

Symondshyde Great Wood – near Hatfield - July 2009



Report and photographs by Steve Chilton

Symondshyde Great Wood is a fantastic place to see a large number of butterflies in a relatively small area.

Close to the start of the bridleway, which runs through the wood from East to West, there is a clearing with a fallen tree trunk in the centre.



Common Nettle and Bramble dominate this area but there is also Common Ragwort, Greater Burdock, Self-heal, Great Mullein, Red Campion and Creeping Thistle to tempt the butterflies and other insects.



Stand still close to the brambles and thistles and you will soon have Ringlet (photographed above left), Comma and Green-veined White (photographed left) butterflies feeding on nectar under your nose.



Also likely to be seen in this area are:

Meadow Brown,
Peacock (photographed),



Large White
(photographed) and
Small Tortoiseshell.

I was also lucky enough to see Gatekeeper, White Admiral, Red Admiral and Silver-washed Fritillary here.



Some of the Commas have the pale underwings of the sub-species 'hutchinsoni' (photographed)

Continuing along the bridleway and deeper into the wood I saw just a few Speckled Wood butterflies. This species should become more abundant during August.



Look out for the spectacular Silver-washed Fritillary (photographed) along the path.

I was fortunate to see the courtship flight with the female flying at speed while the male flew around and around her all the way.



After a hundred yards or so there is a bit of a gap in the canopy and the path usually has some sunlight on it. There is an area of bracken to the left and thistles are on both sides. I saw Silver-washed Fritillaries basking on the flat leaves of a Sycamore here.



I also saw White Admirals (photographed) and a White-letter Hairstreak taking minerals from the footpath (photographed).

This is a great spot to photograph Hoverflies and Bumblebees as they spend time feeding on the thistles. The hoverfly in the photograph is sometimes called a Marmalade Fly and it seems to be very common at the moment.



Look out for Blackcaps, Coal Tits and Goldcrests here too.

Take a right hand turn at the western edge of the wood. On the left is a bean field with a large weedy corner. I added Marbled White and Small Skipper to my list of butterflies here.

I visited the wood four times in mid July and saw a total of sixteen species of Butterfly.

Access is from Hammond's Lane between Hatfield Garden Village and Sandridge. Park opposite Symondshyde Farm near the sign posted bridleway entrance.

Grid Reference TL198 113