

# *New Forest Biodiversity Forum*

## **Recent Lichen Surveys in the New Forest**

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Since 2008, there has been ongoing general survey, including a COVID project to map the species of interest at 1km across the open Forest, in addition to funded studies and surveys.

Since 2008, the total of 477 lichen and associated fungi taxa recorded from the SAC by then has been increased to 720 taxa. This includes 28 Red List, 44 Near Threatened, and 124 Notable species. The data collected has been used in several research projects producing nine peer reviewed papers and four survey reports.

The outstanding work of the last 15 years was the detailed exploration of the New Forest heathlands. These were known to be important, but the scale of the habitat and the taxonomic difficulty had discouraged detailed study. A sample survey was started in 2011 and a detailed report published in 2017, but with survey continuing afterwards. This found many new species, some very unexpected.

Overarching factor in lichen abundance is infertile soils but high diversity is only expressed where openness is maintained by management pressures. Rich areas are produced by complex interactions between grazing, prescribed burning and disturbance and are highly dependent on these disturbances. The disturbance levels are typically higher than is encountered in conservation managed heathland outside of the New Forest.

The maintenance of variable, both in time and place, but sometimes high grazing pressures, systematic prescribed burning and a not over precious attitude to disturbance are required if the outstand heathland lichen assemblage of the New Forest is to be maintained.