

## Tour Report

# UK – Butterflies & Birds of Sussex

5-7 July 2021

Marbled white



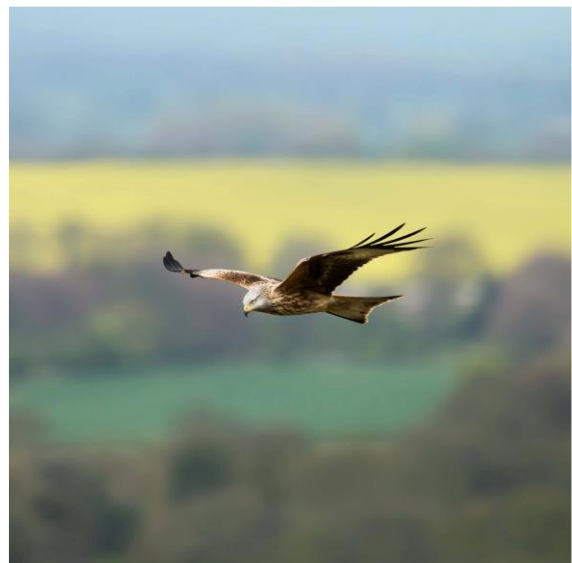
Merlin



Skipper



Red kite



Compiled by Terry Goble

This year has been tough for many butterflies as a cold and dry spring, followed by a wet cool early summer has delayed the emergence of many species. We were very pleased therefore to take advantage of the 'rays of glee' when they arrived and see some lovely species. The silver-washed fritillary is our largest fritillary and a stunning butterfly when seen well and the white admiral has perhaps the most attractive underwing of all our butterflies. Other highlights included a sunny spell at Knepp that brought many butterflies to the wing and transforming a flowery meadow into a scene of dancing marbled whites, ringlets, skippers and browns. The sighting of turtle doves, brown hares and rare snakes was also very much appreciated. Despite the conditions this turned out to be a very enjoyable trip and the patience, sense of fun and enthusiasm of the group was very much appreciated.

### **Day 1: Monday 5 July 2021**

I collected one of the group from the train station and we explored a few potential future sites for visiting. It was then time to meet with the rest of the group at the Tollgate Hotel. After introducing ourselves we set off for Pulborough Brooks just after 15:00. We drove for about 30 minutes before parking up and gaining entry into the reserve. We met with Paula, a warden here, who had just enough time to show us some adders (male and female) and a grass snake that was about to slough his skin. It was a memorable encounter and a rare sight to see the different species next to each other.

We then moved on to the Westmead hide to watch the waders that were rearing their chicks and a few visiting birds. The redshanks and lapwings had their adorable chicks nearby, but at the back of the pool we could make out a summer plumaged bar-tailed godwit and some other redshanks. Leaving the hide we made our way to the Winpenny hide, which was a little quieter. A small murmuration of starlings was entertaining, however this was eclipsed by a merlin shooting through the field rapidly. It was a nice way to end the spell in the hide. We made our way back to the car and set off back to the hotel. We made a brief detour to try for the little owl at Tottingham, unfortunately the rain was getting heavier as we got near and apart from a brief sighting by the leader it was not seen by the group.

At the hotel we got ready for our meal. Whilst some waxed lyrical about the food we all enjoyed a filling meal and relaxed conversation before we decided to get some sleep for the next day's wildlife watching.

### **Day 2: Tuesday 6 July 2021**

We all woke to a morning of rain and high winds, so we had to adapt our plans according to the conditions. We decided to visit Warnham local nature reserve as it has a number of hides to shelter in and a good range of feeders and natural settings.

After we negotiated the slightly confusing entry situation (an education centre and new hide are currently being constructed) we marched along the path and settled in the first hide. The feeders were very active with several species visiting and we noted that many were this year's fledglings, sub-adult blue and great tits abound. There were several others including robin, dunnock, nuthatch, marsh tit and on the mammal front a large brown rat and several tiny bank voles were raiding the spilt seeds.

We followed the path around the one-way system. One of the group heard a goldcrest that we managed to locate and unsurprisingly we saw few common butterflies and only one dragonfly (southern hawker). In the other hides we added to our species with sightings of great-spotted woodpecker, common tern and tufted duck. Despite the weather it was a very enjoyable morning, however the weather did appear to be slightly improving so we decided to gamble on visiting a near-by woodland butterfly site (Madgeland Wood). The skies were still dark and the air damp when we arrived, but we waited patiently for a spell of rain. Eventually the sun did manage to pierce the blanket of cloud and for a few magical moments the woods came alive with butterflies and we were able to see our target species and a few others. The first to appear was a few meadow browns and large skippers. A ringlet was a nice addition and suddenly we saw a flash of orange as a silver-washed fritillary dashed by. Shortly after, a white admiral glided around the bramble

flowers. With a little more patience we were able to get some great views of the target species and of a pristine comma, which looked as if it had just emerged.

We were relieved and happy to finally catch up with these species, but the weather had closed in again and we decided to head off to The Burgh to look for brown hare and some birds as the chances of more butterflies seemed slim. When we arrived at The Burgh the weather had actually improved and we walked the circular track in sunshine for the most part. We had excellent sightings of brown hare and one close to the track. Red kites and common buzzards patrolled the skies and a kestrel passed overhead carrying an unfortunate small bird in their talons. We dipped on the grey partridge as the crops and margins were making spotting them difficult, although we did see a few red-legged partridge. A close view of a raspberry splashed linnet was a nice way to end the day and we then returned to the hotel, via Tootingham for the little owl. Despite the improved conditions the owls didn't show so we returned to get ready for the evening meal.

After a long day we enjoyed relaxing and chatting around our meal and decided not to embark on an evening trip. The moth trap was set up and we bade each other goodnight agreeing to gather in the morning slightly later as it was a packing day.

### **Day 3: Wednesday 7 July 2021**

We met up slightly later as planned and had a quick look at the moth haul, which was modest due to the high winds and rain overnight. The best of the bunch was an angle shades among the many dark arches and heart and dart. There was also a silver 'Y', which is often seen during the day. It was still damp and overcast as we set off to the local supermarkets to buy lunch. After our little shopping trip, we headed for the Knepp Estate to walk the purple emperor trail, designed by Matthew Oates to give people the best chance of connecting with this beautiful butterfly.

After parking up and collecting our map we followed the white trail on to the trail of purple ribbons showing the way past many master trees and sap run oaks. However, what caught our attention was the first white stork nest just beyond the Yoga Centre. We watched the nest for a while, which contained three nearly fully grown chicks. It was really wonderful to see these huge birds glide across the skies of Sussex and at the rate they are breeding they may well expand beyond the estate.

We then had an unexpected sighting of two stunning male bullfinches down on the path feeding. We had great views of their pinky red breasts and contrasting white rump and black cap. They really are handsome birds. Following the trail we came across the churned earth marks left by Tamworth pigs. They were brought in to do the job of the wild boar and disturb the sward creating opportunities for wildflowers to flourish. A little further on we saw the herd of chestnut pigs going about their work, not in the slightest distracted by our presence.

We looked over the lake and were delighted to see a pair of great crested grebes and their chicks among the mallards and coots. Dragonflies were few, but we did find common blue tailed damselfly. As we worked our way around we scanned the tops of the tall oaks and searched among the willows, but we were unable to get a sight of the emperors. We did enjoy a variety of other wildlife sightings though and the red and fallow deer were lovely to see and we all enjoyed an open meadow full of skippers, marbled white, meadow brown, ringlets, a pristine comma and a gorgeous beautiful demoiselle. We were also lucky enough to hear a turtle dove purring and later managed to get a view of the bird before it flew.

We had a last ditch attempt at finding a purple emperor and hoped our chances would be helped by a volunteer ranger (Sussex butterfly expert Neil Hume) putting down a foul smelling bait to lure them down. There were also a few reports of the butterflies being seen at the tops of the oaks. However our luck wasn't in and although we managed to add a few purple hairstreaks we did not see the emperor. It was now time to head back to the car and bid each other farewell well. The weather had certainly not helped but we were

rewarded for our patience with some superb wildlife sightings and the time had come to end a very rewarding and entertaining few days searching out the wildlife of Sussex.



# Checklist



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
	<b>BIRDS</b>	<i>AVES</i>			
1	Mute swan	<i>Cygnus color</i>	✓	✓	
2	Canada goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓		
3	Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		✓	
4	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓
5	Red-legged partridge	<i>Alectoris rufa</i>		✓	
6	Common pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓
7	Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓		
8	Rock dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓
9	Wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓
10	European turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>			✓
11	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓
12	Common swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓	✓
13	Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	✓	✓	✓
14	Common coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓	✓
15	European white stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>			✓
16	Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		✓	
17	Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓	✓	
18	Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓	✓	
19	Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓	✓	
20	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓
21	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓	✓	✓
22	Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓
23	Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>		✓	



24	Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓	✓
25	Eurasian buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓
26	Green woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		✓	✓
27	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	✓	✓
28	Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	✓		
29	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓
30	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓
31	Eurasian magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓
32	Eurasian jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓
33	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓
34	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓
35	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓
36	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓
37	Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	
38	Common chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓
39	European greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓		
40	Common linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓
41	Bull finch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			✓
42	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓
43	Corn bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		✓	
44	Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓
45	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓
46	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>		✓	
47	Eurasian skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓	✓	✓
48	Northern house martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>		✓	
49	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓
50	Common chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓
51	Eurasian blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	H	H	✓

52	Common whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	✓	✓	✓
53	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓
54	Common starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓
55	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓
56	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓
57	Eurasian blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓
	<b>BUTTERFLIES</b>	<b>RHOPALOCERA</b>			
1	Comma	<i>Polyommatus c-album</i>			✓
2	Small skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>		✓	✓
3	Essex skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>			✓
4	Large skipper	<i>Ochlodes sylvanus</i>		✓	✓
5	Large white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>		✓	
6	Meadow brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	✓	✓	✓
7	Marbled white	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>			✓
8	Peacock	<i>Inachis io</i>			C
9	Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	✓	✓	✓
10	Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>	✓	✓	✓
11	Silver-washed fritillary	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>		✓	
12	Small copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>			✓
13	Small heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>		✓	✓
14	Small tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>			✓
15	Small white	<i>Pieris rapae</i>		✓	✓
16	Speckled wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		✓	✓
17	White admiral	<i>Satyrium w-album</i>		✓	
	<b>MOTHS (MACROS)</b>	<b>LEPIDOPTERA</b>			
	<b>GEOMETRID</b>				
1	Yellow shell	<i>Camptogramma bilineata bilineata</i>		✓	✓

2	Cinnabar	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>			✓
	<b>NOCTUIDAE</b>				
1	Heart and dart	<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i>		✓	
2	Dark arches	<i>Apamea monoglypha</i>		✓	
3	Angle shades	<i>Phlogophora meticulosa</i>			✓
4	Large yellow underwing	<i>Noctua pronuba</i>			✓
5	Silver 'Y'	<i>Autographa gamma</i>		✓	
	<b>MOTHS (MICROS)</b>				
1	Common yellow conch	<i>Agapeta hamana</i>			✓
2	Grass veneer	<i>Crambus sp</i>	✓	✓	✓
	<b>DRAGONFLIES</b>	<b>ANISOPTERA</b>			
1	Beautiful demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>			✓
2	Azure damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>		✓	✓
3	Common blue damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>			✓
4	Blue-tailed damselfly	<i>Ischnura elegans</i>		✓	✓
5	Southern hawker	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>		✓	
6	Broad-bodied chaser	<i>Libellula spona</i>			✓
	<b>MAMMALS</b>	<b>MAMMILIA</b>			
1	Brown rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>		✓	
2	Bank vole	<i>Myodfes glareolus</i>		✓	
3	European rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓	✓	✓
4	Brown hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>		✓	
5	Red deer	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>			✓
6	Fallow deer	<i>Dama dama</i>	✓		✓
	<b>REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS</b>	<b>REPTILIA AND AMPHIBIA</b>			
1	Grass snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>		✓	
2	European adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>		✓	



	<b>PLANTS</b>	<i>PLANTAE</i>			
<b>1</b>	Fox and cubs	<i>Pilosella aurantiaca</i>			✓
<b>2</b>	Hedge woundwort	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>		✓	✓
<b>3</b>	Self heal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓
<b>4</b>	Common knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	✓	✓	✓
<b>5</b>	Greater knapweed	<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>	✓	✓	✓
<b>6</b>	Common ragwort	<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>	✓		✓
<b>7</b>	Rough hawkbit	<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>	✓	✓	✓
<b>8</b>	Bird's foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	✓		✓
<b>9</b>	Horseshoe vetch	<i>Hippocrepis comosa</i>			✓
<b>10</b>	Kidney vetch	<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>			✓
<b>11</b>	Ladies bedstraw	<i>Galium verum</i>	✓	✓	✓
<b>12</b>	Scarlet pimpernel	<i>Lysimachia arvensis</i>	✓		✓
<b>13</b>	Common restharrow	<i>Ononis repens</i>		✓	✓
<b>14</b>	Viper's bugloss	<i>Echium vulgare</i>		✓	✓
<b>15</b>	Agrimony	<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>		✓	✓
<b>16</b>	Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	✓	✓	✓
<b>17</b>	Meadow sweet	<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>			✓
<b>18</b>	Common spotted orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>			✓
<b>19</b>	Pyramidal orchid	<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>		✓	✓