

## Tour Report

# UK – Butterflies & Birds of Sussex

5-7 July 2022

White admiral



Dartford warbler



White stork



Silver studded blue



Compiled by Terry Goble

## Day 1: Tuesday 5 July 2022

*Weather: Cloudy and humid in the afternoon later clear evening sky*

We all met at The Old Tollgate and introduced ourselves. Check-in was at 15:00 and we did manage to get out reasonably promptly around 15:30. We set off in the hope of butterflies, birds and dragonflies at Pulborough Brooks Nature Reserve.

When we arrived we first walked down through the heathland to Black Pond, where a variety of ordonta can usually be found. On this occasion, however, the pond was completely dry and we did not see any. Despite this, we did see a green woodpecker feeding in a nearby tree and heard another calling distantly.

We decided to make our way through the nature reserve looking out for birds and butterflies. We walked through some small flower meadows bordered by brambles and shrubs where we had a nice variety of butterflies to start the tour. A nice, fresh comma took most people's attention, particularly as it landed repeatedly on one of the group. There were also good numbers of ringlets, meadow browns, small whites and a few peacocks, red admirals, large white and a small skipper.

We carried on through the zigzags and added gatekeeper and marble white to our butterfly sightings as we made our way to the Winpenny Hide, passing a few more dragonfly ponds that were completely dry, one containing a small tortoiseshell and another peacock. We heard and then saw two avocets 'peeping' and calling, swooping together in what looked like a display flight. I thought with the lack of water that they had probably failed to raise chicks and may be starting again. We also noted a few common birds such as chiffchaff, chaffinch and goldfinch, and an earlier greenfinch was good to see as they had become scarce following a viral infection. We also managed to spot a few ordonta as we came across a banded demoiselle and a little later an emerald spreadwing.

We now headed back to the car but stopped on the way to check out the reptile refugias. Under the first, we saw two beautiful adders. One was a dark-form male and the other a brown, larger female that posed for a few photographs before they glided into the long grass out of sight. They were the only reptiles we saw, but a great sighting nonetheless. We just had time to squeeze in a trip to check for little owl at Edburton. Tonight we were in luck and an owl was sitting on a dovecote glaring menacingly at us as only an angry 10-inch owl could do! It was remarkably patient as we took photographs and admired it. It was now time to get ready for lunch so we drove back to the hotel.

Back at the hotel, the group went to their rooms to get ready and we later met at 19:30 for our buffet evening meal and drinks. We chatted in a relaxed atmosphere throughout the meal. We also discussed the plans for this evening and agreed to go in search of nightjars. After dinner, we drove back to Pulborough Brooks and parked up. We walked to the heathland and immediately heard a familiar churring! Within a few minutes, a nightjar was sitting on a bare branch in full view but in semi-darkness - it was, however, an excellent view of the bird.

As we stood on the brow of a hill above the heath we listened to occasional churring, the call of a female tawny owl and watched bats whizzing around. The large ones were identified as noctule, but the smaller bats were probably pipistrelle species. We then headed back to the car park and had a wander around looking for and finding a few glow worms. It was then time to head back and get some much-needed sleep.

## Day 2: Wednesday 6 July 2022

*Weather: Mostly cloudy with occasional sunny interlude.*

After meeting up with the group we drove to Kithurst Hill to search for downland species. Kithurst is a small, but rich wildflower meadow, which hosts incredible diversity despite its small size.

We walked down into the meadow and despite the slightly cool conditions we were able to find many butterflies, among the pyramidal orchids and other stunning wildflowers. Most evident were the 'browns', [M]meadow brown, gatekeeper and marbled white. There were also many orange skippers with small, Essex and large all found. Perhaps the highlight was the freshly emerged chalkhill blues as we were able to find good numbers of these milky blue beauties. The other target species was the dark green fritillary - we had numerous sightings of these handsome butterflies, mostly they were fast-flying passes, but we did on occasion find a settled butterfly, one on top of a pyramid orchid!

We then continued to the Knepp rewilding project via a service station stop. We parked up in the Knepp car park and immediately noticed the chicks in the nearby stork nest were now almost fully grown. We could tell they were the near adult chicks as they still had their shorter darker bills and not the long coral red bills of their parents.

After stopping to take photographs we walked down to the lake to eat our lunch and during the walk, we discussed the effects of the introduction of habitat drivers in turning the estate into a diverse and thriving reserve. On route, we stopped at a brook and were able to see both banded and beautiful demoiselles flying together with azure and common blue-tail damselflies demonstrating some of that diversity. At the lake, we watched a great crested grebe and their 'humbug' chicks, which eventually swam quite close giving lovely views. A black-tailed skimmer was one of a few dragonflies we had managed to see, partly due to the ponds drying out completely.

After lunch, we decided to walk the 'Emperor Trail' in an attempt to secure sightings of this imperial butterfly. A little down the route we met Matthew Oates who was cycling and on his way to undertake a transect walk. He generously stopped to chat for a while explaining that the females are only just emerging and many males have been seen hunting through the tallows to find the females. We pressed on with optimism and in hope of finding some purple emperors.

After a slow start, we began to pick up a few sightings of males, mostly fairly high up and as Mr Oates described, often shuttling back and forth between their high oak vantage point and the lower tallows. We carried on and had a few slightly better sightings and on one male we were able to make out the patterning on the upper wings. We then approached the 'Green Mile' and met up with another group led by Neil Hume. We stopped and chatted for a while and Neil shared that he had recently seen a large tortoiseshell, a very rare sighting! He also shared information about them breeding along the main Sussex river courses.

We stopped at the tree hide and decided to climb up and watch from the high vantage point. We saw a few mallards with chicks and a grey heron looking very interested in the chicks, who eventually fled to the vegetation to avoid becoming a heron snack. As we were there two doe red deer walked down to the water's edge and relaxed in the warm afternoon. These large deer have been introduced as part of the plan to shape the habitat by their browsing role, keeping some open spaces and stopping the total dominance of woodland and shrubs.

As we walked on we saw Tamworth pigs resting in the shade again introduced to help create conditions for wildflowers to thrive. The day became warm and humid and we made our way back to the car park, having spent a little more time with the storks. We arrived back at the car and had a welcome drink before loading up and setting off. We didn't get far as a large bachelor group of fallow deer was seen and we stopped for photographs.

Leaving Knepp we drove on to Burpham to look for raptors and brown hares. We were lucky enough to have a nice variety of raptors and a couple of sightings of brown hare including one reasonably close at about 30 metres. The highlight of the raptors was perhaps the red kite and a surprise marsh harrier, however, it was also good to see a number of common buzzards and singles of kestrels and sparrowhawk. It was now time to return to the hotel for our evening meal and to release a moth haul from the previous evening.

We gathered in the garden and released a nice variety of moths including elephant and small elephant hawk moths, pepper moth and a lovely burnished brass.

After a relaxing meal, we travelled to a nearby local nature reserve in the hope of finding barn owl. After getting in position we waited and were soon rewarded by a sighting of a beautiful owl. The owl eventually left the nest box and briefly sat out on a bare tree in the open. The light was fading fast and when the owl flew out of sight we listened to its shrieks for a while before heading back and bringing the day to a close.

### **Day 3: Thursday 7 July 2022**

*Weather: Cloudy and cool becoming brighter and warmer in the afternoon.*

We started the day by photographing several of the moths from the overnight trap. There were a few repeats but also a couple of new moths including a female ghost moth that was an attractive individual and a few of the new moths included willow beauty and heart and dart.

It was then time to set off to Iping Common. Our targets were silver-studded blue and Dartford warbler. We arrived after a 50-minute drive to rather cloudy and cool conditions at Iping Common. The heath seemed remarkably quiet with just a few common birds singing. The sites for the Dartford warbler were also very quiet and the morning was not helped by the dragonfly pond being dried out. At this point with scarce sightings, we decided to cut our losses and try to find the sundew plant at the adjacent common. On the way, one of the group found an emperor moth caterpillar - a beautiful emerald green colour. As we neared the car park a pair of stonechats flitted from shrub to shrub and whilst watching these I noticed a Dartford warbler dart between heather patches. It flew fast and only settled briefly as it flitted around us, eventually drifting off. At this point, our attention turned to a keeled skimmer, which was only our second dragonfly!

We soon found the patches of sundew and were pleased to see a silver-washed fritillary, which briefly settled on bracken before flying off. After photographing the fascinating carnivorous sundew plants, we returned to the Iping Heath with renewed hope as the sun started to emerge and the clouds began lifting. Pleasingly we soon found several male and female silver-studded blues in the bell heather - most were a little worn as they had been on the wing since early June - however, we did find one or two specimens in reasonable condition.

After photographing the butterflies we continued on a loop back to the car park, this remained very quiet and neither woodlark nor tree pipits were seen. It was time to leave and try for a few woodland species. We set off back the way we came towards the Horsham area to the semi-ancient woodlands of Southwater.

One of the group had to be back at the hotel in a couple of hours, but the group also wanted to see white admiral and silver-washed fritillary. We drove back towards the Southwater Wood complex via a service station to stop for lunch and a short break. We then stopped by a public footpath and looked for honeysuckle and bramble flowers along the walk. Initially, we saw mostly common species and a distant view of a silver-washed fritillary, and on the return walk, we had better luck and finally spotted a white admiral and a second fritillary. They were both very active and neither settled for long. Eventually, it was time to return to the hotel and say goodbye to the guests as the tour came to a close.

# Checklist



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
	<b>BIRDS</b>	<i>AVES</i>			
1	Canada goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>			✓
2	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓
3	Common pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓
4	Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>		✓	
5	Rock/feral dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓
6	Stock dove	<i>Columba oenas</i>			
7	Wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓
8	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓
9	European nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>	✓		
10	Common swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓	✓
11	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓	
12	Common coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	
13	European white stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>		✓	
14	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	
15	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓		
16	Pied avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓		
17	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓
18	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓	✓	✓
19	Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓
20	Western marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		✓	
21	Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓	
22	Eurasian buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓
23	Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>		✓	



24	Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	✓		
25	Tawny owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>		H	
26	Green woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	✓	✓	✓
27	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	✓	✓
28	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓
29	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	
30	Eurasian magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓
31	Eurasian jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓
32	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓
33	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓
34	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓
35	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓
36	Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	
37	Common chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓
38	European greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓		
39	Common linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓	
40	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓
41	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		✓	✓
42	Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓
43	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓
44	Eurasian skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>		✓	
45	Common reed warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>		✓	
46	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓
47	Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	H	H	✓
48	Long-tailed tit	<i>Aegithalos caudatus</i>		✓	
49	Eurasian blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	✓	✓
50	Common whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	✓	✓	✓
51	Dartford warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>			✓
52	Eurasian nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		H	

53	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓
54	Common starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓
55	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓
56	European stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>			✓
57	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓
58	Eurasian blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓
	<b>BUTTERFLIES</b>	<b>RHOPALOCERA</b>			
1	Chalkhill blue	<i>Polyommatus coridon</i>	✓		
2	Comma	<i>Polyommatus c-album</i>	✓	✓	✓
3	Dark green fritillary	<i>Argynnis aglaja</i>		✓	
4	Essex skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>	✓	✓	✓
5	Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>	✓	✓	✓
6	Green-veined white	<i>Pieris napi</i>		✓	✓
7	Holly blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	✓		
8	Large skipper	<i>Ochlodes venata</i>	✓	✓	✓
9	Large white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>		✓	✓
10	Marbled white	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>	✓	✓	✓
11	Meadow brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	✓	✓	✓
12	Peacock	<i>Inachis io</i>	✓	✓	✓
13	Purple emperor	<i>Apature iris</i>		✓	
14	Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	✓	✓	✓
15	Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>	✓	✓	✓
16	Silver-studded blue	<i>Plebejus argus</i>			✓
17	Silver-washed fritillary	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>			✓
18	Small copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	✓		
19	Small skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>	✓	✓	✓
20	Small tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>		✓	✓
21	Small white	<i>Pieris rapae</i>		✓	✓
22	Speckled wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		✓	✓

23	White admiral	<i>Satyrium w-album</i>			✓
	<b>MOTHS (MACROS)</b>	<b>LEPIDOPTERA</b>			
	<b>GEOMETRID AND OTHERS</b>				
1	Six-spot burnet	<i>Zygaena filipendulae stephensi</i>	✓		
2	Ghost moth (female)	<i>Hepialus humuli</i>		✓	
3	Peppered moth	<i>Biston betularia</i>		✓	✓
4	Willow beauty	<i>Peribatodes rhomboidaria</i>		✓	✓
5	Elephant hawkmoth	<i>Deilephila elpenor</i>		✓	✓
6	Small elephant hawkmoth	<i>Deilephila porcellus</i>		✓	✓
7	Fox moth	<i>Macrothylacia rubi</i>			Cat
8	Riband wave	<i>Idaea aversata</i>			✓
9	Barred straw	<i>Eulithis pyraliata</i>		✓	✓
10	Cinnabar	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>		Cat	
	<b>NOCTUIDAE</b>				
1	Heart and dart	<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i>		✓	✓
2	Dark arches	<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>		✓	✓
3	Grey dagger	<i>Acronicta psi</i>			✓
4	Light brocade	<i>Lacanobia w-latinum</i>		✓	
5	Common rustic	<i>Hoplodrina blanda</i>			✓
6	Burnished brass	<i>Diachrysia chrysitis</i>		✓	✓
7	Langmaid's yellow underwing	<i>Noctua janthia</i>		✓	✓
8	Barred sallow	<i>Xanthia aurago</i>			✓
9	Silver 'Y'	<i>Autographa gamma</i>		✓	
	<b>MOTHS (MICROS)</b>				
1	Grass veneer	<i>Crambus sp</i>	✓	✓	✓
2	Dusky grass veneer		✓		
3	Small magpie	<i>Anania hortulata</i>		✓	✓
4	Nettle-tap	<i>Anthophila fabriciana</i>	✓	✓	✓
	<b>DRAGONFLIES</b>	<b>LIBELLULA</b>			



1	Banded demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	✓	✓	
2	Beautiful demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>		✓	
3	Azure damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>		✓	✓
4	Blue-tailed damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>		✓	
5	Black-tailed skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>		✓	
6	Keeled skimmer	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>			✓
7	Emerald spreadwing	<i>Lestes sponsa</i>	✓		
	<b>MAMMALS</b>	<b>ANISOPTERA</b>			
1	Roe deer	<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>			✓
2	Red deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>		✓	
3	Fallow deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	✓	✓	
4	European rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓	✓
5	Brown hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>		✓	
6	Noctule bat	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>		✓	
7	Pipistrelle sp	<i>Pipistrellus sp</i>		✓	
	<b>REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS</b>	<b>REPTILIA AND AMPHIBIA</b>			
1	European adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>	✓		
	<b>PLANTS</b>	<b>PLANTAE</b>			
1	Devil's bit scabious	<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	✓	✓	
2	Self heal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓
3	Common knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	✓	✓	✓
4	Lesser knapweed		✓	✓	
5	Common ragwort	<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓
6	Borage	<i>Borago officinalis</i>		✓	
7	Rough hawkbit	<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>	✓	✓	✓
8	Bird's foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	✓	✓	
9	Horseshoe vetch	<i>Hippocrepis comosa</i>	✓		
10	Kidney vetch	<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>	✓	✓	✓

11	Ladies bedstraw	<i>Galium verum</i>	✓	✓	
12	Scarlet pimpernel	<i>Lysimachia arvensis</i>	✓	✓	
13	Majaram	<i>Origanum majorana</i>	✓	✓	
14	Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	✓	✓	✓
15	Meadow sweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	✓		
16	Pyramidal orchid	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>	✓		
17	Common fleabane	<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>	✓	✓	✓
18	Field crane's bill	<i>Geranium maculatum</i>	✓		
19	Yellow rattle	<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>	✓		
20	Yellow flag iris	<i>Iris pseudacorus</i>	✓	✓	✓
21	Marsh woundwort	<i>Stachys palustris</i>		✓	
22	Chamomile sp	<i>Asteraceae</i>		✓	
23	Common chicory	<i>Ophrys apifera</i>			✓