

Sussex Butterflies: Duke of Burgundy & Pearl-bordered Fritillary

14th May 2024
Led by Terry Goble



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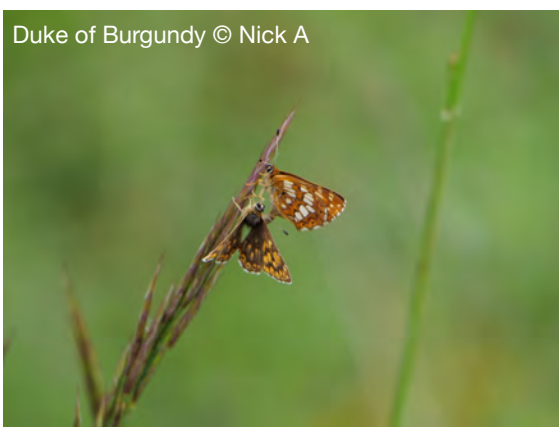
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Ten guests met Terry at 9:30am at the train station with all but one of the group waiting there. We picked up the last member of the group from Erringham Road a few minutes later. It had been a wet night and early morning, but the rain had started to ease and glimpses of blue sky gave hope to the chances of seeing the rare spring butterflies of Sussex.

We then drove over to our first site of the day beyond Storrington. We arrived and the skies were still leaden grey and it was not looking promising. We decided to release the overnight moth haul from a local light trap. There were three different Hawkmoths, Lime, Poplar and Eyed. Among the other highlights were a Chinese Character, Great Prominent, Scorched Wing and Alder Kitten and a variety of other more common moths. After taking a few photos of the offerings we headed to the

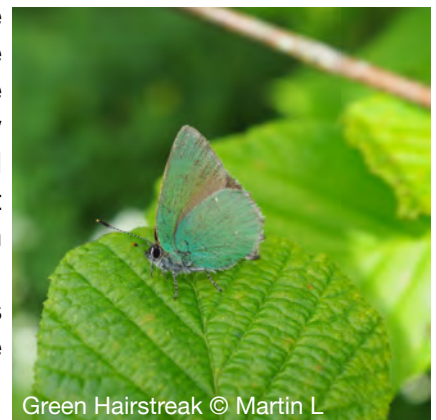


Duke of Burgundy © Nick A

tiny local reserve in the hope the sun would pierce through and warm the morning to encourage the butterflies.

It remained variable but it was warm enough to get the butterflies active and very soon we found a female Duke of Burgundy, the UK's only metalmark butterfly and now increasingly scarce on the South Downs. A while later we found a few more and a few of the group were able to witness the male's courtship flight as it 'marionetted' around a static female.

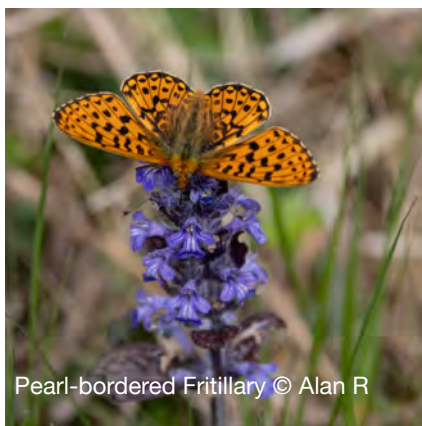
Butterfly sightings came steadily, but not in any great number. A single Green Hairstreak was located perched on a Hazel shrub. Everyone was able to view the butterfly and a few managed a photograph or two. For one of the group it was their first Green Hairstreak in 30 years as they now live abroad. We added a few other butterflies to our list as we saw a few Dingy Skippers and a single Grizzled Skipper. Others included Red Admiral and Common Blue. Other sightings included Burnet Companion, Cinnabar Moth and our only orchid, the Common Twayblade. From the woodland we could hear Blackcaps, Blackbirds, Robins, Song Thrush, Chiffchaff and Garden Warblers singing. Overhead a few Common Buzzards glided and a Red Kite was seen earlier on route.



Green Hairstreak © Martin L

We were ready to move on after a very successful and enjoyable morning, particularly as there were concerns about the weather and temperatures. As we left there was an odd sighting of two White Storks, probably from the breeding colony at the nearby Knepp Estate. We next headed to a nearby shopping complex to purchase our lunches and to use the facilities. We stayed for just about half an hour before we set off again, heading towards our next stop.

We managed to park quite easily at the reserve, which is a SSSI, and as we entered the unusually high volume of rain was very apparent. The track that is often dry and dusty at this time of year was like a swamp and it was a squelchy walk through to the path to the 'plateau'. Winding through this path we can often find Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and frequently see Green Tiger Beetles. On this occasion we saw very little apart from abundant Speckled Yellow Moths.



Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Alan R

When we arrived on the 'plateau' there seemed to be little activity. After a few minutes searching there didn't appear to be any on the wing and I feared the weather and timing may combine to thwart our attempts to find these delightful butterflies. However, a cry of 'there's one' was a relief and soon we found one or two pristine Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, a very welcome sight. These however, were very flittish despite the cool conditions. Eventually a male perched and basked for a few minutes in the weak spring sunshine and we finally all managed excellent views of these pristine butterflies that had only recently emerged.

In addition to the attraction of the rare Pearl-bordered Fritillaries there were a few other moths and insects to enjoy. We saw Mother Shipton and Broad-bodied Chaser dragonflies and a lovely couple of reptiles such as Common Lizard and a magnificent black melanistic Adder were found. Happy with our sightings it was now time to move on as the sun finally became a little stronger and the cool day a little warmer.

We decided to end the day at a typical downland site north of Shoreham. On route we dropped off a couple of the group who wanted to catch their trains home. We said our 'goodbyes' and thanked them for joining us as they went on their way. The remaining members of the group headed for the steep slopes of our final stop.



Adder © Terry Goble

The sun was now out in force and the south facing slopes of the hill were now very warm. We saw a number of Dingy Skippers and a few very fresh Grizzled Skippers. A few Small Heaths, Brimstones and Common Blues were added to our sightings and another more usual coloured Adder was seen.

As it was now approaching 5pm it was time to drift back to the minibus. We all traversed the steep slopes back to the car park and were soon on our way to the train station. We arrived back just after 5pm and said our 'goodbyes' after a very successful day trip in what looked to be difficult conditions, but finished on a warm sunny note.

Systematic Species List

Butterflies:

Orange Tip	<i>Anthocharis cardamines</i>	
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	
Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>	
Holly Blue	<i>Celastrina argiolus</i>	
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	
Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>	
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>	
Duke of Burgundy	<i>Hamearis lucina</i>	
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>	
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	
Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>	
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	☆caterpillar as well as imago

Birds (🎵 denotes heard only):

Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	
White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	
Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	
Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>	
Eurasian Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>	
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	
Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	🎵
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	🎵
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	🎵
Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	🎵
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	

Reptiles:

Slow Worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>
Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>
Viviparous Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>

Moths:

Mother Shipton	<i>Callistege mi</i>
Pale Tussock	<i>Calliteara pudibunda</i>
Yellow Shell	<i>Camptogramma bilineata bilineata</i>
Puss Moth	<i>Cerura vinula</i>
Orange Footman	<i>Eilema sororcula</i>
Common Carpet	<i>Epirrhoe alternata</i>
Burnet Companion	<i>Euclidia glyphica</i>
Alder Kitten	<i>Furcula furcula</i>
Poplar Hawk Moth	<i>Laothoe populi</i>
Lime Hawk Moth	<i>Mimas tiliae</i>
Brimstone	<i>Opisthograptis luteolata</i>
Great Prominent	<i>Peridea anceps</i>
Buff-tip	<i>Phalera bucephala</i>
Swallow Prominent	<i>Pheosia tremula</i>
Scorched Wing	<i>Plagodis dolabraria</i>
Speckled Yellow	<i>Pseudopanthera macularia</i>
Eyed Hawk Moth	<i>Smerinthus ocellata</i>
Silver-ground Carpet	<i>Xanthorhoe montana montana</i>

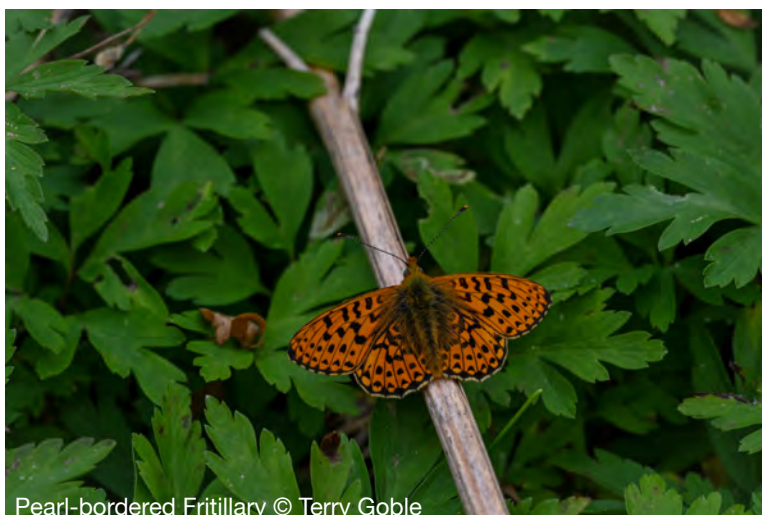
Other Invertebrates:

Red-tailed Bumble bee	<i>Bombus lapidarius</i>
Common Carder Bee	<i>Bombus pascuorum</i>
Buff-tailed Bumblebee	<i>Bombus terrestris</i>
Broad-bodied Chaser	<i>Libellula depressa</i>

Scorpion Fly
Dark Bush Cricket (Nymphs)
Flesh Fly

Panorpa communis
Pholidoptera griseoaptera
Sarcophaga carnaria

Photo Gallery





Grizzled Skipper © Alan R



Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Martin L



Duke of Burgundy © Alan R



Common Twayblade © Terry Goble



Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Alan R



Green Hairstreak © Nick A



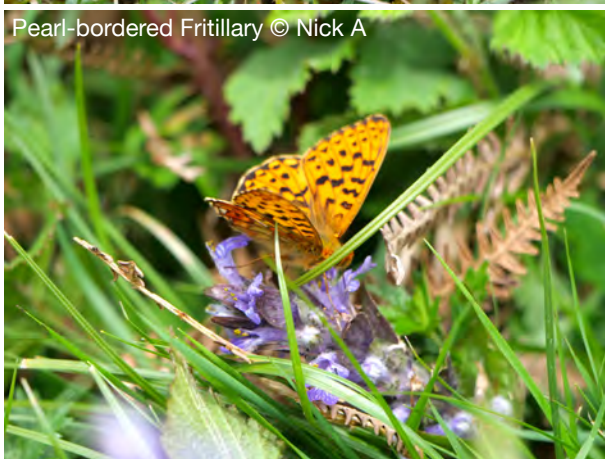
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Dingy Skipper © Nick A



Duke of Burgundy © Nick A

Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Nick A



Green Hairstreak © Alan R



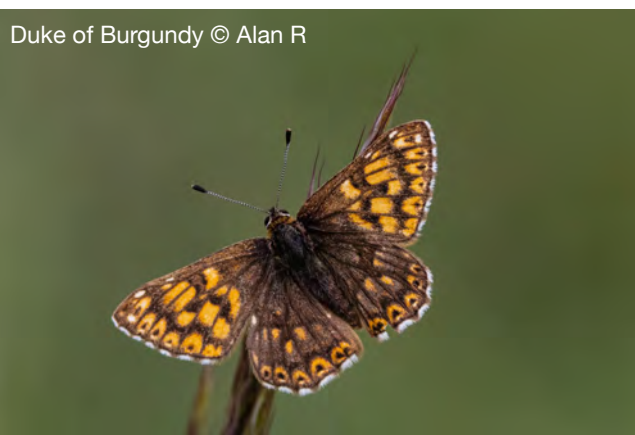
Duke of Burgundy © Terry Goble



Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Nick A



Flesh Fly © Nick A



Duke of Burgundy © Alan R

