

MONKWOOD
Worcestershire

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for the book *Discover Butterflies in Britain*
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Entrance to Monkwood reserve

This is a 70 ha (175 acre) site with rough pasture and ancient woodland on a clay subsoil. It is excellent for woodland butterflies, particularly Wood Whites and White Admirals.

The reserve is now owned jointly by Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and Butterfly Conservation.

TARGET SPECIES
36 different species have been recorded here of which 27 occur regularly, including Wood White, White Admiral, Dingy Skipper, Purple Hairstreak and Silver-washed Fritillary.

Worcestershire's surviving forests are all excellent habitats for woodland butterflies. Provided that the woods are managed so that there are sunlit glades and open rides between the trees, you can expect to see many different butterflies if you visit on a sunny day. Monkwood has been here since at least the 13th century, and its boundaries have hardly changed in all this time. It is known, particularly, for its strong colony of Wood Whites (in May/early June) and its White Admirals (late June/July). But 36 different species have been recorded here over the years and there is much to see.

The reserve is a combination of two Sites of Special Scientific Interest. At the south end of the reserve is Monkwood Green SSSI which is a 7.5 ha (18 acre) area of permanent

rough pasture on a heavy clay-loam soil. This kind of pasture, which is dominated by tufted hair grass and rushes is rare in Worcestershire. To the north, the main part of the reserve has 62 ha (155 acres) of mixed broad-leaved woodland. The trees include some ancient oaks and beech, with ash and alder planted in the 1950s, as well as some small-leaved lime and wild service trees. Flowers include lily-of-the-valley, spurge laurel, and broad-leaved and violet helleborine and, in the pasture at the reserve's southern end, green-winged orchid, lady's mantle, ragged-robin, cuckoo flower and adder's tongue. There are several ponds in the reserve where great-crested newts live and dragonflies flourish, and over 500 different species of moth have been recorded at the reserve.

The wood's recent history is interesting. The paint brush manufacturer, L. G. Harris of Bromsgrove, bought Monkwood in the 1950s to supply timber for brush handles. By now traditional coppicing had virtually ceased, but the firm clear-felled and replanted areas of the wood. This had the result of keeping areas open, allowing woodland flowers and butterflies to continue to flourish. Thirty years later, when L G Harris decided to sell the wood, it was bought by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust with the help of Butterfly Conservation. Both organisations now collaborate in its management. Coppicing and mowing the edges of the rides is done regularly to maintain a permanent network of open rides.

When I went there in July 2008, there was a stunning display of White Admirals. Generally you see these one at a time, but at Monkwood there were three or four nectaring on each bramble bush, a wonderful sight. Because it was late in their season, many had become worn or pecked by birds, but I shall certainly try to come back earlier in their flight season to see them again.



White Admirals may easily be seen in July



Dragonflies frequent the woods



Woodland walk



White Admiral on bramble blossom



The underside of a White Admiral is more colourful than its upperside



Comma basking



White Admirals seem particularly prone to wing damage, presumably by bird attacks



Male (below) and female Large Skippers



Meadow Brown (m)



Meadow Brown (f)



Meadow Brown on bramble blossom



Signs at the reserve's entrance

LOCATION

Explorer Map 204: Worcester and Droitwich Spa
Landranger (pink) Map 150: Worcester and
The Malverns
Parking (Entrance) SO804607

Approximately 5 miles north-west of Worcester. Take the A443 north for about 3 miles and turn left towards Sinton Green. After a further mile, turn left for Wichenford/Monkwood Green and, after 2 miles, turn right at Monkwood Green. This road passes the wood and on the N side of the road a track leads into a small car park. This is about a mile from the New Inn pub at Sinton Green. The main ride has a firm surface which is negotiable for some of its length by most wheelchair users, particularly if with an assistant. There are no facilities at Monkwood, but there are pubs at Sinton Green and Monkwood Green.