

Small Woodland Owners' Group

Newsletter June 2015

Strike a light – firelighting part 2

Managing woodland for bees

Grants deadline



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www.swog.org.uk



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Thanks to our good friends at the Small Woods Association for the update on their events. We hear a lot about managing woods for wildlife, but bees are increasingly endangered and it is good to learn how careful management of woodlands can help them. As promised, John Clark concludes his firefighting articles with the inflammatory topics of fire sources and different types of fire. Finally, there are plenty of new videos on the woodlands.co.uk site, with subjects ranging from roadkill to lath-making.

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SWOG website and forum

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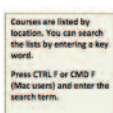
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The Small Woodland Owner's Group has been formed to aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British woodland. The company Woodlands.co.uk sponsors the group, so membership is completely free and events are free of charge unless otherwise stated.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



Update from the Small Woods Association

SWOG and the Small Woods Association (SWA) are easy to confuse – the purpose of both organisations is to support the owners of small woodlands in the management and enjoyment of their woodlands. In addition, the SWA has charitable status and runs courses throughout the year, many based at their headquarters in Shropshire.

Many SWOG members are members of the SWA, and those that purchased a wood from Woodlands.co.uk receive a year's membership of the SWA. (SWOG, of course, is free.)

David Brown, the SWA co-ordinator in the south-east visits members throughout Kent, Surrey and Sussex in their woods on request, and sends out a regular informal south-east newsletter to members on the mailing list with information, news, requests and ads. He has kindly written a short report.

'We've had two very successful meetings in members' woods this year so far, one near Uckfield in East Sussex and the other near Capel in Surrey. The owners really appreciated the

ideas suggested by members and those attending gained from talking to someone else about how they manage their woodland.'

Forthcoming meetings include

- Lower Vert Wood (5 June): advice on grants for PAWS restoration in the Low Weald from the Woodland Trust.
- Berry Wood (27 June): a talk on dormice and expert advice on coppicing.
- Knowlands Wood (11 July): birds and butterflies – how to attract them.
- Slips Wood (7 Sept): woodland management and beekeeping in woods.
- Barnetts Wood (26 Sept): cutting, splitting and seasoning firewood – one woodlander's view.

Contact seorganiser@smallwoods.org.uk for more details.

'The SWA also runs a rolling programme of reduced rate chainsaw courses in Plumpton College's woods at Flimwell, East Sussex.

We are setting up a scheme so that members can find out who their local woodland owners are so they can help each other, visit woods and socialize. Woodland archaeology surveys are also available free of charge.

If you're one of those SWOG members who have allowed their membership of the SWA to lapse, then why not re-join? Take a look at the website, smallwoods.org.uk for more details.'

Woodland Grants – 30 June deadline

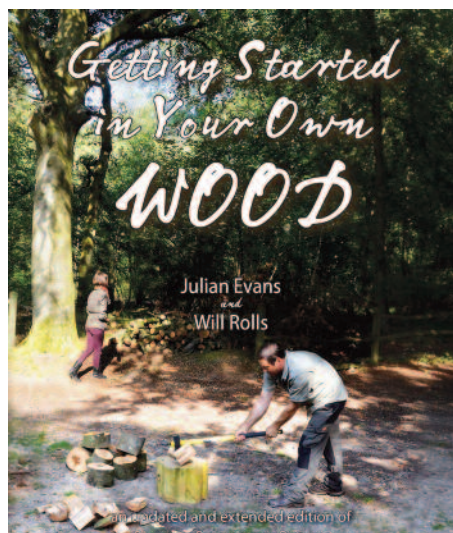
Those wishing to apply for the tree health and management plan grants from the Woodland Capital Grants Scheme 2015 are reminded that the deadline for applications is 30 June 2015.

Successful applicants will receive an agreement once their application has been approved. A draft agreement will be issued within 11 weeks this could take longer if there are major issues to resolve. Full guidance on the *Countryside Stewardship: woodland capital grants*

2015 are on the DEFRA website [here](#).

As we've noted before, it's not the easiest grant to apply for, but it is well worth the trouble. See our **March newsletter** for more details about the scheme.





Getting Started in Your Own Wood

Revised, expanded and updated, *Getting Started in your Own Wood* is a new edition of Julian Evans' hugely successful *Badgers, Beeches and Blisters*, first published in 2006 and reprinted four times. Every chapter has been revised, and two new chapters added by Will Rolls, author of *The Log Book*, on firewood and tree pests and diseases.

Written by experts committed to the care and stewardship of woodland resources, it provides practical advice and guidance for those coming to woodland management for the first time. It is available from **Permanent Publications** for £12.95.

Managing woodland for bees

A new study published in the science journal *Biological Conservation* identified that the amount of uncultivated land currently being devoted to bees and other pollinators on farmland needs to be doubled to boost declining insects such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies.

The five-year study, which formed part of the **Farm4bio project**, was carried out by entomologists from the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) and Rothamsted Research. It suggests that at least a seven per cent increase in flower-rich habitat is needed in order to double pollinator abundance. The study was carried out in two regions of England – Wessex and East Anglia.

Woodland owners can help too. Dr John Holland, head of farmland ecology with the GWCT explained, 'It is vitally important to protect hedges and woodland edges from fertiliser and herbicide drift which can damage existing plant communities that provide preferred habitats for bumblebees such as carder bees and red tailed bees.'

The study identified the importance of woodland edges for bees and butterflies and the need to increase management in these areas for the benefit of pollinators. Dr Holland said, 'Similar to farmland birds, wild bees can also suffer during the 'hungry gap' when there is little spare food available.



When pollinators such as queen bumblebees come out of hibernation in early spring, they need an ample supply of nectar from spring flowers such as white-dead nettle, primrose, and bluebells, so that they can start a breeding colony. Woodland can therefore be a particularly important habitat for pollinators in the landscape during early spring. One of the key ways to maximise the pollen and nectar in these woodland areas is to create a diverse structure within the woodland by coppicing, and opening rides that help encourage the growth of flowers and a shrubby layer within the woodland. Flowering trees are also very important and given their size, provide massive amounts of nectar and pollen.'

To learn more about research into wildlife and woodland habitats, visit the **GWCT website**.

Woodlands TV

Back after a few month's absence, there are now no less than seven new videos to view.

How to make laths

For generations, laths were used in construction. They are still required in heritage restoration work that involves lime plaster.

Preparing roadkill pigeon to eat in the woodlands

Artist and Wild Food Forager, Alison Brierley – aka Tribal Ali – prepares the pigeon she finds at the side of the road for eating.

Urban forestry

Cabinet-makers Jeff Segal, Paul Shrubshall and Andrew Marsh work together to mill a giant beech tree using an Alaskan chainsaw. The 200-year old tree was rotten with disease and unsafe to leave growing within a residential environment. Keen conservationists, they like to use recycled timber in their work.

Identifying edible roadkill by the woodlands

Tribal Ali describes the steps needed to identify whether dead animals found by the side of the road are edible.

Axe safety

Naturalist John Rhyder has learned through direct experience how best to handle axes safely when preparing firewood. Here he demonstrates the stances, swing actions and range of cuts that can be made to ensure personal safety when splitting wood with an axe.

Foraging boletus mushrooms in the woodlands

Fraser Simpson continues his foraging for gourmet mushrooms. This month, he explores the Boletus series – funghi porcini.

Cooking with wild mushrooms from the woodlands

Last in the series, Fraser Simpson completes his foraging season by cooking with the edible wild mushrooms he's picked.

Woodlands blogs

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

Chatsworth Arboretum and Pinetum – highly managed woodlands

Angus explores the extraordinary story of the woodland planting on the Chatsworth Estate undertaken by the 6th Duke of Devonshire in the 19th century.

Woodlands come in many forms

There are several different (and sometimes complex) systems used to classify woodlands. Chris uses a straightforward method: which tree species is most prevalent, factoring in climate and geology.

Woodland types: beech woodlands

Native to southern England and Wales, beech woods are a much-loved feature of the landscape. The trees have a variety of uses, from hedging plants, to long-lived coppice and the timber was commonly used in furniture making.



Strike a light

In this month's article, John Clark of **Bowji Bush Camping** will look at the range of fire lighting devices available to us, the process of building a fire and the range of different fires and their uses

Lighting techniques

Matches/lighter

Both are fairly common forms of fire lighting. A disposable lighter is light, easy to carry and effective. The pitfalls are that they run out of fuel and they are vulnerable to heavy use. It is not difficult to break them by exerting excessive pressure when fingers are cold. Re-chargeable lighters require you to carry extra fuel.

Household matches are susceptible to damp.

All matches should be stored in weather-proof containers – use containers designed for the purpose or old plastic 35mm film containers. Alternatively, simply wrap them in cellophane along with a strip of material to strike them on. Damp-proof matches are an excellent alternative.

Percussion



When struck with high carbon steel, ferrocerium rods create a shower of extremely hot

sparks. These sparks need to be directed onto the tinder



A steel and flint also create intensely hot sparks. To generate a spark, the steel is struck against the flint at a shallow angle.

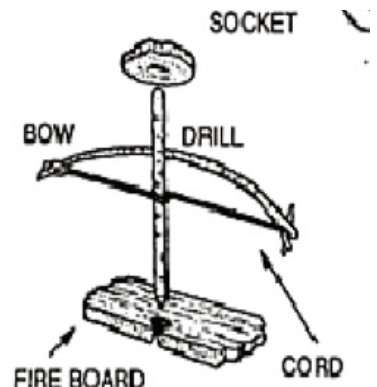
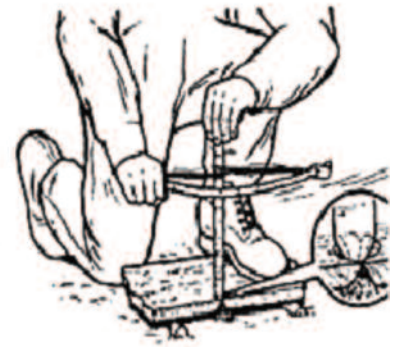
When struck correctly, the flint causes a tiny sliver of superheated steel to fly off. In this case the tinder is held close to the leading edge of the flint to capture the spark.

Friction

There are two friction techniques in common use. The **bow and drill** involves the use of a

bow, its string wrapped around a drill. The drill is held in such a way that one end is forced into a piece of wood known as a hearth. The purpose of the technique is to generate a hot ember that can be carefully collected, introduced to a 'nest' of tinder and blown into flame.

The **hand drill** is similar, but without the mechanical advantage that the bow affords. Both techniques require considerable practice and preparation.



Electrical

It is possible to create sufficient heat to start a fire simply by placing a handful of wire wool across the terminals of an ordinary 9-volt battery. This technique will work equally well with a car battery.

Solar

The sun is a useful source of energy which can be harnessed using a magnifying glass to focus the sun's rays onto a single spot on a suitable piece of tinder. A parabolic mirror (above) achieves the same result.



Compression

The fire piston is an unusual device that harnesses the increase of temperature that occurs when air is rapidly compressed. A piece of



tinder (commonly char cloth) is placed on the tip of the shaft of the plunger (tip of steel shaft in

picture). The plunger is placed in the top of the wooden sheath and then slammed home with the heel of the hand. The resultant heat is sufficient to generate an ember from the tinder which can be added to kindling and nursed into flame.

Preparing firewood

Variety of kindling sizes

When preparing to make a fire, spend a significant amount of time collecting firewood. You will need to collect a range of different sizes from pencil thin, to larger logs as thick as your arm (or thicker).

Firewood needs to be dead and dry. Even in wet weather it is possible to find sufficiently dry kindling.

Wood on the ground tends to be sodden so look up into the branches of trees. There will be dead twigs either still attached to the tree, or broken off by previous winds but still snagged within the tree's branches.

Dry wood sounds different from live or wet wood. It should break cleanly with a snap. Hit the larger stuff with the back of your knife – the sound will be sharper than that of live or wet wood

Split wood

Even dead wood lying on the ground that appears to be wet can be used. Although the wood is wet on the outside, the inside of the

wood is often still dry. By splitting the wood the dry interior can be exposed and will burn readily.

Feather sticks

In order to aid you in getting a fire started in damp/wet conditions, it is possible to process dead wood by creating shavings (*below left*).

This shaved dry wood (with a feathered end) is called, not unsurprisingly, a feather stick. So long as the feathers are kept dry, feather sticks will light in even the dampest of conditions.

Laying a fire

On damp or very cold ground it is important not to set your kindling straight onto the ground. It is good practice to create a layer of small sticks as a 'raft' on the ground first. This does three things:

- Keeps the kindling clear of wet ground.
- Prevents the cold from frozen ground from robbing heat from kindling.
- Allows the flames to breath.

A pair of 'ventilation sticks' should be set in a 'V' shape on top of the raft. This allows you to lift the kindling to help the air get to the fire.



Strike a light

Types of fire

Cooking fire

Cooking fires need to be relatively small and prepared with a mixture of soft and hard wood. The soft wood helps get the fire started, but initially it tends to be far too hot to cook on. Hard wood creates coals which will burn longer and give off a less fierce, more even heat for cooking.



Swedish log fire

Take a pine log, make a deep cut in the form of a cross to midway down the log. A breathing hole cut at the base on one of the crosses is stuffed with kindling. The fire burns from inside and creates a column of flame that is extremely hot and ideal for boiling water.



Long fire

The Swedish long fire (or 'all night' fire) is also a very effective fire for keeping warm. You will be able to sleep full length alongside it to keep your whole body warm.



Signal fire

A signal fire is constructed in a tall column with plenty of air space below the wood and crowned with greenery. Its purpose is to be seen and so this form of construction ensures that smoke is 'punched' into the sky in a long column. A well designed signal fire can be seen for miles.

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

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.

The Arb Show

5–6 June 2015 Westonbirt Arboretum
www.trees.org.uk/The-ARB-Show

Royal Highland Show 2015

18–21 June 2015 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
www.nationalforest.org

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.

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

