



How the owners of small woodlands manage their woods



Introduction

- SWOG was established in 2008 at the suggestion of one small woodland owner.
- SWOG is a national body which is sponsored by Woodlands.co.uk, and represents owners all over the country.



SWOG membership



- Woodlands' company ethos is to encourage active management of the woodlands they sell. They give new owners membership of woodland bodies, free training and their website www.woodlands.co.uk, is a mine of information, with blogs, video and advice.
- Anyone who buys a wood via woodlands.co.uk is automatically a member.
- Anyone with an interest in woodland, wildlife and conservation can join for free. Woodland ownership is definitely not a pre-requisite.

Woodland owners

Who are they?

32% aged 25-44

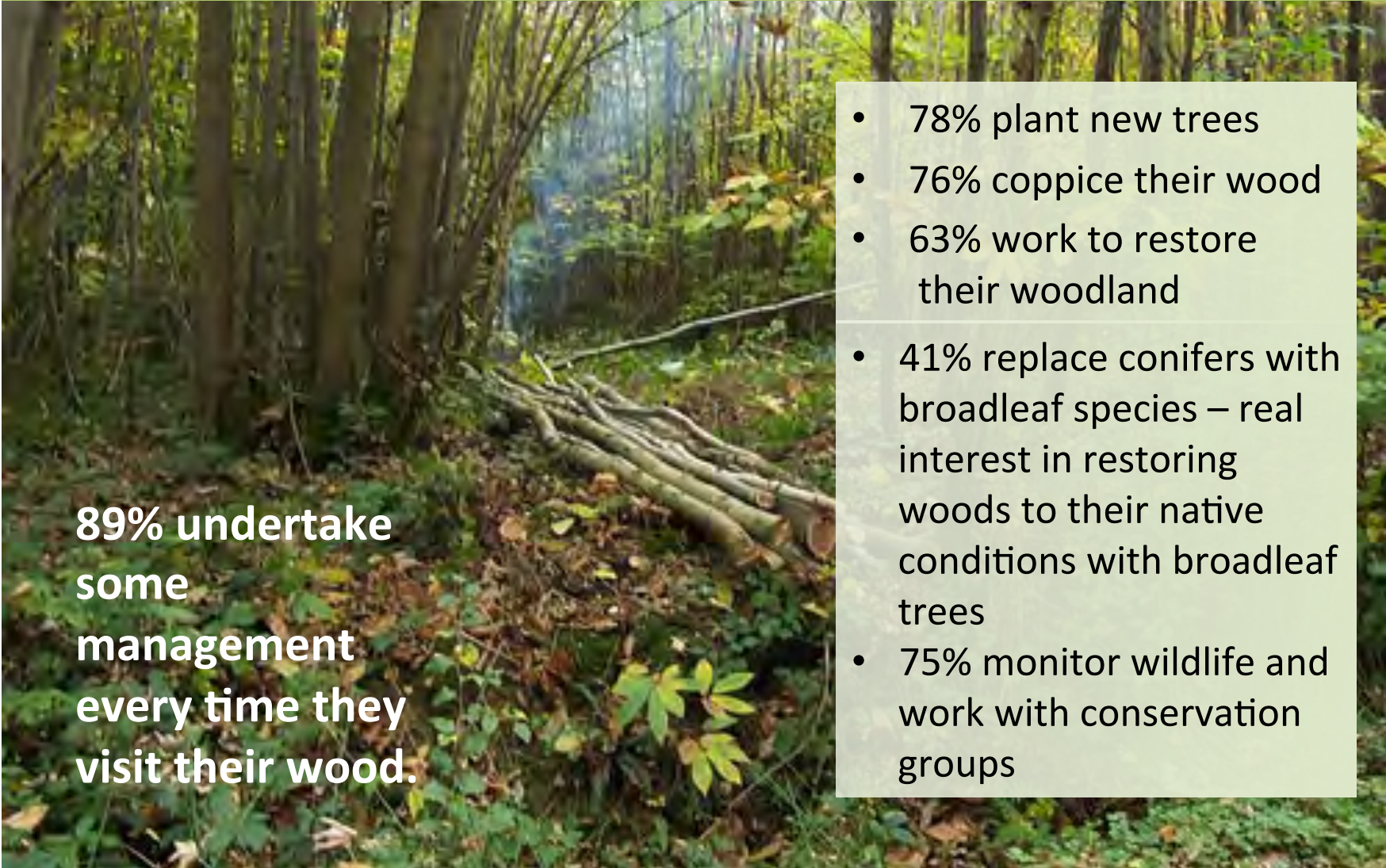
43% aged 45-64 (largest cohort)

Why do they purchase woods?

- Recreation/relaxation (90%)
- Love of wildlife/interest in ecology and conservation (86%)
- Source of wood fuel (87%)
- 66% stated that they wanted to learn about woodland management
- 97% of owners get training or advice about woodland ownership



How do they manage their woods?

A photograph of a forest floor. In the foreground, there are several fallen logs and branches lying on the ground, which is covered with green foliage and some fallen leaves. In the background, there are many standing trees with green leaves, and a stream or path is visible through the trees.

**89% undertake
some
management
every time they
visit their wood.**

- 78% plant new trees
- 76% coppice their wood
- 63% work to restore their woodland
- 41% replace conifers with broadleaf species – real interest in restoring woods to their native conditions with broadleaf trees
- 75% monitor wildlife and work with conservation groups

Ask not what your wood can do for you...

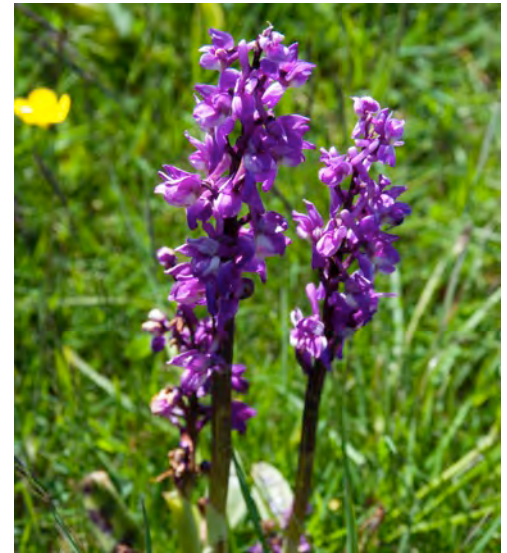


What small woodland owners do for woodlands

- Re-establish coppice rotations
- Find local markets for timber and produce
- Increase the number of 'managed' woodlands
- Support local arborialists and contractors with work

... the list goes on ...

- Increase diversity and control pests such as squirrels and deer
- Monitor and report tree diseases and insect damage
- Monitor bat, butterfly, insect populations
- Work with conservation groups (local & national)
- Maintain and increase habitat for rare or endangered plants



Challenges to small woodland owners

- *Grants* – availability fluctuates every year.
- *Bureaucracy* – the form-filling needed in comparison to the financial rewards available deters many people. Certain organisations recognise this. The Forestry Commission has recently altered its application system for management plans and nearly 75% of members have developed a management plan.
- *No economies of scale* – contractors may be reluctant or perhaps unable to work on small woodland plots. SWOG encourages owners to work together on projects such as repairing tracks or rides, or even the extraction of firewood
- *Lack of knowledge/inexperience* – most owners are conscience of this!

What support do they have?

SWOG

- Forum is a wonderful learning and discussion resource
- Meetings with fellow owners
- Sharing of information
- Monthly newsletter

Grants

FC and others

Training

Owners who purchase from Woodlands.co.uk get £300 worth of training in whatever they wish. About half choose chainsaw training. Many others learn about managing woods for wildlife – and of course this can include coppicing.

Other organisations

SWA, FC, RFS GIB



Forestry Commission



Why do they do it?



- Owners regard their woods as a long-term amenity investment for their family
- Wildlife conservation
- Wood fuel supply
- Fun!


Large estate owners manage and coppice their woods with a view to long-term profit, but small woodland owners are motivated more by the need to ensure that their woodland is well managed and maintained as a natural resource.



Very few manage their woods with a view to making a living! Some members sell firewood or coppice products, but most regard any income as 'money for chainsaw fuel'.

What small woodland owners achieve

- Bring previously under-managed woods into management
- Re-establish coppice rotations
- Increase diversity of flora and fauna
- Monitor arboreal diseases and control pests
- Widen knowledge of woodlands by sharing woods with family and friends. Small woodlands are not just owned by the few, but are shared by many.



‘The process of coppicing has transformed a dark hornbeam wood into a home for multitudes of plants and flowers and insects and birds.’

(Nick Lear, woodland owner)

‘An army of unsung conservationists are together safeguarding more than 12,000 acres of woodland for future generations. Taking large pieces of land into government or charity ownership is not the only way to conserve our woodlands; individuals can undoubtedly play their part too.’ *(Angus Hanton)*

Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk



Promoting woodland management,
sharing knowledge,
enjoying woodlands.

SWOG is free to join and open to all



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