

Sweden's Butterflies & Dragonflies

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Fly Stockholm and transfer Öregrund.
- Day 2** Excursion from Öregrund, transfer Svartådalen
- Day 3-5** Excursions from Svartådalen.
- Day 6** Transfer Stockholm and fly Heathrow.

Departs

June

Focus

Butterflies, dragonflies, birds and other natural history

Grading

A. Gentle day walks only

Dates and Prices

See www.naturetrek.co.uk (tour code SWE05) or our current brochure

Highlights

- Mix of Scandinavian & Eastern European butterfly species
- Up to 11 species of blue possible
- Black-veined White & Clouded Apollo, Poplar Admiral & Scarce Copper
- Arctic Bluet, Yellow-spotted and Lilypad Whiteface, Yellow-spotted Emerald, Azure Hawker and Pygmy Damselfly among the varied and special odonata possible.
- Scarce Fritillary, Cranberry Blue & Northern Chequered Skipper just south of Svartadalen
- Common Goldenring, Bog Hawker, Small Pincertail & Common Clubtail possible.
- Capercaillie, Pied Flycatcher, Spotted Crake & Black Tern all possible among special birdlife



From top: Amanda's Blue, Scarce Chaser, Scarce Copper
Images by Daniel Green



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Introduction

During the high summer months, central Sweden is home to a fascinating mix of Scandinavian and Eastern European butterfly species. Several of these are found here at the southernmost limits of their ranges and in this part of Scandinavia, where north meets south, there might even be a few new discoveries to make, for only recently have populations of Large Blue, Chequered Blue and Duke of Burgundy been discovered. During this holiday we will spend one night in the picturesque town of Öregrund on the Baltic coast, before moving for the remainder of the holiday to Svartådalen (the Black River Valley), a peaceful patchwork of wetlands, mixed woodlands and flower-filled water meadows that are home to a wonderful diversity of butterflies and dragonflies. Amongst the well-established species, highlights should include such charismatic butterflies as Clouded Apollo, Poplar Admiral and Scarce Copper. We also hope to see an abundance of blues — up to 11 species being possible! As well as focussing on finding these special butterflies there are whole host of Dragonflies and Damselflies which we will go in search for. Some of the highlights may include Yellow-spotted Emerald, Bog Hawker, Small Pincertail, Arctic Bluet and Small & Ruby Whiteface. As this is also a fantastic area for birds, we will be sure to take time to enjoy morning and late afternoon birding excursions in search of such species as Black Tern, Spotted Crake, White-tailed Eagle, Thrush Nightingale and Common Rosefinch. This is sure to be a very varied natural history holiday.

Itinerary

Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Day 1

Fly London, transfer Öregrund

We depart from London's Heathrow airport on an early morning British Airways flight to Stockholm. On arrival, we will be met by our English-speaking Swedish tour leader, before transferring north to the picturesque, coastal town of Öregrund, where we will spend our first night of the tour. If weather permits, we will then take the ferry out to the island of Gräsö. Amongst this old-fashioned, rural landscape, we will look for Glanville Fritillary, Geranium and Northern Brown Argus and Purple-edged Coppers. Depending on the season, we also have a good chance of seeing Butterfly Orchids and Lady's Slipper Orchids at their best. Overhead, White-tailed Eagles are hard to miss, and Red-backed Shrikes and Wrynecks are both possible around the butterfly meadows. After a busy first afternoon we return back across the sound to our cosy hotel in the small town of Öregrund. This evening we plan to enjoy a barbeque buffet and some cool drinks (or perhaps even a dip in the pool!) whilst enjoying the beautiful coastal views. For those that wish, the long hours of sunlight mean there will be time to enjoy a walk around the pretty town too.



Clouded Apollo (Daniel Green)

Day 2

Baltic Coast & Butterfly Road

We depart Öregrund after breakfast and drive for around an hour north along the Baltic coast. Here we will pay a visit to a site Swedish lepidopterists call the 'Butterfly Road' — an unassuming gravel track through a seemingly ordinary patch of pine forest. Here, not only do a wonderful variety of orchids grow on the rich chalk soils but, as its name suggests, this is a great spot for butterflies such as Black-veined White, Silvery Argus and Large Grizzled Skipper, along with up to ten species of Blues and plenty of Fritillaries. This site is carefully managed to help the flora and butterfly fauna



Amanda's Blue (Daniel Green)

thrive, and we'll also be on the look-out for a variety of day flying moths including Broad-bordered and Narrow-bordered Bee Hawk-moths. If time permits, we may also head to the coast to look for Caspian Terns, Little Gulls, and perhaps some of the first waders returning from the north, such as Spotted Redshanks, Ruffs and Wood Sandpipers. This is also an excellent time of year for several of Scandinavia's dragonfly specialties, including Yellow-spotted Whiteface, Ruby Whiteface and Yellow-spotted Emerald.

After a picnic lunch, we drive the two hours or so back south to the Black River Valley, our base for the rest of the trip. There should be time for a coffee stop en route at the streams of Gysinge, where Goldeneye and Goosander, and perhaps an Osprey or two, are likely to entertain as they fish amongst the currents.

Day 3

Bergslagen – Norberg – Sala

Today we will head just a little way north to an area where vast pine forests, lakes and mires dominate the landscape, and birds of these northern taiga forests include Capercaillie, Black Grouse, Crested Tit and Pied Flycatcher. This is the home of the rare Baltic Grayling, although, since this species has only one generation every two years (in even years), it's not a butterfly we will see on every tour! Other species to look out for include Bog, Cranberry and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries, Large Heath, Moorland Clouded Yellow, and Cranberry Blue. We also have the opportunity here to look for the enigmatic and very localised Bog Hawker dragonfly, and the more abundant Arctic Bluet.

After lunch we travel a little way south, where we are likely to find False Heath Fritillary, High Brown and Dark Green Fritillary, along with Common Swallowtail. If time permits we will also stop at another marsh to search out the tiny Sedgling, or Pygmy Damselfly, *Nehalennia speciosa*, one of the rarest Damselflies in Europe. This population was only recently discovered and is one of just a handful of sites in Sweden.

This evening, we may set up a moth trap near to our guesthouse, if the weather permits. Sweden's moths are not well known, and we can also try a coniferous forest/bog site and perhaps a deciduous forest site later in the week to increase our species count. Northern Oak Eggar, several hawk-moths including Pine Hawkmoth, and the colourful 'Peat-bog Carpet' (*Arichanna melanaria*) are all possible. Please note that these would be optional 'very late night' activities, as at this time of year in Sweden it barely gets dark at all!

Day 4

West Bergslagen

After breakfast this morning we will head out into the surrounding countryside to spend the day exploring the valley's many rich butterfly habitats, notably in the coniferous forests and around the area's small lakes. The first location we will visit is a quiet spot where we can look for Poplar Admiral, which at this time of year should be newly hatched and in pristine condition. We will also look out for Purple-edged Copper, Ida's and Amanda's Blue, and Northern Wall Browns on the forest roadsides. The surrounding birdlife is excellent, and we plan to enjoy a relaxing picnic lunch beside a small lake where Black-throated Divers usually breed.



Purple-edged Copper (Daniel Green)

After lunch we will continue northwards, with our next target species being the Scarce Fritillary. We will also hope to see Marsh, and False Heath Fritillary, Cranberry Blue, Northern Chequered Skipper and dragonflies including Common Goldenring and Common Clubtail.

Day 5

Ängsö

Today we begin by heading south to an old canal where only small boats are permitted, which has allowed it to become a natural habitat very rich in dragonflies. Here we will enjoy a morning boat trip, where we will be looking especially for Lilypad Whiteface, along with Yellow-spotted Whiteface, Scarce Chaser and perhaps even Eurasian Baskettail, which is seen here annually, though would still be a very rare find indeed.

After lunch, we will spend time exploring the habitat-rich island and nature reserve of Ängsö, where Heath Fritillary, Queen of Spain, High Brown, and Dark Green Fritillary are all possible. Here, there will also be another chance to look for Poplar Admiral, along with Lesser Marbled Fritillary, Scarce Copper, Purple-edged Copper, Pearly Heath, Ida's Blue and up to three species of Burnet Moths. We also hope to see Small Pincertail dragonflies, and Slavonian Grebes, which breed in the pond by the medieval castle, before returning to our guesthouse for our final evening of the trip.

Day 6

Svartådalen

On our final day we will have time to further explore the meadows, mires and forests around Svartådalen, and catch up with some of our favourite species from the previous few days. The nearby river valley should not be overlooked, and butterflies here can include Baltic Grayling, Large Heath, Cranberry Blue, False Heath and Heath Fritillary, plus Dark Whiteface dragonflies that may have just emerged if the season is warm enough. The Black River Valley lakes and wetlands are good for birds, and we will enjoy breeding Black Terns, Common Cranes, White-tailed Eagles, as well as looking for more elusive species such as Common Rosefinch and Thrush Nightingale.



White-tailed Eagle (and Black Tern) (Niclas Lignell)

As we begin our journey back towards Stockholm we will stop at some wetlands to look for grebes, ducks and waders. Osprey, Honey Buzzard, Hobby and Marsh Harrier are all known to be breeding in this area, and any of them could turn up during our stop here! If the southerly migration has already begun, this is another spot where we may catch a glimpse of the first returning Spotted Redshanks and Ruffs. Finally, we continue our journey back to Stockholm's Arlanda Airport in time to catch our evening flight home.

Grading

Gentle day walks only. Grade A.

Focus

Butterflies, dragonflies, birds and other natural history.

Food & accommodation

All food and accommodation is included in the price of this holiday. We spend our first night at a beach front hotel, Strandhotellet (www.strandhotellet.nu) in the small town of Öregrund, followed by 4 nights at a comfortable guesthouse in the Black River Valley. All rooms have private facilities.

Weather

The weather and temperatures are comparable with what you would expect in southern England at the same season, although a little more sunshine and warmer temperatures can generally be expected.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

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