



May 2024  
OWL Scotland National News

It has been a rather soggy start to the year but with the recent cluster of sunny, warm days it feels like spring has arrived. With nature waking up from its winter slumber there has also been a marked increase of activity in the local OWL groups. Lots of exciting updates follow in the group section.



Ros and I had the opportunity to attend the [Confor](#) dinner and awards ceremony in Edinburgh in March. This was a great opportunity to see how the forestry industry is using innovation and skills to progress the sector. Two of the categories included Changing Attitudes and The Net Zero Award and had many interesting short-listed projects and contributors. As always representatives from across the sector were keen to hear about the projects local OWL groups are taking forward, particularly relating to the SJFA and the special skills programmes.



Learning through Landscapes have run two Lead Teacher in Outdoor Learning workshops for Scottish Forestry which have been so well received that both courses had long waiting lists. Scottish Forestry have also supported LtL to update and create new information sheets linked into learning in woodland settings. When completed this will be shared on the OWL Scotland Facebook page.

Thanks again for everyone's hard work!

Eilidh and Bonnie 😊

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## Wildfire Season!

What is this??

Wildfire season is often marked between March and May. This is a period where grass and vegetation is dry and offers fuel for fires to spread. New growth from spring has only started so there is little leafy, green material around to prevent and control the spread of fire.

Therefore, we are reminding the OWL Scotland network to read over the [OWL Scotland Fire Guidance](#) which can be found on the OWL Scotland website and work through the following steps before deciding to have a fire on site.

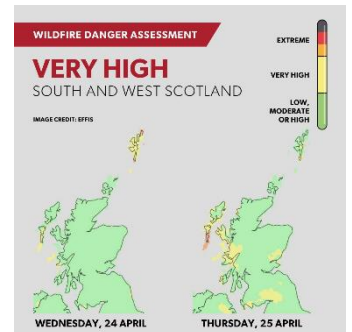
1. Do you have a clear purpose for having your fire?
2. What are the intended outcomes? (Skills/ learning/ environmental)
3. Do you have the required insurance?
4. Consider site sensitivities and possible environmental impacts of activity.

Never start a fire during prolonged dry periods- [Scottish Fire and Rescue Service](#) will issue wildfire risk warnings- please review these for your local area. Think about the status of your local site and local area.

Remember you may have lots of experience and be confident that you can maintain safe fire activities but those watching might try and replicate you and be caught out, resulting in fire spreading.

Please note that the OWL Scotland Fire Guidance is a summary and is not comprehensive. It should be supported by skills development, training, and specialist guidance where appropriate.

Natural Resource Wales has a great [webpage on Wildfires](#) with lots of important information and interactive activities to raise awareness of this burning topic!



## Summer 2024 OWL Scotland National Networking Weekend

### Save the date- 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of August 2024!

This summer's networking event will once again be held at Pillars of Hercules with camping included as part of the weekend ticket. This event will include lots of time to network with other OWL group members, outdoor practitioners and teachers and the opportunity to attend two workshops on the Saturday.

More information will be provided shortly through the local OWL groups and on the OWL Scotland Facebook page.



## OWL Scotland National Networking Weekend 2024

New year new venue! The 2024 OWL Scotland event had a change of location this winter and was held at PGL Dalguise. 82 practitioners attended from all over Scotland and joined in a weekend of workshops, networking, updates and fun. There were a few wee extended road trips with the main road to site being closed and the bridge at Logierait testing everyone's trust in the WhatsApp communication system.



The weather remained generally kind during the day, and we managed to keep all workshops outside, but the evening rain did dampen the spirits slightly for our usual campfire. A massive thank you to all involved in organising the event, running a workshop and attending the event. Once again it was super to see everyone's passion for outdoor learning being expressed and lots of sounds of laughter thrumming from little pockets of woodland.



## Scotland's Finest Woods Awards

Applications for this year's award are now closed and winners will be announced before the start of the summer holidays. Keep an eye on the [OWL Scotland Facebook page](#) for details of this year's winners and runners up. Thank you to every setting that submitted an application form. Another tough year of judging with such exciting and high-quality applications.



Seven Case studies of past winners and runners up are now available on the OWL Scotland website to inspire future applications to this award. For more information on SFWA and to view the case studies please visit the [Awards](#) page of the OWL Scotland website. Applications for the 2025 awards will open in early January 2025.

## 2024/25 courses

OWL Scotland and Scottish Forestry are currently planning course delivery for this financial year.

Please keep visiting the [OWL Scotland events webpage](#) for updates on this and for courses being run by the local OWL groups.



## Scottish Junior Forester Award update

The Scottish Junior Forester Award is going from strength to strength with 1575 young people participating last year.

OWL Scotland is aiming to run a SJFA leader course in the Forth Valley area later in 2024 so please keep an eye on the OWL Scotland Facebook page for more details. For more information on the SJFA please visit the [Awards webpage](#) on the OWL Scotland website.

## Local OWL Events and News

### Argyll OWL group

We are really happy to connect with lots of new members this year and are looking forward to staying more connected locally through the Little OWL's networks. The aims of these hubs are to provide an opportunity to meet up in person more regularly with other local practitioners and share experiences. Marylou and Janie Steel will be on hand to support groups with twilight sessions as well as look at funding needs. Do be in touch if you would like more information.

The group have had a busy few months including:

- March- Janie Steel and Ross Preston delivered a great Bushcraft CPD in Oban.
- Completion of the special skills project working with Tarbert Academy
- Completion of the Ash Rise project- creating a temporary shelter with a mixed group of local young people and Friends of Glenan Wood.
- Work on a young women in woods project.



### Dumfries and Galloway OWL



The group hosted a foraging skill share session at the April meeting in Mabie Forest and are in the process of finalising the details of the 'Taking Maths/ Literacy Outdoors with Your Child' publications. These two resources provide simple and fun activities for parents and carers to encourage learning outdoors with younger children. We look forward to sharing these with the wider OWL Scotland network once they are complete.

### Edinburgh OWL

In February the Edinburgh OWL group organised an additional Sensory Woodland Story workshop for local members. This was in response to the incredibly popular workshop that Alie Findlay ran on this resource in 2023. The workshop was well attended, and the Edinburgh OWL group are looking towards planning sessions for the year ahead.



### Forth Valley OWL

We had a brilliant networking afternoon in Larbert woods at the end of April. Dani led a great workshop on elder crafts, which produced some great imaginative creations from the group!

Karen cremated the first lot of scones in the Dutch oven (the fire was clearly hotter than the recommended 180 degrees). The second lot of sconelets (only half the dough left at this stage) were a triumph!

Our next event is on Sat 25th May – more details will follow on the [Forth Valley OWL group Facebook page](#) and the usual OWL Scotland channels.



### GROWL (Glasgow)

The Glasgow OWL group are currently in the process of organising the postponed voluntary group management weekend. The group are currently looking at dates in September and October to reschedule this event. Once the dates and workshop leaders have been confirmed more details will be circulated through the [GROWL Facebook page](#) and on the OWL Scotland website.

### Lanarkshire FEI Group- soon to be Lanarkshire OWL Group



Do you live or work in Lanarkshire? Would you like to be involved in the establishment of the new Lanarkshire OWL Group? We are currently in the process of transforming the Lanarkshire FEI group to an OWL group and would love to have more folks involved in this exciting process. Please see the OWL Scotland bulletin and Facebook page for more information on this group or email [Eilidh.malcolm@forestry.gov.scot](mailto:Eilidh.malcolm@forestry.gov.scot) to be included in emails from the group.

### Midlothian OWL Group

A huge thank you to all who joined in and supported the recent Midlothian OWL re-launch event. It was a great day, and the general consensus was that we all felt re-energized and inspired as a result which is just brilliant! We are looking forward to the next event already. Check out our [Facebook page](#) for photos and updates.

Next meeting- Tuesday 4th June 6.00-7.00pm, Newbattle Abbey College, Peter Wright Outdoor Learning Hut (behind college, next to Beekeeper Academy hut, follow drive round to car park no.2)



### Moray OWL

The Moray group have been busy finishing a special skills project with pupils from Elgin Academy and the last Ash Rise Project with children from Lossiemouth.

A fantastic joint networking event was held in partnership with the North East OWL group On Saturday 9th March at Aller Croft, Huntly.



Workshops included Biodiversity and Naturalist Skills, Play & Playfulness, Introduction to Whittling and Carving, Nature Crafts, Nature's Classroom- Integrating playful outdoor learning with curriculum outcomes for teachers and outdoor practitioners, and Willow, Wonderful Willow. In total 26 participants attended this great event and were very enthusiastic to try out their new skills and knowledge back at their own settings.



### North East OWL

In addition to the joint networking event with Moray OWL, OWLNEG group members Julia and Doug recently ran forest kindergarten subsidiary courses on Fire and Tool use in the early years. Greenmyres Ecobothy, in Huntly was used as a training venue for its more central location in the northeast. Both courses were well attended and received great feedback.



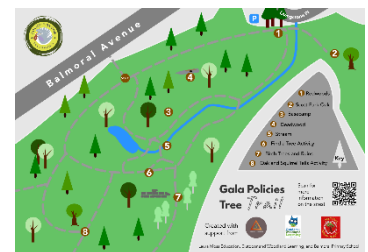
### North Highland OWL

The Scottish Junior Forester Award programmes run by group members in North Highland OWL has been gathering pace and are almost complete. Pupils and staff from Tain Royal Academy and Dingwall Academy have been hard at work learning about managing risk and completing risk assessments, measuring trees, creating bird boxes, taking part in practical woodland management work and why this is needed and investigating wider biodiversity on their sites.



### Scottish Borders OWL

The Scottish Borders OWL Group are keen to increase the number of active group members. We are currently reviewing CPD delivery and looking at working in partnership with a local outdoor nursery to develop new connections and workshop delivery. The group are working towards completing the installation of the Gala Policies Tree Trail posts. To see the current information boards for this project please click [here](#).



### South Highland OWL

South Highland are busy bees! We have already delivered sessions on winter tracking with Dan Puplett and biodiversity and aquatic life with Highlife Highland. There are three more courses planned before the end of the summer term including:

1. **Art Therapy 2** on Sat 11<sup>th</sup> May @ Ness Islands with Sarah Robinson
2. **Tree ID for outdoor educators** on Sat 1<sup>st</sup> June @ Grantown-on-Spey with Rachel Avery
3. **Drama in the woods - Midsummer's night's dream** on Sat 22<sup>nd</sup> June @ Ness Islands with Eden Court- Come to the fairy woods and meet Titania, Bottom and Puck. Shakespeare can feel a little daunting, not just for young people but adults too! This workshop will look at Shakespeare's plays in a practical way, making them accessible and fun. Giving tips and tricks to help young people fall in love with the Master of storytelling.

We are now planning our suite of CPD workshops for 2024/25. These will include:

- Singing in the woods with NHS Highland @ Strathspey
- How to create your own Red Squirrel Detective Club with Juliet Robinson @ Inverness
- Joint networking event @ Inverness-shire/Ross-shire.

In terms of **booking** any of the CPD workshops - these are **FREE for any outdoor educators** and Juliet will send out **EVENTBRITE** booking forms one month before each event. This is being done to try and reduce the number of cancellations. If any readers would like to receive our emails/ Eventbrite updates, please **email Juliet** at [julietpcrobinson@gmail.com](mailto:julietpcrobinson@gmail.com)



### Tayside OWL

The Tayside OWL group recently welcomed new chair, Kirsty Adam to the team. Kirsty previously volunteered with the Perth Outdoor Playgroup which is closely linked to the Tayside OWL group. OWL Scotland and Tayside OWL group would like to thank Alison Wilson, outgoing chair, for her contribution towards the group. We hope to still see Alison sharing her knowledge and skills with the wider network!

**Open Morning**- meet the committee, see the resources and help plan activities for 2024/25

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> of May, The Shed, Kinnoull Hill, Perth.

10.00 - 11.30 am- Committee meeting- members welcome

11.30 am – 1pm- Informal networking and BYO picnic lunch- everyone welcome.



### Perth Outdoor Playgroup

**POP** have been exploring different sorts of play and activities this year through the activities provided by our volunteers. We have been using literacy, numeracy, STEM and expressive arts to help encourage the children to express themselves and engage with the woods at Kinnoull Hill. Some of the activities have included a colour hunt, leaf crowns, bubble art, music making and cooking over the fire to name a few. We have been lucky to have lots of new members join us this year and help the group grow.





### West Coast OWL

We currently have two high schools engaged in the Scottish Junior Forester Award. Portree High School spent their equipment grant on a cordless drill and associated kit and are now planning a programme of expert visits from a local forester, tree-planting, fencing, raised bed and bird / bat box construction. They are working closely with Portree & Braes Community Trust and have a small group of students making regular visits to the local allotments.



Plockton High School have 36 S1 pupils undertaking a weekly 'Wider Achievement' class and are incorporating the SJFA into this. They already have a number of sessions pencilled in, including tree-planting with the Woodland Trust at Shieldaig. They currently have an appeal out locally for wellies and tools and will use the equipment grant to top-up requirements after donations have been assessed.

Our special skills grant project is also underway where young people from Gairloch are working with the Slattadale Community Group. The exciting and varied programme has so far included looking at arbosculpture (creating living tree sculptures), forest survey techniques and silviculture, including tree planting and deer management within forests. Each session also offers students experience in using phone cameras to produce film shorts, and progression through advanced techniques of hotchoc making to potential certification level!



### West Dunbartonshire OWL

Mac continues to be the lone ranger working towards reviving the WD OWL group. She has been hard at work on West Dunbartonshire Facebook page and engaging with past and new potential group members. Currently the plan is to deliver a twilight event in August or September to relaunch the group. If you would like to be involved with this group please contact Mac through the WD OWL group [Facebook page](#).



### West Fife OWL



West Fife OWL Group held a very successful twilight Networking Event on 7th November at Bellyeoman Primary School in Dunfermline. Participants were able to sign up for 3 short workshops including music outdoors, whittling, gardening in school or literacy/numeracy outdoors to choose from. There were also lots of information stalls in the school hall including Kingdoms of Fife Orienteers, Active Schools, Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, Forest School Training Company, OWL Scotland, Little Bugs Nursery and many more. The event was well attended, feedback was very positive, and we plan to hold another event in September 2024

## Funding Opportunities

### Local School Nature Grants

Open to schools and early years settings in England, Scotland, and Wales, this outdoor learning grant fund has two elements – £500 of outdoor equipment chosen from a catalogue of over 100 items, and an outdoor learning training course for your staff. For more information and to access the application form visit the [Learning through Landscapes website](#).



### Tesco Stronger Starts Grants

This scheme can provide grants of up to £1500 to local projects from across the whole of Scotland. A wide range of projects fit the bill - improving school playgrounds, growing and food projects, outdoor play and purchasing kit for healthy activities. Greenspace Scotland's team of friendly Community Enablers can support you to apply or answer any questions. To find out more or to apply, please visit the [Greenspace Scotland website](#).

### Climate School 180

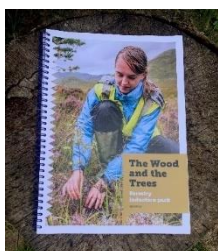
Climate School 180 is Learning through Landscapes' new climate-focused initiative. The project aims to develop and share a better understanding of how schools can implement quality climate education, alongside providing first-hand experience of creating nature-based solutions to climate change in the school grounds.

Partner schools will benefit from staff training, a climate adaptation audit of their grounds, advice, and resources from lesson plans to 'how to' sheets for nature based solutions to climate change in school grounds. For more information and to apply please visit the [Learning through Landscapes website](#).

For further funding opportunities, please visit the [Creative Star Learning](#) webpage.

## Careers Information

### The Wood and the Trees- Forestry Introduction Pack



Scottish Forestry have reprinted this wonderful publication by Lantra aimed at providing an overview of careers and opportunities within forestry. If you work in a secondary school and would like a hard copy of this pack for your careers library please email [Eilidh.malcolm@forestry.gov.scot](mailto:Eilidh.malcolm@forestry.gov.scot) with the postal details of your school. Alternatively you can download an electronic version of this publication through the [Lantra website](#).

### The Royal Forestry Society

RFS offer a free UK wide forestry and arboriculture careers advice service- for more information this please visit the [RFS website](#).



## Other News

### **Early childhood-nature relations in Scottish school-based outdoor learning**

Dr Chris Mackie, the first recipient of NatureScot's Magnus Magnusson Studentship, has recently completed his PhD research on [Early childhood-nature relations in Scottish school-based outdoor learning](#). The thesis contains fascinating insights into child-nature relations in outdoor learning, with implications for educators and outdoor learning and learning for sustainability professionals, including:

- Schools should consider how nature is represented, indoors and outdoors.
- Strategies should be developed to nurture play that respects nature and our place in it.
- Educators need professional learning and additional support.
- Educators need to actively support the development of healthy human-nature relations; just going outside isn't enough.
- Holistic approaches are needed at all levels.

### **Outdoor classroom day- 23<sup>rd</sup> May & 7<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

Outdoor Classroom Day is a global movement to inspire and celebrate outdoor learning and play. The campaign days (in May and November each year) act as a catalyst for more time outdoors every day, both at school and beyond. In the UK and Ireland, Outdoor Classroom Day is led by Learning through Landscapes. [Sign up today](#) to get involved with this special day.



### **Updated online Scottish Outdoor Access Code Education Resource pack**

This [resource pack](#) is full of interesting activities and is designed for use by anyone working with young people of all ages - schools, after school groups, uniformed groups, Duke of Edinburgh's Award - anyone who is keen to learn more about and encourage responsible access in the outdoors - greenspaces and the wider countryside.



Included on the above web page is an [interactive professional learning session](#) of around 20 minutes which was run with Education Scotland for teachers. The session is based on an active face to face 1.5 - 2-hour workshop which has been developed and delivered, thus far, in partnership with Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust, Cairngorms National Park Ranger Service, Highland Ranger Service and Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service.

Activity Workshop Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1500 – 1630 at Battleby House. for more information and to book a space visit [Eventbrite](#).

### **Land-based Learning Review report: SG response.**

The Scottish Government response to the Independent Commission for the Land-Based Learning Review that reported to Ministers with 22 recommendations to attract and equip more people, particularly women and young people, with the skills and knowledge needed to work in land-based and aquaculture sectors. To read the full response please visit the [Scottish Government website](#).

## Summary of other useful links, recent publications, sources of support

### Out to Play - caring for our outdoor spaces.

This guidance supports practitioners to provide high quality outdoor play experiences. To view this document please visit the [Scottish Government website](#).



### Tree Council's Young Tree Champions



Whether you are looking for teaching resources and training opportunities, trees, and hedgerows to green your school grounds or support to run an impactful project in your school, The [Tree Council's Young Tree Champions](#) can help you!

### Climate Ready School Grounds

Climate Ready School Grounds explores using school grounds to address the impacts of climate change whilst creating outdoor environments that support learning and play.

Teachers & educator info- [Learning Through Landscapes website](#).

Landscape architect, designer, or local authority info- [Architecture & Design Scotland website](#).



### STEM Nation

This online resource was created as part of Scotland's STEM Education and Training Strategy. On this site you will find a range of resources to support, inspire and connect- [STEM Nation website](#)



### Scotland's Outdoor Learning Directory

This website aims to provide a portal to outdoor learning services provided by various Scottish organisations, plus news and research from the wider network. Click [here](#) to visit the website.



## Contact Us

To contact your local OWL Scotland group please visit the [OWL Scotland website](#). Or contact us:

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Or visit our [Outdoor and Woodland Learning Scotland Facebook](#) page.