

Balls Wood Nature Reserve, near Hertford Heath

Report and photos by HNHS member and local wildlife photographer Steve Chilton, who visited on 14 May 2009.

Recently purchased by the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, Balls Wood is an ancient coppiced hornbeam wood.



The rare Herb Paris, the speciality of the wood, is in full flower and there are two good sized colonies of them close to the main footpaths.

Other plants in flower now include Red Campion (pictured), Yellow Archangel, Common Vetch, Green Alkanet, Bugle, Germander Speedwell, Herb Robert & Tormentil. Early Purple Orchids, in flower in early May, are past their best now.



Butterflies are numerous in the open areas including Orange Tip (pictured), Speckled Wood (pictured) and Green-veined White

Listen for Yellowhammers in the hedgerows just outside the wood and check for a possible Buzzard or two soaring high above. Inside the wood listen for Song Thrush, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Garden Warbler, Blackcap & Whitethroat.

Though difficult to see, the wood also boasts Slow Worms, Grass Snakes, see my photo, and Great Crested Newts..

Access to Balls Wood is via Roundings Road, adjacent to the College Arms in Hertford Heath; from here walk along the road, keeping to the right where it joins an unsurfaced section of the Roman Ermine Street. The entrance is on the left where there is a Forest Enterprise sign. Grid ref: TL 348106

Further details can be found at <http://www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/herts/>

