

The Netherlands, Drenthe and Overijssel – May 2020

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A brief spring trip to a wildlife viewing hide and surrounding nature reserves in the north-eastern part of the Netherlands. Highlights were Pine Marten, Stone Marten, Badger, Polecat and Otter. Birding highlights included Common Crane, Kingfisher, Golden Oriole, Red-backed Shrike, Whinchat and Pied Flycatcher.



Stone Marten

Ingrid den Boer already published a [great report](#) on the marten observation hide near Steenwijk in the northeastern part of the Netherlands. Her report tells you everything you need to know and I can only confirm that the hut is very comfortable, the owner Edo is great and the wildlife viewing is excellent (within a Dutch context).

We combined a visit to the hide with a weekend visit to the general area, which has some of the best scenery and wildlife watching in the Netherlands. We visited Drents-Friese Wold NP (also spelled Drents-Friese Woud or similar variations), Dwingelder Veld NP, and the Weerribben wetland – all about 30-40 km from the observation hide, but roads are slow so expect to travel 45-60 minutes from one spot to the other. All these sites are well worth visiting, each with their own charm.

Marten viewing hide

Wildlife action at the hut was pretty much non-stop during our visit. The first Stone Marten already showed up when the owner Edo was still explaining to us how everything worked in the hide. We were lucky to see both marten species, Badger and Polecat. There were always a few Brown Rats and Wood Mice present when the carnivores weren't around and just watching them or interact with each other was quite entertaining. We stayed up until about 3 am and got up again around 5 am. Peak carnivore activity was from 10 pm until about 1 am. Dusk was around 9-9.30 pm in May. In the very early morning activity was dominated by birds. Red Fox, Hedgehog, etc. may also show up at the hut.

Photography was challenging. Especially the polecat(s) and rodents were extremely fast and restless. Typically, ISO settings above 3200 were needed to get more or less in focus images. Nice ball-heads and beanbags are available in the hide. More details on the hide and the available equipment and facilities can be found on the [website](#) (in Dutch).



Badger

Other areas visited

Dwingelder Veld national park is a great nature reserve and claims to be the [largest wet heathland](#) in Western Europe. It is a good place to see Common Crane, Red-backed Shrike, Golden Oriole, Whinchat, various woodpeckers, and heathland specialists.

Drents-Friese Wold has good hiking trails and a mix of habitats (mixed forest, heathlands, sandy areas, hedgerow habitats, small pools, etc.). Good birding and should be interesting for spotlighting mammals and owls, but I haven't tried this yet.

The Weerribben peat bog is one of the best places to see otters in the Netherlands. There are several hides and viewing towers in the area and with patience otters can be seen from them, particularly good are Meentebrug and Twitterhut.

Other nature reserves worth visiting that are relatively nearby are Fochteloërveen and Drentsche Aa. From Schiphol it would take about 2 hours to reach the area. On route you could stop at another excellent nature reserve called Oostvaardersplassen (White-tailed Sea Eagle, Spoonbill, Purple Heron, and wetlands birds in general).

Setting traps and/or spotlighting in the area should give you a good chance to see West European Hedgehog, Roe Deer, Hare, and the commoner voles, shrews and mice in the Netherlands. For Red Deer you have to go further south to the Veluwe (about an hour's drive). Wild boar should be possible, but for them I would go to the Veluwe as well.



Kingfisher

Mammals

Red Squirrel *Sciurus Vulgaris* – one in Drents-Friese Wold

House Mouse *Mus musculus* – one crossed the road near a farm in the area

Brown Rat *Rattus norvegicus* – at least five from the hide

Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus* – at least four from the hide

European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* – one on route in the area

European Hare *Lepus europaeus* – two on route in the area

Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* – one briefly seen in the Drents-Friese Wold area

European Polecat *Mustela putorius* – at least one from the hide; not sure whether it was always the same individual. As expected, very fast, restless and bouncy and difficult to get sharp images in the low light

Stone (aka Beech) Marten *Mustela foina* – the commoner marten at the hide, multiple individuals were seen

European Pine Marten *Mustela martes* – one showed up close to midnight but was rather shy and cautious and did not stay around very long, did not get very good shots from this one

Eurasian Badger *Meles meles* – at least one was seen, not sure if the one that visited later was the same or a different individual

European Otter *Lutra lutra* – 4 in the Weerribben

Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus* – several groups on route at dawn/dusk, also seen in the Weerribben



Otter record shots (top) and European Polecat (bottom)



Birds

This list just shows the species that we saw without making any effort to find certain species. A more targeted approach should result in more warblers and reed specialists.

Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* – fairly common

Grey-Lag Goose *Anser anser* – common

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* – a few sightings

Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* – two birds

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* – common

Tufted Duck *Nyroca fuligula* – common

Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* – a few seen

Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* – wetland areas



Common Crane and Cormorant

Bittern *Botaurus stellaris* – heard only in Weerribben

Great White Heron *Egretta alba* – fairly common

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* – fairly common

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* – one in Weerribben

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* – fairly common in the entire area

Little Grebe *Podiceps ruficollis* – two Dwingelderveld, surprisingly scarce on our visit

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus* – a few only

Marsh-Harrier *Circus aeruginosus* – three sightings, Weerribben and Diependal

Goshawk *Astur gentilis* – one seen

Sparrow-Hawk *Accipiter nisus* – one seen

Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo* – fairly common

Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* – fairly common

Hobby *Falco subbuteo* – one in Drents-Friese Wold

Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* – several in the Weerribben area

Coot *Fulica atra* – Weerribben area

Crane *Megalornis grus* – 5+ Dwingelderveld

Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* – once on route in fields

Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* – once on route in fields

Curlew *Numenius arquata* – Dwingelder Veld

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus* – a few

Rock-Dove *Columba livia* – fairly common

Wood-Pigeon *Columba palumbus* – common

Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia turtur* – small numbers

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* – regularly heard, one seen

Eurasian Swift *Micropus apus* – fairly common

Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* – a few seen and heard in Dwingelderveld National Park, also in Drents-Frise Wold

Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dryobates major* –common

Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* – one in Drents-Friese Wold NP near the hamlet Wateren

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* – one in the Weerribben

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* – at least five heard in Dwingelderveld National Park, two seen well

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* – one male in DwingelderVeld

Magpie *Pica pica* – fairly common

Jay *Garrulus glandarius* – fairly common

Jackdaw *Corvus monedula* – common

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* – only once

Carrion-Crow *Corvus corone* – fairly common

Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus* – common

Great Tit *Parus major* – common

Wood-Lark *Lullula arborea* – fairly common

Eurasian Sky-Lark *Alauda arvensis* – fairly common at Dwingelderveld

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* – fairly common

House Martin *Delichon urbica* – a few seen

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* – fairly common

Willow-Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* – fairly common

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* – fairly common

[Garden-Warbler *Sylvia borin* – heard]

[Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* – heard]

Grasshopper-Warbler *Locustella naevia* – Weerribben

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* – at least five heard in Weerribben

Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*

Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* – a few sightings

Tree-Creeper *Certhia familiaris* – a few sightings

Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* – a few sightings

Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* – common

Blackbird *Turdus merula* – common

Song-Thrush *Turdus philomelos* – a few sightings

European Robin *Erithacus rubecula* – a few sightings

Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

Bluethroat *Cyanosylvia svecica* – a male at Weerribben

Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* – a male at the Benderse parking at Dwingelderveld

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* – a few sightings

Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* – one each in Dwingelderveld and Drents Friese Wold NP

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* – two in Drents Friese Wold NP

Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* - common

Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* – a few at Drents-Friese Wold NP

House-Sparrow *Passer domesticus* – common

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* – 5+ at Diependaal

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea* – one seen

Pied/White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* – fairly common

Tree-Pipit *Anthus trivialis* – common in heather areas and adjoining forest edge

Meadow-Pipit *Anthus pratensis* – a few in Dwingelderveld

Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* – common

Greenfinch *Chloris chloris* – a few seen and heard

Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis* – 4-5 sightings in Dwingelderveld and Drents-Friese Wold

Linnet *Acanthis cannabina* – a few at Dwingelderveld

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes* – twice a fly-by in Drents-Friese Wold

Reed-Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* – one in Dwingelderveld, a few in the Weerribben

Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* – common in the area

Other Wildlife

Slowworm *Anguis fragilis* – a fabulous sighting in Drents-Friese Wold, I only run into these in the Netherlands about once every seven years.



Brown Rat in the pool directly in front of the hide



Stone Martens



Stone marten



Pine Marten



Polecat



Badger