



Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter May 2015

Re-wilding: introducing the lynx

Firelighting - what every woodland owner needs to know

Wetland in woodland

SWOG bogs – an update

Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk



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Thanks to Bernie for this wonderful cherry coppice.

Thanks to Tim Gibbs for his fragrant update on his SWOG bog, to Fran Southgate for her piece on the value of wetland areas in woodlands, and to John of Bowji Bushcamping for his illuminating article on how to lay the perfect fire, with part two following in June. Those of you plagued by deer may like to contemplate the plans to reintroduce lynx to woodlands and forests in Britain and hedge-layers might enjoy a free e-book download.

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SWOG website and forum

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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.

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

Woodlands in the news

On 19 April, BBC Countryfile devoted a whole programme to woodlands, dealing with management, the use of timber, coppicing and woodland crafts. There were also features about conservation and increasing dormouse populations, as well as an item focusing on the effects of CO₂ on woodland. All in all, the programme did a good job of bringing woodland issues — sustainability, management and threats — to a wider public.

If you missed it, it is available until 10 May on BBC iPlayer <http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer>

Hedge-laying

Conservationists and farmers can debate the utility or otherwise of hedges. Hedgerows are undoubtedly valuable for wildlife and biodiversity, for coppice and wood fuel, and as boundary markers, but they require ongoing management. Those inspired by Rich's article about hedge planting last month, may be interested in a free download of two e-books, *Practical Hedge Laying – the Basics* and *Practical Hedge Laying – Field and Competition*, by Allan Portas of the National Hedgelaying Society. Email Lucy Bygrave to request a copy: midgehallfarm@gmail.com. More information about hedges and hedge-laying can be found on the National Hedgelaying Society's website: www.hedgelaying.org.uk



myForest – new version launched

The Sylva Foundation have unveiled version 3.0 of the **myForest application**. It is an online facility which enables woodland owners and forest managers to map and manage their woodlands. Devised in conjunction with the Forestry Commission, it is an extremely useful resource for those embarking on the production of management plans or for anyone trying to complete a woodland inventory.

The service is used currently by 2,500 people to map and manage more than 35,000ha of woodlands across Britain. It is provided as a free service, although donations from users are always gratefully received.

The new version has been updated with

- Responsive design, which means it fits the size of the screen you are using, making it better for using with tablets and laptops.
- Easy access to the three myForest tools: Woodland Manager, Business Directory, and Woodland Star Rating.
- Woodland management tool now called Woodland Manager. In here you will find a full screen map and easier access to your woodland information.
- Quick access to your management plans in your account home screen.
- Improvements in creating printable maps.
- Simpler access to the Woodland Star Rating allowing you to measure the management of your woodlands against the UK Forestry Standard.
- Improved guidance using 'context-sensitive' help, including video tutorials.
- The Wood Market element of the site has been removed while discussions continue with others in the forestry industry to see how they can best use the technology.

Re-wilding: introducing the wild lynx

The wild lynx, hunted to extinction in Britain for its fur over 1,000 years ago, has recently crept back into the headlines with the news that the species may be gradually reintroduced into Britain's forests. For woodland owners plagued by deer, this may well be good news, as lynx like nothing more than a diet of deer and small mammals.

The Lynx UK Trust, a conservation charity founded by a team of international wildlife and



Photo courtesy of Lynx UK Trust/Erwin van Maanen

conservation experts, hope that reintroduction will provide a valuable natural control on the UK's overpopulated deer species, which would in turn assist forest regeneration and boost woodland ecosystems. They propose introducing a small number of animals at forest sites around the UK and have made applications to Natural England and Scottish Natural Heritage for suitable sites, which may include Thetford Forest in Norfolk, Kielder Forest in Northumberland, as well as forests in Aberdeenshire. Up to six lynx would be released at each site and closely monitored via satellite

collars over a trial period likely to last for three to five years.

The project is not without controversy, but a survey conducted by the Lynx Trust in association with Cumbria University reported overwhelmingly positive support for the plans. Over 9,000 people took part and 91% supported a trial reintroduction. Interestingly, over half of the respondents were from rural communities.

'We've been blown away by the level of interest and support from the public,'

commented chief scientific advisor to the project, Dr Paul O'Donoghue. 'Lynx have proven themselves across Europe to be absolutely harmless to humans and of very little threat to livestock, whilst bringing huge benefit to rural economies and the natural ecology. . . It's wonderful that the general public want to see lynx given the chance to do the same here.'

The Eurasian lynx (*lynx lynx*) is a solitary creature which looks like a large cat and is distinguished by its spotted coat and distinctive pointed ears. Its size varies from 80–130 cm

long, and up to 70 cm at shoulder height. Males weigh between 18 and 40 kg, while females are smaller at 10–20 kg. The lynx ranges throughout forests in Russia, Scandinavia and the Carpathian Mountains of Eastern Europe, and has recently been reintroduced to Switzerland and Germany.

For more details visit the Lynx trust's website: www.lynxuk.org.

Finally, although this is an election-free newsletter, you might enjoy this link on the Huffington Post website about the furry new immigrants to the British Isles:

www.huffingtonpost.co.uk

Royal Forestry Society Excellence in Forestry Awards 2015



Judges in the RFS Excellence in Forestry Awards are facing a tough challenge as they set off to judge 25 Welsh woodlands and five schools after some of the most inspiring entries ever received.

Six woodlands have been shortlisted in

the RFS Woodland Creation Category, sponsored by Natural Resources Wales (NRW), and five schools, from a record entry of 19.

Woodland Creation Award shortlist:

- Bron Haul, Abergele, Conwy
- Caia Community Woods, Caia Park, Wrexham
- Coed Ysgubor Wen, Llanegryn, Tywyn

- Cwm Fagor, Nr Devauden, Monmouthshire
- Felin Senni, Heol Senni, Brecon.
- Scotland Farm, between Trueddyn and Rhydtalog

Shortlisted school:

- Builth Wells High School
- Ferryside VCP School, Carmarthenshire
- Pencoed Primary School, Bridgend
- Portfield Special School, Haverfordwest
- St Christopher's School, Wrexham

Ceri Davies, NRW Director Knowledge, Strategy & Planning said: 'We were impressed by both the number and quality of entries in this year's awards and we are looking forward to revealing which woodland emerges as the winner.'

Judges will also be visiting a further 19 entries for the Duke of Cornwall (Multipurpose) Silviculture, Small and Community Woodlands Awards. The Awards will be presented in July at the RFS's magnificent Coast Redwoods woodlands in Leighton near Welshpool.

Nature's Calendar at the V&A – science meets art

Data from the Woodland Trust's Nature's Calendar survey will be seen in a new light as it takes pride of place at the entrance to London's Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum until 19 July in the form of a phenological clock.

The clock, which depicts 12 months in the life cycle of the flowering plants and pollinating insects that surround the V&A, was created by New York-based artist and ecologist Natalie Jeremijenko, one of three pieces created under the title 'Re-Public of Air'. The



Phenological Clock' by Natalie Jeremijenko at the entrance to the Victoria and Albert Museum. (Photo: Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

installation forms part of 'All of This Belongs to You', a free exhibition about the museum as a public space and the role of public institutions in contemporary life.

SWOG members will no doubt be aware of the **Nature's Calendar** survey, which tracks the progress of the seasons as observed by the public. The phenological clock displays this data in a way which illustrates the total period of time the seasonal occurrence has been recorded over the course of a year.

See the website www.naturescalendar.org.uk or visit the **V&A's website**.

Fire-lighting: an important woodsman's skill



Many of us simply pop down to the woods armed with a box of matches, an old newspaper and some dry sticks to get the cooking fire going. Firelighters are not unknown in my own personal armoury. But could you cope without these

domestic comforts? John Clark of **Bowji Bush Camping** shows us how to light a fire with materials found in the wood.

The books all talk about three things required for fire – fuel, a heat source and oxygen – also known as the ‘fire triangle’. In my experience, three further elements are necessary: preparation, practice and patience. A sense of humour helps too! If you struggle with some of the fire-lighting techniques so effortlessly demonstrated by presenters on the TV, you are not alone.

In this and next month's article we will look at the basic steps to successful fire lighting, starting with fuel and fire-starting techniques, and then different kinds of fires, their uses and safe management.

Fuel

All fires need fuel (flammable material) to burn. Depending on availability the fuel source could be almost any combustible, including papers, oils, wood, gases, liquids, plastics, rubber. Depending upon the fuel used, the fire will burn at different temperatures.

Heat source

As well as a source of fuel, fires also need heat to start the combustion process. All flammable materials give off vapours when heated and it is these vapours which actually combust.

Oxygen

We all need oxygen to breath and stay alive –

fires are no different. As well as fuel and heat, fires require oxygen to mix with the flammable gasses in order to burn. In a bushcraft setting we can consider the fuel we use in three groups: tinder, kindling and main fuel.

Tinder

The best tinder is of fine texture (high surface area to body mass ratio), dry and, of course, will burn readily. Think ‘fluffy and flammable’. Some tinders, like birch bark, will take a heat source (e.g. a spark from a ferrocium rod) and burst into flame. Others, like the Cramp ball fungus will merely create a glowing ember and require further tinder to ignite. Naturally occurring examples include:

- Birch bark (do not take from live tree)
- Sweet chestnut inner bark (dead tree)
- Old man's beard *Usnea barbata* (lichen)
- Cramp balls fungus *Daldinia Concentrica* (also known as King Alfred's cake)
- Artist's Bracket *Ganoderma applanatum* (found on living beach trees)

Man-made examples include:

- Rubber inner tube (excellent in wet conditions)
- Char cloth
- Cotton wool
- Cloth saturated with petroleum jelly

Kindling

The kindling takes the fire from the tinder, and builds up the heat sufficient for the main fuel to light. Useful kindling includes

- Dry fern
- Small twigs and branches (graded in size from matchstick thickness to finger thickness)
- Dry conifer sap and conifer cones
- Fatwood (resin-rich pine)
- Charcoal from the previous evening's fire

Main fuel

When collecting fuel for your fire, look for material that is **dead, dry and standing**. The main fuel for the fire can be divided into two groups: soft woods and hard woods. Seasoned

Fire-lighting: an important woodsman's skill

soft woods, such as cedar, fir, larch, pine and spruce, tend to burn hot and quickly.

- Cedar: must be well-seasoned, and then it gives out good heat and has a beautiful smell too.
- Larch: a good heat and nice smell. Burns quickly like all softwoods.
- Pine: flames well but does spit and spark. Can have a lovely smell.
- Spruce: avoid – fast burner with lots of sparks.

Hard woods are slower to catch light but when they do, they burn more slowly, creating coals that are long-lasting with a heat that is not too intense. Hard woods are the ideal fuel for cooking and for a slow fire that will burn all night.

Recommended hardwoods include:

- Ash: one of the best woods for burning. It gives off plenty of heat, flames well and even burns reasonably when green.
- Beech: not quite as good as ash. It makes a

good fire, but spits out embers. Better used mixed if possible.

- Birch: produces a good heat, and is a quick burner with a nice smell.
- Hazel: burns well but does spark a little.
- Hawthorn: one of the best woods to burn, but not easy to find. It burns slowly and hot.
- Oak: must be well-seasoned. It is very dense, so burns slowly and hot, and makes a lovely bed of glowing coals.
- Sycamore: flames nicely but the heat is not as strong as oak or ash. It is a very common firewood and good to mix with others.
- Blackthorn: very good, with a nice hot and slow burn without much smoke.
- Chestnut: not a lot of heat. It crackles and sparks a lot. Better to mix with other woods.
- Holly: well-seasoned, it is reasonable. Logs are mainly small, but they produce a medium and long lasting heat.

1. Heat sources

Either use an ember or a ferrocerium rod to light tinder such as bark shavings or other dry material.



2. Ignition! *Blowing into the dry tinder to fan the sparks into flames.*

Below: birch bark and fat-wood scrapings take light.



3. Kindling

Flames fed with larger tinder e.g. pencil thin twigs, sticks and small branches, arranged on a 'raft' of sticks.



Next month, John will examine different kinds of fires and how to manage them safely.

Wetland in woodland

Fran Southgate, an officer with the Sussex Wildlife Trust explains why wetlands are so important to woodland ecology.

Although my day job is to provide advice to landowners and smallholders across Sussex, my passion is wildlife, and particularly wetlands and rivers. You would be amazed at how much woodland in Sussex is as important as a wetland as it is as a woodland – from meandering, seasonally flooded woodlands, to boggy spring-fed woodlands, each has its own unique set of niches for wildlife. Each pond, seep and trickle of water in your wood adds immense value for both wildlife and for people.

These wetland woodlands provide important natural services for us – they store floodwater, help regulate our climate, provide us with food and fuel and generate oxygen for us to breathe. Did you know that 1 hectare of soil in a well managed woodland can help store around 850,000 litres of water? With all the talk of dredging, damaging and draining rivers to stop flooding, we are instead trying to help people restore natural woodlands so that we can slow down and store floodwater naturally in our landscape. Instead of creating panic about climate change and sea level rise, we are helping to provide practical solutions by re-wooding our upland streams, so that they become natural cooling engines for our rivers.

Improving wetlands in Sussex

We are increasingly trying to help landowners and local communities, to deal with some of the bigger issues such as flooding, invasive species and wildlife declines. To do this properly, we apply for grants which help us to fund work to improve our river catchments for people and



wildlife across Sussex.

One of our most successful projects to date is the **Arun & Rother Connections (ARC)** project. Covering over 77,000 hectares of the Arun & Rother river catchments in West Sussex, we have access to grants to help landowners plant floodplain and streamside woodlands, and small grants of up to £1,000 for enhancements which will benefit local habitats and communities. The grants can pay for volunteer training, tools for community groups, access and interpretation, habitat improvements for wildlife and more – more information is available here. You can also download our mobile phone app to help you record the local wildlife in your wood: **arcexplorer.org.uk**

In the Ouse catchment in East Sussex, we run a natural flood management project called Sussex Flow Initiative, with the Woodland Trust and the Environment Agency, which helps landowners plant trees and hedgerows, and restore meadows and ponds to reduce flooding and the impacts of climate change. Have a look at our **Facebook page here**.

Free trees!

Last, but not least, each year we give out free, rare black poplar trees to landowners in Sussex. For decades, this rare native timber tree was at

risk of becoming genetically extinct, and so we have worked closely with the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and local people to ensure that the future of the tree is secured for generations to come.

We would love more people to get involved and to benefit from some of the free support and advice that we can provide. If you have woodlands, or want to create woodlands (or wetlands!) in any of our project areas, then please get in touch and we will try and help as much as we can.

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Sandra Manning Jones, Sussex Flow Initiative,



Volunteers plant floodplain with black poplar saplings.

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Woodlands blogs

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

Review of Landmarks by Robert Macfarlane

Passionate about both the countryside and language, Robert Macfarlane has written an absorbing book about how people think about their outdoor surroundings and particularly how a fertile language has developed around the country.



The life cycle of bumblebees: Part 1 and Part 2

Fascinating details about the life cycle of bumblebees, from the different places that they build their nests to the queen's shivering incubation of her eggs, and finally the flight of young bumblebees as they leave the hive to continue the cycle.

Bees and bumblebees: the threat of extinction

Some 10% of bee species are threatened, with 25% of bumblebee species at risk of dying out. Bees pollinate 80% of our food crops, so we cannot afford to lose them.

Bracken and woodlands

Bracken is the perfect weed – it is the most commonly found fern in the UK and its height and dominance means that the other species can be deprived of light and nutrients.

SWOG bogs – composting loo update

Over 18 months ago Tim Gibbs wrote about the composting loo he built in his wood and he has been kind enough to send us an operational update.

Firstly it has proved to be very popular with users and this is especially true for the young children – for reasons that are not at all clear to us. As a nice touch, friends who camped in the wood one weekend installed some LED lights in it – the enclosure not the composting container!

Technically it has proved to be a great success despite its simplicity, as it is basically only one



Getting to know your neighbours

Meeting the neighbours is often a haphazard event for woodland owners – we all potter down to our woods at different times, and weeks or even months can go past without bumping into them. If you would like to be put in touch with your immediate neighbours, just email judith@swog.org.uk and I will try to arrange it. We never share personal details without the owner's permission, so, equally, if you simply want to be left alone, we won't bother you.

Experience shows that local contacts are really

half of a plastic chemical drum with a top plate fitted with a loo seat as shown in the picture. Because it is not in everyday use I decided to make no attempt to separate the liquid, but have relied on the added material to absorb it.

It was clear to me at the start from my scant knowledge of organic chemistry that the secret to preventing smells developing lay in introducing some initial bugs and to use of lots of carbon in the purest practical form. This was achieved by using sawdust and peat, both of which were thoroughly dried in the sun to optimise the liquid take-up.

So, to start it off a small shovel full of earth with lots of bugs was put in the bottom and on top of that a similar amount of saw dust. From that point on, the rule has been, one scoop of saw duct wee and a scoop of peat for poo. The result is that the container is still less than one quarter full but I can't claim it smells of roses – because THERE IS NO SMELL!

This concept may not be for everyone, but it sure works for us and I have now built one for Jane's cousin in France and my sister in Yorkshire has decided it would be nice to have one in her wood.

Recently, a friend was telling me that there are often composting loos on canal narrow boats but they sounded much more complicated and more hassle than mine, AND they cost about £1000, about 40 times my version!

useful, particularly when dealing with security or track issues. And it's always great to have a chat or show off your latest kit over a cuppa!



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

South Downs Show and Hampshire Woodfair

15–16 August 2015 Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Hampshire
www.southdownsshow.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

Cranborne Chase Woodfair

3–4 October 2015, Fordingbridge, Hampshire
www.woodfair.org.uk

Peebles Wood Market

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

Free entry to Bentley Woodfair

One of the highlights of the year is the woodfair at Bentley, where SWOG has a stall decked out with woodland products, various displays and Rich's rocket stoves, which provide a constant supply of tea. The SWOG team is small – just two of us – and we are always really grateful for the support of SWOG members in manning the stall.

If you would like to help out by doing a couple of hours on the stall in return for free entry, please get in touch.