

Tour Report UK – Butterflies & Birds of Sussex 9-11 June 2021

Small blue



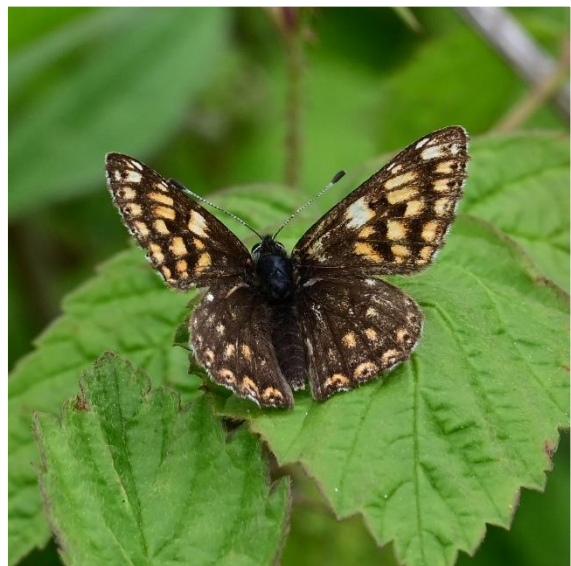
White stork



Sundew with prey



Duke of Burgundy



Compiled by Terry Goble
Images by Terry Goble & David Pitt

This tour was a short break to sample some of the diverse habitats in Sussex. We visited heathland, downland and the 'savannah' like landscapes of Knepp. We were pleased to see the majority of our target species and perhaps the highlights for some were the scarce duke of Burgundy butterflies. Other notable experiences were listening to nightingale's liquid song and the sight and sounds of nightjars churring. We also manage some interesting and exquisite orchids and moths. I'd also like to add that it was a relaxed and knowledgeable group that made the whole experience fun and entertaining.

Day 1: Wednesday 9 June 2021

We all met at the Tollgate Hotel, some had enjoyed a stop at Pulborough RSPB reserve en route and among the sightings was a downy emerald dragonfly. We now started off on the group tour on a glorious afternoon. We decided on a stroll around Knepp Estate. This was a struggling farm that reimagined its future as the UK largest 'rewilding' estate. The lost large herbivores that were drivers of the ecology and habitat were substituted with modern breeds and the results have been spectacular in becoming a stronghold for scarce and declining wildlife.

We drove for 30 minutes around the country lanes of Sussex to the Knepp Estate and embarked on a walk sampling the habitats of the large wilderness. As we set off we met David Plummer, an acclaimed wildlife photographer, who was making a film at the estate. He gave us a site for a little owl that he had been filming, so we headed for this site. On route we came across the first of seven white stork nests. This one contained two well developed chicks and it was great to see these birds now back in the UK and breeding, following a successful re-introduction.

We enjoyed the spectacle and then moved on to the little owl site and had a few glimpses of the owl in flight and slightly better views as it landed on a post. As we moved on we watched a few beautiful demoiselles flitting around a small stream. We also noted a black-tailed skimmer and azure damselflies. We continued around the trail enjoying the mosaic of habitats and animals that have settled here. The highlights included great views of nesting storks, numerous small passerines, both green and great spotted woodpeckers and perhaps most satisfyingly a turtle dove after hearing several purring. The butterfly highlight was lovely sightings of small copper. As we returned to the car the evening was just beginning to cool and we made our way back to the hotel to get ready for dinner.

We all gathered again at the hotel restaurant and chatted and ate in a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere. After dinner there was an option to listen to nightingales at a nearby location, however the long day and walk was enough for some who retired to their rooms. Therefore three of us set off for a ten minute drive to a local mill lane. As we walked along the air was filled with the delightful song of song thrush. After a little while we were rewarded by a familiar staccato burst followed by clear liquid notes of nightingales filling the night sky. We enjoyed at least three singing males, which was a lovely note to finish the evening on.

Day 2: Thursday 10 June 2021

We all gather at 8am on a damp and overcast morning to open the moth trap at a local wild meadow. The cool and damp night may have kept the moth haul modest, but alongside some familiar heart and darts and treble lines there were a few nice species. A small elephant hawk-moth was much appreciated along with ermine, common swift and a light brocade. We had a walk around the meadow looking under the refuges, which harbour many slow worms. The meadow itself had some downland floral species and we added common blue, small heath and a few more moths including mother shipton.

We then had a short drive to Mill Hill, a well-known site for a diverse selection of chalk downland butterflies. The main target was adonis blue and we were successful shortly after arriving. The adonis were lively in the warming conditions, but we had some lovely flight views, appreciating the cobalt blue of their wings. Other butterflies included dingy skipper, common blue and brimstone. Meanwhile, a group member who stayed up on the top of the hill enjoyed finding a species of broomrape. So with the first of the major

targets secured we climbed back into the car and headed for Kithurst Hill, hoping the duke of Burgundy would still be on the wing. First we stopped at a local supermarket to buy our lunches.

We arrived at Kithurst and sat in the car park to eat our lunch. The overcast conditions and slightly cool conditions did not encourage optimism, but we thought we would try for the dukes anyhow as it is a great little site. Near where we parked we found our first orchids of the tour as common spotted orchids were growing near the carpark and all around the reserve. David then came across a number of pristine small blue, these delightful little butterflies had emerged very recently and were clearly enjoying the large amount of kidney vetch growing on the reserve. As the morning turned into the afternoon the temperatures continued to rise slowly and finally we caught sight of a duke of Burgundy! Two of the group were particularly happy as this was a sought after species for them, but enjoyed by all. Another member of the group then found a grizzled skipper, but this butterfly eluded most of us. Other notable sightings included a common clubtail dragonfly and thick-kneed beetles.

We felt that we had exhausted this small reserve and decided to look for scarce orchids at the nearby Fairmile Bottom. This small strip of downland is also an area where the duke of Burgundy is found, but we did not see any on this occasion. However, after an enjoyable walk that included finding a ghost crab spider consuming a large fly (a nervous male also hovered around), we came to some downland fields. After a quick search we came across a number of the fascinating fly orchids. Intriguingly we watched as a parasitic wasp flew on to one of the flowers, possibly mistakenly trying to subdue the flower! A very fresh bee orchid was another gorgeous little flower to add to our list. Now it was time to head back for an early dinner.

After a productive day in the field it was nice to relax and chat over dinner, however there was a little pressure as we wanted to get out to Iping Common before dusk. On this occasion four of us set off to north Sussex to the heathlands. We arrived in good time and walked to a ridge in the hope of spotting roding woodcock. Whilst waiting we heard the first of many churring nightjars and as the evening grew a little darker they began to fly over the heath and at one point over our heads! We chatted excitedly as we headed back having enjoyed a magical spectacle. As we drove out a muntjac was a worrying sight as these small deer can create major problems. We drove back in high spirits and returned to the hotel a little tired but happy to have enjoyed an excellent day.

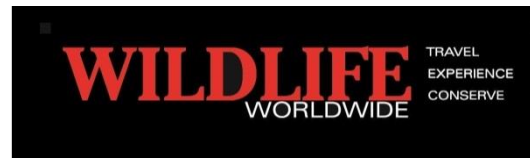
Day 3: Friday 11 June 2021

We met again at 8am and compared the two elephant hawk moths, both in pristine condition. We took a few photographs before releasing them into the hotel garden. This morning we decided to try for small pearl-bordered fritillary at the Park Corner Heath site. The morning was cool, damp and overcast, but the sun was threatening to shine through so we hoped to find this very scarce Sussex butterfly. We searched around the 'hotspot' area of this reserve to no avail, but some consolation was had when one of the group found a cream-spot tiger moth, which is quite spectacular with its startling red, cream and black colouring. We then found the green tiger beetle, which was much more sedate in the cool conditions and so we were able to photograph it. We noted its huge mandibles, which it uses to hunt for ants. A last look for the small pearl-bordered fritillary was again not successful, despite slightly warmer conditions and this time being the peak of their season. This population is the last in Sussex and does seem to be struggling to hold on.

We headed back to the hotel where the tour officially ended and we said our goodbyes in the hotel carpark. It had been a very successful trip, with most target species found. The only complaints seem to be it could have been longer!

P.S Two of the group returned to Iping Common and found that the silver-studded blues like many butterflies this year had still not emerged and were late this year. However they did manage to get great views of the Dartford warbler and tree pipit. Other birds they enjoyed were raven, stonechats and yellowhammer. They also found the scarce sundew plants, one of our few carnivorous plants.

Checklist



	Common Name	Scientific Name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
	BIRDS	<i>AVES</i>			
1	Mute swan	<i>Cygnus color</i>	✓	✓	
2	Canada goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	✓		
3	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓
4	Common pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	✓	✓	✓
5	Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓		
6	Rock dove	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓	✓	✓
7	Wood pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓
8	European turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>	✓		
9	Eurasian collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	✓	✓	✓
10	European nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>		✓	
11	Common swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓	✓	✓
12	Common cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	H		H
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	Black-headed gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓	✓
19	Lesser black-backed gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓	✓	✓
20	Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓	✓	✓
21	Eurasian buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓
22	Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	✓		
23	Green woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	✓	✓	✓



24	Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓	✓	✓
25	Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓
26	Eurasian jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>		✓	✓
27	Eurasian magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓
28	Eurasian jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓
29	Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	✓	✓	✓
30	Common raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>			✓
31	Carrion crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓
32	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	✓	✓	✓
33	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓
34	Tree pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>			✓
35	Pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓
36	Common chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓
37	Eurasian bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	✓		
38	European greenfinch	<i>Chloris chloris</i>	✓		
39	Common linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓	✓	✓
40	Common redpoll	<i>Acanthis flammea</i>			
41	European goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓	✓
42	Corn bunting	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>		H	
43	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			P
44	Blue tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓
45	Great tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓
46	Wood lark	<i>Lullula arborea</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>	H	H	✓
51	Eurasian blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	✓	✓

52	Garden warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>		✓	H
53	Lesser whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i>		H	
54	Common whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	✓	✓	✓
55	Dartford warbler	<i>Curruca undata</i>			✓
56	Eurasian wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	✓	✓	✓
57	Common starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	✓
58	European robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>	✓	✓	✓
59	Common nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	H		
60	European stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>		✓	✓
61	Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	✓	✓	✓
62	Eurasian blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓
	BUTTERFLIES	RHOPALOCERA			
1	Adonis blue	<i>Polyommatus bellargus</i>		✓	
2	Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>		✓	✓
3	Brown argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>		✓	
4	Common blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	✓	✓	✓
5	Dingy skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>		✓	✓
6	Duke of Burgundy	<i>Hamearis lucina</i>		✓	
7	Essex skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>		✓	
8	Green-veined white	<i>Pieris napi</i>	✓	✓	✓
9	Grizzled skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>		✓	
10	Holly blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	✓	✓	
11	Meadow brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>		✓	✓
12	Red admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	✓	✓	✓
13	Small blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>		✓	
14	Small copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	✓		
15	Small heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	✓	✓	✓
16	Speckled wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	✓	✓	✓

	MOTHS (MACROS)	<i>LEPIDOPTERA</i>			
	Geometrid and Others				
1	Common swift	<i>Hepialus lupulinus</i>		✓	✓
2	Lime-speck pug	<i>Eupithecia centaureata</i>		✓	
3	Lattice heath	<i>Chiasmia clathrata clathrata</i>			✓
4	Speckled yellow	<i>Pseudopanthera mancularia</i>	✓	✓	✓
5	Common heath	<i>Ematuga atomaria atomaria</i>			✓
6	Common wave	<i>Cabera pusaria</i>		✓	✓
7	Yellow belle	<i>Semiaspilates ochrearia</i>		✓	
8	Treble bar	<i>Apolcera plagiata plagiata</i>		✓	✓
9	Silver ground carpet	<i>Xanthorhoe decoloraria hethlandica</i>		✓	
10	Elephant hawkmoth	<i>Deilephila elpenor</i>			✓
11	Small elephant hawkmoth	<i>Deilephila porcellus</i>		✓	✓
12	White ermine	<i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i>		✓	
13	Cinnabar	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	✓	✓	
14	Transparent burnet	<i>Zygaena purpuralis</i>		✓	
15	Cream-spot tiger moth	<i>Arctia villica britannica</i>			✓
	NOCTUIDAE				
1	Heart and dart	<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i>		✓	
2	Shears	<i>Hada plebeja</i>		✓	
3	Marbled coronet	<i>Hadena confusa</i>		✓	
4	Hewbrew character	<i>Orthosia gothica</i>		✓	
5	Shuttle-shaped dart	<i>Agrotis puta puta</i>		✓	
6	Common wainscot	<i>Mythimna pallens</i>		✓	
7	Marbled minor	<i>Oligia latruncula</i>		✓	
8	Common rustic	<i>Mesapamea secalis</i>		✓	
9	Treble lines	<i>Charanyca trigrammica</i>		✓	

10	Mother shipton	<i>Callistege mi</i>	✓	✓	
11	Burnet companion	<i>Euclidia glyphica</i>	✓	✓	
	MOTHS (MICROS)				
1	Nettle-tap	<i>Anthophila fabriciana</i>			✓
	DRAGONFLIES	ANISOPTERA			
1	Banded demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	✓		
2	Beautiful demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx virgo</i>	✓	✓	✓
3	Azure damselfly	<i>Coenagrion puella</i>	✓	✓	✓
4	Common blue damselfly	<i>Enallagma cyathigerum</i>	✓		
5	White-legged damselfly	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>		✓	
6	Common Clubtail	<i>Gomphus vulgatissimus</i>		✓	
7	Broad-bodied chaser	<i>Libellula spona</i>	✓	✓	
8	Black-tailed skimmer	<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>	✓	✓	
9	Keeled skimmer	<i>Orthetrum coerulescens</i>			✓
	MAMMALS	MAMMILIA			
1	European rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>	✓		
2	Fallow deer	<i>Dama dama</i>		✓	
3	Muntjac deer	<i>Muntiacus Rafinesque</i>		✓	
4	Roe deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	✓	✓	
	REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS	REPTILIA AND AMPHIBIA			
1	Viviparous lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>		✓	✓
2	Slow worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>		✓	✓
3	Great crested newt	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>		✓	
	PLANTS	PLANTAE			
1	Ragged robin	<i>Lychnis flos-cuculi</i>		✓	
2	Round headed rampion	<i>Phyteuma orbiculare</i>		✓	
3	Devil's bit scabious	<i>Succisa pratensis</i>		✓	

4	Self heal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>		✓	
5	Common knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>		✓	
6	Common ragwort	<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>	✓	✓	
7	Rough hawkbit	<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>	✓	✓	✓
8	Bird's foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	✓	✓	
9	Kidney vetch	<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>		✓	
10	Ladies bedstraw	<i>Galium verum</i>	✓	✓	
11	Scarlet pimpernel	<i>Lysimachia arvensis</i>	✓	✓	
12	Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	✓	✓	✓
13	Common spotted orchid	<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>		✓	✓
14	Bee orchid	<i>Ophrys apifera</i>		✓	
15	Fly Orchid	<i>Ophrys insectifera</i>		✓	
16	Knapweed broomrape	<i>Orobanche eliator</i>		✓	
17	Common Twayblade	<i>Neottia ovata</i>		✓	
18	Sundew	<i>Drosera sp</i>			✓
19	Bell heather	<i>Erica cinerea</i>			✓
20	Cross-leaved heather	<i>Erica tetralix</i>			✓
21	Common ling	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>			✓