

The Hafren Forest

Hafren Forest is situated between the Clywedog reservoir to the east, and Plynlimon (the highest point in the Cambrian mountains) to the west, and covers an area of 40 square kms. It was first planted in 1937, on land acquired as twelve upland farms. It is a commercial forestry run by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) with large stands of spruce and fir but is cut on a rotational basis producing a variety of habitats. These range from the thick commercial stands to new plantings to areas of scrub and natural regeneration of broad leaf woodland. It overlooks the Clywedog reservoir and the river Severn which has its origins on Plynlimon flows through producing the Cascade Falls and Severn-Break-it's-neck waterfall.



Hafren Forest

The main access to the forest is from Llanidloes town centre. Face the market hall from Great Oak street and take short Bridge Street directly opposite. Follow the narrow road to Old Hall and then on to the Rhyd-y-benwch car park (SN 857 869). You can also access the forest from the north end of the Clywedog and from Staylitttle (Penffordd-las). There are walking trails that are way-marked and commence from the carpark but there are many forestry roads that criss-cross the forest and can be accessed on foot.



Open areas of habitat

With the varied habitat comes a variety of species and, as the forest covers such a large area, what you will see and hear will vary depending on your location. Even so Common Crossbill are usually a given on any walk along with Siskin, Lesser Redpoll, Great-spotted Woodpecker, the more common thrush (in winter Redwing and Fieldfare) and tit species. Marsh and Willow Tits are sometimes seen. Grey Wagtail and Dipper are frequent along the river and a view of the Clywedog can reward with a variety of gull species including Herring and Greater and Lesser Black-backed gulls, Cormorant, Great-crested Grebe, Canada

Goose and Mallard. Heron is frequent, often in large numbers. Great grey Shrike has been a winter visitor in the past.

In spring and summer the re-growth areas are usually alive with migrants. Wood, Willow, and Garden Warblers along with Chiffchaff, Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Tree Pipit, Common Cuckoo and Common Redstart can be found. European Nightjars have also been seen on occasion.

One of the highlights of the forest in recent years is the presence of breeding Osprey. They have bred in the forest since 2013. There is a viewing location at SN 870897 and NRW put a hide in place during the summer, though you do not need to be inside to see them.

Red Kite, Common Buzzard and Sparrowhawk are frequent and Northern Goshawk is a possible. Merlin and Hen Harrier may sometimes be found on the walk to the source of the Severn



Bombus monticola

In addition to the birds some interesting insects may also be found including *Bombus monticola* (Bilberry bumble bee), *Andrena tarseta* (Tormentil mining bee), Small Pearl-bordered and Dark-green Fritillary butterflies.

Finally, for added interest is the geology with rock exposures covering a time period between 446 - 433Ma, late Ordovician to early Silurian. A period when Britain lay well south of the equator. One very interesting structure may be found perched on a hillside at SN 867 868, 1Km before the carpark. This is the "Drinking Stone" so called as legend suggests that it descends to the river each night for a drink (as the stone is frequently wet in the morning). This is a huge boulder which has, at some point in the distant past, fractured from the bedrock, probably only a few tens of metres up the hill and has slid to rest here. One side of the Drinking Stone, originally the underside of a sediment bed, exhibits a splendid example of flute casting. Flute marks are made by strong eddies (vortices) in the current. These scour the underlying mud deeply at first, but then weaken and widen as they move on down current. Therefore they aid in identifying the direction of the palaeocurrent.



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The Drinking Stone showing Flute casts and other interesting features