

# Belgium in Summer

Naturetrek Tour Report

30 June - 4 July 2016

---



Common Redstart



Black-necked Grebe



Mediterranean Gulls



Scarce Copper

Report and images by Gerald Broddelez



Naturetrek    Mingedown Barn    Wolf's Lane    Chawton    Alton    Hampshire    GU34 3HJ    UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

W: [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)

Tour participants: Gerald Broddelez (leader) with three Naturetrek clients

## Introduction

A keen group of nature lovers had a great time identifying the approx. 30 species of butterflies, seeing and hearing a good selection of birds, and we also had some fantastic mammal encounters .

Accommodation in charming local hotels with excellent food and great picnics were much appreciated by everyone and made an important part of the success of this trip.

Finally, culture was not forgotten with a visit to Bruges and reminders of the Second World War spread all over the Ardennes.

## Day 1

Thursday 30th June

### Lille – Bruges

Everybody arrived on time with the Eurostar and soon we were on our way to Bruges.

After checking into the hotel, we drove north to the Nature reserve of Het Zwin where we visited the reserve, looking at a large variety of waterbirds. White Storks were seen near the entrance, on the nest with their chicks and, from the dyke, we had great views over the wetland.

On the sandy beaches and the small islets in the lagoon we saw several waders in summer plumage: Redshanks, Curlew and smart Avocet; many Oystercatchers were closely watched by several smart Little Egrets and beautiful Spoonbills. Many Gulls and Terns were breeding on the islets and included several hundred pairs of smart Mediterranean Gulls, several Herring and Black-headed Gulls, Common Tern and many Cormorants.

After this, we took a short stroll through the saltbush vegetation and, although it was warm, we all had good views of a Reed Bunting, male Linnets, Stonechat, Whitethroat and displaying Meadow and Tree Pipits, Sedge Warbler and singing Skylarks.

Back at the car park, a male and female Redstart put on a great show, posing for photographs on some dead twigs, close to the nest box they were breeding in.

It had been a good afternoon, and we drove back to the Hotel where we had a great dinner and discussed our plans for tomorrow.

## Day 2

Friday 1st July

### Bruges - Antwerp - Kalmthout - Rendeux

After breakfast at the hotel, we met with our local guide who gave us, in two hours, a brief but interesting history of the city.

We then drove to Blokkersdijk, a large lake surrounded by reedbeds and famous for its large wildfowl concentrations. Here we took our picnic lunch by the lake. By carefully scanning the lake, we found large numbers of Tufted Ducks, Common Pochards, Gadwall, Mute Swans with young, and a smart Black-necked Grebe in summer plumage, showing off its red eye and orange ear tufts!

Next we drove to Kalmthout. Here we found our main quarry quite quickly: a pair of Bluethroats with fledglings gave excellent scope views, even showing of the white spot on the blue throat! Several Stonechats and a pair of Crested Tits overhead were other highlights!

We then drove to the Ardennes and, after freshening up, we had a wonderful dinner at our charming hotel, with great views over the valley.

## Day 3

Saturday 2nd July

### Rendeux - Botrange - Eupen - Rendeux

After breakfast we drove to Hautes Fagnes. The weather was overcast with some rainy spells.

We drove onto the plateau of the Hautes Fagnes and made a walk along a nice patch of forest. Tracks of Wild Boar were everywhere, the animals keeping a low profile.

Our next stop, at the viewpoint of Signal de Botrange (Belgium's highest point at over 2000 feet!), provided us with great views plus displaying Tree Pipits and a Stonechat. In a large firebreak we found several Scarce Coppers, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, dozens of Ringlets and several Small Heaths.

After our picnic at the Visitors Centre, we drove down to the river Ourthe.

On the way, we checked for Dipper along one of the many fast-flowing streams, and found a bird in the middle of the stream together with several Grey Wagtails.

We then visited one of the quarries for Eagle Owl. It took a bit of searching but, once we had located the owl, we had great telescope looks of a single bird preening itself on top of a large rock.

We then drove to the river, waiting for the Beavers to appear. An Ermine swam across - a very rare sight, and many Beautiful and Banded Demoiselles and White-legged Damselflies perched on the reeds nearby. A Kingfisher flew by, a Marsh Warbler was busy feeding its young in the thick scrub and several Grey Heron and a single Great Egret were feeding in the meadows nearby.

## Day 4

Sunday 3rd July

### Rendeux - Han - Lavaux -Nismes

The morning was spent in the Famenne area. A short stop at the river produced a brief view of a Beaver while a Muskrat was swimming back and forth to its nest hole with freshly cut grass for its young. Up to three

Kingfishers gave fly-by views and more Marsh Warblers were seen and heard. We also scanned the area from different viewpoints, before driving to Lavaux for the rest of the afternoon.

En route, we found a Red-backed Shrike that perched nearby and several Buzzards overhead.

After picnicking, we explored the area and found many butterflies including Marbled White, smart Wood White, Black-veined White, Clouded Yellow, Green Hairstreak, large Silver-washed Fritillary, Pearly Heath and also a few Fragrant Orchids still in flower.

Next we explored some mixed Beech forests and, with the weather improving, found more butterflies including the rare False Ilex Hairstreak, Lesser Marbled Fritillary, more Marbled Whites and Pearly Heaths and several White Admirals. A Black Woodpecker that flew by was a birding highlight; a Golden Oriole was fluting away and several Turtle Doves were heard.

We then continued on to Nismes. Here we checked in to our hotel and then quickly went out and visited one of the reserves near town. A short walk produced butterflies as Marbled White, Ringlet and Pearly Heaths, all allowing great photos, and also our first Red Helleborine orchids and singing Yellowhammers.

## Day 5

Monday 4th July

### Nismes - Trelon - Lille

The morning was spent in the mixed Beech and Oak forests along the Belgian/French border. Here we walked along a nice path looking for wildlife. A Black Stork overhead was a very good start and several Roe Deer crossed the path. Great Spotted Woodpeckers were everywhere; Short-toed Treecreepers and Nuthatch accompanied them, as did several species of Tit. Lesser Marbled Fritillaries and Ringlets were common, and Blue-tailed Skimmer and Emperor were new for the list;

The drive to Lille went by very quickly. We all agreed that it had been a great trip with many good birds, excellent butterflies, some nice mammal sightings and great company.

Au revoir

## Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Visit [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk) to sign up.

## Naturetrek Facebook

We are delighted to launch the Naturetrek Facebook page so that participants of Naturetrek tours can remain in touch after the holiday and share photos, comments and future travel plans.

Setting up a personal profile at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) is quick, free and easy. The [Naturetrek Facebook page](#) is now live; do please pay us a visit!

## Species Lists

Birds (✓=recorded but not counted)

	Common Name	Scientific Name	June/July				
			30	1	2	3	4
1	Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	✓				
2	Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	✓	✓			
3	Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>		✓			
5	Tufted Duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>		✓			
6	Common Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>		✓			
7	Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	✓	✓			
8	Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>		✓			
9	Black Stork	<i>Ciconia nigra</i>					✓
10	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i>	✓				
11	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>			✓		
13	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	✓				
14	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	✓				
15	Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>			✓		
16	Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
17	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	✓	✓			
18	Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	✓				
19	Pied Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>	✓				
20	Northern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	✓			✓	
21	Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	✓				
22	Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>	✓	✓			✓
23	Mediterranean Gull	<i>Ichthyophaga melanocephalus</i>	100				
24	European Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	✓				
25	Lesser Black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	✓				✓
26	Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	✓				
27	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	✓		✓		✓
28	Common Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
29	European Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia turtur</i>				✓	✓
30	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>			✓	✓	✓
31	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	✓				
32	Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>			✓		
33	Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	✓		✓	✓	
34	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>			✓	✓	
35	Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓
36	Black Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>			✓		
37	European Green Woodpecker	<i>Picus viridis</i>	✓			✓	✓
38	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
39	Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i>			✓		
40	Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>				✓	
41	Eurasian Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>			✓	✓	✓
42	Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
43	Western Jackdaw	<i>Coloeus monedula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
44	Carrion Crow	<i>Corvus corone</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
45	European Crested Tit	<i>Lophophanes cristatus</i>		✓			✓
46	Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile montana</i>					✓
47	Eurasian Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Common Name	Scientific Name	June/July				
			30	1	2	3	4
48	Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
49	Eurasian Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	✓				
50	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
51	Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i>	✓		✓		✓
52	Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	✓	✓	✓		
53	Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
54	Marsh Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus palustris</i>			✓	✓	
55	Eurasian Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
56	Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>			✓	✓	
57	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>			✓		
58	Common Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
59	Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	✓		✓		✓
60	Eurasian Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>		✓	✓	✓	
61	Eurasian Nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>		✓	✓		✓
62	Eurasian Treecreeper	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>			✓	✓	
63	Short-toed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia brachydactyla</i>					✓
64	Common Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	✓	✓		✓	
65	Common Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
66	Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>			✓	✓	✓
67	Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>			✓	✓	✓
68	Mistle Thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>			✓	✓	✓
69	European Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>		✓	✓	✓	
70	Bluethroat	<i>Luscinia svecica</i>	3				
71	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>				✓	
72	Common Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>	✓				
73	European Stonechat	<i>Saxicola rubicola</i>	✓	✓		✓	
74	White-throated Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>			✓		
75	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
76	Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>		✓	✓	✓	
77	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>			✓		
78	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓
79	Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	✓				
80	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	✓		✓	✓	
81	Common Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>		✓	✓	✓	
82	Hawfinch	<i>Coccothraustes coccothraustes</i>			✓	✓	
83	Eurasian Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>			✓		
84	Common Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	✓		✓	✓	
85	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>				✓	
86	European Serin	<i>Serinus serinus</i>				✓	
87	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>			✓	✓	
88	Common Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	✓	✓			

## Mammals

1	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>				✓	✓
2	Red Squirrel	<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>					✓
3	Beaver	<i>Castor fiber</i>				✓	
4	Ermine	<i>Mustela erminea</i>			✓		
5	Muskrat	<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i>				✓	

	Common Name	Scientific Name	June/July				
			30	1	2	3	4

## Butterflies

1	Black-veined White	<i>Aporia crataegi</i>				✓	
2	Large White	<i>Pieris brassicae</i>				✓	
3	Small White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>	✓				
4	Green-veined White	<i>Artogeia napi</i>	✓				
5	Clouded Yellow	<i>Colias crocea</i>				✓	
6	Wood White	<i>Leptidea sinapis</i>				✓	
7	Purple Hairstreak	<i>Quercusia quercus</i>				✓	
8	Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>				✓	
9	False Ilex Hairstreak	<i>Satyrium esculi</i>				✓	
10	Scarce Copper	<i>Lycaena virgaureae</i>			✓		
11	Little Blue	<i>Cupido minimus</i>				✓	
12	Common Blue	<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>				✓	
13	White Admiral	<i>Limenitis camilla</i>				✓	
14	Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>			✓		
15	Small Tortoiseshell	<i>Aglais urticae</i>				✓	
16	Silver-washed Fritillary	<i>Argynnis paphia</i>				✓	
17	Lesser Marbled Fritillary	<i>Brenthis ino</i>				✓	✓
18	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Clossiana selene</i>			✓		
19	Marbled White	<i>Melanargia galathea</i>				✓	
20	Meadow Brown	<i>Maniola jurtina</i>			✓	✓	
21	Ringlet	<i>Aphantopus hyperantus</i>			✓	✓	✓
22	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>			✓		
23	Pearly Heath	<i>Coenonympha arcania</i>				✓	✓
24	Grizzled Skipper	<i>Pyrgus malvae</i>				✓	
25	Essex Skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>				✓	
26	Small Skipper	<i>Thymelicus sylvestris</i>				✓	
27	Large Skipper	<i>Ochlodes venatus</i>			✓	✓	✓



Photographing the wildlife

Fragrant Orchid