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Commission works 'ruining forest' fears

By Karen Bate

FEARS that the Forestry Commission are annihilating multiple species in the New Forest were voiced at the Verderers' Court on Friday in two presentments.

Concern has been raised that many restoration projects being carried out are ill-prepared and destructive to wildlife, particularly during the bird nesting season.

And now it is time to "put a stop to this trail of destruction" – according to Hyde resident John Fryer.

Mr Fryer said: "I came to this court just over three years ago, to express my horror at what had been done to some of the brooks, streams, and other watercourses.

"I am amazed that after three years this perpetual ruination of the watercourses and their associated habitats is still being allowed to continue.

"They are unable to repair the extensive damage they have already caused to the fragile habitats of many birds, mammals, fish, insects and micro-organisms. The flora, many of which are rare and indigenous, are also being destroyed.

"Verderers, as custodians, have the ancient right to control what is actually taking place here. Now is the time to say 'enough is enough'.

"If this type of activity had been taking place on private land, particularly if that land had been awarded SSSI status, or similar, DEFRA would have called a halt to work as soon as it started."

Commoner Beryl Bull made her presentment regarding the restoration work at Amberslade and Broomy Inclosure which, she claims, was done during the peak bird nest-



Work underway to restore the wetlands in the New Forest

ing season. She said: "May and June are busy months for birds, with the breeding season in full swing for most species, yet this was the time when the Forestry Commission started restoration work for the second time on Amberslade and Broomy Inclosure.

"The huge diggers were carting the enormous amounts of materials along the once small forest tracks to where great mounds of clay, heather bales and large stones were being stored, thus turning the tracks into a deep, wide, muddy mess, causing unnecessary disturbance to the birds, wildlife and their habitat."

The Forestry Commission is fill-

ing drainage dykes created in the 1950s to bring back the meandering streams that support wildlife.

Conservationists are hoping the restored river and wetlands will encourage a return of invertebrates and aquatic plants.

Clerk to the Verderers Sue Westwood said: "The Official Verderer will make a statement at the next open court on September 16 explaining why the Verderers support the principle of wetland restoration."

A website friendsoflatchmore.co.uk was launched to save Latchmore Brook and other sensitive parts of the forest from restoration by the Forestry Commission.