

Sussex – Late Summer Butterflies

Naturetrek Tour Report

11th – 14th August 2025



Male Common Blue



Male White-legged Damselfly



Silver-spotted Skipper



Female Brown Hairstreak

Tour report and photos by Bob Eade



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: Bob Eade (leader) with six Naturetrek clients.

Day 1

Monday 11th August

An afternoon stroll along the River Cuckmere, to get our tour off to an early start, was excellent for everyone to get to know each other.

With the latest heatwave to hit us, we were pleased to find a bit of a breeze blowing when we got to the river. However, many insects were taking shelter from the heat, and that resulted in only a few species being seen.

On the odonata front, we quickly picked up the White-legged Damselfly, with several seen of both sexes. We were also lucky to spot a newly emerged female Willow Emerald that was happy to sit still for us all to admire her.

As far as butterflies went, it was good to get a Small Copper straight away, as this species can at times be a little tricky. We also saw the more common and usual species such as Small Heath, Common Blue, Gatekeeper and of course, Meadow Brown. All three of the usual white species were also seen along with three Wall Brown. Also seen in the mass of nettles were large quantities of Peacock larvae.

Finally, a female Banded Demoiselle was seen just before we got back to the van.

The group then met in the lounge to hear the plans for the tour. With the heatwave expected to continue throughout the tour, plans were to try to get going before the heat builds up too much. With two trips planned for West Sussex and one local trip we had high hopes for lots of great sightings, despite the early butterfly year meaning some species have finished their flight season early. Plans were then followed by a superb meal in the Wingrove restaurant.

Day 2

Tuesday 12th August

The day started with a drive of just under an hour to the first destination near Storrington - a gorgeous meadow full of wildflowers, which really attract the butterflies. Plenty of species were seen here including notable species such as Chalkhill Blue, Brown Argus, Small Copper and Brimstone. We also had a couple of surprising fritillaries in the form of a Silver-washed and Dark Green.

Following this, we headed to one of the best Brown Hairstreak sites in Sussex, at Steyning. As this species can be very elusive, we expected to have to wait some time for a sighting. However, the first Brown Hairstreak was spotted almost immediately, with another straight after. The second one stayed in view for several minutes before she vanished deeper into the Blackthorn, as she searched for egg laying sites.

It was then only 10 minutes later before we saw another two females further around the extensive Blackthorn bushes. One of these was in very good condition, and performed extremely well for us, allowing many photographs to be taken. In the end, we saw seven of these gorgeous butterflies.

Our next stop was a well-known site for Adonis Blue. A recce that the leader did a week before was not very promising, but since then, many Adonis Blues have emerged and the sight of so many flying was a delight to see.

We also saw at least four Clouded Yellows, which included a mating pair. It was also good to see many Autumn Lady's Tresses appearing on the hillside.

Day 3

Wednesday 13th August

Despite the good forecast, we awoke to find dull gloomy conditions. We decided to head over to Lancing, where the only Sussex Long-tailed Blue this year had turned up for a brief visit over the past weekend. Although the butterfly hadn't been seen again, it was worth a look just in case. However, when we arrived at the site, the weather hadn't improved. A slow walk around the area produced a few Meadow Brown, Green-veined White and Gatekeeper as well as two wonderful Wasp Spiders. As we slowly started to walk further up the hill the rain started and looked as though it was set in, so we retreated to the van.

After checking the forecast, that had now changed, it was decided to head further inland where the sun should be shining soon, and with luck the Wood White would still be flying. With such an early season, this was a bit of a gamble, as there was a big chance that they would have finished by now. However, it wasn't worth staying near the coast so we headed north.

On arrival at the woodland the weather was still far from perfect, but much better than we had left behind. A few Speckled Wood and Holly Blue gave us some hope, but it was sometime later before we stumbled upon the first of six Wood White. These delightful dainty butterflies certainly saved the day, and was a new butterfly for most of the group. We even witnessed the famous courtship display of this species, as well as a female looking for egg laying sites.

The weather then deteriorated further with thunder heard in the distance, so we headed back south, with a possible stop if the weather allowed, nearer to the hotel. Rain however started yet again, so we headed back to the hotel for some relaxation.

Day 4

Thursday 14th August

The day started with the amazing spectacle of 138 Jersey Tiger Moths in the moth trap at the leader's home. Other moth highlights were a Wax Moth, (the first for the garden), Portland Riband Wave, Dark Sword Grass and Marbled Green.

We then walked around the Marbled Meadow, a meadow where the leader advises on the management. Here, many Common Blue and Brown Argus were seen.

We did a quick stop at one of the local Long-tailed Blue spots, just in case one had turned up on the mass of Broad-leaved Everlasting Pea, but alas there has still only been the one sighting in Sussex so far this year.

Our main target of the day was the lovely Silver-spotted Skipper. This species has had another terrible year locally, but fortunately, a 30-minute drive brought us to a Sussex Wildlife Trust reserve near Lewes, where the species has had a bit of a recovery. We were delighted to see several of these fast-flying butterflies. We also had bonuses of both Small and Essex Skipper and a very fresh Adonis Blue. Chalk Hill Blues were also very prominent here.

It was then time to return to the hotel and say goodbye. With 25 species of butterfly seen over the four days, the main star certainly being the Brown Hairstreaks that showed so well for us.



Female Wood White

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek email list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers.

naturetrek.co.uk/e-newsletter-signup

Scan to
sign up!



Social Media

We're social! Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, Bluesky and X and be the first to hear about the launch of new tours, offers, exciting sightings and photos from our recently returned holidays.



[instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays](https://www.instagram.com/naturetrek_wildlife_holidays)



[facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays](https://www.facebook.com/naturetrekwildlifeholidays)



[naturetrek.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/naturetrek.social)



x.com/naturetrektours (formerly Twitter)

Species lists

Butterflies and Moths

Common name	Scientific name	August 2025			
		11	12	13	14
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>		✓	✓	
Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Green-veined White	<i>Pieris napi</i>	✓	✓	✓	
Wood White	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>			✓	
Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias croceus</i>		✓		
Brown Hairstreak	<i>Thecla betulae</i>		✓		
Small Copper	<i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>	✓	✓		✓
Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>		✓		✓
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	✓	✓		✓
Chalk Hill Blue	<i>Polyommatus coridon</i>		✓		✓
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>		✓	✓	
Adonis Blue	<i>Polyommatus bellargus</i>		✓		✓
Peacock	<i>Aglais io</i>	larvae			
Comma	<i>Polygonia c-album</i>	✓	✓		
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>		✓	✓	
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>		✓	✓	
Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	✓			✓
Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gatekeeper	<i>Pyronia tithonus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>		✓		✓
Silver-washed Fritillary	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>		✓		
Dark Green Fritillary	<i>Speyeria aglaja</i>		✓		
Silver-spotted Skipper	<i>Hesperia comma</i>				✓
Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>				✓
Essex Skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>				✓
Moths					
Brimstone Moth	<i>Opisthagraptis luteolata</i>			✓	
Hummingbird Hawk-moth	<i>Macroglossum stellatarum</i>		✓		✓
Jersey Tiger	<i>Euplagia quadripunctaria</i>			✓	✓
Swallow Prominent	<i>Pheosia tremula</i>				✓
Rhubarb and Custard	<i>Oncocera semirubella</i>				✓
Toadflax Brocade larvae	<i>Calophasia lunula</i>				✓
Portland Riband Wave	<i>Idaea degeneraria</i>				✓
Marbled Green	<i>Nyctobrya muralis</i>				✓
Wax Moth	<i>Galleria mellonella</i>				✓
Pale Mottled Willow	<i>Caradrina clavipalpis</i>				✓
White-point	<i>Mythimna albipuncta</i>				✓
Rosy Minor	<i>Litiligia literosa</i>				✓
Yellow-barred Brindle	<i>Acasis viretta</i>				✓
Shuttle-shaped Dart	<i>Agrotis puta</i>				✓
Cabbage Moth	<i>Mamestra brassicae</i>				✓
Lime-speck Pug	<i>Eupithecia centaureata</i>				✓
Willow Beauty	<i>Peribatodes rhomboidaria</i>				✓
Swallow Prominent	<i>Pheosia tremula</i>				✓
The Fern	<i>Horisme tersata</i>				✓
Nut-tree Tussock	<i>Colocasia coryli</i>				✓

Common name	Scientific name	August 2025			
		11	12	13	14
Rush Veneer	<i>Nomophila noctuella</i>				✓
Angle Shades	<i>Phlogophora meticulosa</i>				✓
Common Wainscot	<i>Mythimna pallens</i>				✓
Setaceous Hebrew Character	<i>Xestia c-nigrum</i>				✓
Hebrew Character	<i>Orthosia gothica</i>				✓
Dark Sword Grass	<i>Agrotis ipsilon</i>				✓
Heart and Dart	<i>Agrotis exclamationis</i>				✓
The Spectacle	<i>Abrostola tripartita</i>				✓

Birds (H = Heard only)

Common name	Scientific name	August 2025			
		11	12	13	14
Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>			✓	
Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>			✓	
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>		✓		✓
Eurasian Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>				✓
Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>		✓		✓
European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>		✓		✓
Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			✓	✓
Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>		✓	✓	✓
European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>		✓		
Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			✓	
Eurasian Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>		✓	✓	✓
Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>		✓	✓	✓
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>		✓	✓	
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>				✓
Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>				✓
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>		✓	✓	✓
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>		✓	✓	
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	✓			
Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	✓			
Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>			✓	
Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i>	Y			✓
Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>			H	
Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		✓	✓	
Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>		✓	✓	✓
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>				✓
European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓	✓
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>				✓
Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓
European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	✓	✓		✓
Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		✓		✓
Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>		✓	H	H
Common Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>			✓	
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>		✓		

Damselflies & dragonflies

Common name	Scientific name	August 2025			
		11	12	13	14
Migrant Hawker	<i>Aeshna mixta</i>		✓	✓	
Southern Hawker	<i>Aeshna cyanea</i>				✓
Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>				✓
Willow Emerald Damselfly	<i>Chalcolestes viridis</i>	✓			
White-legged Damselfly	<i>Platycnemis pennipes</i>	✓			
Banded Demoiselle	<i>Calopteryx splendens</i>	✓			

Mammals

Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) seen on 14th August

Reptiles & amphibians

Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) seen on 12th and 14th August

Others

Wasp Spider (*Argiope bruennichi*) seen on 13th August

Autumn Lady's Tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*) seen on 12th August