Black-headed Gulls on small islands within the wetland areas.



Sandwich Tern Colony

There were also breeding Avocet with some delightful small chicks.



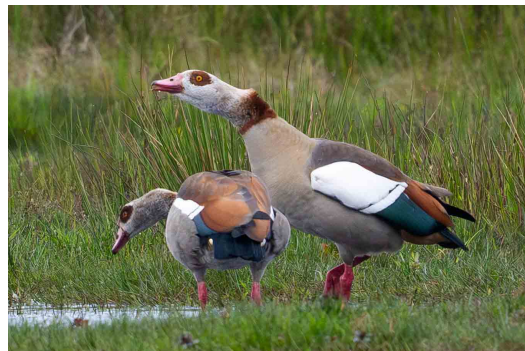
Avocet and Avocet Chick

Further north there were four Spoonbill, several Common Eider and we walked around a nice area of dune land/wetland where we saw Ringed and Little Ringed Plovers and our first Yellow Wagtail (Blue-headed form).



Yellow Wagtail (Blue-headed form)

At the northern tip of Texel is a lighthouse and we did some sea watching, watching Common and Sandwich Terns in flight and feeding. We headed back towards our hotel and had a last stop at De Dennen, an area of woodland and wetland where a North American vagrant Blue-winged Teal had been reported. We had fleeting views of the bird and delightful views of a pair of displaying Egyptian Geese.



Displaying Egyptian Geese

Robin Martin

Wednesday May 13th Texel to Hoenderloo

Today was our last day on Texel and most of the group were woken by thunder and lightning at 5.30am signaling another cold, wet day ahead.

After leaving De Koog we drove south towards the ferry terminal but before returning to the mainland we spent some time looking for water birds and warblers around T Horntje.



Eider Family and Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Race intermedius*)

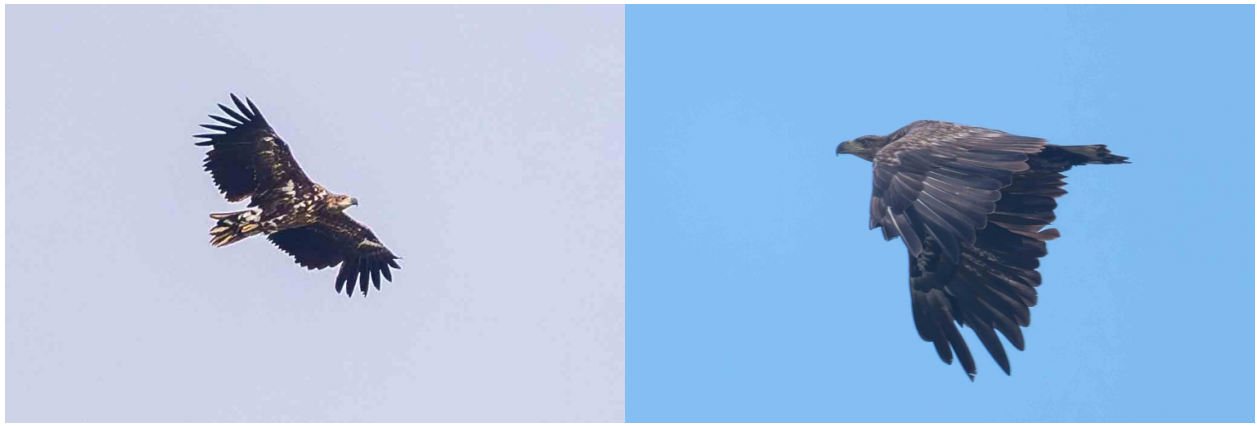
From Den Helder on the mainland, we travelled to a farming area near Den Oever where Dotterel had been seen. With the help of local birders, the field was identified, and we successfully viewed a group of twenty or more.



Distant Dotterel – female and male

Our next stop was the 56 square kilometer nature reserve at Oostvaardersplassen, a polder on the shore of the Markermeer. A rewilding project that was started in 1968, it has a wet area in the north and a dry area in the south. The southern area includes extensive reed beds, a large lake which supports abundant birdlife and is best known for the 60,000 Greylag Geese that winter here. In addition to the birdlife, Konik ponies, Red Deer, Red Foxes and wild cattle have been introduced to manage the habitat in a natural fashion. During our lunch in the reserve centre, we could see huge numbers of Greylag and Barnacle geese as well as a variety of duck species.

In the afternoon we drove to a few viewing sites in the north and west sectors of the reserve for what turned out to be a raptor spectacular. Common Buzzard, Goshawk, Marsh Harrier were seen and to put the icing on the cake three magnificent White-tailed Eagles circling above us.



Juvenile and Adult White-tailed Eagles

Warblers were also in good numbers with Marsh, Savi's, Willow and Sedge seen and Bluethroat was heard.



Singing Savi's Warbler

We left the reserve in the late afternoon and drove to our hotel in Hoenderloo.

Alan Wall

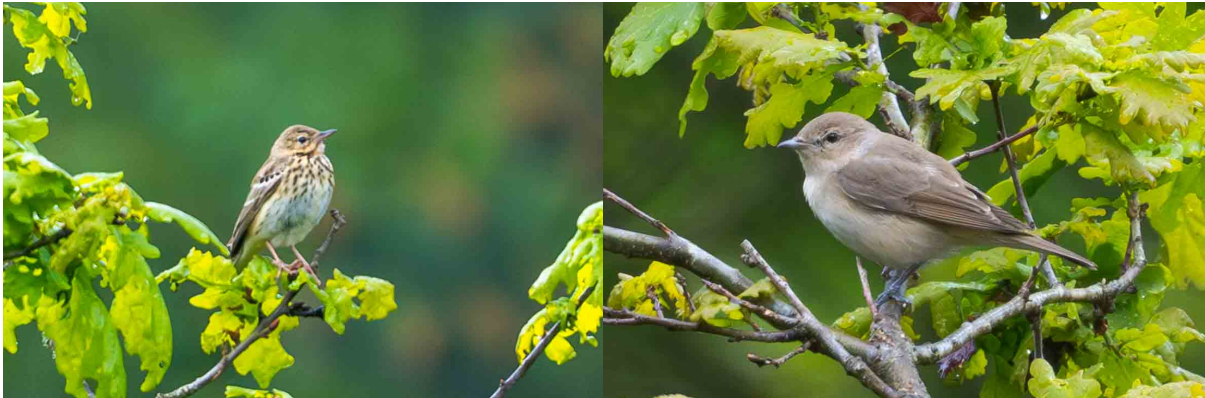
Thursday May 14th Deluwezoom Park

We spent our first night at the de Boer'n Kinkel hotel, a small, charming hotel in Hoenderloo, a village 19.8 km from Arnhem. The hotel is situated directly opposite the entrance to De Hoge Veluwe National Park, an ideal base for hikers, cyclists and nature lovers. Unfortunately, we were unable to gain access to the park in the morning as an event was taking place.

Outside the hotel, a Pied flycatcher could be seen and heard regularly. We started the day by driving 29.4 km to Rozendaalse Veld/Beekhuizense Bossen (Veld in Dutch means Open plain, Bossen in Dutch means forest) within Veluwezoom National Park South. Rozendaalse Veld/Beekhuizense Bossen is a landscape of rolling woodland, open heath and broad valleys shaped by glacial sands. The gorse, yellow broom and rhododendrons lit up the landscape.

The woods contain extensive beech and oak trees and in the morning we were treated to sights of Tree Pipit, Stonechat, Garden Warbler, Willow Warbler, Wood Warbler, Chiffchaff,

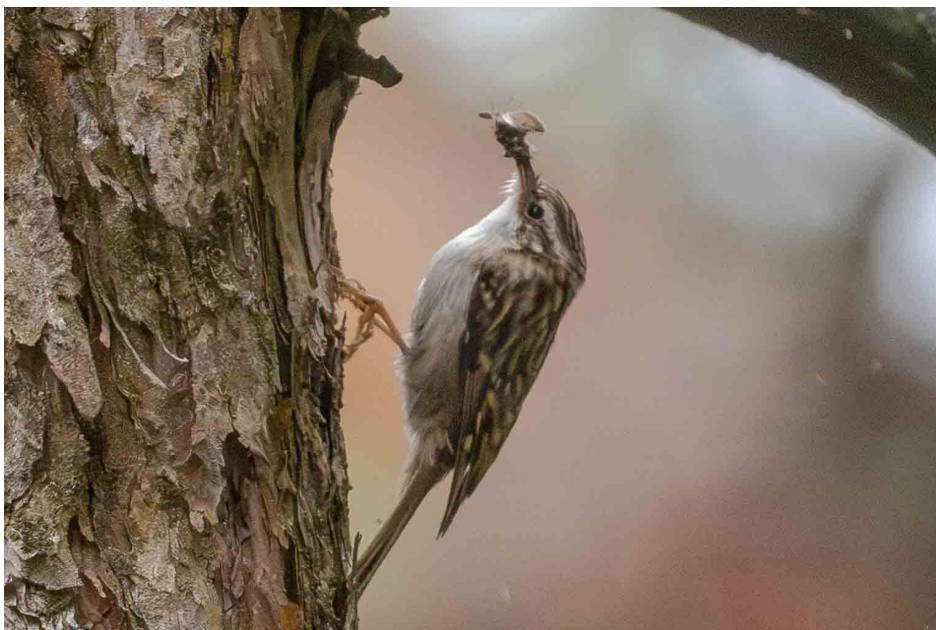
Wren, Starling, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Jackdaw, Crow, Swallow, Stock Dove, Swift, Skylark, Chaffinch, Nuthatch, Jay, Short-toed Treecreeper, Blackcap, Common Redstart, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush as well as Robin, Blackbird, Jay, Nuthatch, Chaffinch, Wood Pigeon, Magpie, House Sparrow, Grey and White Wagtails.



Tree Pipit and Garden Warbler



Willow Warbler and Male Redstart



Short-toed Treecreeper

It was a special delight to see Woodlark not only on the ground but in flight.



Woodlark

Roe deer were spotted and a Cuckoo was regularly heard. In the late morning, we found a small pool via a boardwalk where we saw Mallard, Tufted Duck, Teal and Little Grebe. The morning had started dry but soon changed to rain from mid-morning to lunchtime and we had to shelter at least twice. Fortunately, it did not prevent us from seeing many birds as reported.

We were ready for lunch and descended upon a delightful 'tented' café in the woods where we had a long lunch break and a chance to dry out over a welcoming open fire.

Thankfully the afternoon proved to be sunny and dry, and we moved to a different area of the same National Park. We had another sight of Woodlark and Common Redstart but a first for Yellowhammer and Marsh Tit. Before returning to the minibuses, we were alerted by those that had stayed behind, that the two minibuses had received a parking fine for parking on a Bank holiday – a Feast Day – Ascension Day!

On returning to the hotel, a small number of the group had a brief walk close by and saw Great Spotted Woodpecker and Nuthatch and heard a Short-toed Treecreeper and a Firecrest.

Charmaine Furlong and Jean Carroll

Friday May 15 Hoge Velum Park

Those doing the pre-breakfast stroll found that the Pied Flycatcher was once again calling from the same tree outside the hotel.

A visit then to the nearby De Hoge Veluwe National Park. This is the one containing the famous Kröller-Müller Museum. The most obvious difference from the hilly Veluwezoom that we visited the previous day is that this is largely flat. It also has a large Wolf population.

Matt planned a circular walk from the Visitor Centre for about 3 miles. Bird sightings included two Crested Tits, Redstart, and Tree Pipits. A Woodlark obligingly allowed telescope views as it sat on a dead bough.



Crested Tit and Tree Pipit

The only raptor was a Red Kite. A short diversion to a small lake revealed a variety of duck but it was the return from here that produced a strong candidate for 'Bird of the Day.' A male Red-backed Shrike was sitting on the top of a small Willow and remained long enough to allow prolonged views.

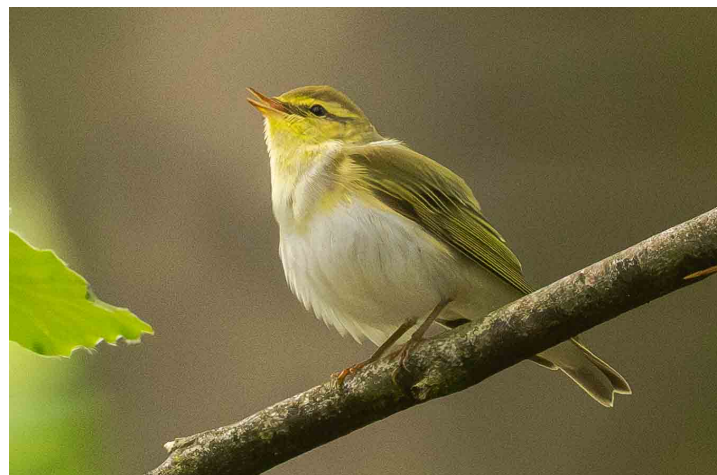


Red-backed Shrike

A Black Woodpecker was briefly seen by a few of the group and only two saw the Nightjar that was flushed from the heather. A walk around the area failed to find it again.

An area of Beech Forest hosted the first Wood Warbler. It was singing well and allowed very good views.

Below Singing Wood Warbler



On the walk back to the Visitor centre there were further areas of mature Beech, again with singing Wood Warblers. After an excellent lunch at the Visitor Centre, we exited the Park and drove the short distance to Otterlo where there is a small nature reserve called De Zanding. Nine of the team went for a short walk through this park whilst a small group remained around the car park and explored the small Restaurant. In the trees around the car park were a Firecrest, Spotted Flycatcher and a another Bonte Vliegenvanger (Pied Flycatcher). The comment “we should have stayed around the car park” was heard.



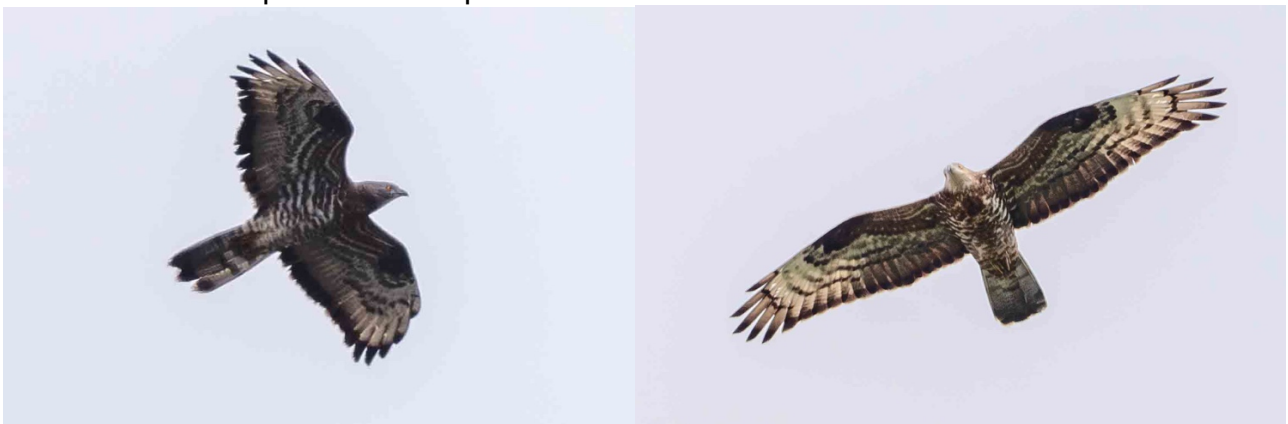
Spotted Flycatcher

After another excellent supper some remained in the bar while the majority made the short excursion back to De Zanding where there were brief sightings of Nightjar.

Roger White

Saturday May 16th Oosvaardersplassen Park to Amsterdam

After loading up the minibuses we left our hotel in Hoenderloo and travelled to Lelystad to visit Oostvaardersplassen National Park. The walk from the Visitor Centre first produced a Honey Buzzard. It was if all the trees and shrubs held a singing warbler: Nightingales, Willow Warblers, Chiffchaff, Whitethroat and Sedge Warbler. The Honey Buzzard again came into view and obligingly flew over our heads to join two Common Buzzards which enabled us to compare the two species.



Honey Buzzard

The star of the morning's walk was a very showy Marsh Warbler who gave us fabulous views with non-stop singing.



Singing Marsh Warbler

Some of the group who braved the walk back to the Visitor Centre saw a Spoonbill and two Cuckoo.



Spoonbill



Male Cuckoo

After lunch we drove for a few minutes to a site where a male Baikal Teal had been spotted earlier in the day. Unfortunately, it was a no show for the group. However, we had great views of three Black Tern, some Common Tern were also present along with Pintail. It was then time to make the drive to the airport where a Kestrel was observed hovering by a few from the minibus, as we neared the terminal. It was then time to say our thanks and goodbyes to our guides Matt and Mark and begin our journey back to Bristol.

Julie Evans