



**Haugh Wood Butterfly Project**

**Location: Haugh Woods, Herefordshire**

**Client: Forestry England**

### **The Site**

Located in South Herefordshire near the village of Mordiford, approximately 4 miles from the cathedral city of Hereford, Haugh Wood is 350 hectares of mixed conifer and native broadleaf species managed to provide a range of outcomes; ecological, social and timber production. Designated as a SSSI (site of scientific interest), due to its rich diversity of flora, fauna and in particular the invertebrates, it is nationally recognized for being home to over 600 species of butterflies and moths, particularly the rare White Wood butterfly and Drab Looper moth.

It is a popular site for walkers keen to enjoy the wildlife and spectacular views over the Herefordshire hills. There are two way-marked butterfly trails which include information boards about the various species and conservation work that has been carried out.

### **The Project**

All butterfly and moth species have their own habitat requirements; the foodplant of the caterpillar, the conditions for the caterpillar to successfully pupate and nectar for the adult. Some species are habitat specialists and require specific conditions to survive. If the environment they rely on changes, these specialists can rapidly decline.

Forestry England engaged Kilmaha to carry out various works to enhance and enrich the habitat with the aim of increasing the invertebrate population. This work is on-going and carried out in stages during the winter months, when most species are dormant.

We work closely with the Forestry England ecologist to plan and execute works as required.

### **Scope of Works**

There are several facets to the works which all come together to manage the habitat. They can be broadly split into three distinct operations;

- Copping and tree felling - This constitutes the majority of the work carried out. Selected areas were cleared using chainsaws, taking care to protect the species that were to be retained – random standard trees, deadwood and some particular species such as Wych Elm and Alder Buckthorn. The arisings were used to make ‘dead hedges’. Dead hedges have many advantages and of particular note on this site;
  - we utilized the brush as a barrier against deer and;
  - as a method to use the arisings in a productive and ecologically sustainable way, providing deadwood habitat for a range of species from small mammals to micro-moths.
- Scrub clearance – Using brushcutters and radio-controlled flails, we cleared areas of vegetation, mostly bramble and bracken. By controlling this dominant vegetation, we have given a chance for the more delicate flora to thrive, essential to creating a thriving butterfly habitat.
- Temporary fencing – Haugh Wood and the surrounding landscape has a large population of fallow, roe and muntjac deer, and while there is a management plan in place, it was felt some areas would need further protection from browsing. To this end we installed

## **Case Study**

temporary deer fences. Where possible we used posts recovered from the coppicing operations and plastic deer netting. When the ecologist determined that the fencing could be removed, the netting was bundled and sent for recycling and the posts stacked into deadwood piles.

### **Outcome**

While these works are still on-going, it is clear that the habitat is improving and invertebrate numbers are increasing. The flora and fauna essential for these species is thriving and feedback from visitors has been very positive.