

Wildlife of the Hampshire Downs

Naturetrek Tour Report

17 - 19 June 2016



Bird's-nest Orchid



Five-spot Burnet



Yew



Field Cow-wheat

Report and images by Jon Stokes



Naturetrek

Mingledown Barn

Wolf's Lane

Chawton

Alton

Hampshire

GU34 3HJ

UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Tour participants: Jon Stokes (leader) with five Naturetrek clients

Summary

Day 1

Friday 17th June

The group met before dinner and we talked about the plans for the weekend, then sat down to a great dinner at our 'new' hotel for this trip. Great food, a lovely atmosphere and a fun group added to a good start to the weekend, topped off by Strawberry and Rhubarb Eton Mess which was truly stunning!

After dinner we set off and travelled a few miles north towards Chawton. Here in a darkening wood, we spotted an almost unique 'albino' White Helleborine, which had no chlorophyll. Found a few weeks earlier by Dave Shute of Naturetrek, this stunning plant was a truly amazing beginning to our weekend.

Then as dark drew in, we stopped at an amazing ancient Yew. This 3000-year-old tree is in an old churchyard, growing next to the much younger Norman church. Completely hollow and a natural work of art, this ancient organism is one of Hampshire's Green Monuments. Viewed by torchlight, in the dark of a near-midsummer night, one of the group confessed to understanding why our ancestors were devoted to the worship of ancient trees like this.

Day 2

Saturday 18th June

Our first stop today was Noar Hill where the orchids were as usual in profusion, comprising thousands of Fragrant Orchids, Common Spotted Orchids, Common Twayblades, Early Purple and Pyramidal Orchids, along with Musk Orchids and Fly Orchids, some of which were stunning albino flowers. We also managed to find Dragons Teeth and some beautiful albino Fragrant Orchids. Noar Hill never fails to impress – it truly is one of the most amazing orchid sites in Britain.

Then we moved on to a small downland on the border with Sussex, where Greater Butterfly Orchid occurs in considerable number amongst Common Spotted Orchids and Fragrant Orchids. Wild Columbine grows on the site and we found our first few Bee Orchids of the day.

Our next stop was on Portsdown Hill in the family garden of the leader, where Pyramid and Common Spotted Orchids abound, but where there was also a cup of tea and a few sandwiches. After this we looked at the rare Spindle Bracket (*Phylloporia ribis*), a fungus growing from the base of an old Spindle tree, plus Wild Asparagus, which grows on the hill. Then we saw the legally protected Field Cow-wheat, growing close to a patch of Bee Orchids, which are a mixture of the normal form and the much rarer variety '*belgarum*'. Another rarity in the same area was a yellow form of Ivy Broomrape. On top of Portsdown an area is being managed in a traditional method for arable weeds of the chalk, and here Rough Poppy and Wild Pansy were abundant; our next stop – a small wet meadow – being equally full of Early Marsh and Southern Marsh Orchids.

Then we stopped at the stunning Butser Hill where Common Spotted Orchids were abundant, with some of the Early Purple Orchids still in full bloom. One amazing wildlife sighting on the Down was a pair of Hobbies which were sweeping low over the grass catching the large, fat-bodied and uncommon Five Spot Burnet moths.

This was an amazing sight as Hobbies aren't usually found on the Downs, but poor weather must have pushed them to feed on a sub-optimal food source. Shame it was a rare moth – which is even rarer now as the Hobbies were efficient predators!

Finally we returned to our hotel for dinner and a catch-up on an excellent day on the Downs with 13 orchid species for our troubles.

Day 3

Sunday 19th June

Our first stop of the day was Hawkley Churchyard where three, 1200-year-old Yew trees grow in a slight curve, each on a small mound of earth, suggesting to the leader a circular Yew grove which may have been planted in the 8th Century. They are amazing trees, and not ones the leader had seen before. A great start to the morning.

Then we moved on to Shortheath Common for a look at something completely different. At the northern edge of the chalk, just a few miles from our hotel, the chalk runs onto the Surrey heaths. Here small pockets of heathland still exist and Shortheath is a good example of this, where Birch trees grow over heathland; Heath Spotted and Common Spotted Orchids were growing here. Amongst the heather, a super fungus called Tawny Grizette was fruiting and red topped Soldier Lichens were visible. Around us Field Crickets called – a species now restricted to a few sites in Britain – and dragon and damselflies shot around over the pond.

Our next stop was a mixed woodland on the downs where Sword-leaved Helleborines, White Helleborines, Fly Orchids and Bird's-nest Orchids were still just in flower, whilst the Broad-leaved Helleborine was still in development. There were also a couple of the extremely rare hybrids between the Sword-leaved and White Helleborines. These special plants show the vigour that occurs with hybridisation, being nearly twice the height of either of the parent plants.

We had lunch on Beacon Hill, where there were large numbers of Greater Butterfly and Common Spotted Orchids and this downland is also covered in Rock-rose, Wild Mignonette and huge quantities of vetches. Travelling on to our next stop, we stopped briefly in a beautiful meadow which has Green-winged Orchid which had just finished flowering, before we visited a small but unique woodland where Whitebeam and Rowan trees grow in proximity to the much rarer Wild Service trees. The effect of these three species living in close proximity, in this ecologically isolated spot, has been hybridisation between these trees. One hybrid is a Wild Service x Whitebeam where the only other known trees, apart from this small woodland, are in the Wye Valley. Another cross that has occurred here is a probable hybrid between Wild Service x Rowan.

So that concluded our weekend and, after the short trip back to the hotel, we went on our separate ways, but knew that we had seen some of Hampshire's finest wildlife, including 17 species of orchid.

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Species Lists

Plants

Scientific Name	Common Name
PINOPSIDA (GYMNOSPERMS)	CONIFERS
Cupressaceae	Juniper Family
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Juniper
Pinaceae	Pine Family
<i>Larix decidua</i>	European Larch
<i>Picea abies</i> subsp. <i>abies</i>	Norway Spruce
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Scot's Pine
Taxaceae	Yew Family
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Yew
MAGNOLIOPSIDA (ANGIOSPERMS)	FLOWERING PLANTS
Aceraceae	Maple Family
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
Apiaceae (Umbelliferae)	Carrot Family
<i>Aegipodium podagaria</i>	Ground Elder
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Sanicula europaea</i>	Sanicle
Aquifoliaceae	Holly Family
<i>Ilex aquifolia</i>	Holly
Araliaceae	Ivy Family
<i>Hedera helix</i> agg.	Ivy
Asteraceae (Compositae)	Daisy Family
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Knapweed
<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>	Greater Knapweed
<i>Cirsium palustre</i>	Marsh Thistle
<i>Lapsana communis</i>	Nipplewort
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Ox-eye Daisy
<i>Matricaria discoidea</i>	Pineapple Weed
<i>Mycelis muralis</i>	Wall Lettuce
<i>Senecio erucifolius</i>	Hoary Ragwort
<i>Senecio jacobea</i>	Ragwort
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>	Groundsel
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Smooth Sowthistle
<i>Taraxacum</i> agg.	Dandelion
<i>Tragopogon pratensis</i>	Goat's-beard

Scientific Name	Common Name
Betulaceae (Corylaceae) <i>Betula pendula</i>	Birch Family Silver Birch
Boraginaceae <i>Anchusa arvensis</i> <i>Echium vulgare</i> <i>Myosotis arvensis</i>	Forget-me-not Family Bugloss Viper's Bugloss Field Forget-me-not
Brassicaceae (Cruciferae) <i>Alliaria petiolata</i> <i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i> <i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i> <i>Sinapis arvensis</i>	Cabbage Family Garlic Mustard Thale Cress Shepherd's Purse Charlock
Caprifoliaceae <i>Lonicera periclymenum</i> <i>Sambucus nigra</i> <i>Viburnum lantana</i> <i>Viburnum opulus</i>	Honeysuckle Family Honeysuckle Elder Wayfaring Tree Guelder Rose
Caryophyllaceae <i>A. serpyllifolia</i> subsp. <i>serpyllifolia</i> <i>Cerastium fontanum</i> <i>Cerastium glomeratum</i> <i>Silene dioica</i> <i>Silene (Lychnis) flos-cuculi</i> <i>Silene latifolia (S. alba)</i> <i>Silene vulgaris</i>	Pink Family Thyme-leaved Sandwort Common Mouse-ear Sticky Mouse-ear Red Campion Ragged Robin White Campion Bladder Campion
Celastraceae <i>Euonymus europaeus</i>	Spindle-tree Family Spindle-tree
Cistaceae <i>Helianthemum nummularium</i>	Rock-rose Family Common Rock-rose
Clusiaceae <i>Hypericum hirsutum</i> <i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	St. John's-wort Family Hairy St. John's-wort Perforate St. John's-wort
Convolvulaceae <i>Calystegia sepium</i> <i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Bindweed Family Hedge Bindweed Field Bindweed
Cornaceae <i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	Dogwood Family Dogwood
Corylaceae <i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel Family Hazel
Crassulaceae <i>Sedum acre</i>	Stonecrop Family Biting Stonecrop

Scientific Name	Common Name
Cucurbitaceae <i>Bryonia dioica</i>	Cucumber Family White Bryony
Dipsacaceae <i>Dipsacus fullonum</i> <i>Knautia arvensis</i>	Teasel Family Teasel Field Scabious
Ericaceae <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> <i>Erica tetralix</i>	Heath family Heather Bell Heather
Euphorbiaceae <i>Euphorbia amygdaloides</i> <i>Euphorbia exigua</i> <i>Euphorbia peplus</i> <i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Spurge Family Wood Spurge Dwarf Spurge Petty Spurge Dog's Mercury
Fabaceae (Leguminosae) <i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i> <i>Hippocrepis comosa</i> <i>Lathyrus pratensis</i> <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> <i>Lotus (Tetragonolobus) maritimus</i> <i>Lotus pedunculatus (uliginosus)</i> <i>Medicago arabica</i> <i>Medicago lupulina</i> <i>Melilotus altissimus</i> <i>Ononis repens</i> <i>Trifolium campestre</i> <i>Trifolium dubium</i> <i>Trifolium pratense</i> <i>Trifolium repens</i> <i>Vicia cracca</i> <i>Vicia sativa</i> subsp. <i>segetalis</i> <i>Vicia sepium</i>	Pea Family Kidney Vetch Horseshoe Vetch Yellow Vetchling Bird's-foot Trefoil Dragon's Teeth 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
Fagaceae <i>Carpinus betulus</i> <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> <i>Quercus robur</i>	Oak & Beech Family Hornbeam Beech English Oak
Geraniaceae <i>Erodium cicutarium</i> <i>Geranium columbinum</i> <i>Geranium dissectum</i> <i>Geranium molle</i> <i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Geranium Family Common Stork's-bill Long-stalked Crane's-bill Cut-leaved Crane's-bill Dove's-foot Crane's-bill Herb Robert
Lamiaceae (Labiatae) <i>Ballota nigra</i> <i>Clinopodium acinos</i> <i>Clinopodium vulgare</i> <i>Lamium album</i>	Dead-nettle Family Black Horehound Basil Thyme Wild Basil White Deadnettle

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Lamium purpureum</i>	Red Deadnettle
<i>Oregano officinalis</i>	Marjoram
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Selfheal
<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	Hedge Woundwort
<i>Teucrium scorodonium</i>	Wood Sage
<i>Thymus polytrichus</i>	Wild Thyme
Linaceae	Flax Family
<i>Linum catharticum</i>	Purging or Fairy Flax
Oleaceae	Olive Family
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	Wild Privet
Onagraceae	Willowherb Family
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Rosebay Willowherb
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Hairy Willowherb
Orobanchaceae	Broomrape Family
<i>Orobanche elatior</i>	Knapweed Broomrape
<i>Orobanche hederaceae</i>	Ivy Broomrape
Oxalidaceae	Wood-sorrel Family
<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>	Wood-sorrel
Papaveraceae	Poppy Family
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Corn Poppy
<i>Pavaver hybridum</i>	Rough Poppy
Plantaginaceae	Plantain Family
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater Plantain
<i>Plantago media</i>	Hoary or Lamb's-tail Plantain
Polygalaceae	Milkwort Family
<i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i>	Heath Milkwort
<i>Polygala vulgaris</i>	Common Milkwort
Polygonaceae	Knotweed Family
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Sorrel
<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	French Sorrel
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Curled Dock
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock
Primulaceae	Primrose Family
<i>Primula veris</i>	Cowslip
Ranunculaceae	Buttercup Family
<i>Aquilegia vulgaris</i>	Columbine
<i>Clematis vitalba</i>	Old-man's-beard
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup
<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	Bulbous Buttercup
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup

Scientific Name	Common Name
Resedaceae	Mignonette Family
<i>Reseda lutea</i>	Wild Mignonette
<i>Reseda luteola</i>	Weld
Rhamnaceae	Buckthorn Family
<i>Rhamnus catharticus</i>	Buckthorn
Rosaceae	Rose Family
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Wild Strawberry
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Meadowsweet
<i>Filipendula vulgaris</i>	Dropwort
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood Avens or Herb Bennet
<i>Potentilla anserina</i>	Silverweed
<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	Tormentil
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Creeping Cinquefoil
<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild Cherry
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn
<i>Rosa canina</i> agg.	Dog Rose
<i>Rubus caesius</i>	Dewberry
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble
<i>Sanguisorba minor</i> agg.	Salad Burnet
<i>Sorbus aria</i> agg.	Whitebeam
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan
<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>	Wild Service Tree
Rubiaceae	Bedstraw Family
<i>Cruciata laevipes</i>	Crosswort
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers
<i>Galium mollugo</i>	Hedge Bedstraw
<i>Galium saxatile</i>	Heath Bedstraw
<i>Galium verum</i>	Lady's Bedstraw
<i>Sheradia arvensis</i>	Field Madder
Scrophulariaceae	Figwort Family
<i>Chaenorhinum minus</i>	Small Toadflax
<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>	Ivy-leaved Toadflax
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Foxglove
<i>Melampyrum arvense</i>	Field Cow-wheat
<i>Odontites verna</i>	Red Bartsia
<i>Rhinanthus minor</i> agg.	Yellow Rattle
<i>Scrophularia auriculata</i>	Water Figwort
<i>Verbascum nigrum</i>	Dark Mullein
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander Speedwell
<i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i>	Thyme-leaved Speedwell
Solanaceae	Nightshade Family
<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Bittersweet
Urticaceae	Nettle Family
<i>Parietaria judaica</i>	Pelitory of the Wall
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle

Scientific Name	Common Name
Valerianaceae	Valerian Family
<i>Centranthus ruber</i>	Red Valerian
<i>Valeriana dioica</i>	Marsh Valerian
Verbenaceae	Vervain Family
<i>Verbena officinalis</i>	Vervain
Violaceae	Violet Family
<i>Viola arvensis</i>	Field Pansy
<i>Viola riviniana</i>	Common Dog Violet
Liliidae	(Monocotyledons)
Araceae	Arum Family
<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Lords-and-Ladies
Asparagaceae	Asparagus Family
<i>Asparagus officinalis</i>	Wild Asparagus
Dioscoreaceae	Black Bryony Family
<i>Tamus communis</i>	Black Bryony
Iridaceae	Iris Family
<i>Iris psuedacorus</i>	Yellow Flag
Liliaceae	Lily Family
<i>Allium ursinum</i>	Ramsons
<i>Allium vineale</i>	Wild Onion
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	Butcher's-broom
Orchidaceae	Orchid Family
<i>Anacamptis morio</i>	Green-winged orchid
<i>Anacamptis pyramidalis</i>	Pyramidal Orchid
<i>Cephalanthera damasonium</i>	White Helleborine
<i>Cephalanthera longifolia</i>	Narrow-leaved Helleborine
<i>Dactylorhiza fuchsii</i>	Common Spotted Orchid
<i>Dactylorhiza praetermissa</i>	Southern Marsh Orchid
<i>Dactylorhiza incanata</i>	Early Marsh Orchid
<i>Dactylorhiza maculata</i>	Heath Spotted Orchid
<i>Epipactis helleborine</i>	Broad-leaved Helleborine
<i>Gymnadenia conopsea</i>	Fragrant Orchid
<i>Herminium monorchis</i>	Musk Orchid
<i>Neottia (Listera) ovata</i>	Twayblade
<i>Neottia nidus-avis</i>	Bird's-nest Orchid
<i>Ophrys apifera</i>	Bee Orchid
<i>Ophrys insectifera</i>	Fly Orchid
<i>Orchis mascula</i>	Early Purple Orchid
<i>Platanthera chlorantha</i>	Greater Butterfly Orchid

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Greater Butterfly Orchid



Ivy Broomrape