

Small Woodland Owners' Group

To aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British Woodland
www.woodlands.co.uk/swog

Newsletter October 2008

All SWOG events are free of charge unless otherwise stated.
The Small Woodland Owners Group is co-supported and sponsored by Woodlands.co.uk

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SWOG Meeting

Simply Bats!

(and a lot of other stuff!)

8th November 2008 9:45 am – 4:00pm

Woodland Enterprise Centre,
Flimwell, East Sussex



Including:

An hour with David and Sheila from Batbox

- Bat types and habitat
- Echo location
- Foreign bats
- Legislation
- Leaflets and further info about bats
- Info about Bat Boxes
- And real live bats to look at too!

Patrick Roper on

'To coppice or not to coppice: some conservation controversies'

Patrick has worked as a consultant ecologist since 1993 and works closely with the Woodland Trust on management plans. Patrick manages the Rare Species Inventory for the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre in a professional capacity and has appeared on wildlife programmes on radio and television on many occasions including the national 2007 and 2008 Springwatch on BBC television.

His most amazing feat is that he has studied the Wild Service tree, *Sorbus torminalis*, for over 30 years!!

Fiona Tooth talks on

'Bang to Rights': Rights and responsibilities of owning woodland and Q & A

Fiona says: 'I have a Foundation Degree (equivalent of the old HND) in Forestry & Woodland Management with the emphasis on science and ecology. I was awarded the top student prize and came out with a Distinction, which I regard as a feat! I retired from making prototype and short series contemporary furniture in 2001 and have been immersed in all matter connected with wood since then. I am a very proud grandmother. I'm working to foster the renewal of sustainable rural communities and a deeper understanding of our relationship with nature. I see myself as the custodian of my woodland not just the owner. Oh, and I'm lovely. (will she notice that I left that in?)

There is also a request for us to bring our best tools and five tips each.

Start preparing!

Let me know if you are coming

tracy@woodlands.co.uk

Discussion from the Website Chainsaw Headaches

www.woodlands.co.uk/swog

Martin said:

Using my chainsaw for longish periods gives me a headache! I thought for a while it was due to dehydration so now I drink lots. Then my GP said it might be a good idea to keep glucose levels high as felling/logging etc is hard graft so I make sure I have lots of carbohydrates. But the headaches still come on and stay around until the following morning. I mentioned this to a fellow wooder yesterday and he said the same thing happened to him too and he thought it was due to the chainsaw exhaust fumes. A quick GOOGLE search confirmed that this might indeed be the problem. 2 stroke engines are pretty inefficient and bending over the engine one cannot avoid taking in fumes. I followed a lead to a possible solution in Alkylate Synthetic petrol, which does not contain so much of the harmful elements (but comes at a price).

TWO questions here, does anyone else get chain sore heads and has anyone experience of using this fuel? (What with inhaling chain oil too it's a wonder any of us are still around!!)

The Sawyer

As my forum name suggests I am a sawyer (forester, chainsaw jock and general dogs body) I do on occasion get headaches, I think any one who uses 2 stroke equipment does. One thing you could also look at as well as this new fuel is the mix of oil to petrol you use, e.g. 50:1 33:1 or 25:1 this will depend on the oil you use. I use husquavana 2 stroke oil at 50:1 ish this means that there is less oil in the mix meaning there is less smoke out of the exhaust.

Darren

I get headache from chain sawing only because I get too hot wearing the protective clothing. When the weather gets cooler the problems goes away

Binz

I've not had headaches due to using chainsaw and am using alkylate fuel, but cannot say whether that is just a coincidence or not. I use it because I'm told it's better for the engine and there's no need to drain the fuel if you are going to leave the saw standing unused for a few months - dunno if I'm being conned though cos it is expensive.

Regarding dehydration remember that it's not just the water you've lost but also the salts that need to be replaced. Isotonic drinks are good for that and/or eat food that has lots of salt and sugar such as biscuits etc (or in really hot weather get some proper rehydration salts, but they taste yucky).

Simon

For rehydration, or specifically, the replenishment of lost salts and other minerals, Diarolyte or similar sachets from Boots etc is worth looking at.

My GP suggested I use these when I was suffering the effects of low body salt level after long/strenuous cycle training rides during which I was drinking plenty of water, but effectively diluting the body salts. They're typically available in blackcurrant and citrus flavours as sachets of powder, which you dissolve in water and drink. They're not too unpleasant.

Martin

Thanks all. I have decided to try the Eco friendly fuel, Aspen, which sounds like a very good product anyway but expensive (£14 for 5 litres). It promises better running of the chainsaw and less polluting fumes. As it is ready mixed it should be spot on too in terms of oil/fuel balance etc. I was advised last week by a saw repair guy to take off the spark guard on my Husqvarna exhaust as it can inhibit the exit of exhaust gas-the chance of a stray spark causing a forest fire being pretty slim. I will let you know how I get on.

DaveTaz

Have been to the APF show at Cannock today and got talking to the rep for Aspen, from what he says it helps reduce the headache problem due to the fuel not having lots of the added chemicals that unleaded has. Hopefully this should help you. The Aspen has been developed closely with Husquavarna and it has been recommended to me. The other benefits are that you can buy it for four stroke engines with out oil or with oil mixed in at 50:1. They also have a super high quality chain oil which is vegetable based but I haven't tried it out yet.

Cast iron cooking pots

Richard:

I thought I'd try out the cast iron cooking pot yesterday, put in a whole chicken and some potatoes, placed it over a smallish fire and about an hour and a half later we had lovely roast chicken and almost roast potatoes.

I'm glad I bought this now and am looking forward to a nice cold winter around the fire.



New Grant funding for the WARR area

RDPE Leader is a new grant fund that has money to spend on woodland owners and equipment. Far too complex for me to summarise in this newsletter, but if you are in the WARR (Weald and Rural Rother) area and are looking to buy equipment and make and sell products, then get in touch with me for more information.

The producer group at WoodNet will also be a good way to plug into this funding.



Netherfield centre courses
www.thenetherfieldcentre.co.uk

Was 6th & 7th October (new date- TBC)	Stock Fencing (2 days) Using chestnut stakes, stock netting and barbed wire, this practical course includes putting in strainer posts and struts and tensioning the wire.	£120
Friday 10th October	Charcoal Making A practical course covering the history of charcoal making, suitable woods and a variety of small kilns	£60
Friday 17th October Closing date for booking 3 rd Oct	Besom Broom making (half day) Make your own broom and learn about materials and techniques with Alan Sage	£40
3rd & 4th November (tbc)	Post & Rail Fencing (2 days) A practical hands on course, covering equipment, tools and techniques; learn how to set uprights on the ground and fix rails	£120
Friday 14 th November	Hedge Laying A practical course, by the end of which you will have laid a section of hedge. Covers tools, clearing, pleaching, stakes and binders.	£60
Friday 28 th November	Hedge Laying	£60
Friday 6th February	Hedge Laying	£60





Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell, East Sussex

Date	Course	Cost	Description
04/10/08	Fungi ID walk	£20	Join Bryan Bullen for a walk in the woods, and learn to identify the principal fungi groups present at this time of year as well as the individual species names of the more common mushrooms and toadstools. Although not intended as a foray for collecting edibles, advice will be given on what is safe and what is poisonous, as well as the place of fungi in the ecology of woodland
18/10/08	Wood Products – storage, seasoning and marketing	£30	Learn about wood types and their uses; find out which lengths are useful for cut coppice, how to store your wood and which markets you could sell to. Tim Saunders from Rother Forestry will guide you through the process from cutting, to storage and sales.
22/11/08	Woodland Archaeology	£30	Learn to Identify archaeological features that have been protected by the presence of woodland. Understand why woodlands are not recognised as very important archaeological landscapes. Suitable for general interest, woodland owners, foresters, coppice cutters, woodland managers, people involved in community woodlands etc.
05/12/08	Make a rustic bird table	£75	Choose the correct wood for a bird table, harvest your own tree and make a bird table to take home, with the expert guidance of John Waller
14 th March, 25 th April, 9 th May, 13 th June 2009	Managing woodland for Biodiversity	Apprx £60 per day	Patrick Roper, consultant Ecologist, is developing a 4 day course, including woodland types, flora, fauna and management planning. Please email me if you are interested in knowing more. Price to be confirmed
Date to be confirmed when we have 11 people	Forestry First Aid Please register interest.	Approx £70	This training is suitable for private individuals (e.g. woodland owners working in their own woodland) and commercial foresters, coppice cutters, woodland managers, arborists, etc. The H&SE 1-day Appointed Person First Aid Certificate is valid for three years.

Contact Tracy for more information and a booking form

training@woodnet.org.uk

or phone 07930 589 508

www.woodnet.org.uk

Please note that due to rising costs and reduced funding, our course prices will need to increase next year.

Chainsaw courses

Chainsaw users refreshers course

John asks:

I am trying to get together a group of four people for a one day chainsaw retraining course as required for BTCV public liability insurance. Participants should already have a chainsaw license with NPTC CS30 and CS31b. The course will cost £85 per person and will be held in New England Wood, Cuckfield, on a date to be arranged between participants and the trainer.

If you are interested, please contact me by email: j_pilkington363@btinternet.com, or by telephone on 01444 482166.

Felling Small Trees: Chainsaw Course

There are some more SWOG members interested in doing this course, felling small trees and maintaining a saw. Although this course comes with a LANTRA qualification, it is assessed by the trainer, which takes some of the stress out of the course. If you are interested in chainsaw training, contact me, (Tracy) or David Rossney (esusforestry@btinternet.com)



You can also do one day chainsaw courses through the Netherfield centre, on maintenance and cross cutting. However this course does **not** cover felling trees safely.

Five basic hand tools for woodland management (and how to care for them) Ian Swaine

These are the hand tools that have helped me most in my wood, and that in many cases have proved popular when supplied second hand to others. In the case of the edge tools I can't emphasise enough the importance of good sharpening – if in doubt get help.

1. Billhook/handbill – indispensable for light trimming, felling and splitting. Most woodland workers prefer a lighter single bladed bill of about 10" with a moderate hook. My personal choice is an Elwell 3901 (Tenterden pattern) – not made for over forty years, but often found second hand. The thin blade makes sharpening easy, and if kept in order it will sever a 1" hazel rod with a single light blow. A good woodsman with a billhook never needs to stoop: the hook allows you to pick up material from the ground easily. I keep my billhooks in old trouser legs, sewn up at one end, together with glove in which I store a sharpening stone, so all that I need is in one place. Beware of the modern type of bill that has short tang riveted into the ferrule – everything about these tools is dire, and they are dangerous to use.
2. Light axe – a small Kent or Wedge pattern axe of 2 to 3lb is great for heavier splitting, snedding and for pointing stakes. Felling trees up to 6 inch diameter with an axe is a pleasure, and much more restful than using a chainsaw, if you are not pushed for time. Try to select an axe that has a fairly slender blade. This will be easier to maintain. Once again old legs from jeans are good for protecting the blade. A round axe stone is useful, but not easy to find at a sensible price. Cutting 2" off the end of an old carpenters combination coarse/fine bench stone makes a cheap substitute. Good axes are often found second hand, but almost always need rehandling. Beware of tools that have been used as hammers on the poll (rear), as the eye is often cracked.
3. Timber tongs – not a tool that people automatically think of for light manual forestry work, but it saves your strength and saves your hands from injury. Two pairs of tongs assist greatly if you are trying to carry a heavy log with a helper. Tongs can transform your productivity when stacking cordwood. The larger size are easier to use and can still grip fairly small logs. Not often seen second hand, but worth the expense to buy new – Sandvik ones are fine.



4. Bow saw – I use a 21" with a triangular frame and a 24" type. The smaller saw is good for pruning and for getting into coppice stools, the 24" is great for light felling. When not in use you should release the tension from the blade. This gives the blade and frame a longer life. The supplied blade guards always break or get lost. A length of plastic water pipe with a cut down the side is a fair replacement that lasts a while. Sandvik Bahco seems to make the best blades, cheaper bowsaws often cut in a curve, or suffer frame failure. It is worth buying a decent, heavier robust saw. Don't be mean about blade replacement, a new blade is a joy to use.
5. Long handled fork – I still burn up lop and top, so I find this tool invaluable for tidying up and turning in the fire. The type that works best has a 4' handle and four light curved tines. They are the kind that people use for mucking out livestock. You can rake up debris with it, and throw material into the fire without getting scorched. Never leave it too close to the fire, (many of these tools end up with one side of the handle charred!) and give the handle a dose of linseed oil occasionally. Once again these are sometimes found secondhand, and SCATS have had reasonable modern ones.



Tool Care

Always wipe off moisture before storing your tools, and then lightly oil blades, including saws. Wooden handles on axes and bills need to be checked for looseness. Avoid soaking handles in water to tighten, as this can lead to the wood degenerating, and in the long term makes the looseness worse. Applying linseed oil is kinder to the tool. Looseness on axe handles may be cured with a new wooden wedge, or additional small metal wedges, not nails or staples! Any cracks necessitate fitting a new handle. Billhook handles are harder to tighten, but the tang (metal part that is inside handle) may be tightened up where it emerges from the back of the handle. Clamp the blade in a vice near the handle, and using a hammer gently peen over the end of the tang. This works if the looseness is slight, but leaving the handle to rattle will allow the problem to get to the stage where a new one is needed.

Hessian sacks, old trouser legs, canvas kit bags and old ammunition boxes are all great for safe storage and transport of edge tools.

Sharpening is a real knack, and requires practise and patience. Briefly, you need to consider the following points:-

- Only sharpen when you are not going to be distracted.
- Damage like chips and burrs needs to be tackled in a workshop where you can clamp the tool and use a file to remove the fault.
- The bevels should blend into the sides of the blade without a shoulder. If this is not the case then once again clamp the tool down and use a file to correct the contours of the tool.
- Don't sharpen the extreme edge of the tool (the angle of the edge will get obtuse), work on the bevels and maintain the acute angle of the edge. This helps to avoid a shoulder forming.
- Sharpen during the working day. Little and often keeps the tool keen and avoids you needing to sharpen when you start work next time.
- Experiment with different shapes and grades of sharpening stone to find out what works for you; many modern stones are very poor. Old 'Carborundum' brand 'canoe' shaped stones are usually useable for billhooks.
- Use water (or spit) not oil on your sharpening stone. Oil tends to go gummy or glazed with time, and it picks up dust. Wash the stone if needed.
- If new to sharpening consider wearing gloves, rubber palmed builders gloves allow reasonable dexterity and some cut protection.

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Forest Forge workshop

There will be a workshop in Beechmast Wood, Goudhurst, Kent on the 18th-19th October with Bernard Graves who will be making and firing a small forest forge. Bernard is a master craftsman in this and many other woodland skills and I would strongly recommend two days spent in his company.

The workshop will run from 9.30 Sat morning through to 5 pm each day with a price of £30 per person. We will need a minimum of 10 people, maximum of 15. The workshop will involve making charcoal, demonstrating the building of a small forge, and forging iron. We hope everyone will go home with a piece of forged iron!

Beechmast wood is a part of the Old Park Wood Owners Association, which is looking at ways of establishing a coherent management plan for Old Park Wood as a whole. Please do circulate this to whoever you think may be interested, and get in touch with me if you need directions or further information. There has already been quite a bit of interest, so please do get in touch asap.

dan.skinner@talktalk.net



Butterflies and Moths in 2008.

The mixed weather in 2008 produced mixed fortunes for our local moths and butterflies. Here are some of the results from South East woods.



Orange Tip had a very good year, abundant throughout the Spring on woodland rides and in connecting clearings. Later in the year the **Small White** and **Large White** have been abundant – at times fluttering about like confetti.



The **Comma** seems to have had a good year. Individuals were regularly reported 'patrolling' around woodland clearings. Most will now be hibernating, hidden amongst dead leaves, so watch out for them if you're doing any clearing over the winter.



Red Admirals were strangely absent for much of the year. There were only a small number of sightings of this normally common butterfly.



There were no sightings of the **Pearl-bordered Fritillary** in the Kent or East Sussex in 2008. This once widespread butterfly now seems to be locally extinct in Kent and East Sussex woodlands. The butterfly needs a succession of coppiced areas where dog-violets are abundant.



White Admiral, another woodland specialist, was reported in lots of woods this year. The caterpillar of the White Admiral relies on Honeysuckle – a beautiful plant that can survive in shaded woodlands. Within the Rother Woods area the adult butterfly was seen at Mill Wood near Peasmarsh, Great Sowdens Wood at Udimore and Elephant Wood near Staplecross.



Rare moths were also recorded this year; **Clay Fan-foot** (above) and **Olive Crescent** moths (both UK Biodiversity Priority Species) were found in good numbers in Tracy and Mike's newly coppiced area in Mill Wood.

For those of you who have been looking out for butterflies this year I hope you found it a rewarding experience and it led you to discover all sorts of fauna and flora. Please keep up the good work and keep the reports coming in.

Steve Wheatley

Butterfly Conservation's South East Woodlands Project

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