

## **Rachael Harvey**

“I studied at the Royal Agricultural University as a mature student undertaking a FdSc in British Wildlife Conservation. In 2022 I completed a BSc (Hons) in Countryside Management at the Royal Agricultural University. In the final year of my studies, I had the option to take the Forestry and Woodland Management elective which I very much enjoyed.

“This module introduced and emphasised the various factors to consider when assessing and managing woodlands and the wide range of benefits that woodlands can deliver, be it the production of quality sustainable timber, the provision of important habitat for wildlife, adding to the amenity of the countryside, assisting with flood alleviation and the improvement of air and water quality.

“There were a range of site visits to supplement the lectures, including an autumn visit to a Gloucestershire Beech wood, which was an aesthetically beautiful experience and a practical learning opportunity. A woodland assessment and management plan for this Beech woodland formed a core assessment so I was therefore delighted to receive the Royal Forestry Society, Morley Penistan prize for top student on this module.

“My main woodland connection is through volunteering activities and access to nature. A few years ago during a volunteer visit to record the presence/absence of long eared owls in the Mendip Hills I was introduced to the practical management of Stockhill coniferous woodland for wildlife and for people. The collaborative habitat planning and management at landscape scale supported a range of species in the larger mosaic landscape which increased biodiversity for a range of species. On this occasion I heard the calling of nightjar, tawny and barn owls. Importantly this woodland contained accessible paths with places to rest which facilitated my participation in the search for the long eared owl and continues to enable access to nature throughout the seasons.

“My volunteer activities enable opportunity to participate in practical countryside management and wildlife monitoring and recording. I have a keen interest in veteran trees, standing deadwood and invertebrates particularly pollinating insects. Moving forward I ideally would like to use my skills in communicating the benefits gained through educational and personal engagement in accessible access to wildlife, natural environments and landscape heritage.”