

## Rupert Lane

### **Dartmoor's woodlands.**

About 10% of Dartmoor is wooded, about half of that is conifer and the other half broadleaf and 27%, near enough 2,700 hectares is ancient woodland, that means that its recorded as being woodland cover on that land since 1600 when they started mapping woodlands, or mapping land on a regular basis.

*And what constitutes those ancient woodlands?*

They're generally western oak woodlands in this part of the world, often, in woodlands like Yarner, they're often over dominated by oak trees because of the charcoal production that's gone on in the past and they wanted oak for the tan bark and the charcoal, normally you would expect to see birch, hazel, rowan and thorn and that sort of thing in amongst the oaks, where as we've got very few of that in many of the older, more difficult to access woodlands.

*So what is the significant of western Atlantic woodland on Dartmoor?*

Well you find the western oak woodlands running all the way from Cumbria down to Portugal in fact, and they've all got the same sort of characteristics, and the same floral make up, on Dartmoor the real importance here are the mosses and lichens that colonise these woodlands, the right sort of light levels, clear unpolluted air and a lot of moisture that is often associated with the steep riverside valleys, so you're getting a moister, damper climate which encourages these luxuriant species that we actually don't know a huge amount about, but they are, most of the western oak woodlands are scheduled as Site of Special Scientific Interest and indeed a lot of them, like Yarner Wood, have the international recognition of the Special Area of Conservation, largely because of the high numbers of lichens and mosses that are found within those woodlands.