

August 2009

The Great Nut Hunt



Hazel dormice are small, rarely seen creatures which live predominantly in our woodlands and hedgerows. Over the last century their distribution has shrunk due to loss of their woodland habitats, a decline in the use of traditional coppicing methods and the fact that unlike other small mammals they find it harder to recover their numbers quickly as they are slow to breed, tending to only have one litter a year.

In order to protect this species it is vital that we know where it is. One of the easiest ways of finding out if it's present in a woodland is to look for feeding signs. Dormice are one of the few species in our country that hibernate and to ensure they survive the winter they need to build up huge fat reserves. Consequently they rely on habitat that has a variety of plant and tree species that provide an abundance of food stuffs throughout the year, but in particular a wealth of rich foods in the autumn, just before they prepare for winter. Hazel nuts, where available, are a staple of their autumn diet. And luckily for us dormice leave distinctive tooth marks when they gnaw into the green hazel nuts, before eating the kernel and discarding the shell to fall to the forest floor.



This autumn the People's Trust for Endangered Species, a wildlife conservation charity, is launching the third Great Nut Hunt. In both 1993 and 2001 the Trust asked people to search their local woodlands for any hazel nuts chewed by wildlife and

send them in to be identified. In total thousands of volunteers sent in hazel nuts from over 2,000 sites and helped to identify almost 500 woodlands that had dormice present across England and Wales, which had been previously unrecorded. Of these 50 are now being monitored annually. The Trust is encouraging people of all ages to get out into the woods this year to help hunt for more nibbled nuts to see if dormice are there. To take part in the 2009 Great Nut Hunt email Nida Al Fulaij at nida@ptes.org or visit our website www.ptes.org/greatnuthunt.

You can enter the hedgerow competition too:

www.ptes.org/hedgerows

Remember, only licensed handlers can handle dormice.

For a free information booklet on managing woodlands for dormice, email Tracy with your postal address, or get one from us at a woodfair.

Events South East

Informal woodland visit

1 August 2009

Nick's wood near Lewes

See website for details

<http://www.swog.org.uk/forum/topic.php?id=306>

Email tracy@woodlands.co.uk

Fungi ID walk

Sunday 27th September

Woodland near Northiam

Bentley Woodfair

Email Tracy with your postal address if you would like more information and a discount voucher.

18th – 20th Sept.

WoodlandsTV.co.uk

Dealing with hung up trees
Snedding
Butchering a deer

North and Wales meetings

Please note that the venue for the 10th October has changed to accommodate speaker and topic. We will reschedule the Co Durham meeting.

10th October, Wetherby, York. Carlshead Farms

<http://www.carlshead.co.uk>

Our main topic is ponds – creation and management. Please let me know if you are interested in attending.

14th November, Delamere Forest Park, Cheshire

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/delamereforestpark>

I realise that neither of these are in Wales. The locations of our meetings are based on where people live (not necessarily where the woods are), and are only for main meetings. We would love to have smaller, local and woodland based meetings all around the country. If you would like to offer to host a small gathering, please get in touch.

Let me know if you would like to attend one of these gatherings, so I can plan it in more detail - suggest topics too!

Woodland Insurance: new contact

We (Beechtree) offer a tailor-made insurance scheme for woodland owners and their workers, whether these are friends and family or employees. Cover extends to working in other people's woods or land and also for equipment such as tools and trailers.

All quotations are based on your individual circumstances; email: gary@thebeechtree.com for information.

Or see the SWOG website for more

www.swog.org.uk/news/woodland-insurance

Events Wales/ Shropshire

SWOG meetings

10th Oct Near York

14th Nov, Delamere Forest Park,
Cheshire

www.forestry.gov.uk/delamereforestpark

www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk

www.moelyci.org

Wanted

Butterfly recorders in Wales, if you can help contact Katie survey@butterfly-conservation.org

Woodlands.co.uk blogs

Healing through woodlands
Community woods projects

And much, much more!

www.woodlands.co.uk/blog

More information on events needed, please contact Tracy if you know of any!

Would you like to be our representative on the Bridgend Biodiversity partnership? Email me if you are interested. tracy@woodlands.co.uk

Small Woodland Owners' Group

The Great Yorkshire Show

Is indeed GREAT! I have never been to such an enormous show. Took us ages to find the woodlands.co.uk tent!

As this show is an agricultural show, it is very different from those that are pure wood shows. There were all kinds of farm animals and all sorts of equipment, vehicles, clothing and information.



In the woodlands, was the woodland section. Lots of woodland tools and equipment, chainsaw carving and racing up poles- never a dull moment.

The woodlands.co.uk tent had a section for SWOG, with free information packs and flapjack. It was really good to meet some SWOG members and woodland owners. Dan and Jonathan were kept very busy telling people about the woods in the North and offering advice.



Dan also had a selection of his carvings for sale. It was brilliant to watch him carve these over the week.



The Yorkshire show is fabulous; we will be back there in two years time.

Events North

SWOG meeting
10th October
York

Courses, events and products
www.yorkshirehurdles.com

Scottish Native woods
Courses, events, volunteering
www.scottishnativewoods.org.uk

Woodland Survival crafts
www.woodlandurvivalcrafts.com

Woodland management advice
www.cumbriawoodlands.co.uk

Yorwoods
Supporting forestry in Yorkshire
www.yorwoods.org.uk

Details of events and courses needed, please email Tracy with information



Small Woods Association

The Small Woods Association will have its usual stand at the Weald Woodfair in September, ably organised by Richard King and his band of volunteers, together with SWA staff, so come along and say hello. In addition the 21st anniversary SWA AGM and members conference will be held at the event on the Saturday morning (19th September); speakers include Joanne Yarrow from Wilderness Wood, and Robert Matthews from Forestry Commission who will be talking about small woods and global warming. The cost to members is £23.50, which includes lunch and entry to the Woodfair. For enquiries please contact Lorraine Murray on 01952 432769 or enquiries@smallwoods.org.uk



The ghost of workers past by David

Delving into the history hidden in your woodland



Identifying features – banks and ditches

“I don’t think my wood has any archaeology in it” somebody said to me recently. So, what are the chances of finding anything archaeological in your wood? And if you do, what is it likely to be? In all the woods I’ve looked at there has always been something archaeological, either in the trees, the ground flora or in the bumps on the ground. So the chances of finding archaeological features in your own woodland are very high. Wherever your wood is, there are a number of features, which are more commonly found than others, and we’ll look at those first.

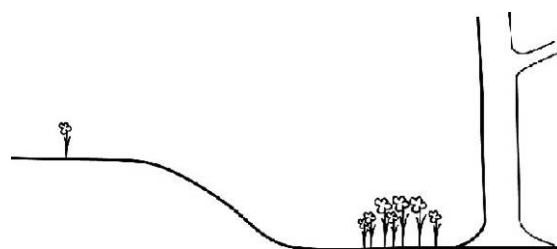
Woodbanks

This is possibly the most common feature to be found either within the woodland or on the edge. If you’re not sure whether a slight rise in the ground is a bank or not, follow it. It may go nowhere, in which case it could be something else. If it does go somewhere then there’s a good chance it’s a bank. Does it go in a straight line, or is it wandering around? Does the bank have a matching ditch? The ditch may no longer look much like one. Over time it could have become pretty filled in. What with deer crossing it and rainfall over a century or more, there might not be much ditch left. It might well look like a slight dip in the ground on one side of the bank.

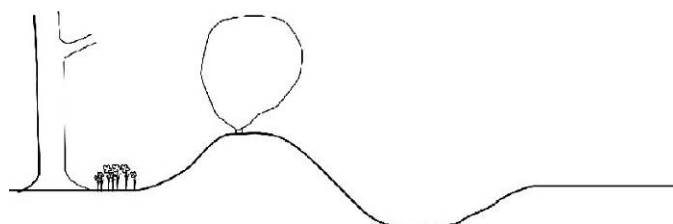
We’re now at the point where you either have a straight bank or a sinuous bank, and it either has the remains of a ditch or it doesn’t. Looking at each of these options –

Straight and no ditch – if the level of the ground on one side of the bank is higher than on the other, you could be looking at a lynchet. If this is the case the bank will be one-sided and the bank will be where the ground level changes.

A lynchet was the edge of an arable field, often on sloping ground. People have ploughed up to the boundary and turned, and that together with the effect of rain-washed soil on a downhill slope has caused the soil to build up at the boundary. It would once have been marked by stones, trees or a hedge. There probably won’t be much of the original boundary markers to be seen, just the change in height. Lynchets are generally quite straight, but may be gently curved; they don’t tend to wiggle.



Straight and with a ditch – this would be somewhat unusual, but suggests a fairly recent boundary where a ditch has been dug, probably for drainage.



Sinuous without a ditch – the most likely explanation for this is as an internal wood boundary. In other words, there was woodland on both sides of the bank and the bank marked the boundary between two owners of woodland.

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Sinuuous with a ditch – this suggests that the woodland has medieval origins, and the medieval wood was on the side of the bank opposite to the ditch. In those days woodland owners were responsible for keeping livestock out of their wood (unlike now where the farmer is responsible). With no barbed wire available, they had to construct something within their boundary which was animal proof. So they dug a ditch on the outside, throwing the spoil up to form a bank. Dig down one foot and throw the spoil onto a bank, and you've got a two-foot high barrier already. They also had to grow a hedge on the bank to act as a final deterrent. It was very effective as long as the ditch was kept dug, and the hedge was laid. It seems likely that in many places this barrier was maintained until early in the 20th century, but certainly after the First World War, such practices tended to fall into abeyance. You may find stems of trees, which have been laid over many years on such banks. If a ditch-with-bank runs through woodland it suggests that the side with the ditch had not been woodland at some time in the past.

You may realise from this that most ditches were not dug in order to drain water – in fact, many would have run parallel with the slope. But yours might be doing an excellent job of draining because it happens to run downhill. But if it's a ditch without a bank, then it might have been dug for drainage only. Do look carefully to see if there are the remains of a bank somewhere along it, preferably with trees on it, because a lot of the bank could have been bulldozed out. It sometimes gets to the point when you really can't be sure whether a farmer has re-dug a ditch recently or whether you're looking at a historic feature. Still, you could always ask me to come and have a look to make sure. We'll have a look at recording banks and ditches next time.

David Brown

www.sewaf.org.uk

sewoodarchforum@googlemail.com

Responsible shooting by Catweazle

Shooting is better in old woodland, but there are shooters and there are cowboys. I have been shooting vermin and a member of the best forums for many years, if you can give me a rough location I can probably find you a responsible shooter to control your vermin. You meet the guy, check his insurance and decide, no pressure. If anyone else wants vermin control there's a reasonable chance I can put you in touch. I won't just post a link to a shooting site, that would be stupid as anybody can join, but I will forward your requests to established and responsible shooters, after 5 years membership I know the decent chaps from the fools.

I should say that I am not looking for a shoot myself, my 17 acres keeps me busy, but I'm a keen shooter myself who would like to put good shooters in touch with woodland owners. I reckon that my 5 years shooting forum membership makes this safer than you just putting a request on-line and hoping that the respondent is a decent fellow.

If you want a pest controller email me at ashenbank.south@gmail.com and I'll see if there is a responsible shooter in your area.

You won't be expected to pay anything at all, there are loads of enthusiastic adult hunters out there who will do the job for free if they can keep the meat.

If you wish to discuss this topic further, or ask questions, follow this link to the forum www.swog.org.uk/forum/topic.php?id=345



Planning in woodlands

Our SWOG meeting on planning law and woodlands was hard work and really useful. Nick Ide from Batchellor Thacker led us through an amazing array of information. We are in the process of writing up some kind of a guide, but this will take some time to make sure we get it accurate.



According to long-standing law, all “development” requires planning consent. There are exceptions to this rule. As you are aware, you do not usually require permission to put a small shed in your garden at home. This is “within the cartilage of a dwelling house” so it is exempt. There is a similar exemption for Forestry Land, where certain activities which would otherwise be classified as development are allowed. This is called “permitted development”. Certain developments, including the erection of sheds, are allowed, but only if they are thought to be “reasonably necessary for forestry purposes”.

So, the issue is, how do you show that your needs are reasonably necessary?

Much more to come on this topic!

In the meantime, if you require planning advice you can contact Nick Ide. He may be able to help you briefly on the phone, or will tell you his fees for a more complex application.



Head of Planning and Development

Direct phone: 01892 509285

Email: nicholas.ide@batchellerthacker.co.uk

Web: <http://www.batchellerthacker.co.uk>

We also had a visit from Lyn Palmer and David Brown from the SE woodland archaeology group. Lyn was telling us about LIDAR (light detection and ranging) which shows up features through the trees, such as old tracks, remains of forts, charcoal burning platforms etc. Really interesting! If your wood is in the Weald area in Sussex, you might like to see if the LIDAR plane flew over your wood. Contact Lyn: Lyn.Palmer@eastsussex.gov.uk

David led a gallop around the woods to look at some ‘real life’ archaeology.





News from the woods



Sean sent us some wonderful pictures of the poppies near his wood.

David writes: We found a common orchid, - *dactylorhiza fuschii*. I am at a pleasant loss to wonder why it has grown here . The Woodland is on wet glacial clay and orchids are meant to grow on calcareous soil. It is a welcome visitor, which with luck will spread.



Do you have orchids in your woodland? Send us some pictures.

Hatchet Man

Tim has been making hatchets! He is offering to sell them at a discounted rate to SWOG members, £50 only! More information and larger photos on the website at: www.swog.org.uk/articles/the-hatchet-man



David Plummer writes on his blog:

I have just bought a load of native pond plants from Pete the Pond. He has a fantastic small garden with 42 ponds in it! They are packed with pond plants so if you want to buy from him call him on 07970 891711; he also refurbishes and sets up new ponds. All my plants are now in the mud around the edges and I'm hoping they at least get half a season's growth this year to become established. I'm seeing at least 4 dragonfly species around the pond and I saw southern hawkers laying eggs in the margins. I also had a sizeable grass snake and 2 baby 'boot-lace' grass snakes under a couple of the corrugated iron refuges.

<http://www.davidplummerimages.co.uk>

Family Forestry

www.familyforestry.co.uk

Open woodlands

Find a woodland to walk in near you, and recommend them to others.

<http://www.openwoodlands.co.uk/>



Coppice .co.uk
your coppicing resource!

The forum is slowly building momentum; don't forget to use the coppice site for more information on products and cultivation. I am working on a page on Ash coppice, all input welcome!

What are you doing in your woodland?
Email Tracy and tell us!

Chainsaw Courses

I am collecting recommendations for chainsaw courses across the country. Recommendations so far can be found on the www.coppice.co.uk forum in the training section. Please get in touch if you can recommend other trainers.



Courses and information

Fungi Walk 27th Sept

in a wood near Northiam, East Sussex
A chance for an informal walk around the woodland searching for fungi. I will attempt to explain the features that separate the different genera so that people will be able to recognise the main groups in their own woodlands, such as the Amanitas (they include death caps!), Brittle Gills, Milk Caps etc. We will do this by look, feel, smell and taste! We will learn about the association of fungi with trees and other plants, and their lifestyles. We will also look at the culinary aspect so we can discuss the best species for eating, as well as the most poisonous ones.

A bit about me: (Martin)

I have worked for the RSPB for over twenty years, first as a warden, then site manager and currently area manager, where I am responsible for the Society's suite of woodland and heathland reserves in South East England. I have managed woodland nature reserves throughout that period, where I developed my interest in fungi, alongside my knowledge of birds and flora. I have published several papers and reports on fungi, and undertaken surveys for various bodies including National Trust, Woodland Trust, Plantlife, Highways Agency, and of course the RSPB. I sit on the UK Fungus Conservation Forum, which meets at Kew twice a year, and have recently taken up the position of county recorder for fungi in East Sussex.

Courses

WoodNet, East Sussex

www.woodnet.co.uk

Malvern Coppicing, Worcestershire

www.malverncoppicing.co.uk

BTCV

Countrywide

www.btcv.org.uk

Greenwood Centre

Coalbrookdale

www.greenwoodcentre.org.uk

Wildlife photography

Near Crawley

www.davidplummerimages.co.uk

Woodland Skills Centre, Wales

www.woodlandskillscentre.co.uk

Centre for Alternative Technology

Machynlleth

www.cat.org.uk

Small woods association

www.smallwoods.org.uk

facebook

The Small Woodland Owners Group (SWOG) is also on facebook. Come and join us, post photos and videos and share with others. You can also become a swog blog fan and receive feed from the site when new articles go up.

www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61487332523

Forestry courses on offer at the National School of Forestry

The National School of Forestry in Cumbria has been providing training and education in forestry since the early 1960's and has forged strong links with the forestry sector. We have a reputation for delivering focused, practical and relevant training in forestry skills and in forest management. We can offer you, as woodland owners a range of courses that will provide you with the knowledge and skills required to successfully manage your woodland. Courses range from NPTC units, delivered as short courses over a few days or a week through to Foundation degrees and BSc degrees in forestry. There are also opportunities to study Masters degrees in forestry, both full time and part-time with us.

Examples of the short courses we offer leading to NPC certificates include those focused on felling and processing trees but others can be organised through our links with locally based trainers. Details of these courses can be found in the short course prospectus on pages 43 to 47 available from our web site at:

<http://www.cumbria.ac.uk/Courses/Coursesbylevel/ShortCourses2009/InYearAppformsold/BusinessandProfcourses.pdf>

For information on prices for 2009-2010 contact Samantha Smith at: Samantha.Smith@Cumbria.ac.uk or by phone on 01768 893649.



If you are interested in acquiring a greater depth of knowledge of forestry in addition to applied woodland skills you might want to think about studying on our FdSc part time, which last year replaced our successful HND and HNC courses. This is delivered in four, one-week blocks per year and each module can be studied as a university certificate. This course is widely used by forestry employers such as the Forestry commission, the Irish Forest Service and forest management companies as staff development. We have also had a number of woodland owners on the course and one of them made the following comment on the course:

"I own a small commercial conifer woodland in Wales and have just completed the part time HNC in Forestry at University of Cumbria. I found the course gave me the confidence to manage more of the wood myself rather than relying on an agent, and to debate issues with forestry professionals. It also gave me the skills to do many practical jobs in the wood myself, such as inventory and beat up. It is a good blend of informative field trips with structured classroom learning and home study and I found it sufficiently flexible to fit in with my day job." (Current HNC student and woodland owner)

A brief description of the course is available at: <http://www.cumbria.ac.uk/Courses/Coursesbylevel/Foundationdegree2009/ScienceNatResources/NaturalResources/Forestry.aspx>

For further information on the Foundation degree please contact Dave Atkinson at: David.atkinson@cumbria.ac.uk or by phone on 01768 893652.

Can you recommend other courses?

Hedgelaying course

Sellindge, Ashford, Kent, with hazel Coppice. This course will enable participants to cut their own Stakes & Binders & use them to lay a section of hedge. This is a practical & sometimes demanding physical activity, which should be noted, but in saying that everyone is welcome. No dates have been set, that will happen as people make contact to book their place.

They do not need to supply anything, except their own refreshments & wear old suitable clothes, allowing for the weather. All tools & PPE is supplied & they will be supplied with written notes to take away with for future reference.

The cost for each person for a two day course is £60 per person & will be supplied a map to find the site when I have received

their cheques. All proceeds will go to support East Kent Coppice & Hedgerow Organisation, of which they will become automatic members. The courses will on a weekend, 10.00 til 16.00 each day, (Sat & Sun) unless there are enough people who would prefer weekdays by special arrangement.

A maximum of three persons per course.



Those interested should contact me, Allan Rogers via email (ar251049@googlemail.com) or by telephone 01303-891542 providing name, full address & phone number.

Woodland management

Own your own wood, or looking to learn more about woodland management? Learn how to piece together a sound management plan for a woodland & what things in particular you should be doing to maintain or preserve it. Woodland types, applicable laws & sound management practices will all be discussed.

Only £30

Sunday, 27 September 2009

10:00 - 16:00

Yonsea Farm, Rare Breeds Centre, Woodchurch

alan@ajscrafts.co.uk

Coppicing

Coppicing native broadleaf trees in winter is a traditional form of woodland management which also benefits wildlife biodiversity. Learn the basic skills using hand tools and find out what different products can be fashioned from the freshly cut wood. £40

28/11/2009

10am til 4pm

Sparkes Gill Wood, Rolvenden, Kent.

alan@ajscrafts.co.uk

More information on these courses on the SWOG website

<http://www.swog.org.uk/events/hedgelaying-coppicing-and-management-courses/>