

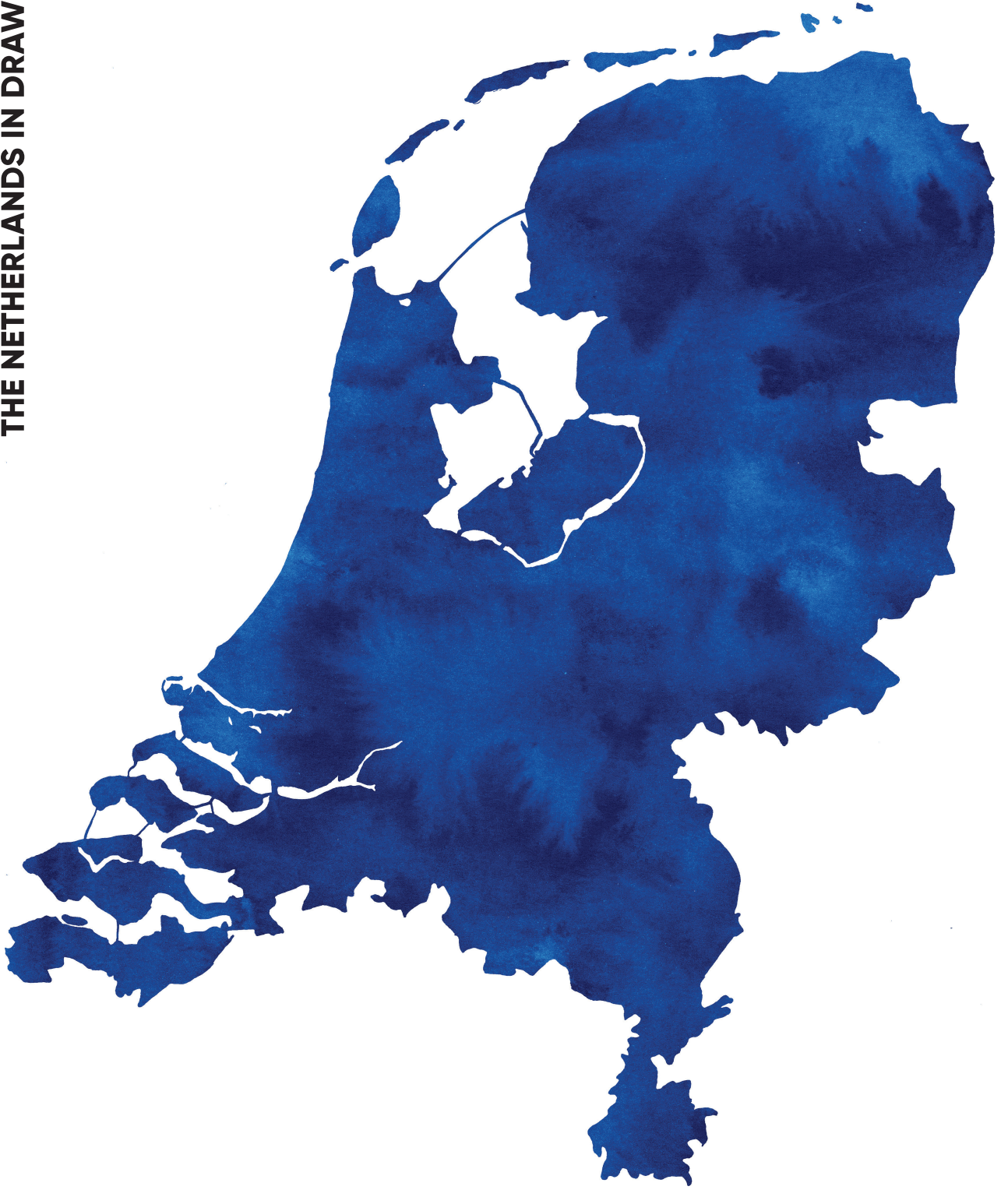
Merel Corduwener

**THE NETHERLANDS
IN DRAWINGS**

**the Dutch, their country
and their culture**

POLDERPOLONAISE

THE NETHERLANDS IN DRAWINGS



POLDERPOLONAISE

As the guard blows his whistle, the doors close and the train gathers speed, my journey through the Netherlands begins. I hear the rhythmic clanking of steel wheels, the squeal of rails and the everything whizzes past. From the window, high and low, grey, blue and green alternate rapidly, various shades of brick succeed each other and rows of trees, so straight, they might have been planted using a ruler. A cow, a sheep, a cyclist waiting at the level-crossing barrier, parked cars, Harry's Hair Salon, a gate, a dike, a snack bar. A country in which everything is well-ordered, every street sign rendered in the same type-face and the same colour blue, where a traffic light is never red for more than two minutes (true) and where there are 868 different traffic signs. We pass blocks of flats, the nature reserve at Oostvaardersplassen, a sit-down birthday party and a student social. I see two women, clad in practical coats, having a chat standing next to their bikes with shopping bags dangling from the handlebars. A man walks past, dressed from top to toe in beige, with matching loafers and dogs.

Next to me a plastic bag rustles and a fellow passenger starts eating his cheese sandwich rather noisily. A group of women enter the Quiet Coach with a loud 'Ssshhhhh' and I catch snippets of a conversation, something about heartbreak. I store all of these observations in my head then I transform them into scenes, decide on the atmosphere, what's being said and capture it in an illustration; a grumpy face – fun to sketch – a proud bird, dunes or a mother waving her children goodbye. Which colours are right, is it a warm or a cold day? Busy or quiet, do I hear the humming of voices? For this book I drew people I met, places that are worth a visit, and the act of drawing forced me to look differently at a country I've been living in all my life. How much do I really know about this country? What is typically Dutch and how much of that is still evident in everyday life?

I left my own environment and suddenly all the things that are 'ordinary' turned out to be interesting, funny, or idiosyncratic, like the food on our plates, the flat polders and habits I took for granted. To help me look beyond the view from my train window, I drew up a questionnaire to help me get to know the Netherlands and its average inhabitants better; thirty-one questions which were answered – anonymously – over twelve hundred times by people throughout the country. One thing is for sure, the Dutch do not mince their words. I was surprised by the openness of the replies, I learnt how the Dutch think about each other and this country, and it gave me an insight into the minds of all kinds of different people – surely the most enjoyable thing there is! 'The Netherlands is Europe's garden city', 'The Netherlands is nothing special' and 'I'd rather go to Spain any day'.

Like a train, this book travels from province to province and while the drawings have been inspired by, and are loosely based on those areas, they do not represent them literally. The book has been assembled in an associative way and the title, Polderpolonaise refers to the Dutch landscape, the seemingly endless flat 'polder' lands in the west and north of the Netherlands. The Dutch only create polders after careful deliberation; something at which the Dutch excel. The polonaise acts as a counterbalance, bringing exhilaration and gaiety, danced during celebrations mainly in the east and south of the country (see p. 104). I hope my drawings will make you look at this country afresh and prepare you to be astonished by things that may seem perfectly ordinary.

FLEVOLAND 6



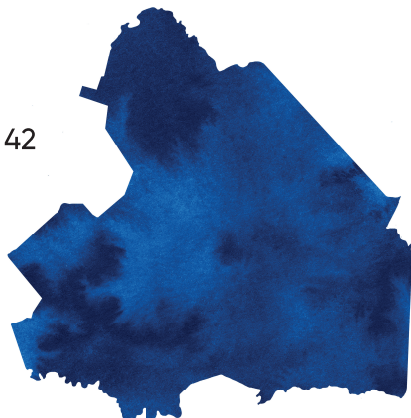
FRIESLAND 16



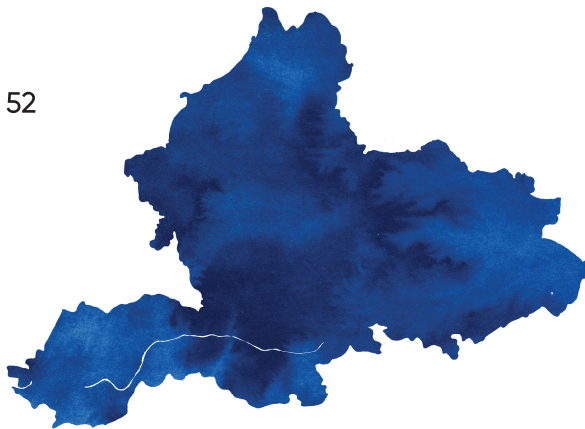
GRONINGEN 32



DRENTHE 42



GELDERLAND 64



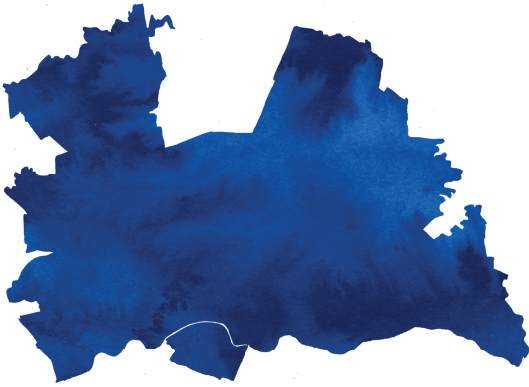
OVERIJSEL 52



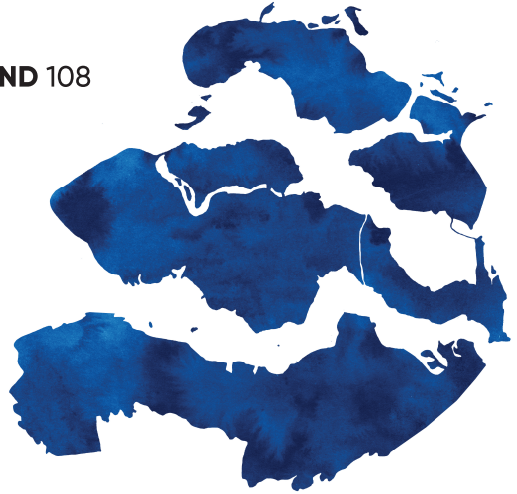
NOORD-BRABANT 86



UTRECHT 74



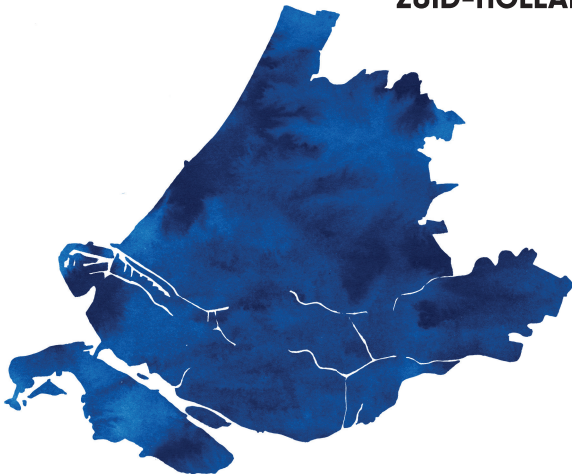
ZEELAND 108



LIMBURG 98



ZUID-HOLLAND 122



NOORD-HOLLAND 134



Flevoland

The **population** of Flevoland is the **youngest** in the Netherlands.

Flevoland has the largest number of **organic farms**.

With 804 cars per 1000 head, **car ownership** is by far the highest in the country.

Of all the **wind energy** that is generated on land in the Netherlands, 33% comes from Flevoland.

In 2014, exactly the **same number of men as women** lived in the province.

There were 2320 **red deer**, 610 **Konik ponies** and 200 **Heck cattle** in the Oostvaardersplassen in 2018.

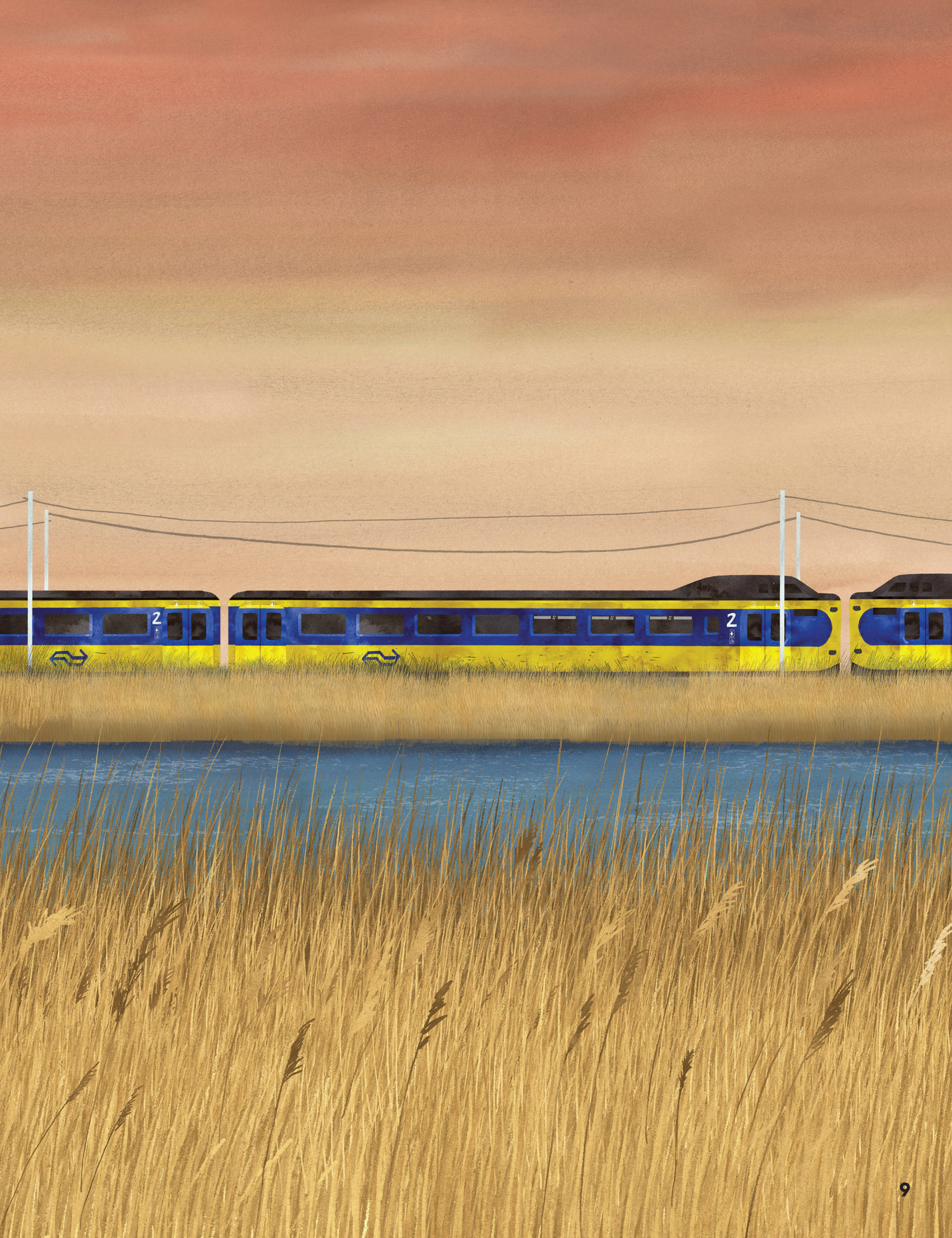
The Oostvaardersplassen extends to 56 km² (21.6 square mi), which equates to **11200 football pitches**.

In 1968 the Oostvaardersplassen (Oostvaarder Lakes) were designated a '**National Nature Reserve**'. These days, it is one of Europe's most important wetlands.

It is estimated that in winter, **8% of all the greylag geese in the world** can be found in the Oostvaardersplassen.

On average the NS (Dutch Railways),
transport **1.1 million passengers a day**,
spread out over 4500 train journeys
and 7000 km (4350 mi) railway tracks.







CAN YOU
COMMUNICATE WITH BERT
ABOUT THIS? GET HIM TO PUT
A GLOSS ON IT, THEN WE'LL
FEED IT BACK!

YES, I SIMPLY LOVE THE THEATRE, BUT ESPECIALLY
WHEN I TAKE PART MYSELF. I'M JUST PERFECT
FOR THE DRAMATIC PARTS - THE THEATRE'S THEATRE,
KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

