

Duke of Burgundy & Pearl-bordered Fritillary Day Trip

8th May 2025
Led by Terry Goble



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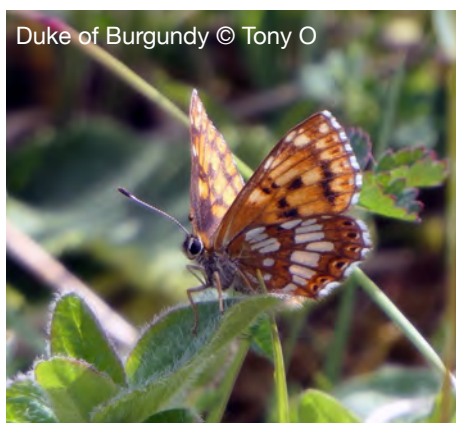
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We met at 9:00am at the train station with all but one of the group waiting there. We picked up the last member of the group from Erringham Road a few minutes later. It had been a cool early morning, with a northerly breeze, bringing a chill to the air. There were glimpses of blue sky, despite being overcast and it appeared to become increasingly brighter as we set off to our first location beyond Storrington.

It is a lovely, but very small reserve that has been very well managed to ensure the population of the Duke of Burgundy continues to thrive. The yellow sea of cowslips were testimony to this among the diverse sward that makes up this delightful downland reserve. We arrived and the skies were still overcast, but looking increasingly bright and blue. The cool northerly breeze was a little stiffer on top of the downs and it was keeping the temperatures down to a little over 12°C. This ensured the morning was slow to get going but steadily produced butterflies, with the additional bonus that the cool temperatures ensured the butterflies were less active and easier to photograph.



Duke of Burgundy © Tony O

It remained variable but it was warm enough to get the butterflies moving and very soon we found a Grizzled Skipper and then 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 the group were able to see both the male and females together.

Butterfly sightings came steadily, but not in any great number. A pair of Green Hairstreaks were spiralling in a courtship flight dance and we had to be patient to wait for them to land and give amazing views of these handsome vivid green butterflies, perched on a Hazel shrub. Everyone was able to view the butterfly and a few managed a photograph or two. A basking Common Lizard was a sign that the day was finally beginning to warm up more.

We added a few other butterflies to our list as we saw a few Dingy and Grizzled Skippers. Others included Red Admiral, Speckled Wood and Common Blue. Other sightings included Burnet Companion moth, and an attractive sawfly species. From the woodland we could hear Blackcaps, Whitethroats, Blackbirds, Robins, Song Thrush, Chiffchaff and Garden Warblers singing. Overhead a few Common Buzzards glided over and a pair of Red Kites seen earlier on route were constantly low overhead and a few more were seen throughout the day.



Grizzled Skipper © Peter B

We were ready to move on after a very successful and enjoyable morning, particularly as there were concerns about the weather and temperatures. We set off again to face the traffic chaos of the A27, but first stopped briefly to purchase lunches and enjoy a few snacks and drinks. The morning was giving way to a warmer afternoon and we set off again, with high hopes, heading towards our next site.

Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Alice M



We managed to park quite easily at the reserve, which is a SSSI managed by Butterfly Conservation. As we entered the reserve we encountered Speckled Yellow moths and very quickly we saw our first Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. This sighting was on the open rides as we walked along and was followed by several more sightings. The Pearl-bordered fritillaries were clearly having a better year than the last and we were to enjoy over a dozen sightings throughout the afternoon. More sightings of Dingy and Grizzled Skipper were enjoyed and Painted Ladies and Brimstones (including mating) were common sightings.

There was some interest in finding the Green Tiger Beetle and at first this was proving difficult. The few that were seen were flying off and getting a good view was not easy. As it warmed that seemed to change and suddenly there were seemingly everywhere. We managed to get great views and saw their fierce looking oversized mandibles!

We continued to walk along the sandy heath path and scrap of woodland to the 'plateau'. Winding through this path we can usually find Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, however on this occasion we saw none and it was noticeable that the Violets were also absent. We speculated that they may have left this area in search of Violets elsewhere on the reserve.

We left the 'plateau' as there seemed to be little activity and retraced our steps back to the car. We saw a few more Pearl-bordered Fritillaries and one pristine looking individual may have been a small pearl bordered but we were unable to get a good enough view to determine this.

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.

The sun was now out in force and the south facing slopes 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 and then we spotted a very blue blue and realised that these were Adonis Blues! We were very pleased to see these and quite unexpected as they were out early. Some pristine Brown Argus were also a great sighting and finished off an excellent day of spring butterflies in Sussex.



Adonis Blue © Tony O




As it was now approaching 5pm it was time to drift back to the car. 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 around 5:30pm and said our 'goodbyes' after a very successful day trip seeing all our target species and a few more!

Species Lists

Butterflies:

Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>
Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>
Brimstone	<i>Gonepteryx rhamni</i>
Large white	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>
Small white	<i>Pieris rapae</i>
Duke of Burgundy	<i>Hamearis lucina</i>
Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>
Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>
Adonis Blue	<i>Lysandra bellargus</i>
Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>
Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>
Painted lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>
Peacock	<i>Aglais io</i>
Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>
Speckled Wood	<i>Pararge aegeria</i>

Birds:

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

Reptiles/Amphibians:

Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>
Slow Worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>
Viviparous Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>
Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>

Other Invertebrates:

Common Carder Bee	<i>Bombus pascuorum</i>
Green Tiger Beetle	<i>Cicindela campestris</i>

Common Blue Damselfly
Burnet Companion
Scorpion Fly
Brown Silver-line
Dark Bush Cricket (Nymphs)
Speckled Yellow

Enallagma cyathigerum
Euclidia glyphica
Panorpa communis
Petrophora chlorosata
Pholidoptera griseoptera
Pseudopanthera macularia

Photo Gallery





Green Hairstreak © Tony O



Green Tiger Beetle © Peter B



Duke of Burgundy © Peter B



Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Gerald B



Brown Silver-line © Tony O



Brimstone Pair © Peter B

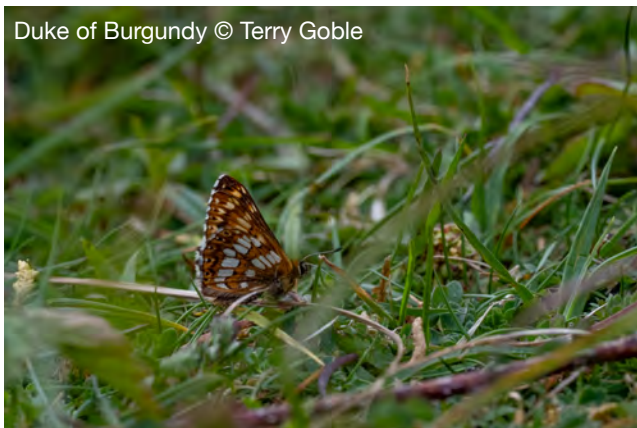


Common Frog © Tony O



Common Blue Damselfly © Gerald B

Duke of Burgundy © Terry Goble



Brimstone Pair © Peter B



Burnet Companion © Tony O



Dingy Skipper © Tony O



Green Hairstreak © Alice M



Duke of Burgundy © Tony O



Green Tiger Beetle © Terry Goble

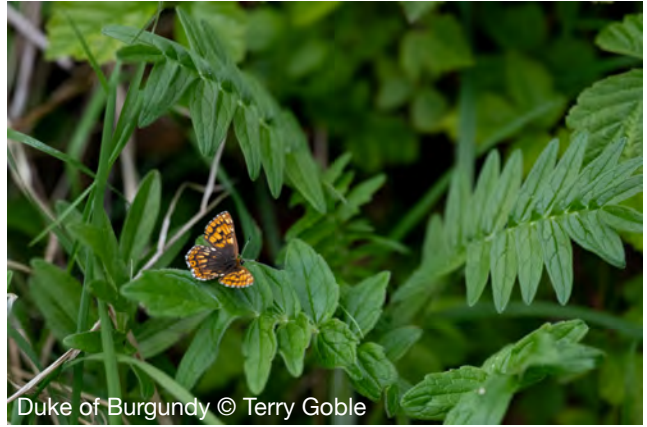


Painted Lady © Peter B

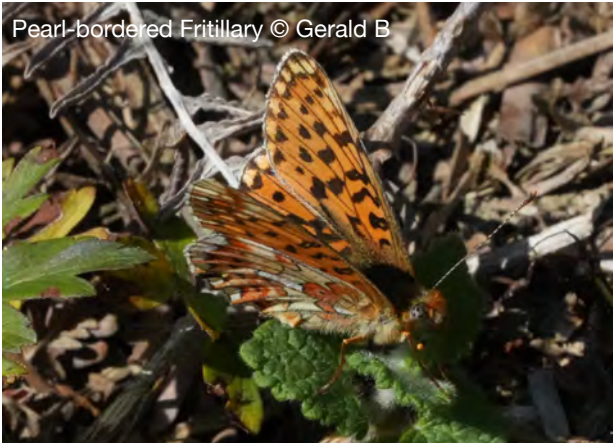




Grizzled Skipper © Terry Goble



Duke of Burgundy © Terry Goble



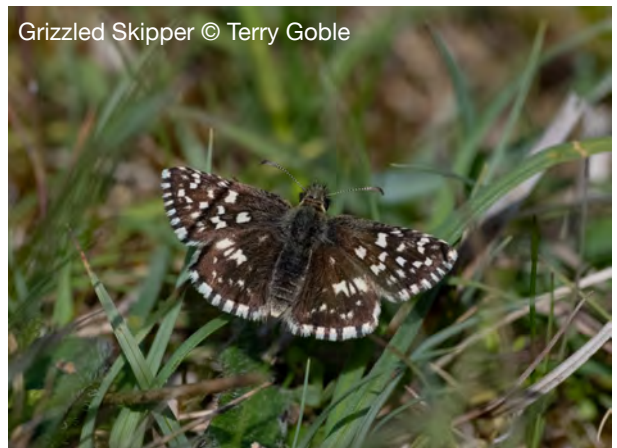
Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Gerald B



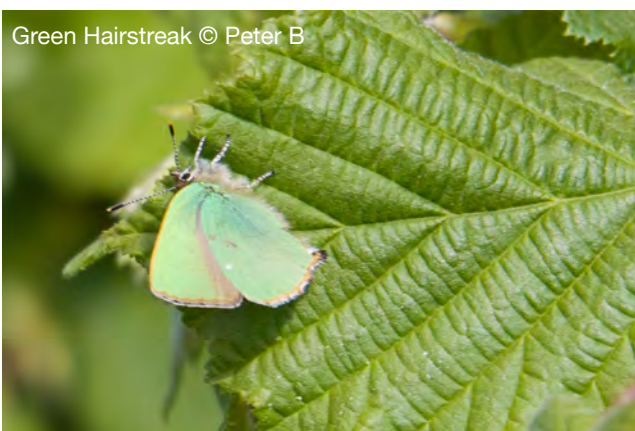
Pheasant © Peter B



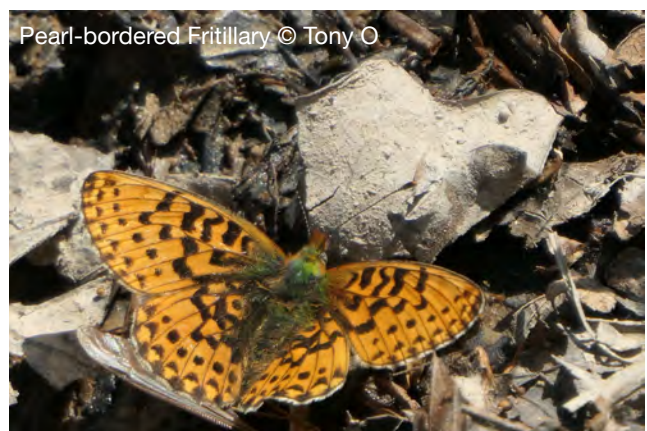
Duke of Burgundy © Tony O



Grizzled Skipper © Terry Goble

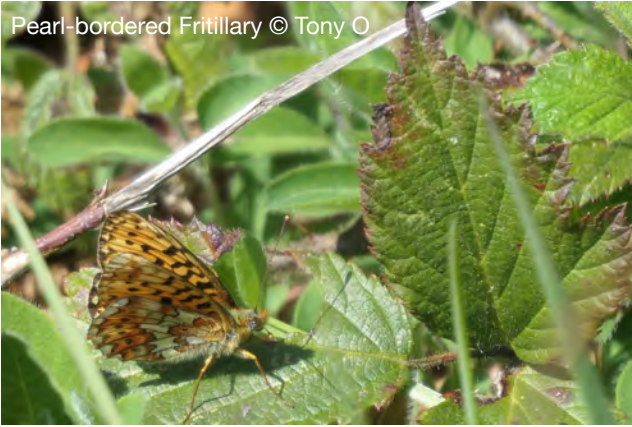


Green Hairstreak © Peter B



Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Tony O

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Duke of Burgundy © Tony O



Duke of Burgundy © Alice M



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Grizzled Skipper © Tony O



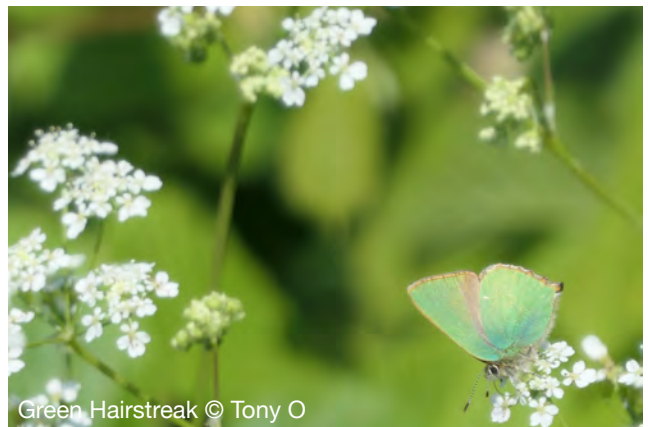
Duke of Burgundy © Gerald B



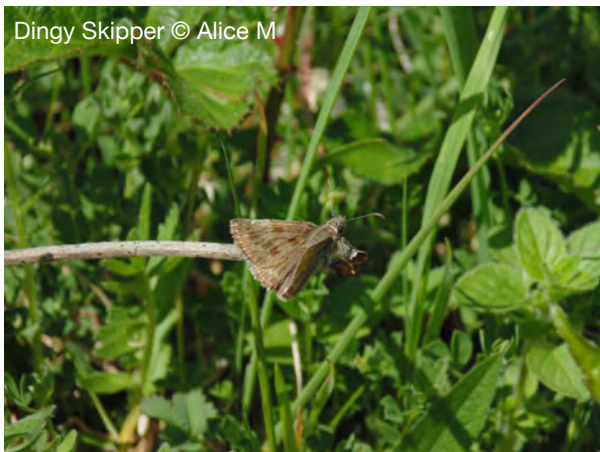
Duke of Burgundy © Peter B



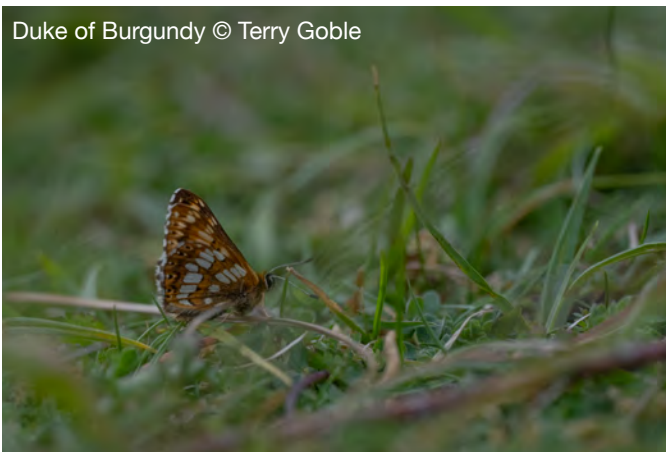
Green Hairstreak © Tony O



Dingy Skipper © Alice M



Duke of Burgundy © Terry Goble



Adonis Blue © Alice M



Pearl-bordered Fritillary © Alice M