

# *New Forest Biodiversity Forum*

## **Habitat management at RSPB Franchises Lodge**

### **Saul Alonso (RSPB)**

Franchises Lodge is a 426ha Nature Reserve in the New Forest managed by the RSPB. It is located in the north of the New Forest, sitting within the New Forest National Park in the area between Redlynch and Nomansland.

The site is largely wooded, with both native broadleaf woodland and conifer plantations. There are a few open fields, rides and glades, and a few small streams, a pond, and a lake. The site holds a good mix of woodland bird species, a fascinating botanical mix of species, an internationally important lichen community and it's good for invertebrates and fungi.

The site used to be much more open, with heathland and mire systems and far less tree cover. We have been slowly thinning the conifer plantations, removing rhododendron, and culling the deer population. We are hoping that this will encourage a softer transition between habitats, encouraging movement through the landscape for wildlife, and reconnecting areas of suitable habitat.

The reserve is of high nature value. It gives the RSPB a unique opportunity to develop a significant area of woodland, heathland, wood pasture and grassland for the benefit of wildlife. In doing so we will increase the area of land in the New Forest in favourable condition for nature.