

Small Woodland Owners' Group Newsletter October 2016

State of Nature 2016
Squirrel accord
Tracking birds in the woods



Small Woodland Owners' Group

www.swog.org.uk



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With autumn here, it might be a good time to consider taking a course in woodland management. Providers are listed on the SWOG website, and there are several suggestions in this issue. Observatree has issued a series of seasonal guides to identify pests and diseases, but if you'd rather enjoy the wildlife, take a look at John Rhyder's guide to tracking birds.

The Small Woodland Owner's Group has been formed to aid the enjoyment, diversity and conservation of British woodlands. 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.

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SWOG website and forum

rich@swog.org.uk

SWOG co-ordinator and newsletter editor

judith@swog.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter @_swog



SWOG COURSE LIST 2016



Courses are listed by location. You can search the lists by entering a key word. Press CTRL F for CMD F (Mac users) and enter the search term.



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/courses

UK Squirrel Accord – good news for red squirrels

Woodland owners will be only too familiar with the damage caused to trees by grey squirrels, which strip bark from broadleaved species, leaving them vulnerable to pests and diseases, or even killing them. Since their introduction in the late 19th century, grey squirrel populations have grown rapidly, with their numbers outstripping the native red squirrel. Greys also carry the squirrel pox virus (SQPV), which spreads quickly through red squirrel populations and is fatal. Various agencies have been discussing the problem for years, but there may be a real glimmer of hope on the horizon.

The UK Squirrel Accord is government-backed and supported by 35 leading British woodland and conservation organisations, such as Confor, the Forestry Commission, the RFS, Sylva and the Woodland Trust. Created by HRH the Prince of Wales, the signatories share information and are committed to practical action and scientific research.

The most recent research has focused on



fertility control, which offers the prospect of controlling and reducing population numbers. Research has been undertaken by DEFRA to develop effective single-use oral immune-contraceptives. Modelling suggests that grey squirrels could be eradicated from an area in a few years if more than 70% were rendered infertile. As yet, the research and development is still under way, but if pilot field trials and costings are successful, there is a very real prospect that grey squirrel numbers will decline. Keep up to date with the project here:

www.squirrelaccord.uk

National Wood Fuel Conference 2016 Fuelling the landscape

13 October Sandown Park Racecourse

Organised by the Surrey Hills AONB, Forestry Commission, Grown in Britain, LC Energy and the CLA, this year's National Wood Fuel Conference will focus on woodland's growing role in the rural economy. Wood fuel is developing as a significant driver for landscape scale management and the conference will look at how an integrated approach can support new woodland creation, aid flood prevention, add

value to land and fuel the rural economy.

Subjects under discussion will include

- The role new woodland could play in helping manage flood flows
- Business opportunities offered by new woods
- The role of woody biomass in district heating
- Government heat strategy and the Renewable Heat Incentive
- Implications of BREXIT for the wood fuel industry.

To learn more and to book (£115 per head) visit the **Surrey Hills website**.

State of Nature 2016 report published

Launched at the Royal Society, the *State of Nature 2016* report reveals that over half (56%) of UK species studied have declined since 1970, while more than one in ten (1,199 species) of the nearly 8,000 species assessed in the UK are under threat of disappearing altogether.

‘The State of Nature report 2016 is the biggest and most comprehensive assessment of UK nature to date and the statistics are overwhelming and compelling – our nature is being lost at an alarming rate and is highly threatened,’ said Dr Richard Gregory of the RSPB Centre for Conservation Science.

Although the news is far from good, there are some positive actions that have occurred as a direct result of the 2013 report.

While launching the report, Sir David Attenborough said, ‘The rallying call issued after the State of Nature report in 2013 has promoted exciting and innovative conservation projects. Landscapes are being restored, special places defended, struggling species being saved

and brought back. But we need to build significantly on this progress if we are to provide a bright future for nature and for people. The future of nature is under threat and we must work together; governments, conservationists, businesses and individuals, to help it. Millions of people in the UK care very passionately about nature and the environment and I believe that we can work together to turn around the fortunes of wildlife.’

The report pools data from more than 50 organisations. The woodland section notes that Britain is one of the least wooded areas in Europe and that the prime drivers of change are the intensity and type of woodland management which has such a profound effect on wildlife. The whole report is available to download from the RSPB website here: ww2.rspb.org.uk.



Certificate in Greenwood craft with the Woodsmith Experience



The north-east's foremost traditional woodland craftsman and greenwood worker, Maurice Pyle, is leading a new part-time course in a wide range of traditional greenwood

craft subjects, which will qualify for a Northumberland College certificate. It is a unique foundation course, which will equip students with a range of practical and theoretical woodland craft skills

Typically running Friday and Saturday each week, from Thursday 12 January 2017 until Saturday 15 April 2017, the course offers 22 days of instruction (and two extra days) with Maurice and other leading craft professionals. The units are as follows:

Small woodland management and traditional coppice craft (2 days)
Charcoal and firewood production (2 days)
Willow structures (2 days)
Make a pole lathe (2 days)
Make a shavehorse (2 days)
Oak swill baskets (3 days)
Wooden bowl carving (1 day)
Spoon carving (1 day)
Tool sharpening (1 day)
Shrink boxes (1 day)
Willow baskets (2 days)
Cleft ash gates (2 days)
Business planning and start-up (1 day)

Cost: £1,400

Venue: The Northumberland Centre for Greenwood Craft at Kirkley Hall. Visit the **Woodsmith website** for more details or email Maurice: maurice@mpwoodsmith.co.uk



Suz Lambert of the Sustainability Centre in East Meon, Hampshire, explains why a course in woodland management is an excellent way of learning new skills to improve your woodland.

As every woodsman knows, it is both a privilege and a great responsibility to own and manage a woodland. It is an obligation to pass on this precious resource in a better state to our children, than that in which it was inherited. But for the first-time woodland owner, this can be a daunting task, riddled with complexity and conflict.

Two-thirds of Britain's woodlands are in private hands, with only half of these known to be in 'active management'. Whilst there is still a certain temptation to bow to the idea that a woodland can, and indeed should, flourish without manmade control, the hands-off approach is not necessarily the best. With so much of our natural and ancient woodland now lost, and smaller, ever more vulnerable pockets of woodland to protect, it is becoming increasingly important for a coherent and collective approach to woodland management.

The challenges our woodlands face are numerous and varied. From climate change, pests and diseases, to intensive development and land use, our trees and woodlands are crying out for proper guardianship and protection. Chalara dieback of ash threatens 130 million ash trees, the third most popular tree in the UK. Mature oaks across central England and Wales are falling victim to acute oak decline, and *Phytophthora ramorum* is affecting larch, with dreadful impacts for both commercial forestry

and biodiversity across the British Isles.

The spread of such diseases and the desynchronisation of seasonal events is assisted by a warming climate, which may begin to have a severe impact on species and diversity. With spring and summer starting on average 2.5 days earlier every decade since 1971, it is increasingly likely that butterflies will start to emerge before food-plants are available and birds will hatch before their insect food is available.

Happily, the solutions are just as varied as the challenges and we are seeing sustainability move towards the heart of innovative woodland management training courses up and down the country. Committed woodsmen are working tirelessly to pass on their skills to a new generation of woodland owners and managers.

Hampshire's Sustainability Centre delivers a programme of

training sessions under the guidance of practioners such as Ben Law, specifically designed to deliver a holistic approach to managing our local woodland spaces.

Visit our website www.sustainability-centre.org to see the full extent of our courses. The next woodland management course is from 7–11 November and covers all principles of woodland sustainability, including methods of management, timber production and processing, woodland craft and charcoal, conservation and biodiversity, woodland law and health and safety, woodland management plans and surveys, insurance, felling licence requirements and woodland grants as well as tackling social forestry and community involvement.



Tracking birds in the woods

*John Ryder of the **Woodcraft School** in Sussex shares his love of tracking birds in the woods*

For me, tracking is about building a better understanding of all the creatures that share our spaces. Birds are generally much easier to spot than more shy and secretive mammals. It might at first seem, then, that tracking would be more appropriate to mammals than to birds.

However, as the birds finish their annual breeding cycle they stop singing so frequently and hide amongst the leaves, which are thick on the trees. In late summer it can be surprisingly difficult to spot them. Many become almost as secretive as their mammalian cousins.

Tracking birds is a more inexact science than tracking animals. While it is frequently possible to identify a bird species, spotting the differences between, say, a song thrush and blackbird from its tracks alone, is very difficult, if not impossible.

I have included here a few bird tracks with some obvious features to get you started on a fascinating subject. Bird tracks are a really enjoyable addition to your storehouse of natural knowledge. It is all about observation, so anyone can learn these skills, and become good at spotting clues and learning to track.

A few groups of birds are easy to spot and a rudimentary knowledge of the structure of a birds' feet, notably the arrangement of toes is useful. Birds have four toes with toe one, the hallux, (in a classic bird track), pointing backwards. The other toes are numbered two, three and four, starting from the inside, so toe number two is closest to the other leg. In many species, such as gulls and ducks, there is webbing between toes two, three and four which often shows in the tracks. Some species, such as cormorants, also have webbing extending between the fourth toe and the hallux.

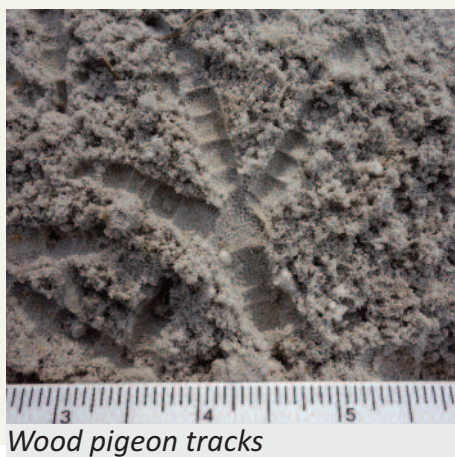
Identifying birds' feet

Game birds and some shore birds very rarely show the hallux in a track at all, as it is higher up the leg and much shortened. This reflects a life on the ground with no need for the first toe to hold the creature securely to a branch. Large tracks showing three toes in a Sussex woodland don't leave very many options other than pheasant.



Hugging toe of the crow.

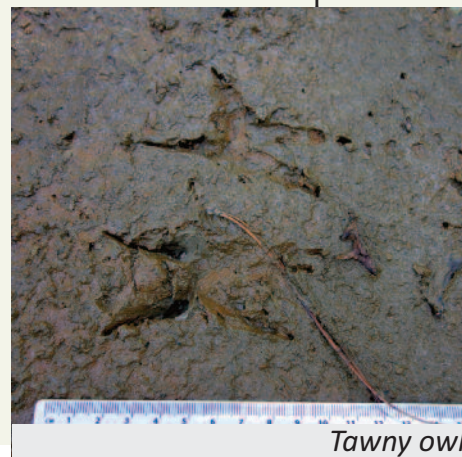
Around muddy puddles in woods it is also possible to spot the tracks of wood pigeons. They show classic four-toed tracks, but with the forward facing toes curving in towards the trail, hence the expression 'pigeon-toed'. They also frequently show a large space in the center of the track where all the toes meet.



Wood pigeon tracks

Crows show a classic perching bird track, but one toe always lays closer to toe number three than the other. If you work out which one, you can also tell right from left.

Some birds, unusually, have two toes facing backwards and two facing forwards. The two most well known, are owls and woodpeckers. Each of these form a classic 'K'-shaped track.



Tawny owl

Observatree

Observatree is a collaborative project between Forest Research, the Forestry Commission, APHA, Defra, Fera Science Ltd, the National Trust, Natural Resources Wales and the Woodland Trust. Funded by the EU's Life programme, it aims to help spot new pest and disease threats to UK trees.

Utilising the power of over 200 volunteer 'citizen scientists', Observatree has a comprehensive early warning system of reporting the signs and locations of pests and diseases. The website has very clear and detailed instructions on how to spot the usual unpleasant suspects in the world of tree problems: Chalara ash dieback, oak processional moth, oriental chestnut gall wasp and others.

There is a wide array of resources and posters to download from their website, www.observatree.org.uk/resources, including a really useful calendar, which shows the seasonal occurrence of signs of trouble. October, for example, is the key month for spotting the feeding damage from the fierce (but

relatively unusual) Asian Longhorn beetle in infected timber. It's also the time to inspect tree bark for damage caused by phytophthora, acute oak decline or chestnut blight.

The involvement of volunteers in this project is really important and enables information to be passed quickly to the relevant regulatory authorities. Peter Crow, the Observatree project manager said, 'By bringing together volunteers' knowledge and enthusiasm and the expertise of professional diagnosticians, the unique Observatree project will detect threats at the earliest stages and mark a major contribution towards protecting UK trees.'

In 2012, for example, Asian longhorn was reported in a Kent woodland and the Forestry Commission acted swiftly to impose a 2km buffer zone around the infected location, asking owners to hold back from felling or tree surgery, and if absolutely necessary, to ensure that all woody material was disposed of in an appropriate way.

Anyone can report their suspicions via the Forestry Commission's **Tree Alert online tool**, which is monitored by tree health officers.



Pest signs and symptoms calendar

If you see any of these symptoms, report your concerns via Tree Alert: www.forestry.gov.uk/treelert



PESTS	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
Oak Processionary Moth	Old nests/ eggs	Old nests/ eggs	Old nests/ eggs	Active caterpillars/ feeding damage	Active caterpillars/ feeding damage	Active caterpillars/ feeding damage/ silk trails	Adult/moth emergence/ silk trails	Adult/moth emergence/ silk trails	Adult/moth emergence			
Pine Processionary Moth	Nests/ feeding damage	Nests/ feeding damage	Nests/ feeding damage	Nests/ feeding damage	Adult/moth emergence	Adult/moth emergence	Adult/moth emergence			Nests/ feeding damage	Nests/ feeding damage	Nests/ feeding damage
Oriental Chestnut Gall Wasp	Brown, woody galls/ distorted, retained leaves	Brown, woody galls/ distorted, retained leaves	Brown, woody galls/ distorted, retained leaves	Brown, woody galls/ distorted, retained leaves	Green and pink/ red galls/ deformed leaves	Green and pink/ red galls/ deformed leaves	Green and pink/ red galls/ deformed leaves	Green and pink/ red galls/ deformed leaves	Green and pink/ red galls/ deformed leaves	Brown, woody galls/ distorted, retained leaves	Brown, woody galls/ distorted, retained leaves	Brown, woody galls/ distorted, retained leaves
Great Spruce Bark Beetle	Resin tubes/ bleeds	Resin tubes/ bleeds	Resin tubes/ bleeds	Adults/ beetles active >12°C/resin tubes/bleeds	Adults/ beetles active >12°C/resin tubes/bleeds	Adults/ beetles active >12°C/resin tubes/bleeds	Adults/ beetles active >12°C/resin tubes/bleeds	Adults/ beetles active >12°C/resin tubes/bleeds	Adults/ beetles active >12°C/resin tubes/bleeds	Resin tubes/ bleeds	Resin tubes/ bleeds	Resin tubes/ bleeds
Plane/Oak Lace Bug				Leaf vein eggs/black dot frass/ feeding damage	Leaf vein eggs/black dot frass/ feeding damage	Adult emergence	Adult emergence	Adult emergence	Adult emergence	Leaf vein eggs/black dot frass/ feeding damage		
Bronze Birch Borer/ Emerald Ash Borer				Thinning, yellow, stunted leaves	Thinning, yellow, stunted leaves	Adult/beetle emergence	Adult/beetle emergence	Adult/beetle emergence	Thinning, yellow, stunted leaves			
Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner					Pale/brown leaf mines	Pale/brown leaf mines	Pale/brown leaf mines	Pale/brown leaf mines	Pale/brown leaf mines	Pale/brown leaf mines		
Longhorn Beetle - Asian (from July) - Citrus - Red Necked					Adults/ beetles/ frass/feeding damage/exit holes	Adults/ beetles/ frass/feeding damage/exit holes	Adults/ beetles/ frass/feeding damage/exit holes	Adults/ beetles/ frass/feeding damage/exit holes	Adults/ beetles/ frass/feeding damage/exit holes	Adults/ beetles/ frass/feeding damage/exit holes		

APF 2016

The APF show is one of the largest forestry shows in Europe – and having walked all the way round, I'm not surprised. It really does offer something of interest for every sector of the woodland community, from professional contractors to pole-lathe turners. Although much of the kit on display is aimed at arboricultural professionals – chippers, forwarders, splitters and processors – there were many items to tempt the small woodland owner, from chainsaws to saw horses and hand tools. Given its size, and the fact that over 22,000 people attended, I was really delighted to bump into several SWOG members (especially those in their SWOG t-shirts!) and hope you all enjoyed a grand day out. APF will return in 2018.



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

TV

Making flower essence in the woodland

Homeopath Jenny Howarth describes how she captures the essence of woodlands in a bottle to use its healing energy.

Blogs

Birds, oil seed rape and foraging

Dr Ben Woodcock and colleagues of the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology have examined and analysed the changing distributions and populations of bees in relation to the growing areas of oilseed rape cultivation across England.



Woodland owners – be part of the Tree Charter

Next year we will commemorate the 800th anniversary of the 1217 Charter of the Forest. Add your views to the 2017 Tree Charter by taking part in a survey for owners hosted by the Sylva Foundation. More than two-thirds of woodlands are held in private hands, so it is vital that the voices of woodland owners and custodians are captured.

Small woodland owners play an important

Images of spring and summer

A collection of great photographs that record many natural wonders: shells, berries, flowers, frogs, dragonflies – pure visual enjoyment!

Woodland moths and butterflies

Deciduous lowland woodlands can offer a rich variety of habitats if they are managed to offer a diverse structure, coupled with a changing supply of open areas. A woodland that is 'good' for butterflies and moths is one with a diverse and uneven structure, and one that changes.

Moorland heather and bees

In late summer Yorkshire bees are often moved to the moors as the small purple flowers of the heather emerge. It's a cumbersome process, but well worth the effort. The nectar they produce results in a highly sought after and delicious honey.



part in woodland management to support wildlife, produce home-grown timber and improve biodiversity. Responses so far have been heartfelt, with owners recounting how dedicated they are to improving their woods and their delight at the results.

The survey really does take only five minutes. To take part: sylva.org.uk/myforest/charter.



Woodfairs and events 2016



Surrey Hills Wood Fair

1–2 October 2016 Birtley Estate, Bramley
www.surreyhills.org

Peebles Wood Market

22–23 October 2016 Tweed Green &
Community Hall, Peebles, Scottish Borders
www.forest-festival.com/wood-market

Grown in Britain Week

10–16 October 2016 Various locations
www.growninbritain.org

National Woodfuel Conference

Thursday 13th October 2016
Sandown Park Racecourse, Portsmouth Road,
Esher KT10 9AJ
www.surreyhills.org/events

Royal Forestry Society Conference

1 November 2016 Making Woodlands Pay
www.rfs.org.uk/events

Grown in Britain Week 2016

Back by popular demand, Grown in Britain week 2016 promises to be another great ‘national celebration of wood and the amazing places and people that bring this fantastic material into our lives’.

Supported by a number of partners and organisations such as the Royal Forestry Society, GIB week spans the whole woodland world, from industrial supply chain dealers to small woodland owners; from craftsmen to internationally recognised furniture retailers such as Heal’s.

The launch event, which will focus on timber in construction, will be followed by a day discussing woodland social enterprises and the value they bring to local economies. Grown in Britain is working with the Plunkett Foundation and a range of partners to help local groups transform woodland sites. The project is called

‘Making Local Woods Work’ and if you would like your project to be included, email enquiries@growninbritain.org.

Education is the focus for day three, led by the RFS one-day course on grading and valuing your timber, which may be of particular interest to woodland owners. For more details, visit the GIB website, www.growninbritain.org

