

# *New Forest Biodiversity Forum*

## **The New Forest: a cornucopia of species**

### **Clive Chatters**

Recording wildlife in the New Forest has a long and honourable tradition. We have inherited a superb legacy of biological records which inform our understanding of the changing character of the Forest, with much left to discover and rediscover. There are records for c.20,000 species from the grazed Open Forest, a landscape which extends to some 25-28,000ha. However, much remains to be done to describe and understand the Forest's biota. Single species studies are fun, fundable, and intellectually stimulating but are at risk of unpicking ecosystems and focusing the gaze on individual components. No species is entire of itself; every living thing is a piece of the whole...what we are concerned with in conserving the Forest is the fundamental interconnectedness of all things. The driving force of this diversity is pastoralism as manifest in the commoning economy. Those who aspire to conserve the Forest are faced with challenges that are more socio-economic and political than biological. For most of our c.20,000 species, life is tough but tolerable, shared habitats are burnt and bashed and broken and browsed and shat on. The very nature of diverse landscapes is that they are sub-optimal for most things, few species thrive but many survive - which is wonderful.