



Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter March 2015

Oliver Rackham

Bushcraft beds

New woodland grants

Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk



In this issue

Events and News	3
Oliver Rackham	
Woodland Courses	
Woodland blogs	
RFS supports Squirrel Partnership	
• Forestry grants 2015	6
• Make a basic bushcraft bed	8
• Woodfair listing 2015	10

The big news is the announcement that new DEFRA forestry grants are available to woodland owners – but there is only a short time in which to apply. Several organisations have been in touch to publicise their courses and events around the country. If you can't get to them, why not try making a camp bed under the able guidance of our resident bushcraft expert John Clark?

The Small Woodland Owner's Group has been formed to aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British woodland. The company Woodlands.co.uk sponsors the group, so membership is completely free and events are free of charge unless otherwise stated. SWOG is open to anyone interested in the management or the enjoyment of woodland.



Copyright © Small Woodland Owners' Group 2015

Picture credits Cover & p 7: Woodlands Photo Library; p 2 Peebles Wood Market; p 4 Woodland Skills Centre; p 5 RFS; p 6 Forest of Marston Vale; pp8–9 J. Clark; p 10 Weird & Wild.

SWOG website and forum

rich@swog.org.uk

SWOG co-ordinator and newsletter editor

judith@swog.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter @_swog



SWOG COURSE LIST MARCH 2015



SWOG Course Listings

Anyone who buys a wood from Woodlands.co.uk is given £300 towards a woodland course to help towards owners' enjoyment and knowledge. These courses can encompass anything from basket-weaving, green woodworking or pole lathe turning, to chainsaw tuition and woodland management. Buyers are asked to write a short resumé of their course, noting how effective they found it, and whether they would recommend it to others.

We are gradually incorporating all these valuable comments into a database listing which can be searched by area or course topic. We hope it will be useful to anyone searching for help and guidance in choosing a woodland course. View it on the SWOG website here: www.swog.org.uk

Oliver Rackham 1939–2015

The woodland world is mourning the death of Oliver Rackham OBE FBA, an authority on woodlands and Britain's leading historian of the countryside.

A year ago, an appreciation of his work was published on the Woodlands.co.uk website, which we reproduce here.

Oliver Rackham has been described as 'one of the really outstanding botanical writers of our times', his work being deemed 'seminal' and his books 'meticulously researched'. Rackham has raised huge amounts of awareness for the issues faced by woodlands and the importance of their conservation. In 1998, he was awarded the OBE for services to Nature Conservation, and so Rackham's principles are in line with our own of 'conservation and enjoyment'. He has reinforced respect for woodlands and so is a key figure to know about when owning your own.

Rackham's book, *Ancient Woodland* (1980) profoundly changed the way larger companies appreciate woodlands. After its publication, the Forestry Commission began providing greater protection to ancient woodlands and the Woodland Trust became large woodland owners themselves to ensure conservation. Not only this, but the book has become obligatory reading for all scientists working on any aspect of woodlands, proving Rackham's work to be a globally recognised resource. Not only was the 1980 edition of this book hugely influential, but the launch of the 2003 edition meant it went on being current, and addressed new issues regarding the conservation of woods – such as rapid climate change.

As a woodland owner, it is important to recognise the need for conservation of

woodlands. As Rackham frequently points out, our woods are a living, breathing part of our heritage and therefore it is our responsibility to protect them. In owning a wood, you are playing a part in ensuring its

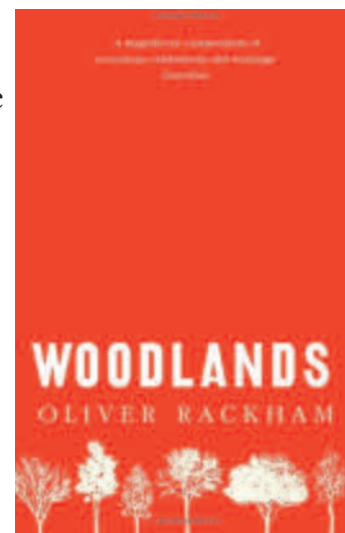
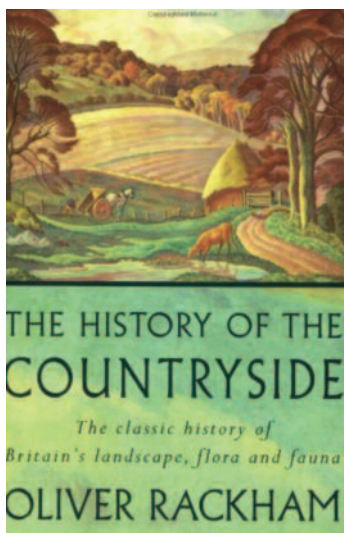
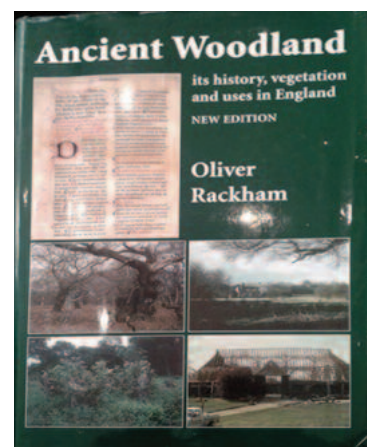
conservation. As an advocate of such preservation, Oliver Rackham is highly relevant to the woodland owner as he knows better than any the difficulties with, and the obstacles set against conservation.

One thing Rackham considers in his work is the issue of managing woodland. Many ancient woodlands have become dark and overgrown as the older techniques of management have been abandoned. Whilst it's important to conserve the natural beauty of your wood, it is also important to enhance it through techniques, such as coppicing. Letting light in often results in an increase in the diversity of the herb layer.

Not only does Rackham inspire the woodland owner to conserve, but he also writes on the importance of trees and wood throughout history. As a historical ecologist, Rackham has written books such as *Woodlands* (2006), which traces British woodlands through the ages and studies how they have achieved national interest.

His last book, *The Ash Tree* was published in October 2014. A fine study, it also provided a platform for a wider consideration of the state of British woodlands.

Oliver Rackham, the finest arboreal advocate of his generation, will be much missed.



Woodland Skills Courses 2015

The Woodland Skills Centre is situated in the heart of the Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in north-east Wales.

With 50 acres of woodland, arboretum, heritage orchard, allotments and extensive workshops the Centre boasts a new timber-frame, timber-clad, lime plastered, sheepswool-insulated, wood-heated building. This provides a meeting room, kitchen, w.c. and resource centre, all with full disabled access.

The Woodland Skills Centre is a not-for-profit social enterprise, that brings together some of the finest craftspeople in the UK. It offer free camping for those attending the courses, with access to the centre building.

Courses include green woodworking crafts such as pole lathe-turning, making a shave horse, stool-making or spoon carving. For the more active there are family bushcraft days or tree identification. and of course, there are many of particular use to small woodland owners, such as managing a small woodland, timber processing and chainsaw training.

The Woodland Skills Centre runs many activities for schools and youth and community

groups, as well as a wide range of Social Forestry programmes. They offer OCN-accredited certification in a range of woodland and countryside crafts, and are also a centre for the National Botanic Garden of Wales gardening courses.

Visit the website woodlandskillscentre.co.uk for more details of the extensive course list. Several SWOG members have attended and their recommendations can be seen in the Course list, downloadable from the SWOG website. In addition SWOG members can benefit from a special discounted offer: £5 off a day course and £10 off a weekend course.



Woodlands blogs

Click on the titles to be taken to the full blogs or videos on the Woodlands.co.uk website.

Forest schools in the UK

Forest schools are becoming increasingly popular and offer a wide variety of activities that allow children to enjoy woodlands and the natural environment.

Beware the giant hogweed

Once admired by the Victorians as an ornamental, the giant hogweed is now regarded as an invasive plant.

Deer stalking as a serious hobby

Sam explains why he not only enjoys deer

stalking, but regards it as a useful hobby. Deer populations must be kept in check to prevent them overgrazing young woodlands.

Midges – a new use!

Midges in their various forms are a perennial blood-sucking nuisance to humans and animals. However, researchers at the Open University have discovered that they are also identifiers of climate change.

Growing fine oak timber in 100 years

Angus reviews Jean Lemaire's brilliant book on growing oak for timber. Translated from the French by Bede Howell, *Oak: fine timber in 100 years* explains that quality oak can only come from careful and scientific management.



Blackdown and East Devon Woodland Association Events and Courses

Living tree grading and thinning selection

Wednesday March 18 2015 10am–5pm

Managing woodlands for woodfuel and wildlife

April 22nd 2015 10am–5pm

Introduction to Deer management

20th May 2015 10am–4pm

All held at Park Farm, Wellington, TA21 9NP
Cost: £90 or £75 to BEDWA members, to include a light lunch.

Chainsaw awareness course

12th September 2015 10am–5pm

Lantra approved trainer. Cost: £145 or £130 to BEDWA members, to include a light lunch.

Location: Park Farm, Wellington, TA21 9NP

To book, or for more information, contact John Greenshields on 01823 660764 or e-mail parkfarm@tinyonline.co.uk. More details at

www.woodbiz.co.uk

RFS support for National Forest grey squirrel partnerships

The Royal Forestry Society (RFS) is supporting the National Forest Company's (NFC) new Grey Squirrel Strategy and is looking forward to working in active collaboration with other owners to protect woodlands in the region from damage.

Woodland owners whose trees suffer from squirrel damage as the rodents strip the bark might be interested in the new strategy, which can be seen **here on the RFS website**.

The RFS's Battram Wood was among the first to be established in the National Forest, with most of trees planted in 1999-2001. The species mix includes English oak and other broadleaved trees which are particularly vulnerable to squirrel attack between the ages of 10-40 years.

RFS Chief Executive Simon Lloyd says: 'The National Forest is the perfect location to establish collaborative projects to control grey squirrels because so much of the woodland there is at a similar vulnerable stage of development. RFS members have called for support to control grey squirrels more effectively and we look forward to participating in any projects which help others learn how to establish these projects successfully.'

'Our management of the site reflects forestry good practice; experiences are shared with

members and others who have an interest in developing woodlands for timber and for future generations to enjoy. We believe grey squirrel control needs to be part of overall management in

areas where they threaten the viability of woodlands, and that control will only be effective if there is a regional approach.'

Simon West, Head of Forestry for the NFC said: 'Managing squirrel numbers to sustainable levels in order to protect our woodlands is a collective responsibility, and our new strategy highlights the work we will do with our landowners and site managers to achieve this. We will support grey squirrel management through advice, training, collaboration and funding, where possible.'

The NFC is working with Forest Research on the long-term sustainable management of grey squirrels and recognises the importance of continually developing sound scientific evidence to develop new control methods as well as understanding grey squirrel behaviour.



Forestry grants 2015

The new grant system from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Forestry Commission and Natural England is currently being rolled out. This might prove the incentive to spur into action any SWOG members who are looking to carry out management in their woodlands. Although the grants available might not seem particularly relevant to some owners, applying for help with a management plan alone, would be very worthwhile. Some of us have only a vague idea of how we think we might tackle the ongoing management of our woods, others are much clearer. Either way, having it all written down, examined and discussed in more detail is a valuable exercise in itself. Added to this is the fact that the grant will pay you for the time taken to complete this task, then surely this must elevate it to the top of your woodland's 'to do' list?

After a two-year gap, the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Forestry Commission and Natural England have announced that woodland capital grants will be available from February 2015 to assist in

- woodland creation
- woodland management plans to ensure woodland owners are in a position to apply for other support when full Countryside Stewardship opens
- addressing tree health issues.

The Woodland Trust gathered 30,000 signatures for a petition to revive the grant scheme in order to support woodland planting. A spokesman said, 'We hope the new grants will be the start of a period of stability for landowners, nurseries

and contractors, enabling them to undertake the long-term planning that new woodland requires'.

The grants

Applicants can apply for funding to assist in the purchase of capital items, or for support in creating woodland management plans. Funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Countryside Stewardship will open fully in July 2015, with additional options for existing woodland. These will include grants for woodland creation, fencing, tree planting, scrub control and felling, or the creation of a detailed woodland management plan. Note that once a grant has been agreed, applicants will only recover their money once the work has been completed.

It's not a particularly quick process, but it is well worthwhile, and can provide a really useful financial boost for those with plans for their woodlands. There is a good overview and links to the various forms needed on the DEFRA website here.

How to apply

1. Applicants must first register with the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) – guidance is here www.gov.uk/government/collections/rural-payments-agency-customer-registration – to get a single business identifier number (SBI) and have their land placed on the rural land register.

Volunteers plant trees in the Forest of Marston Vale, Bedfordshire.



They will also receive a customer registration number (CRN)

2. Contact your Area Forestry Commission office to discuss your application. The FC will be able to give advice about how to proceed. Applications must be submitted to local Forestry Commission offices.

3. Prepare a map of your woodland with boundaries and features clearly defined, and show the proposed area of activity or use of capital items.

More details about mapping are here www.gov.uk/prepare-a-map-woodland.

4. Work out what you want – do you need to protect young trees from deer or rabbits, would you rather draw up a management plan or perhaps get help with felling diseased trees? It is possible to apply for several grants in order to achieve one outcome – for example if you apply for a capital grant for tree planting, it might also be worth applying for help with deer fencing.



When to apply

17 Feb–30 June Tree health and management plan applications

17 Feb–30 April Woodland creation application to allow time for a site visit to take place ahead of the final deadline of 31 May 2015. Woodland creation agreements will be issued to successful applicants from June 2015.

There is a full set of instructions on how, when and where to apply here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/

Winter twig identifier

The Woodland Trust have published a really useful guide to identifying twigs in winter. If your bare trees all look the same at this time of year, take a look at this beautifully photographed poster. Intended for children, there's no shame in adults using it. You can download it and print it out from the WT website here: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk.

Although children don't need a lot of entertainment in the woods, the Woodland Trust's Nature detectives series provides useful learning tools to teach young people about the natural world, from shelter-building, to identifying bird song. The twig identifier also makes a fun family quiz.



Make a basic bushcraft bed

John Clark of bowjibushcamping.co.uk continues his series of bushcraft articles, with a guide to constructing a woodland camp bed.

Although shelter is critical for survival, most heat is lost through contact with the ground, so it is important to construct something to sit or lie on. A simple cot made from wooden staves or poles will elevate your body off ground and keep the damp out.

You will need to gather: six logs for the head and foot; four 2-metre long poles 10-15 cm in diameter; a collection of 60-cm poles about 5 cm thick and sufficient to spread along the length of the bed.

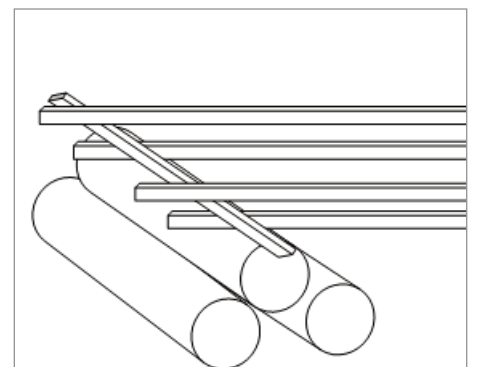
Be flexible and use the materials to hand. Here we found an adequate supply of hazel and some old drainage pipe, which we used as an alternative to logs, which were in short supply. These simple materials can be turned into a low bed without too much trouble. The hazel branches are about 2 metres long and the pipe lengths about a metre each. Similar length logs about 15-20cm in diameter are an excellent substitutes for the piping.



1. Place three support pipes/logs about two metres apart at either end of the cot. Arrange them in a pyramid, with two on the ground and the third on top. Tie them together – by tightening or loosening the rope you will be able to raise or lower the top log, and this is a neat way of levelling the bed.



2. Lay the four longer hazel struts lengthways across them. By using four of these struts rather than just two, we gain extra strength and ground clearance. Note that the two sets of longitudinal struts are separated by an additional cross piece to give separation.



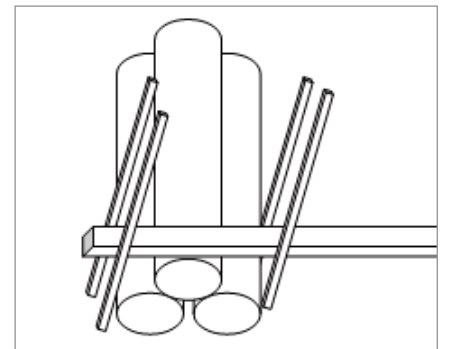
Make a basic bushcraft bed



3. Place the shorter 60-cm poles on top of the long struts at 90° to form the 'mattress'. They need to be pushed fairly close together.

4. Stabilising the structure.

Make up some short stakes and bash them into the ground as illustrated – you will need four stakes for each corner. They will lock the supporting logs and long struts into position.



The result should be a level bed capable of taking your body weight. Two beds are shown here, under a basic shelter.

Woodfairs

The nights are still long and the days icy, but we are starting to receive dates for the woodfairs and shows that brighten up the summer. Woodlands.co.uk and SWOG will be at Woodfest Wales, Westonbirt and Bentley. Please send us details of your event.

Weird and Wonderful Wood

16–17 May 2015 Haughley Park, Wetherden, Stowmarket, Suffolk
www.weirdandwonderfulwood.co.uk

The Bushcraft Show

23–25 May 2015 Beehive Farm Woodland Lakes, Rosliston, Derbyshire
www.thebushcraftshow.co.uk

Royal Highland Show 2015

18–21 June Edinburgh
www.royalhighlandshow.org

Woodfest Wales

26–28 June 2015 Caerwys, North Wales
www.woodfestwales.co.uk

Blackdown Hills Woodland Fair

4th July Wrangway near Wellington, Somerset
www.woodbiz.co.uk

Woodlands Country Show

11–12 July 2015 Royal Victoria Country Park, Southampton, Hampshire
www.woodlandcrafts.co.uk

New Forest and Hampshire Show

29–31 July 2015 Brockenhurst, Hampshire
www.newforestshow.co.uk

Treefest at Westonbirt Arboretum

29–31 August 2015 Tetbury, Gloucestershire
www.forestry.gov.uk

Stock Gaylard Oak Fair

29–30 August 2015
Sturminster Newton, Dorset
www.stockgaylard.com

National Forest Woodfair

31 August 2015 Beacon Hill Country Park,

Leicestershire (early bird ticket discount until 5 May) www.nationalforest.org

Wychwood Forest Fair

6 September 2015 Charlbury, Oxfordshire
www.wychwoodproject.org

Confor Woodland Show 2015

10–11 September 2015
Longleat Estate, Wiltshire
www.confor.org.uk

European Woodworking Show

12–13 September 2015, Cressing Temple Barns, Essex
www.europeanwoodworkingshow.eu

Bentley Weald 20th Anniversary Woodfair

18–20 September 2015 Lewes, East Sussex
www.bentley.org.uk/events

Surrey Hills Woodfair

3–4 October 2015 Birtley House, Bramley
www.surreyhills.org

Peebles Wood Market

24–25 October 2015 Tweed Green & Community Hall, Peebles, Scottish Borders
www.forest-festival.com/wood-market

