

Sweden's Butterflies

Naturetrek Tour Report

19 - 24 June 2016



Moorland Clouded Yellow



Cranberry Blue



Scarce Fritillary



Yellow-spotted Whiteface

Report compiled by Daniel Green
Species lists & images courtesy of Eric McCabe



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Tour participants: Daniel Green (leader) together with eight Naturetrek clients

Day 1

Sunday 19th June

The weather has been terrible over the last days so it was a hopeful tribe that approach the Baltic coast in +19°C and a light overcast sky. As we got out for the first stop we had already spotted the first few butterflies along the road and the habitat was looking increasingly interesting.

We took time for a coffee and sandwich before we headed out into the meadow where the first good flyers are found. As the sun came out it didn't take us long to spot the first Clouded Apollo flying around over the vegetation in it's characteristic, floppy way. Soon we gathered around the first perched one showing really well in the grass. Mazarine Blue, Northern Brown Argus and Heath Fritillary were also seen, and among the dragonflies several Four-spotted Chasers and a couple of teneral Black-tailed Skimmers were noted. Among the day-flying moths there were plenty of Chimney Sweepers and White-veined Moths.

Next stop was the small coastal town Öregrund, where we took the ferry to the island of Gräsö. The harbour offered close views of Arctic Terns... to the extent that half the group missed the ferry! Once there the first part of the group managed to find Purple-edged Copper, and later we all enjoyed Geranium Argus, Pearly Heath and Small Heath, and several orchids including Butterfly Orchid.

Day 2

Monday 20th June

In brilliant sunshine and only a little wind, we headed northwards after a nice breakfast in the hotel. The temperature was rising towards +18°C as we had a short leg stretch and a quick coffee by a shallow inlet of the sea. 40 or so Common Cranes were standing in the bay with 30 Curlews beside them. At least six Caspian Terns looked gigantic next to the Arctic Terns which breed here in abundance. Common Redshank and Lapwing were the only waders we could see, simply because the weather was too good for stopover migrants that usually appear this time of the year. However this meant we were likely to get many more butterflies!

The 30-minute drive to the 'butterfly road' was soon done and we were greeted by several Black-veined Whites flitting over the gravel road in front of us. A very localised butterfly on mainland Sweden, this is probably the only site we will see them. As we stepped out and started to prepare for our walk along this productive forest track, the first Dinky Skippers, Wood Whites and False Heath Fritillaries were spotted. A couple of skippers on a muddy patch were Large Grizzled Skippers. The (almost) lack of white spots on the hindwing upperside gave them away. Some Common Swallowtails were seen along the trail, and among the butterflies we saw the majestic Common Goldenring dragonfly.

After a really nice and intense butterfly session we gathered for a lunch picnic before we started our two hour journey towards our next base - Skultuna brukshotell. We broke the journey with a nice coffee by the streams of Gysinge where Goosander, Goldeneye and Common Tern frequented the stream. We got to our destination, Skultuna, in time to have dinner and relax after two quite intense but productive days of butterflying.

Day 3

Tuesday 21st June

Today was only +14°C and cloudy. The plan was to head north to look for bog species. We started with a birding stop since the weather was not good enough yet, which produced excellent views of a singing Grasshopper Warbler, well perched on the only higher bush in the meadow.

We walked the bog without finding anything in terms of butterflies or dragonflies. We had our picnic lunch hoping the temperature would rise, but it didn't, so we headed south instead. Luckily it brightened up a bit as we headed towards the site for Pygmy Damselfly. It was a good decision as when we got there the cloud was breaking up and the temperature +19°C, making for insect activity. It didn't take us long to find the damsels, as tiny as they were. Getting them in focus in the camera was the bigger challenge! Yellow-Spotted Emeralds were flying around at the same time. Both Ruby and Small Whitefaces were photographed on the boardwalk, and Four-spotted Chasers were abundant too.

Since people still had energy, we finished the day looking at a nice little restored wetland lake holding Slavonian Grebes and several Cranes. One pair had a chick that seemed to be strong and healthy. A harsh call from the sky above us revealed a Caspian Tern descending to the lake. On some small mudflat islands we found a resting Spotted Redshank in almost full summer plumage, and a couple of male Ruffs were flying by. Little Gulls were calling frequently and flying about over the lake. Around 10 individuals were seen, certainly adding atmosphere to the scene with their cute, piercing calls, rising above the more distant noise of hundreds of Black-headed Gulls. As we headed back towards the hotel a Moose was seen in a field in front of us. Although a cow without antlers, it was an impressive sight.

An evening drive gave us views of Wild Boar - a female with a bunch of piglets, and as the full moon rose over a meadow in the forest, three Corn Crakes, one really close, were calling simultaneously around us. Cuckoo was frequently heard as well, but no owls appeared. It had not been a good year for owls in this area; it was a nice night out though.

Day 4

Wednesday 22nd June

We headed south towards Hjälmare Canal in brilliant weather. When we were close a big butterfly flew low over the gravel track in front of the vehicle. We had to stop. It was a Poplar Admiral. We got out but unfortunately it disappeared. We started to scan the roadsides thoroughly and the first good dragonflies were found: a teneral whiteface looked like a Yellow-Spotted Whiteface but it couldn't be confirmed before it flew away. But a Scarce Chaser was a certain; a good male and offering good views and pictures. A Blue Featherleg was also documented.

When we got out on the boat, plenty of dragonflies and damselflies were seen. Lily pads full of Red-eyed Damselflies/Large Redeye (*Erythromma najas*), Downy Emeralds and Four-spotted Chasers were flying around. A Brown Hawker was the first of the season here, and Hairy Hawker was the only other hawk about for the moment. Along the sun-exposed reedbed there were plenty of Scarce Chasers perched up. In front of the boat a Common Clubtail was flying, soon to be followed by two more. But hey....whats that? A different looking, quite feisty and long-tailed dragonfly was flying close to the boat. We went through the identification details in the book and all agreed that it was, in fact, a Eurasian Baskettail (*Epitheca bimaculata*): probably the most difficult-to-

find dragonfly species in central Sweden. Luckily, it flew back and forth past the boat over and over again, providing excellent views. What a great find!

A little further up the canal we spotted the first Lilypad Whiteface, sitting on.... a lilypad; soon to be followed by more. As we approach for more pictures, we also found Yellow-Spotted Whiteface: pairs in tandem and good views and photography. An Osprey flew past above and a female Marsh Harrier was perched on a broken tree in the reedbed for a while. When we got back ashore, a large family group of Long-tailed Tits were crossing the river, landing in trees beside us. They were pretty little creatures with all-white heads (the Scandinavian race). Some other tits including Willow Tit joined the party.

We decided to walk along the river to look for some more perched dragonflies as the minibus rendezvoused a bit further ahead. Soon a big butterfly appeared and although many were not convinced from the beginning, it was in fact a Poplar Admiral. Daniel saw another (or the same) specimen and caught it in a net to show the group. On release, it flew directly up and away but was later found in a bush by the river, not conveniently perched for photography but allowing good views. As we drove away another Poplar Admiral was seen flying by.

The weather was good and we had time on our hands, so we drove to another excellent site and combined lunch and butterflies. It was not easy to focus on the food when there were Scarce Fritillaries all around us! How lovely! Most of them were males and in good condition. A quite different individual had more white than normal and almost resembled a Lapland Fritillary. We also saw several Marsh Fritillaries, and plenty of Beautiful Demoiselles were flitting around the little stream that cut through the area.

Later it was moth night with Niclas Lignell. We saw 25 or so species of moth including Fox Moth, Great Oak Beauty, White Ermine and Eyed Hawk-moth. Two members of the group spent an hour to see more of the Beavers upstream along the river, and they saw eight individuals!

Day 5

Thursday 23rd June

The weather was looking good again today so we headed back to the Norberg bog area, a bit north, for the second time. Now butterfly activity was high and we had an excellent session with plenty of Cranberry Blues, Moorland Clouded Yellows, some Common Swallowtails and Large Heaths. We carefully examined all the fritillaries we saw and among the Pearl-bordered and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries we also found the scarce Bog Fritillary. We were also blessed with good views of several specimens of the enigmatic Baltic Grayling, a species with a two-year life cycle, only flying in even years. They are not at all small, but as soon as they perch they tend to disappear, looking like just another flake of bark on the pine trunk they sit on. There were also plenty of dragonflies on this little site. Most of them were Small Whiteface (*Leucorrhinia dubia*) but among them were a couple of Ruby Whitefaces (*Leucorrhinia rubicunda*). Downy Emerald, Four-Spotted Chaser and Keeled Skimmer were also found. Among the damselflies, the delicate Arctic Bluet (*Coenagrion johanssoni*) was the most abundant damselfly on the site.

Next we tried a site for the critically endangered Assman's Fritillary, but without success. It is likely to be extinct from the area now since there are no records this year and very few (if confirmed) last year. The species now only remains on one more site in the south-east of the country. The decline is not fully explained or understood since the host plant (a speedwell) is in fact not at all scarce. Habitat change (less grazing and mowing of forest

meadows) is likely to be the case though. Only the related species of Heath and False Heath Fritillaries were showing, with some Geranium Argus and Pearly Heaths too.

Day 6

Friday 24th June

Today was drizzly but warm. We stopped not far from the hotel, upstream along the river, to try to catch a glimpse of Thrush Nightingale. That's exactly what we manage to get - a glimpse - four or five times it showed briefly as it moved between willows in front of us. Only once did it burst into song for a short while. But another song caught our ears just a little further down the road. There was a beautiful warbling song coming out of another bush - a Blyth's Reed Warbler. It was a bit slow in the beginning but eventually it sang more intensely and it also showed extraordinary well. It is known to be nocturnal and not usually willing to show at all.

The weather was improving slowly but we had to do a little more birdwatching as we waited for the clouds to rise. We reached the island of Ängsö and stopped at the pond by the castle. No Slavonian Grebes here this year but at least some Coots, herons, ducks and geese. Down by the southern spit of the island, two pairs of Great Crested Grebes were showing and a Sedge Warbler was singing. On the drive through areas of ancient rural landscape we came across Red-backed Shrikes on three occasions, all males and stunning birds. Wheatear, Whinchat and Common Whitethroat were also spotted.

When we arrived at the butterfly area it is warm enough for some butterflies to sit up in the grass. We instantly spotted an Amanda's Blue. Soon after a male Purple-edged Copper. The next new species for the trip was Lesser Marbled Fritillary. We found several fresh, nice specimens and they performed well for our cameras. A colourful little moth, a Purple Bar (*Lythria cruentaria*) showed well to some people around some Lesser Butterfly Orchids. A flock of 18 Curlews passed in the sky above the road in front of us; the last noticeable observation before we reached the airport for departure.

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Species Lists

Butterflies (✓=recorded but not counted)

	Common Name	June					
		19	20	21	22	23	24
1	Grizzled Skipper		✓				
2	Large Grizzled Skipper		✓				
3	Large Skipper	✓	✓		✓		✓
4	Dingy Skipper		✓				
5	Northern Chequered Skipper		✓				
6	Common Swallowtail	✓	✓				
7	Clouded Apollo	✓					
8	Wood White		✓			✓	
9	Moorland Clouded Yellow					✓	
10	Brimstone	✓	✓				
11	Black-veined White		✓				
12	Green Hairstreak		✓				
13	Purple-edged Copper		✓			✓	✓
14	Small Copper					✓	
15	Holly Blue		✓				
16	Geranium Argus	✓	✓				✓
17	Northern Brown Argus	✓					
18	Common Blue	✓					✓
19	Cranberry Blue		✓				
20	Green Underside Blue		✓				
21	Mazarine Blue	✓					
22	Amanda's Blue						✓
23	Baltic Grayling					✓	
24	Large Wall Brown					✓	
25	Pearly Heath		✓				✓
26	Small Heath	✓					
27	Large Heath					✓	
28	Northern Wall Brown		✓				
29	Small Tortoiseshell		✓		✓	✓	
30	Camberwell Beauty				✓		
31	Poplar Admiral				✓		
32	Comma					✓	
33	Pearl-bordered Fritillary		✓			✓	
34	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary		✓			✓	
35	Scarce Fritillary				✓		
36	Bog Fritillary					✓	
37	Marsh Fritillary				✓		
38	Cranberry Fritillary					✓	
39	Lesser Marbled Fritillary					✓	
40	Heath Fritillary		✓		✓		

	Common Name	June					
		19	20	21	22	23	24
41	False Heath Fritillary		✓		✓		

Moths

1	Lattice Heath	✓					
2	Chimney Sweeper	✓					
3	Black-veined Moth	✓				✓	
4	Burnet Companion	✓					
5	Small Elephant Hawk-moth	✓					
6	Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moth		✓				
7	Oak Eggar			✓			
8	Fox Moth				✓		
9	Great Oak Beauty				✓		
10	White Ermine				✓		
11	Eyed Hawk-moth				✓		
12	Purple Bar						✓

Damselflies

1	Beautiful Demoiselle		✓		✓		
2	Blue Featherleg (White-legged Damselfly)				✓		
3	Sedgeling			✓			
4	Large Red damselfly				✓		
5	Arctic Bluet					✓	
6	Small Red-eyed Damselfly				✓		
7	Red-eyed Damselfly				✓		
8	Variable Damselfly		✓				
9	Common Blue Damselfly		✓				
10	Blue-tailed Damselfly		✓				✓

Dragonflies

1	Common Clubtail				✓		
2	Small Pincertail		✓				
3	Hairy Hawker				✓		
4	Brown Hawker				✓		
5	Downy Emerald		✓		✓	✓	
6	Yellow-spotted Emerald			✓			
7	Baskettail				✓		
8	Golden-ringed Dragonfly				✓	✓	
9	Four-spotted Chaser	✓			✓	✓	
10	Keeled Skimmer					✓	
11	Black-tailed Skimmer	✓					
12	Scarce Chaser				✓		
13	Small Whiteface				✓		
14	Lilypad Whiteface				✓		

	Common Name	June					
		19	20	21	22	23	24
15	Yellow-spotted Whiteface				✓		
16	Dark Whiteface		✓				
17	Ruby Whiteface			✓		✓	

Birds

1	Black-throated Diver			✓			
2	Slavonian Grebe			✓			
3	Great Crested Grebe						✓
4	Great Cormorant	✓					
5	Grey Heron						✓
6	Mute Swan		✓				
7	Whooper Swan			✓			
8	Greylag Goose			✓			✓
9	Barnacle Goose	✓					
10	Eurasian Teal			✓			
11	Common Goldeneye		✓				
12	Tufted Duck	✓					
13	Common Eider	✓					
14	Goosander		✓				
15	Red-breasted Merganser		✓				
16	Western Osprey				✓		
17	Western Marsh Harrier	✓		✓	✓		
18	Eurasian Sparrowhawk			✓			
19	Eurasian Hobby	✓					
20	Ring-necked Pheasant						✓
21	Common Crane		✓			✓	
22	Eurasian Coot			✓			✓
23	Corn Crake			✓		✓	
24	Northern Lapwing		✓				
25	Common Ringed Plover			✓			
26	Green Sandpiper				✓		
27	Common Sandpiper		✓		✓		
28	Woodcock			✓			
29	Common Redshank		✓	✓			
30	Spotted Redshank			✓			
31	Common Greenshank			✓			
32	Eurasian Curlew						✓
33	Ruff			✓			
34	Common Snipe						✓
35	Little Gull			✓			
36	Common Gull	✓					
37	Black-headed Gull	✓		✓			
38	Great Black-backed Gull	✓					

	Common Name	June					
		19	20	21	22	23	24
39	Caspian Tern		✓				
40	Arctic Tern	✓					
41	Black Tern			✓			
42	Common Wood Pigeon	✓					
43	Common Cuckoo			✓			
44	European Green Woodpecker					✓	
45	Wryneck			✓			
46	Barn Swallow	✓					
47	Common House Martin		✓				
48	Grey Wagtail			✓			
49	White Wagtail	✓					
50	Red-backed Shrike		✓				✓
51	Common Whitethroat			✓			
52	Grasshopper Warbler			✓			
53	Sedge Warbler			✓			
54	Blyth's reed Warbler						✓
55	Pied Flycatcher		✓			✓	
56	Thrush Nightingale						✓
57	Whinchat			✓			✓
58	Common Redstart					✓	
59	Northern Wheatear						✓
60	European Robin						✓
61	Fieldfare	✓		✓			
62	Redwing			✓			
63	Willow Tit				✓		
64	Long-tailed Tit				✓		
65	Eurasian Nuthatch		✓			✓	
66	Yellowhammer						✓
67	Red Crossbill				✓		
68	Common Starling	✓					
69	Eurasian Jay				✓		
70	Spotted Nutcracker					✓	
71	Western Jackdaw	✓					
72	Hooded Crow	✓					
73	Northern Raven		✓				
74	Eurasian Magpie	✓					

Mammals

1	Roe Deer		✓				
2	Wild Boar			✓			
3	Fallow Deer						✓
4	Beaver			✓	✓		
5	Moose (Elk)			✓			

	Common Name	June					
		19	20	21	22	23	24

Reptiles

1	Grass Snake		✓				
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Beetles

1	Bee Beetle		✓				
2	Green Cockchafer		✓				



Blyth's Reed Warbler



Baltic Grayling



Full Moon



Ragged Robin