

Flora of the Hampshire Downs

Naturetrek Tour Report

10 - 12 June 2011



Fly Orchid



Narrow leaved Marsh Orchid



White Fragrant Orchid

Report and images compiled by Jon Stokes



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Day 1

Friday 10th June

The group arrived at the hotel for dinner, after which we set off on our first outing. As the evening drew in we headed east towards Petersfield seeing a Roe Deer bounding down the road in front of us, before arriving at Coulters Dean Bank. Here Greater Butterfly Orchids were flowering and their faint perfume could be smelt on the damp evening air. Common Spotted Orchids and Wild Columbine were also part of the downs riches. Overhead bats flew and a Robin sang from the bushes but all too soon darkness set in, so we headed back to the hotel and bed.

Day 2

Saturday 11th June

The morning dawned bright and clear and we set off for our first visit of the day. Arriving at a small wet meadow, the first plants to be seen were Southern Marsh and Narrow Leaved Marsh Orchids, but unfortunately the meadow had been cut, so many of the other flowers were not visible. We therefore set off for Odiham Common, stopping briefly to look at a native Black Poplar. These distinctive trees number less than 10,000 throughout the UK, and in Hampshire they are very uncommon. On the common itself there were many Large Skipper butterflies, Small Tortoiseshells and Meadow Browns, plus more meadow flora. However a most interesting part was a large crowd of locals in heated dispute with Natural England over the planned management of the common!

Our next visit was to Noar Hill where the usual rafts of Fragrant and Pyramidal Orchids were present plus Musk Orchids, Fly Orchids and thousands of Common Spotted Orchids. There were also a couple of 'white form' Fragrant Orchids, whose beautiful white flowers stood out from their pink relatives. Turtle Doves cooed in the bushes and Yellowhammers sang their hearts out, whilst Common Blue and Small Blue butterflies darted around at our feet. Other plants of note included the swathes of yellow vetches, the pale yellow Dragon's Teeth plus the darker yellow Common Rockrose. So 'yellow' is the downland flora at this time of year that it sometimes appears only to be the 'pink' orchids which break up the yellow palette plus the dark brown of the strange Knapweed Broomrape.

After a couple of hours wandering around the delightful Noar Hill, we set off for some sandwiches in Petersfield and took them to the top of Butser Hill. The view from here is spectacular and as we ate we looked at the amazing view over southern Hampshire, estimating how long we had before the large rain shower hit us. Deciding we had half an hour we walked to the north side of the hill and looked down into the spectacular coomb below. This amazing bit of chalk country was enhanced by hundreds of Wood Tiger moths whose beautiful orange and black forms were whizzing around, joined by the red and black of Six-spot Burnet moths.

These moths have a very limited distribution and there are only a few sites in Hampshire where they are found. Numbers this year appear to be enormous on Butser Hill paralleling the rise in adult numbers of many butterfly species this year. This appears to stem from the past two winters which have been much colder than winters for the preceding 30 years. Entomologists now think that the cold weather helps control parasites that have been killing the overwintering larvae, ensuring that many species are having an excellent year. As the rain got closer we headed for the car, stopping to look at the beautiful Hound's Tongue before heading south to Portsdown. Here above Portsmouth we were lucky enough to find Field Cow Wheat, one of Britain's rarest plants - this beautiful plant grows amidst Pyramid Orchids and Kidney Vetch and Small Skipper butterflies and Marbled Whites flit around to add to the interest.

Following an ice-cream stop and a look at the magnificent Roman Portchester Castle, Bee Orchids were our next find, plus a look at the contents of a moth trap which yielded White Point plus White and Buff Ermines to name but three. Returning to the top of Portsdown we found Field Pansy, Red Bartsia and Basil Thyme but unfortunately couldn't locate Venus Looking Glass which grows there. Finally we then returned to the hotel for dinner, before retiring for a well earned rest.

Day 3

Sunday 12th June

Sunday dawned wet and cold, but undaunted we set off for our first stop, an ancient yew tree of approximately 3000 to 4000 years in age. This magnificent tree is one of the finest in Britain and is always worth visiting. Next stop a wood where the woodland floor has vast numbers of Birdsnest Orchids and White Helleborines and as usual it didn't disappoint. There were also a few more Fly Orchids for good measure plus a goshawk flew between the Beech canopy and outside the wood a Red Kite soared. Our final morning stop was another wood where there were large numbers of Narrow Leaved Helleborine, Broad Leaved and White Helleborine plus more Fly Orchids.

Lunch in Selborne was followed by our final trip of the weekend to Woolmer Forest but by now the rain had become quite heavy so we spent a short while looking at Narrow Leaved Helleborines which were brought to this heathlands site in chalk ballast when the railway was built. On the heath itself, Biting Stonecrop grew amidst lichens whilst a distant Woodlark called, but eventually the rain got the better of us and we returned to base to end a great weekend on the chalk.

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Species List

PINOPSIDA (GYMNOSPERMS) CONIFERS

Cupressaceae

Juniperus communis

Juniper Family

Juniper

Pinaceae

Larix decidua

Picea abies ssp. *abies*

Pinus sylvestris

Pine Family

European Larch

Spruce

Scot's Pine

Taxaceae

Taxus baccata

Yew Family

Yew

MAGNOLIOPSIDA (ANGIOSPERMS) FLOWERING PLANTS

Aceraceae

Acer pseudoplatanus

Maple Family

Sycamore

Apiaceae (Umbelliferae)

Aegipodium podagaria

Anthriscus sylvestris

Heracleum sphondylium

Sanicula europaea

Carrot Family

Ground Elder

Cow Parsley

Hogweed

Sanicle

Aquifoliaceae

Ilex aquifolia

Holly Family

Holly

Araliaceae

Hedera helix agg

Ivy Family

Ivy

Asteraceae (Compositae)

Achillea millefolium

Bellis perennis

Centaurea nigra

Centaurea scabiosa

Cirsium palustre

Lapsana communis

Leucanthimum vulgare

Matricaria discoidea

Mycelis muralis

Senecio erucifolius

Senecio jacobae

Senecio vulgaris

Sonchus oleraceus

Taraxacum agg

Tragapogon pratensis

Daisy Family

Yarrow

Daisy

Knapweed

Greater Knapweed

Marsh Thistle

Nipplewort

Ox-eye Daisy

Pinapple Weed

Wall Lettuce

Hoary Ragwort

Ragwort

Groudsel

Smooth Sowthistle

Dandelion

Goatsbeard

Betulaceae (Corylaceae)

Betula pendula

Birch Family

Silver Birch

Boraginaceae

Anchusa arvensis

Echium vulgare

Myosotis arvensis

Cynoglossum officinale

Forget-me-not Family

Bugloss

Viper's Bugloss

Field Forget-me-not

Houndstounge

Brassicaceae (Cruciferae)

Alliaria petiolata

Cabbage Family

Garlic Mustard

Arabidopsis thaliana
Capsella bursa-pastoris
Sinapis arvensis

Caprifoliaceae

Lonicera periclymenum
Sambucus nigra
Viburnum lantana
Viburnum opulus

Caryophyllaceae

A. serpyllifolia ssp. *serpyllifolia*
Cerastium fontanum
Gerastium glomeratum
Lychnis flos-cuculi
Silene dioica
Silene latifolia (*S. alba*)
Silene vulgaris

Celastraceae

Euonymus europaeus

Cistaceae

Helianthemum nummularium

Clusiaceae

Hypericum hirsutum
Hypericum perforatum

Convolvulaceae

Calystegia sepium
Convolvulus arvensis

Cornaceae

Cornus sanguinea

Corylaceae

Corylus avellana

Crassulaceae

Sedum acre

Cucurbitaceae

Bryonia dioica

Dipsacaceae

Dipsacus fullonum
Knautia arvensis

Ericaceae

Calluna vulgaris
Erica tetralix

Euphorbiaceae

Euphorbia amygdaloides
Euphorbia peplus
Mercurialis perennis

Fabaceae (Leguminosae)

Anthyllis vulneraria
Hippocrepis comosa

Thale Cress
 Shepherd's Purse
 Charlock

Honeysuckle Family

Honeysuckle
 Elder
 Wayfaring Tree
 Guelder Rose

Pink Family

Thyme-leaved Sandwort
 Common Mouse-ear
 Sticky Mouse-ear
 Ragged Robin
 Red Campion
 White Campion
 Bladder Campion

Spindle-tree Family

Spindle-tree

Rock-rose Family

Common Rockrose

St. John's-wort Family

Hairy St. John's-wort
 Perforate St. John's-wort

Bindweed Family

Hedge Bindweed
 Field Bindweed

Dogwood Family

Dogwood

Hazel Family

Hazel

Stonecrop Family

Biting Stonecrop

Cucumber Family

White Bryony

Teasel Family

Teasel
 Field Scabious

Heath family

Heather
 Bell Heather

Spurge Family

Wood Spurge
 Petty Spurge
 Dog's Mercury

Pea Family

Kidney Vetch
 Horseshoe Vetch

Lathyrus pratensis
Lotus corniculatus
Lotus uliginosa
Medicago arabica
Medicago lupulina
Melilotus altissimus
Ononis repens
Trifolium campestre
Trifolium dubium
Trifolium pratense
Trifolium repens
Vicia cracca
Vicia sativa ssp. *segetalis*
Vicia sepium
Tetragonolobus maritimus

Fagaceae

Carpinus betulus
Fagus sylvatica
Quercus robur

Geraniaceae

Erodium cicutarium
Geranium columbinum
Geranium dissectum
Geranium molle
Geranium robertianum

Lamiaceae (Labiatae)

Clinopodium acinos
Ballota nigra
Clinopodium vulgare
Lamium album
Lamium purpureum
Oregano officinalis
Prunella vulgaris
Stachys sylvatica
Teucrium scorodonium
Thymus polytrichis

Linaceae

Linum catharticum

Oleaceae

Fraxinus excelsior
Ligustrum vulgare

Onagraceae

Chamerion angustifolium
Epilobium hirsutum

Orobanchaceae

Orobanche elatior

Oxalidaceae

Oxalis acetosella

Papaveraceae

Papaver rhoeas

Plantaginaceae

Yellow Vetchling
Bird's-foot Trefoil
Large Bird's-foot Trefoil
Spotted Medick
Black Medick
Ribbed melilot
Restharrow
Hop Trefoil
Lesser Yellow Trefoil
Red Clover
White Clover
Tufted vetch
Common Vetch
Bush Vetch
Dragons teeth

Oak & Beech Family

Hornbeam
Beech
Downy Oak

Geranium Family

Common Stork's-bill
Long-stalked Crane's-bill
Cut-leaved Crane's-bill
Dove's-foot Crane's-bill
Herb Robert

Dead-nettle Family

Basil Thyme
Black Horehound
Wild basil
White Deadnettle
Red Deadnettle
Marjoram
Selfheal
Hedge Woundwort
Wood Sage
Wild Thyme

Flax Family

Purging or Fairy Flax

Olive Family

Ash
Wild Privet

Willowherb Family

Rosebay Willowherb
Hairy Willowherb

Broomrape Family

Knapweed Broomrape

Wood-sorrel Family

Wood-sorrel

Poppy Family

Corn Poppy

Plantain Family

Plantago lanceolata
Plantago majus
Plantago media

Polygalaceae

Polygala serpyllifolia
Polygala vulgaris

Polygonaceae

Rumex acetosa
Rumex crispus
Rumex obtusifolius
Rumex acetosella

Primulaceae

Primula veris

Ranunculaceae

Clematis vitalba
Ranunculus acris
Ranunculus bulbosus
Ranunculus repens

Resedaceae

Reseda lutea
Reseda luteola

Rhamnaceae

Rhamnus catharticus

Rosaceae

Crataegus monogyna
Fragaria vesca
Filipendula ulmaria
Filipendula vulgaris
Geum urbanum
Potentilla anserina
Potentilla erecta
Potentilla reptans
Prunus avium
Prunus spinosa
Rosa canina agg
Rubus caesius
Rubus fruticosus agg
Sanguisorba minor agg
Sorbus aria agg
Sorbus aucuparia

Rubiaceae

Cruciata laevipes
Galium aparine
Galium mollugo
Galium verum
Galium saxatile
Sherardia arvensis

Scrophulariaceae

Cymbalaria muralis
Digitalis purpurea
Melampyrum arvense
Odontites verna

Ribwort Plantain
 Greater Plantain
 Hoary or Lamb's-tail Plantain

Milkwort Family

Heath Milkwort
 Common Milkwort

Knotweed Family

Sorrel
 Curled Dock
 Broad-leaved Dock
 French Sorrel

Primrose Family

Cowslip

Buttercup Family

Old man's-beard
 Meadow Buttercup
 Bulbous Buttercup
 Creeping Buttercup

Mignonette Family

Wild Mignonette
 Weld

Buckthorn Family

Buckthorn

Rose Family

Hawthorn
 Wild Strawberry
 Meadowsweet
 Dropwort
 Wood Avens or Herb Bennet
 Silverweed
 Tormentil
 Creeping Cinquefoil
 Wild Cherry
 Blackthorn
 Dog Rose
 Dewberry
 Bramble
 Salad Burnet
 Whitebeam
 Rowen

Bedstraw Family

Crosswort
 Clevers
 Hedge Bedstraw
 Ladies bedstraw
 Heath Bedstraw
 Field Madder

Figwort Family

Ivy-leaved Toadflax
 Foxglove
 Field Cow-wheat
 Red Bartsia

Rhinanthus minor agg
Scrophularia auriculata
Verbascum nigrum
Veronica chamaedrys
Veronica serpyllifolia

Solanaceae

Solanum dulcamara

Urticaceae

Parietaria judaica
Urtica dioica

Valerianaceae

Centranthus ruber
Valeriana dioica

Verbenaceae

Verbena officinalis

Violaceae

Viola riviniana
Viola arvensis

Liliidae**Araceae**

Arum maculatum

Dioscoreaceae

Tamus communis

Iridaceae

Iris psuedocorus

Liliaceae

Allium ursinum
Allium vineale
Ruscus aculeatus

Orchidaceae

Anacamptis pyramidalis
Platanthera chlorantha
Cephalanthera damasonium
Cephalanthera longifolia
Dactylorhiza fuchsii
Dactylorhiza maculata
Dactylorhiza praetermissa
Dactylorhiza traunsteineri
Epipactis helleborine
Epipactis leptochila
Gymnadenia conopsea
Herminium monorchis
Listera ovata
Neottia nidus-avis
Ophrys apifera
Ophrys insectifera

Hay Rattle
 Water Figwort
 Dark Mullien
 Germander Speedwell
 Thyme-leaved Speedwell

Nightshade Family

Bittersweet

Nettle Family

Pelitory of the Wall
 Common Nettle

Valerian Family

Red Valerian
 Marsh Valerian

Vervain Family

Vervain

Violet Family

Common Dog Violet
 Field pansy

(Monocotyledons)**Arum Family**

Lords and Ladies

Black Bryony Family

Black Bryony

Iris Family

Yellow Flag

Lily Family

Ramsons
 Wild Onion
 Butcher's-broom

Orchid Family

Pyramidal Orchid
 Greater Butterfly-orchid
 White Helleborine
 Narrow-leaved Helleborine
 Common Spotted Orchid
 Heath Spotted Orchid
 Southern Marsh Orchid
 Narrow-leaved Marsh Orchid
 Broad-leaved Helleborine
 Narrow Lipped Helleborine
 Fragrant Orchid
 Musk Orchid
 Twayblade
 Birdsnest Orchid
 Bee Orchid
 Fly Orchid