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In the Newsletter this Month

After the cold winter and wet February, Spring is on its way in the woods. Bluebells are starting to emerge from the leaf litter, the buds are bursting and everywhere there are the sounds of birds claiming their territories and woodpeckers drumming.

This edition of the newsletter brings you another in the series of photography tips: this time macro or close-up photography to help you capture those first spring butterflies and flowers.

We also have articles from Trish on the wanton waste from poaching, and some excellent feedback from Phil Hopkinson's new tailor-made courses.

The number of SWOG meetings continues to grow: you are very likely to find a meeting close to you, so please do go along and meet other woodland owners, and share your thoughts and experiences. We all have slightly different experiences and perspectives to share, and that is what makes SWOG such an excellent place to learn. Woodlands have a high profile at the moment, thanks to the publicity received as a result of the suspended DEFRA consultation on the public forest, so this is a good time to get together with other woodland owners.

The Spring has also brought a large number of new opportunities to attend events, courses and seminars. If you want to learn a new skill or craft, or learn how to manage your woodland for a specific purpose, or just learn a bit more about wildlife or sustainable living, there are courses on offer everywhere, and we have an updated list in this newsletter.

If you have designed a Log Bog, now is the time to photograph it and send in your entries by the end of March. Let's see how creative we can be! Surely we can do better than hiding behind a tree or a hole in the ground? Also, if you would like to review a book for this newsletter, or tell us about your favourite tree—please do get in touch.

Sarah Walters (sarah@swog.org.uk)

Photography Basics: Getting up close...

Up to now, we have been taking a wide picture – landscape, people, buildings. Now we are going to look at close-up photography, sometimes also called macro photography.

Equipment

The majority of modern compact cameras and even some mobile phones allow the lens to focus on a subject relatively close to the camera – around 3 feet is usually the minimum distance at which a lens can focus on its subject in a compact camera. This allows you to take a pleasing natural image of a complete flower, but without any apparent magnification.

An SLR camera will have several advantages over a compact camera for macro photography. First of all, you can change the lenses. Although the “kit” lens that comes with most modern SLR cameras will allow close focusing to about 3 feet, there are a lot more options available, including *dedicated macro lenses*. These lenses allow the camera to focus much closer – to 1 foot or less. In turn, this captures an image on the sensor at around life size or 1:1 ratio. When buying a lens beware – a true macro lens allows a 1:1 ratio. Many lenses sold as macro only allow a 1:3 or less and are really only close-focus lenses. With a macro lens, because the sensor is small, and the object usually quite large, the final image appears to be magnified, and it allows you to get a whole new perspective on the world.

Instead of buying a new macro lens, you can effectively make your main lens a macro lens by the use

of *extension tubes* – these will allow the lens to focus at a closer distance to the subject, but at the expense of reducing the maximum aperture available on your camera. This is usually not a problem, as you are usually trying to use a small aperture anyway (see below).

Other important advantages of an SLR camera are the ability to control focus manually, the size of the sensor which produces greater resolution and better separation of foreground and background, greater flexibility in exposure adjustment and ability to use other accessories including specialist flash attachments.

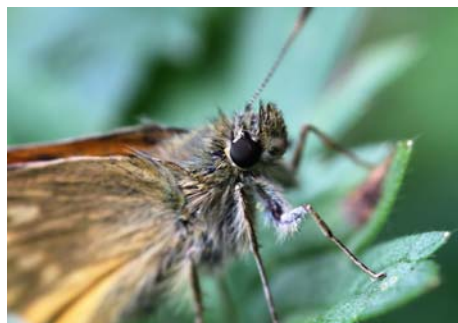


Most cameras, including low and mid-range SLR cameras, will have specific modes that produce better close-up photographs: these are usually denoted by a little flower symbol. This will automatically select appropriate aperture, shutter speed and adjust colour saturation, and set the lens to preferentially focus on near rather than far objects. High end SLR cameras usually do not have these symbols, as users are expected to want to make these settings manually, but all SLR cameras and some “bridge” cameras (high end compact cameras) will allow you to make manual adjustments too.

As well as a camera, macro photography will frequently demand some kind of extra support – a tripod or monopod. The reason for this will become clear below.

Depending on what you like to photograph and the light conditions, you may require a flash. However an on-camera flash sitting above or to one side of the lens will not be useful when really close to your subject as it will tend to light the background and miss the subject completely. A better, if expensive, solution is a ring flash, which is fitted to the lens itself and which provides even light all the way round the subject. Some such flashes can be adjusted to provide uneven light and thus preserve contrast and 3d definition.

Depth of field



Remember last time we looked at the relationship between lens aperture (or f number) and depth of field: a small aperture produces a wider depth of field, a large aperture a narrow depth of field.

If we are taking a general image of our woodland, we might set the aperture so that about 2/3 of the image is in focus, and 1/3 is slightly blurred. This is OK – the main subjects of the image will all be in focus, even if some are closer than others, with a slightly blurred far background.

Now supposing we are going to take a picture of a flower. We might set the same aperture. But this time there is a problem. First of all the subject now fills the frame, so inevitably some of the subject will appear out of focus as only 2/3 of the subject is in focus. But actually it is even worse than that. As the lens reaches its closest focus, the range of distances between subject and lens that remain in focus gets smaller. So, for a general image, you might get everything from 6 metres to infinity in focus, in a close-up you may only get from 11.8 to 12.5 inches in focus. You risk ending up with an almost unrecognisable image where most of what you are interested in is out of focus. If you want to show detail in some of the background as well, you will have real difficulty.

There are several ways to tackle this

1. Choose a small aperture – something like f16, f22 or even smaller. This will bring more of your subject into focus, but at the expense of two main problems: First definition of the lens deteriorates at very small apertures; Second, you will need a longer exposure (slower shutter speed) give the correct exposure and you run the risk of camera shake or motion blur caused by movement of the camera or subject respectively. You can compensate by choosing a high ISO setting, but this will reduce detail and make the image look grainy. You could also use flash, but this can lead to a rather flat-looking image, and will disturb subjects such as insects.

2. Deliberately choose to focus on only part of the subject e.g. the eyes of an insect or the stamens

Course Directory

Field Studies Council

<http://www.field-studies-council.org/>

Institute of Chartered Foresters

Forthcoming events are on

<http://www.charteredforesters.org/default.asp?page=33>

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

A large range of courses for woodland owners

For *BTCV Short Courses*

<http://shop.btcv.org.uk/shop/level3/536/level>

For *BTCV long courses*

<http://shop.btcv.org.uk/shop/level3/561/level>

Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT)

To see upcoming courses for early 2011 visit

<http://www2.cat.org.uk/shortcourses/>

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

To see courses for the coming year visit

<http://www.rspb.org.uk/events/courses.aspx>

LILI Courses

For the full range of courses from the Low Impact Living Initiative, please see

<http://www.lowimpact.org/courses.htm>

Wildlife Trusts

All 47 UK Wildlife Trusts run events of potential interest to woodland owners. For further details please see

<http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/index.php?section=events>

of a flower. This can lead to some very powerful images.

3. Take multiple images and re-combine them afterwards using a photo editor (known as “stacking”). To do this you will have to be using a tripod together with a focusing rack that allows you to take images that are only 1 or 2mm apart. Clearly this is unsuitable for moving or sensitive subjects.

4. Compose your image so that most of the subject is parallel to the camera, as in the dragonfly picture (right) and there is less need for a wide depth of field. For example, instead of taking a head-on image of an insect, take an image parallel to its body. This is not always possible – some insects hold their wings at an angle, and some flowers are quite deep.

5. Use the depth-of-field preview button on your lens if you have an SLR. This will give you an idea of the depth of field you are going to achieve with the settings you have selected. It is usually on the lower left of the lens as you hold the camera, at about 7 o'clock.

Focusing

Close-up photography can also produce difficulties for the camera in terms of focusing on the subject, in particular with autofocus, which may tend to “hunt” between foreground and background, and will try and fail to follow a moving subject. It may also focus on the centre of the subject, rather than the detail that you want to portray. The problem is amplified by the extremely small depth of field that you may have when you are very close to the subject.

For this reason, if you have the facility available, it is better to select manual focus on your lens. Set the focus at an appropriate distance, then *move yourself and the camera*, rather than the focus wheel on the lens, to achieve correct focus of the subject. The movement can be extremely subtle when you are close to a subject – just a matter of rocking a few millimetres back and forward.

Shutter speed



Macro photography is also very challenging in terms of shutter speed. You need a small aperture, but the shutter speeds can then become very slow, and in consequence motion blur becomes a problem. There are two sources of movement: the camera and the subject. With a very narrow depth of field, and sensitive focus, any tiny movements of the subject due to wind, or moving insects, can appear magnified.

In addition, use of a long lens, small aperture and slow shutter speed are all likely to enhance camera shake. To some extent this can be compensated by image stabilisation technology, but only to a point.

Some techniques to overcome this include

1. Pull back a bit and use software to focus in on the image afterwards – you may actually get a better image doing this even though you are effectively reducing the definition of the image. Pulling back immediately gives you a wider depth of field.
2. Use support. I find a monopod very helpful, as it provides some support but still allows you to move slightly when your subject moves, whereas a tripod is more cumbersome and harder to move.
3. Use flash. Ring flash is best, but this can result in bland images free from shadow and with low contrast. On camera flash can be used, particularly if you bounce this off a reflector (a piece of white card is fine).
4. Use a windbreak. A piece of cardboard, carefully situated to screen a subject from the wind can make all the difference.

Take lots of pictures! Digital pictures are effectively free so just take lots and discard those that aren't up to scratch. If you think you are only going to get one shot, then set up your camera to take multiple frames per second and give it one good blast before the subject flies away. One frame may be good.

Composition

Background

The background is important when you are trying to make a close subject stand out. A fussy background will detract from an otherwise beautiful image of your subject. Try thinking about capturing your subject against either a lighter or darker background, and ensuring that the background is thrown out of focus by use of the widest aperture possible given the need to ensure the subject itself is in focus. You may wish to screen off some of a fussy background using a cloth, if you cannot adjust your angle of view of



other aspects of composition.

Rule of thirds



The rule of thirds can still be used to advantage in macro photography. Placing your subject, or the focal point of the image, on one of the “zing” points obtained by the intersection of lines dividing the image into thirds horizontally and vertically, can be very powerful, if not always possible.

Angles, diagonals, triangles

Use of diagonals and triangles make the image seem more dynamic. It can also be very interesting to experiment with viewing your subject from unusual angles e.g. lying down on the floor and taking pictures of flowers looking up at the sky.

Lighting

Lighting has a powerful effect on the three-dimensional quality of your image. Backlighting, as in the picture of borage (right) and side-lighting can produce a very powerful image, whereas full sun or flash can produce a flat image. However full sun can also bring out dramatic colours. Actually, the best lighting for macro photography is often white cloud, rather than full sun.



Patterns and abstracts

Macro photography can be used to exploit the repeating patterns that appear in nature and produce powerful abstract images.

Insects

Insects are a particular interest of mine, and prove difficult subjects. This is because they move, they can be jittery and their wide range of colours make getting exposure right very difficult.

Here are a few tips to get insect photography right

1. Know the behaviour of your insect. Some butterflies (e.g. speckled wood) and dragonflies are territorial, so they will always return close to where you first saw them. Knowing this can reduce the time you spend chasing around.

2. Set up something that the insects will like. A patch of thistles will be irresistible to many butterflies and other insects. Another good tip is to set up a twig at an angle over a pond, but close enough to the bank that you can sit there with your camera focused on it. Pretty soon, a dragonfly will come and perch there, and will come back again and again.



3. Insects are sensitive to light and vibrations so don't crash around like a fairy elephant. Approach rapidly at first, then when you know what angle you want to photograph from, slow right down and move quietly. Avoid your shadow falling over the insect. If it flies away stop and wait – it might come back! If you can, switch off the beeps on your camera that sometimes tell you it has achieved correct focus, exposure or the flash is charged.

4. Bang off a few images as soon as you get the insect in focus and in shot. Then, if you haven't scared it away, you can try to improve composition, background, depth of field and so on. I usually take a few images from further away and gradually move in,

improving composition and angle as I go.

Be patient! It can take hours to get one great shot, and expect to get lots of pictures of empty twigs, leaves or flowers!

Course Directory

The Greenwood Centre offer a range of courses of interest to woodland owners

<http://www.greenwoodcentre.org.uk/WoodlandCourses.htm>

Phil Hopkinson of Malvern Coppicing offers practical coppicing courses

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

Yorwoods offer courses for woodland owners and managers in the Yorkshire area

<http://www.yorwoods.org.uk/training>

Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management offer a wide range of courses, some of which are of interest to woodland owners

<http://www.ieem.net/otherevents.asp>

Royal Forestry Society Divisional Events The programmes for early 2011 can be seen at

<http://www.rfs.org.uk/event/2011/03/01/month/all/all/1>

Bat Conservation Trust

Run a number of training courses. The full brochure is available at

<http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/training.html>

There are special courses for arborists, on use of bat detectors and bat surveys

Exercises

1. Take some close-up photos concentrating on composition and in particular how the subject relates to the background. Try to make the subject stand out or "pop" out from the image. Remember the rule of thirds, and the use of diagonals, different angles of view, and the use of lighting.
2. Explore depth of field in your close-up images by using different apertures: try taking images of the same subject with narrow and deep depth of field and see how the feel of the image changes. Remember depth of field preview if you have it.
3. Try using manual focus if you have it: take some images with autofocus and again with manual focus, remembering to move you and the camera, rather than the focus ring, once you have got the focus approximately right.
4. Try setting up somewhere for insects to sit, and then photograph them: this could be a patch of thistles or other nectar plants, or a stick over a pond for dragonflies.
5. Try identifying a pattern that can be seen well in a close-up and take some abstract images.



NOTE: If you would like to learn a bit more about photography, there are lots of workshops and courses for you to attend. Sarah, at Alvecote Wood, who wrote this series and took all these photographs is offering One-Day Photography Workshops in 2011, the first of which is on Sunday 17th April. Cost is £15 per person, camping also available. Details [on http://www.alvecotewood.co.uk/AW-EventsProg-0211.pdf](http://www.alvecotewood.co.uk/AW-EventsProg-0211.pdf)

The Embrace project is offering a specific Macro Photography Workshop on Saturday 26th March <http://embraceworkshops.com/default/embrace-macro-photography-workshop.html>

Wanton Waste by Trish

Brian and I have watched with interest the debate on the FC selling off their woodlands. The fear of the general public that all will be privatised and they (the general public) will lose the opportunity of enjoying woodlands that the likes of myself enjoy.

We have always welcomed the general public in Easter Wood. We have recognised that the local kids have played there for years as they grow up, and quite a few locals walk through the woods for pleasure.

Instead of chasing the kids on their quads, we have put out our hand in friendship and we have always been reciprocated with nothing but respect. In fact I am sure they help "keep an eye" on our little neck of the woods.



They did ask our opinion of shooting. Having been kids ourselves, there is no good encouraging poaching as such and we have always said there is no harm in something for the "pot". In particular squirrel makes a good snack over the fire. The squirrel numbers have not diminished as much as we would like, nor have the rabbits or deer. The quads stick to the rides and the pheasant numbers grew over the past year. Everyone getting along famously.

So it was with great sadness this weekend we arrived at our gate to find a pile of dead pheasants and pigeons. The wings were ripped off a couple of the pheasant and a couple of breasts removed from pigeon.

Ben Law

Runs a wide range of woodland management and woodcraft courses in Sussex

<http://www.ben-law.co.uk/education.html>

Brighton Permaculture Trust

Run a number of courses of potential interest including courses on pruning old fruit trees, introduction to permaculture and building with straw bales.

<http://www.brightonpermaculture.org.uk/>

Losehill Hall

This beautiful centre in the Peak District runs residential courses for professionals working in countryside and environment management. This includes courses on managing paths and public rights of way, and habitat creation and restoration.

http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/professional_courses brochure_2010-12.pdf

Kingcombe Environmental Studies Centre

Is running a course on the history and ecology of woodlands on 22-24th April 2011

<http://www.kingcombe.org/courses/Details/256>

What a waste. - Waste of perfectly good meat.

Sunday the woodlands were devoid of the pheasant calls but the good news is the buzzard who has been visiting at this time of year for the past few years swooped silently over the open glade. Pheasant shooting season is over now so hopefully the birds will be left in peace.

We do not believe these are the local kids that frequent the woods but others from the general public causing mayhem.

It is acts like these that will cause woodland owners to erect fences and put up "Private property" signs.

Has anybody else got experiences like this to share? Poaching or other wildlife crimes? If so, please write and tell us about it. We hope to have an article soon on a Poacher Watch scheme.



Feedback on One-to-One Course from Malvern Coppicing

Richard Screats writes about his experience on a day in the woods, with Phil.

I recently purchased a small ancient semi natural, if somewhat neglected woodland, where I plan to encourage the habitat for the benefit of wildlife in general but birds in particular.

With the assistance of my local Wildlife organisation I have begun to put together a simple management plan to help me achieve my aims.

A key part of this has to be the regeneration of the wood and an understanding of the woodland crafts that go into achieving this.

Being a total novice, I decided to get some advice and training and as with most things these days I did a search on the Web. Amongst others, my search brought up Malvern-coppicing.co.uk, run by Phil Hopkinson.

Based just outside Malvern, Phil runs both courses for groups, typically over a weekend and one to one day sessions. I chose the latter as I felt being a novice I would get more from being able to direct the training to my particular requirements.

So, last week on a particularly windy Monday, I set off for the Ravenshill Nature Reserve to meet up with Phil. It soon became clear that not only did he have considerable experience but was able to put it over in a way even a novice could understand (and when I didn't he was quite happy to go over the point again!).

We started with a walk around the nature reserve. Not only was this interesting in itself, but demonstrated the breadth of his woodland knowledge so much so that in addition to learning about coppicing I increased my knowledge of animal tracks, bird songs and tree identification to mention but a few!

We then turned our attention to a patch of woodland that he was in the process of coppicing. Having explained the general principles of how to get started, we then moved to an area that had not been worked to begin the practical aspects. I was taught how to clear the understore, remove small saplings, followed by larger ones and then those small trees not selected to remain as standards. Each operation used different tools and skills and when we had finished, even if I say it myself, it looked pretty good!

Despite a sore back I was not finished yet! Phil then took me through the processes of

Norfolk Wildlife Trust

Run a variety of potentially interesting courses on <http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/Things-to-do/Events/Events-archive.aspx>

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust

Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust are running six-part bird identification courses in spring of 2011 starting on 19th March.

See <http://www.nottinghamshirewildlife.org/events/> for details of these and other courses

Gwent Wildlife Trust are offering a course entitled A Beginners Guide to Woodland Management 14th April 2011

<http://www.sewbrec.org.uk/event/events-calendar/gwent-wildlife-trust-a-beginners-guide-to-woodland-management.page>

The Sustainability Centre

offers lots of courses around the theme of sustainable living. Upcoming courses include Hedgelaying, OCN Sustainable Woodland Management, Build a Treebog, Shingle-making, Herbal Remedies, Eco Film-making and Thatching.

http://www.sustainability-centre.org/courses_adult.php

sneading, dressing, sorting, selecting and storing the amazing number of different products that can be derived from the coppiced material.

I came away feeling I had had a really productive and informative day and could return to my wood with the confidence to begin coppicing. Thanks Phil for a great day!

Phil Hopkinson at Malvern Coppicing runs a variety of courses, including one-to-one instruction for woodland owners. See

http://www.malverncoppicing.co.uk/coppicing_courses.html for further details.

Design a Log Bog—Enter the Competition

Calling all SWOG Members!

We would like you to be as creative as possible, and show off your skills in the field of design. You know the problem—you have a wood, miles from any kind of plumbing facility, and you need to solve the problem of having Somewhere To Go.

Well, here it is, the greatest competition in SWOG history! Have you made a toilet in your woodland? Does it have a very special design, ambience or view?

Send your bog photos and a short paragraph about why your woodland toilet is the BEST to

tracy@woodlands.co.uk



All entries will go onto the website end of March and the winners will be announced in April. Prize is your own choice of woody book up to £20 *Photo by Mike Pepler*

Seminars and Workshops

Woodheat Solutions - Woodheat Solutions Key Stakeholders Workshop

New Forest, England—Date 9th/10th March 2011

Venue Forestry Commission, Queen's House, Lyndhurst, Hampshire

Workshop aims

This workshop is targeted at key stakeholders including:

- heat buyers
- heat engineers
- agriculture and forestry managers
- representatives from woodfuel networks

As places are limited, booking is essential. Please contact Jeanette Hawkins Tel:01420 23337 Email: jeanette.hawkins@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Llais y Goedwig

The Llais y Goedwig conference and AGM (Funding Sustainable Community Woodlands) will be held this year in Denbigh and is open to all with an interest or involvement in

Courses from Coppicewood College

Garden Structure Weaving—Sat 17th April for one day £25

Make your own Shavehorse- 3 days from Sat 30th April (£160)

Green woodworking-4 days starting Monday 14th March (£160)

<http://coppicewoodcollege.co.uk/>

Woodcraft School have published their timetable for woodcraft and bushcraft courses

<http://www.woodcraftschool.co.uk/woodcraft-courses.htm>

BEAT—the Forest of Bradford—are offering weekend courses on hedgelaying in February and March

http://www.beat.org.uk/bm/forest_of_bradford/Courses-HedgelayingGreen-Woodcraft/index.shtml

Bodgers.org.uk

There is a listing of a wide range of pole lathe turning and green woodworking courses on the Bodgers.org.uk site.

<http://www.bodgers.org.uk/courses>

Brightwater Greenwood in Dorset run a range of greenwood craft courses and their 2011 calendar is now available

<http://www.brightwater.org.uk/bodgersbarn.html>

The Cherry Wood Project near Bath run a range of greenwood craft courses

<http://www.cherrywoodproject.co.uk/index.html>

community woodlands in Wales. Rodney Waterfield of the Woodland Skills Centre has agreed to host us with a visit and tour on the Saturday. This is a fantastic opportunity to learn more about the operation of a mixed enterprise based on woodland skills and products. If you need funding to make your ideas and group fly then you can't afford to miss this event.

The programme is packed and will include an opening address from Eleanor Burnham AM (North Wales) and presentations and workshops on funding from:

- Sustainable Funding Cymru (Wales Council for Voluntary Action)
- Wales Cooperative Centre
- BIG Lottery Fund
- Forestry Commission Wales
- Cadwyn Clwyd
- Denbighshire Voluntary Service Council
- Keep Wales Tidy
- Environment Wales
- Focus on Forestry First

The flyer can be downloaded from

http://www.coedlleol.org.uk/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=154&Itemid=27 (1.6 mB pdf flyer). You can join at the same time as booking for this

Sales of public forests and PPG Consultation—Update

The great forestry sell-off has been temporarily suspended and the consultation on the future of our forests halted after vigorous campaigning from the public, and opposition from the organisations who it was envisaged would take over management of the heritage forests.

On 17th February, Caroline Spelman announced suspension of the consultation and a temporary halt to the sales of 15% of forests permitted under current legislation. The forestry clauses would also be removed from the Public Bodies Bill. Instead, a panel will be set up to consider the future of forests in England, with a wider remit than just the publicly-owned woodlands. It will "include representatives of key environmental and access organisations alongside representatives of the forestry industry."

The composition and terms of reference of this five-man panel have yet to be announced. It is as yet unclear to what extent the public will be able to put their views to this panel, nor to what extent the responses to the halted consultation will be taken into account – more information is expected to emerge shortly.

Woodlands.co.uk responded to the consultation and their response can be seen at <http://www.woodlands.co.uk/Woodlands-Report-01Feb11.pdf>

There is also a review of Planning and Policy Guidance taking place, reviewing the terms under which Local Authorities can grant planning permission for development. Under current PPS9, relating to ancient woodland, "They should not grant planning permission for any development that would result in its loss or deterioration unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location outweigh the loss of the woodland habitat."

The new wording reads...

"Planning permission should be refused for development that would result in the loss or deterioration of species and habitats of principal importance, ancient woodland or aged or 'veteran' trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location outweigh their loss."

Courses from The Mammal Society – a wide variety of courses, at various venues and dates. 2011 dates now announced.

<http://tinyurl.com/69l76s7>

Courses in forthcoming months include mammal identification, dormouse ecology and conservation, badger ecology, survey and recording techniques and radio tracking.

Dorset Centre for Rural Skills

Run a range of courses of interest to woodland owners

<http://www.dorsetruralskills.co.uk/courses.htm>

Cotswolds Rural Skills Courses

Include hedgelaying and coppicing. Details on.

<http://www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk/?page=cotswolds-rural-skills>

Acorn Ecology in Exeter run a range of courses including a Phase 1 habitat survey course

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

Northfield Ecocentre in Birmingham run a range of courses on sustainable living including a wild-food spring foraging course on 15th March <http://www.northfieldecocentre.org/courses>

The Brown Hare Project

<http://www.merseysidebiobank.org.uk/BrownHare/default.aspx?content=../news/110216-training.xml>

The proposed changes also give greater power to regional and local authorities to decide on their planning policies around the natural environment and green spaces, and to determine which habitats are valuable and require protection.

If you would like to respond to this consultation, the document can be downloaded from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1498981.pdf>

RFS Excellence in Forestry Awards—Reminder

The clock is ticking in the search for this year's winners of the RFS Excellence in Forestry Awards. The deadline for entries is **Tuesday March 8** for all categories of the Royal Forestry Society's (RFS) Excellence in Forestry 2011 awards with prizes of **£1000** for the winner and **£500** for the runner up. Woodlands.co.uk are sponsoring a new category for Small Woodlands which is open to woodland in a single discreet block or in neighbouring small units up to a total of 20ha. There is no minimum size.

Please note that this award is considered on a Regional basis. Entries are being sought from Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex – together with all the Greater London Boroughs north of the River Thames.

For further details of the Excellence in Forestry Awards and entry forms visit www.rfs.org.uk and follow the 'Get Involved' competition links; email rfscompetition@boyns.net or call 01824 704230.

Fundamental Bushcraft Course

Andy from Naturescraft is offering SWOG members and immediate family (only!) a 1/3 discount (£50 off) their March 18th Fundamental Bushcraft course. Details of the course can be found on <http://www.naturescraft.co.uk/courses/fundamental.htm>

The course runs from 19:00 on Friday 18th March until 16:00 on Sunday 20th March and will be held in their Wiltshire woodland near Marlborough.

Students will need to bring food for Friday night if they haven't eaten early, and will also need to bring food for Saturday and Sunday Breakfasts. All other meals are provided.

The course is an entry level course into Bushcraft and cover skills such as firelighting, shelter building, game preparation, water purification, tree and plant ID, cordage production, carving, and natural awareness.

Contact Andy directly if you would like to attend:

<http://www.naturescraft.co.uk/contact.htm>

Native Hands Workshops



Native hands are running some workshops that may be of interest to SWOG members.

Hedgerow basketry:

we'll be using bark, bramble, reed mace, grass and other foraged materials, and we'll be using a number of basketry techniques such as frame baskets, bias plaited, coiled, stake and strand. Suitable for all lev-

The Field Studies Council have a number of interesting looking courses in early 2011. At Epping the courses include birds, amphibians, lichens, mosses, liverworts, aquatic plants, bats, badgers and fungi.

<http://field-studies-council.org/eppingforest/professionaldev.aspx>

At Flatford Mill there are courses on on film-making, photography, painting and drawing wildlife <http://field-studies-council.org/flatfordmill/professionaldev.aspx>

There is also a course on the NVC for woodlands in May 2011 at FSC Course NVC Woodlands (May 2011) - <http://field-studies-council.org/professional/2011/courseinfo.aspx?id=416>

For full details of courses at all the FSC Centres of particular relevance to woodland owners see <http://field-studies-council.org/professional/2011/habitats/habitats.aspx>

AJS Crafts—Coppice Week

Offer a wide range of courses covering many different woodland-related crafts

<http://www.ajscrafts.co.uk/courses/CourseList.aspx>

There is also a wide-ranging programme available during the Surrey and Sussex Coppice Group Coppice Week 17-22nd May (flyer will be on SWOG web site shortly).

els, beginners as well as those with some experience.

Foraging for food and medicine:

an opportunity to learn how to identify, gather and make preparations from seasonal plants, for both food and medicine.

Hide-working:

traditional tanning and preserving techniques, using tools of flint, bone and wood. Dry scraping a prepared piece of deer skin, softening and preserving it by hand in order to then cut and stitch it as a pouch or other small item. A non-smelly process!

Plant journeying:

tools to open a doorway to help reconnect with nature. Time to sit with and study the plants, and learn to journey with a plant to experience its spirit. Suitable for people with no experience of journeying techniques as well as for those who've been doing it for years! .

Fire-making:

exploring three ways of making fire: by friction using the bow drill, by percussion using flint and steel and by the more ancient technique of flint and iron pyrites. Gathering and exploring various plants which can provide tinder to start our fires.

Wild pottery: hand-building pots from locally dug clay; experimenting with inclusions. Firing pots in a clamp kiln we'll make together...using only what we can gather from the woods for this whole process.

Courses take place either at Lewes, West Sussex or the WOWO campsite near Uckfield. Price £40 per day. All details and contact information are available on their <http://www.swog.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/native-hands-2011-programme.pdf>

Chestnut Bark Weaving Workshop

Anyone interested in learning to weave baskets from chestnut bark?

There is a workshop being held in East Sussex soon, (March 26th-27th) just as the sap begins to rise. Mark Lloyd who displayed some beautiful bark basketry at Bentley last year will be running this weekend course at a cost of £75 per person, camping available if required.



Please contact rich@swog.org.uk for more details.

Free Advisory Visits in High Weald AONB

While the government grapples with the thorny question of selling Forestry Commission woodlands, over 88% of the High Weald's woodlands remain unmanaged. Over half of these woodlands are recorded as ancient. These woods have a long history of management stretching back into pre-history. Iconic species including dormice & Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly adapted quickly to the cycle of coppicing; but their number have tumbled as widespread management has declined.

There is hope, as the woodlands of the High Weald could offer us more sustainable fuel and safeguard our most cherished wildlife. This can be achieved through sympathetic management, which relies on getting the right advice. The High Weald AONB is offering FREE advisory visits to woodland owners in the High Weald. This is a chance to discuss future management and find out about the past history of your woodland. To find out more visit www.highweald.org/.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust

are running what sounds like a very useful course for woodland owners.

Thinking and Skills for Small Woodlands on 4th Feb -

<http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/Things-to-do/Events/Events-archive/Thinking-and-Skills-for-Small-Woodlands.aspx>

There are other courses of interest too on

<http://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/Things-to-do/Events/Events-archive.aspx>

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have a number of interesting looking courses in early 2011. At Epping the courses include birds, amphibians, lichens, mosses, liverworts, aquatic plants, bats, badgers and fungi.

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Forthcoming SWOG Meetings

Sevenoaks, Kent, 12-13th March 2011

The Coolings (http://www.coolings.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=312&Itemid=1) are hosting this one! Speakers are Jonathan Harding from the Forestry Commission and Dan Hoare from Butterfly conservation. There is a lot to see and do there, should be a great day. Topics include grant applications, regulations, tree diseases and all things butterfly! Further details and flyer available on <http://www.swog.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/SWOG-Butterflies-and-wildlife-12th-March-1.pdf> Please let Tracy@woodlands.co.uk know if you would like more information and to book your place



Spring Birds and Plants, Knowlands Wood, East Sussex, 16th April

Come and join us for a walk in Nick's woodland in April. Knowlands wood is 5 miles North of Lewes in East Sussex. We will mostly be looking at woodland birds, plants and butterflies. Nick has a huge range of plants and wildlife!



Woodland flowers (especially bluebells and Wood Anemones) and woodland birds, (especially early summer visitors) There should be lots of windflowers, primroses, dog violets, bluebells, other woodland species such as celandine, wild strawberry, barren strawberry, Dog's Mercury, Woodland Spurge. Maybe Early Purple Orchids. Warbler species (Chiffchaff, Blackcap plus if we're lucky Garden Warbler and Willow Warbler); the usual four tit species, Goldcrest, tree-creeper, nuthatch maybe. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker with a lot of luck! Email tracy@woodlands.co.uk if you would like to book your place.

Purleigh near Chelmsford, Essex, 30th April

Alex is holding an open day for SWOG members on the 30th April 2011, at his woodland in Purleigh, near Chelmsford, Essex. Alex is hoping to set up a retreat space in the woodland for people with dyspraxia and related conditions. He can share his knowledge on retreats, composting toilets and wigwams! This is ancient woodland with a wide variety of things to see. You can also have a go at some archery. Terrain: suitable for limited mobility.

Please talk to Tracy about your needs if you wish to come. Dogs allowed, but on leads please. Email tracy@woodlands.co.uk if you are interested to know more. There is the option to camp or stay in a local B and B if you wish.



Alvecote Wood, North Warwickshire, 8th May

Sarah and Stephen from Alvecote Wood in North Warwickshire are kindly hosting this meeting in May. The speaker will be Alistair Yeomans of the Sylva Foundation, who will be talking about the 'My Forest' woodland inventory tools. This will be followed by a walk around the wood to discuss the practical application of the tools in a woodland

Biocensus

Biocensus run courses of interest to woodland owners at their centre in Gloucestershire and will shortly be running courses in the Lake District. Include badger ecology, Phase 1 habitat survey, wildlife and the law and identifying common grassland plants.

<http://www.biocensus.co.uk/training.asp>

Warwickshire College

Moreton Morrell Centre

Four week course on Woodland Management starting March 2011

http://www.warwickshire.ac.uk/courses/search_results/course_details.aspx?Id=11832

Ignite Woodfuel Courses

Forthcoming courses include Managing Woodlands for Woodfuel, a four day course on Woodfuel, and Woodlands Archaeology

<http://www.ruraldevelopment.org.uk/events/all>

BTCV London

Courses include coppicing, tree identification and tree planting
<http://shop.btcv.org.uk/shop/level3/536/level>

Alvecote Wood, North Warwickshire

An expanded programme of events during 2011 including Introduction to Photography Workshops, SWOG meeting, Introductory Woodland Management Course and a Nordic Walking Workshop

<http://www.alvecotewood.co.uk/AW-EventsProg-0211.pdf>

setting. This talk may be indoors if the weather is bad as there is a barn available.

The afternoon will include a walk round the wood to discuss what the owners have been doing to manage it for wildlife and use by community groups. Including a visit to the new 9 acre extension (Betty's Wood) planted over the winter on an adjacent arable field purchased in November 2010. Camping (no facilities) will be available on request. Unfortunately, dogs are not permitted. There is limited access for wheelchairs through part of the site but some additional areas are accessible by 4 x 4 should this be required.



Stephen and Sarah bought Alvecote Wood in October 2007. It is a neglected piece of ancient semi-natural oak woodland that has been grazed in the past by sheep, pigs, goats, horses and cattle. When purchased, it was neglected, over-fertile, overgrown with bramble, elder and nettle, and there was relatively little regeneration. Since then, the owners have been managing it for wildlife and as a resource for community groups. This has included creation of ponds and wildflower meadows, hedgerow planting, bramble and scrub clearance, thinning, and coppicing to enhance diversity of habitats. Alvecote Wood was originally 11 acres in size, but in November 2010, 9 acres of adjacent arable field was purchased in order to create new woodland and wildlife habitat, taking the size to 20 acres. Alvecote Wood is supported by the Forestry Commission and is designated by the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust as a Local Wildlife Site and Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

The meeting will run from 09:30 to 4pm or thereabouts. Please email tracy@woodlands.co.uk if you would like to attend, detailed directions will be emailed to attendees nearer the time.



Newport Pagnell, Bucks, 29th May

Ann and Paul are offering a woodland walk and chat on the 29th May. Ann says "We have two pieces of woodland in the immediate area. 10 acres of plantation pine, which we have felled over the past 4 years to reveal deciduous trees and some new planting. It is interesting to see how the ground has reacted to the increase in light. The other is 2.5 acres (a few minutes walk) consisting of old oaks with coppiced hazel and bluebell carpet, occasional stream at edge. This is untouched apart from tidying up the ancient coppice (sadly neglected by past owners)

We do not have a speaker as such but Paul will be on hand to discuss the approach to the Forestry Commission for the Felling licence and to the local council for planning permission for the shed (lodge) that we have recently completed. He has also researched the history of this area of ancient woodland which goes back at least 400 years.

Terrain: suitable for limited mobility to centre of 10acre on a path else rutted and can be very wet. BUT not to the smaller wood (unless 4-wheel drive available) as it is a grassy slope approach which can prove a little steep for some."

Email tracy@woodlands.co.uk if you are interested in coming along.

Dolgellau, Sunday 19th June

Stephen and Jane are offering to host a day in their woodland in Gwynnedd. Looks very interesting! Topics include enjoying woodland on a steep terrain and camping. Coed Glyndwr consists of mixed coniferous and deciduous trees. The total area is about fifteen acres. It lies on a North facing slope and offers spectacular views over the river Mawddach towards the Rhinog mountains. In many places the ground is steep and slippery, although there are



parts which are virtually level, and some good tracks. There are other woodlands immediately adjacent to it. It is the largest woodland in the associated group. Unsuitable for those with limited mobility and dogs are allowed. Please email Tracy@woodlands.co.uk if you would like to know more or to book your place

News and Events for Small Woodland Owners

Last chance to save spiked rampion

http://www.plantlife.org.uk/about_us/news_press/last_gasp_for_the_rare_rapunzel_flower/

Plantlife have drawn attention to the endangered status of the spiked rampion. This plant only grows in woodland and on verges in East Sussex. A 2010 survey revealed plants were present on fewer sites than expected, and with less than 10 remaining plants at 5 of the 8 remaining sites. Patrick Roper, Rother Guardian says "The only area it has been found is Abbot's Wood nr Hailsham, Hadlow Down and some places close by. Sussex botanists have been monitoring it for nearly 200 years, but it is gradually declining." There is a possibility that the plant can be saved by appropriate management, including coppicing, which will also help other species. Members of the public in East Sussex are invited to become Plantlife 'Flora Guardians' to help monitor sites where spiked rampion grows, or where it has grown in the past. A training day will be held next June for the new Flora Guardians, to show them the plant and pass on information about site monitoring. For more information, please contact: **Dominic Price** Plantlife Species Recovery Officer T: 01722 342749 / E: dominic.price@plantlife.org.uk.

NOTE: The [plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk) web site is well worth a visit even if you do not live in an area where spiked rampion grows as it has a lot of useful information about plants, large and small, that you may find in your woodlands.

London Green Fair 4th/5th June Regent's Park

<http://www.londongreenfair.org/>

"The London Green Fair will be an event that reflects the green aspirations and achievements of London as a whole, as well as providing an enjoyable and engaging day out for people from all walks of life.

It will be a dynamic and innovative event that makes ecological and social issues accessible to the diversity of London culture." If you live in London and are interested in your local environment and green issues in general, this might be of interest.

Useful handbook on woodland management (thanks to MartreCycle)

Coed Cymru have a free pdf edition available of their handbook on woodland management. Although it deals with some issues particular to Wales, there is also a lot of information in there relevant to all woodland owners and managers. It includes information about predominant woodland species, silvicultural systems, timber and its uses, tree planting and protection and markets for farm timber.

<http://www.coedcymru.org.uk/pdf/CoedCymruEnglish.pdf>

Oxford Woodland Project

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/woodlandproject

This project offers a series of events, training, workshops and advice. There is also a great newsletter "Offcuts". See the above web site for more details.

Sad News

We are very sorry to report that one of our SWOG members was killed in his woodland in February. Our thoughts and prayers are with Ted's family at this time.

<http://www.thisissussex.co.uk/news/Villagers-shocked-falling-tree-kills-Ted/article-3263772-detail/article.html>

On the Blogs at woodlands.co.uk...

What do you think of the Forestry Commission Sell-off?—by *Angus*

Lots of debate here...

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/what-do-you-think-of-the-forestry-commission-sell-off/>

Woodfuel Strategy by *Bruce Richardson*

A student discusses future woodfuel needs, and asks owners to complete a short survey on

<http://tinyurl.com/woodmansurvey1>

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/woodfuel-strategy/>

What does the Forestry Commission Consultation Really Say? by *Angus*

More about a lease-off and give-away than a sale.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/what-does-the-forestry-commission-consultation-really-say/>



Hedges, Hedgerows by *Lewis*

Why are hedgerows there? What wildlife can they contain? How can they best be preserved and managed?

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/wildlife/hedges-hedgerows/>

Forestry Commission Disposals—More Surprises by *Angus*

Are the proposals down to a lack of trust in the Forestry Commission?

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/woodland-activities/forestry-commission-disposals-more-surprises/>



The Rabbit—an Introduced Species By *Lewis*

Love 'em or hate 'em—rabbits are not native to the British Isles, but were introduced possibly as late as the 12th or 13th Centuries

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/wildlife/the-rabbit-an-introduced-speci/>

Yew Turn on the Forestry Commission Sell-off by *Angus*

The Forestry Commission sell-off was suspended, but was this really a good thing?

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/community-woodland-use/yew-turn-on-forestry-commission-sell-off/>

Fungi, Mycorrhizae, Truffles By *Chris*

Fancy growing truffles? Here's a bit of background and some sources of inoculated trees.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/blog/plants-flowers/fungi-mycorrhizae-truffles/>



Videos from Woodlandstv.co.uk

Making a Rose Arch from Hazel Rods

Rosie Rendell discovered how to make one by going on a course at West Dean College, Chichester. WoodlandsTV talked to her whilst she was making one at the Weald Wood Fair in Sussex. Using a side adze to split the hazel, and a mould with pre drilled holes Rosie discusses the points to look out for including a top tip to make your rose arch last longer. She is gaining more experience and skill working with Wildwood Charcoal and Coppice Products.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/2011/02/making-a-rose-arch-from-hazel-rods/>



Cooking with Wild Food in a Mesolithic Hut

Inside a re-creation of a mesolithic hut based on archaeological evidence, a group of children are spell-bound. The adults show them the way sour fruit such as crab apples can be sweetened by roasting over the fire, and what can be eaten straight from the tree. Everything is tasted and compared. Haws and their medicinal properties are discussed as well as "bletting" and fruit from the wild service tree. This is the first of 3 films Woodlands TV shot inside the hut.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/2011/02/cooking-with-wild-food-in-a-mesolithic-hut/>

Stone-Age Cooking using Acorn Flour

Following on from the previous programme they are experimenting with cooking acorn flour sweetened with blackberry juice. They also offer round some seeds from the Himalayan Balsam to try, as well as sloes. Again they pass on a wealth of information to a young audience as well as testing their tastebuds. The relaxed and informal discussion throws up such gems as how to use running water to leach acorns, and making fruit leather.

<http://www.woodlands.co.uk/tv/2011/02/stone-age-cooking-using-acorn-flour/>

Forthcoming Woodfairs from woodfairs.co.uk

Woodfairs in Scotland

Royal Highland Show, Edinburgh

23-26th June 2011

<http://www.royalhighlandshow.org/visitors/tickets>

Tweed Valley Forest Festival

21st to 30th October 2011

<http://www.forest-festival.com/website/index.php>

Woodfairs in Wales

Woodfest Wales

St Asaph, 3rd to 5th June 2011

http://www.woodfestwales.co.uk/north/general_information.php

Woodfairs in England

Capel Manor Gardens, J25 M25

15th-16th April

http://www.capelmanorgardens.co.uk/shows_and_events.asp

Weird and Wonderful Wood

Haughley Park, Wetherden, Nr Stowmarket, IP14 3JY, 14th and 15th May

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

Devon County Show

Westpoint, Exeter, 19-21st May

<http://www.devoncountyshow.co.uk/home>

Live Crafts and Festival of Woods

Various dates and venues across SE England.

http://www.hdfairs.co.uk/live_crafts_default.html

Naturefest

Bentley Wildfowl and Motor Museum, Lewes, East Sussex, 28-30th May

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

Great Yorkshire Show

Harrogate, 12-14th July

<http://www.greatyorkshireshow.com/html/home/>

Newsletter - March 2011

About SWOG

The Small Woodland Owner's group has been formed to aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British Woodland. As Woodlands.co.uk is sponsoring the group there will be no annual fee for members, and events are free of charge unless otherwise stated.

Anyone can join in, (you do not need to own a woodland) just send Tracy your details (name, address, email) to be put on the list. We will not pass your information to anyone else.

Please do join with us and share your wealth of knowledge and experience with others, as well as your joys and moans. We have members from all over the country. We are also on Facebook if you like to communicate that way! See www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=61487332523

Contact us:-

Web site:

rich@swog.org.uk

Newsletter editor

sarah@swog.org.uk

All other enquiries

tracy@woodlands.co.uk

www.swog.org.uk

Small Woodland Owners' Group Forum

On the forum...what have we been doing this month?

Wood troll was pleased with the wood he obtained by felling an old pear tree.

Splodger has been laying a trench to replace a leaky shared mains water supply with a non-leaky non-shared one.

Exeldama has been planting a few trees, but mostly making new paths and removing dead or dying scots pine.

Following **jellybean's** spoons featured in last month's newsletter, she has been offered quite a few pieces of wood to make more spoons.

Brassmonkey is planted some trees in his garden for future coppicing. Has also been helping with planting for a forest school and using a chainsaw for the first time.

Hornbeam_man is new to woodland own-

ership. He has already been busy with visits from the High Weald AONB and Forestry Commission recommending he restarts the coppicing cycle.

Doesquid has been busy planting more trees to create a new woodland—4000 trees so far this winter.

A new section has been added to the forum for members in **France**. There have also been discussions about huts and shelters, planking and firewood splitting equipment, cheaper ways of feeding the birds, pollarding, and forest gardens. The Forestry Commission Sell-off attracted quite a discussion, and although plans are now on hold, this issue is likely to continue to be topical. Please visit the Forum and contribute to the discussions. It is clear that the advice given is very helpful, practical, and just what people are looking for.

Forthcoming Woodfairs (continued) woodfairs.co.uk

Festival of the Tree

Westonbirt Arboretum, 26-29th August

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

Stock Gaylard Estate Oak Fair

Sturminster Newton, Devon, 27th August

<http://www.stockgaylard.com/oak-fair/oak-fair-at-stock-gaylard.html>

National Forest Woodfair

Beacon Hill Country Park, Leicestershire, 29th August

<http://www.leics.gov.uk/woodfair>

South West Woodland Show

Longleat Estate, Warminster, Wilts, 9th September

<http://www.southwestwoodlandshow.org.uk/>

Wild About Wood

Castle Howard Arboretum, 10th to 11th September

<http://www.wildaboutwood.org/>

Bentley Weald Woodfair

Bentley Wildfowl and Motor Museum, Lewes, East Sussex, 16-18th September

<http://www.bentley.org.uk/woodfair/4525168793>

Cranborne Chase Woodfair

8th-9th October, Larmer Tree Gardens

<http://www.woodfair.org.uk/>

Ickworth House, Suffolk

8th and 9th October

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-ickworth>

