



Happy New Year from OWL Scotland! We wish you a successful and happy 2025 in the outdoors. There is always lots going on in the OWL Scotland Network and if you have news or projects you want to share please let us know. [OWL Scotland Website](#)

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Upcoming Events

*[Scottish Junior Forester Award SJFA Training Events](#)

18 January, 9.00 to 4.00, [Junior Forester Award Training Day](#), Callendar Woods, Larbet.

20 January, 9.30 to 3.30, [Junior Forester Award Training Day](#), [Chatelherault Country Park](#), South Lanarkshire

*[Ogham Tree Alphabet Resource Training Days](#)

18 January, 9.30 to 1.30, [Ogham: Using the ancient tree alphabet in outdoor learning](#), Pollok Country Park, Glasgow.

1 February, 9.30 to 1.30, [Ogham: Using the ancient tree alphabet in outdoor learning](#), The Shed at Kinnoull Hill, Perth.

15 February, 9.30 to 1.30, [Ogham: Using the ancient tree alphabet in outdoor learning](#), Sanquhar Woods & Chapelton Fields, Forres.

7 March, 12.30 to 4.30, [Ogham: Using the ancient tree alphabet in outdoor learning](#), Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh

For local OWL events please see the OWL Group updates and also the [OWL Scotland events page](#)

28th Feb to 2nd March **National OWL Scotland working Event**. Tickets are offered to local OWL group members until the 10th January 2025 then they go on general sale. Please ensure you are signed up as a member to secure a ticket as spaces are limited. [Click Here for Local OWL Groups](#), Dounans Outdoor Centre, Aberfoyle

10th March 2025 *[Save the Date](#)* GROWL OWL Scotland Development Day Glasgow



OWL Scotland National Networking Event



[Dounans Outdoor Centre](#), Aberfoyle

28 February to 2 March 2025

Join us for a fun-packed and welcoming weekend of workshops, skill sharing and networking.

This year there will be hammock making, foraging & woodland exploration, murder mystery trailblazing, soapstone carving, Scottish outdoor access code, upcycling, human pixelation, vole dentistry and owl pellets, Scottish junior forestry award, woodworking and all types of outdoor and woodland based games.

First choice of tickets goes to OWL groups until the 10th of January when they go on general sale. Click [here](#) to find information on your local OWL group. Visit our [Events](#) page for more details.

Ogham: using the ancient tree alphabet in outdoor learning

Training Events Jan to March 2025

This is a fantastic half day course on using Ogham in outdoor learning with lots of practical examples and links to cross-curriculum learning for different age groups. [Download](#) a free copy of the Ogham teaching resource.

Click on the links for each event for more information & book via the Eventbrite link.

18 January, 9.30 to 1.30, Ogham Resource Training Event, [Pollok Country Park](#), Glasgow.

1 February, 9.30 to 1.30, Ogham Resource Training Event, [The Shed Kinnoull Hill](#), Perth

15 February, 9.30 to 1.30, Ogham Resource Training Event, [Sanquhar Woods & Chapelton Fields](#), Forres

7 March, 12.30 to 4.30, Ogham Resource Training Event, [The Royal Botanic Garden](#), Edinburgh





OWL Scotland Development Day (GROWL) 10th March 2025

Glasgow & Region OWL Group (Coordinating) 10 March 2025

We invite any OWL Scotland group members who have a track record of being committed to developing their OWL group, in particular any OWL group committee members, to join us for this event.

The day will have a strong organisation development and sustainability focus, and we're offering this with the expectation that attendees will use any new skills they gain for the benefit of their OWL group. Our plan is that all activities will be interactive and fun, plus we've got some brilliant facilitators lined up to deliver the workshops. These will be around the themes of:

- Managing Events, marketing events and event administration.
- Setting up your group's processes and community digitally.
- Creating sustainable organisational management systems and digital marketing plans, including social media profiles and newsletter management.
- Voluntary Group management and administration, plus member recruitment and retention.
- Managing finance in voluntary groups and fundraising.

All and any OWL Scotland groups are welcome to attend, and we have a limited budget to contribute towards accommodation costs for those of you coming from outside of town. We'll consider these on a case by case basis as funds are limited.

The venue is central and set in a brilliant green space. We will provide lunch on the day and it's likely to run 9.30am till 4.30pm. We will release exact details to you as they firm up.

If you haven't already registered, please be in touch with your Owl group committee to find out how to attend. Find your local OWL Group [here](#).





Northern Scotland Round Up



South Highland OWL

Due to adverse weather we had to cancel our Crafty Christmas event at Abriachan Forest Trust. We are looking for a new date in 2025. Watch this space?

We are very excited about our new partnership with RZSS Highland Wildlife Park, in Kincaig. The Discovery and Learning team programme manager, Jess Wise joined our recent committee meeting. The Park is planning some exciting outdoor learning opportunities and we are going to have our first 2025 CPD workshop with them. You can find more out using this [link](#).



Planned events for 2025

We have a range of exciting events planned from February to June including: **Go Wild at the Highland Wildlife Park & AGM** (8 Feb from 10am); **Storytelling by the Fire** at Abriachan (Trish Matthews) March; **Singing in the Woods** at Craigellachie, Aviemore (Ailsa Villegas) April; **Outdoor Yoga for Youngsters** at Inverness Botanics (Hazel Marr) 24 May from 2pm; **Outdoor Drama through books** at Inverness Botanics (Andrew Simpkins), 21 June from 2pm.

Details will be posted in January on the OWL Scotland events page & please use this [link](#) for updates for all of our events and workshops.

West Coast OWL

West Coast Owl Group are continuing to work with local schools and education organisations to spread the word about outdoor & woodland learning.

The Gairloch High School S1 Junior foresters entered their woven hazel/willow obelisk into the community Christmas tree competition. The weather was too wild to venture into the forest so we took the opportunity for tool use and chat about different wood properties while getting creative with cones, bark, lichen, and a glue gun!





NORTH EAST OWL GROUPS



North East Region OWL

Our twelve week Branching Out South Aberdeenshire programmes have been on hold during 2024 whilst we applied for funding for future programmes. We are delighted to have received funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to continue the programme for a further three years. A huge thank you to Jill for all her hard work in securing this grant.

The Branching Out Plus programme has continued throughout 2024: this is a follow-on programme for attendees from Branching Out, working with community groups across South Aberdeenshire. This year we began a new initiative, Riverfly, in partnership with The Dee Catchment Partnership and Buglife - each month we have sampled the Tanar for freshwater invertebrates as an indicator of water quality, allowing an additional opportunity for nature connection and contributing valuable data to the Riverfly project.

We also received a small grant from NESCAN to enable us to buy another three scythe sets. This summer we worked with five different community groups to help them create wild flower areas and to manage them for the benefit of pollinating insects. We introduced more than 60 people to the benefits of scything for managing small areas and provided instruction and guidance in meadow establishment, seed gathering and growing techniques.

The scythes have also been used to manage wild flower areas that Aberdeenshire Council Rangers have created, along with pupils, in a dozen school grounds in Buchan as part of the Buglife B-Lines project. The creation of these wild flower patches has provided great hands-on learning opportunities for the children, through the cultivation of the ground, sowing of the seeds, including yellow rattle and in studying and identifying the wild flowers and insects that visited.

At the beginning of December we held our last meeting of the year where we planned our events for next spring including a green-woodworking event at Loch of Blairs in March and a joint event with Moray OWLS in May, to be held at Aller Croft, near Huntly.



Central & East Scotland Round Up



Tayside OWL

Lights, Shadows, Action! workshop

Fed up as the days grow shorter and the nights are long and dark? Late in the afternoon in November at the Education Shed, Kinnoull Hill, Perth, teachers and Tayside OWL Group members embraced the darkness with a fantastic Lights, Shadows, Action! workshop led by Luke Phillips, a Forest School Leader from Dundee.

Luke shared information on different winter festivals like Christmas, Chanukah, Diwali or Eid. We used this to worked plan our stories, gathered leaves, twigs, ferns and cut out shapes. Then all we needed was a cloth sheet screen, torches and our newly made props to perform our shadow plays. It was lots of fun! We could see how this opportunity for playing and learning outdoors in the dark could be adapted for different ages and stages.

Tayside OWL AGM 2025: at the Shed Kinnoull Hill Perth, Sat 15 March. We also expect to offer a workshop by Catherine Leatherland, Discovery, Learning and Engagement Officer at Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust. All welcome.

Keep an eye on our [group webpage](#) for further information!

Midlothian OWL

Another busy and productive time for MOWL with a welcome to our new Treasurer Helen New, who set about getting a new bank account and procuring our insurance in time for our Winter Skill Share Event (SSE) on Sunday 1st December 2024, and last SSE of the year. Our Chair, Jules Cockburn, held a short committee meeting prior to the event and welcomed all the participants who came from East Lothian, Edinburgh, Glasgow Region, and Lanarkshire OWLs.

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Midlothian OWL continued

Our Chair, Jules Cockburn, held a short committee meeting prior to the event and welcomed all the participants who came from East Lothian, Edinburgh, Glasgow Region, and Lanarkshire OWLs.

Paul Hurd ran a fabulous reindeer making workshop and showed many of his humorous creations. This was followed by Liz Habgood and Maire Devlin's wreath making workshop, and Stephanie Walker's pewter smelting workshop. Corrina Dawson provided the most amazing mince pies and Maire brought her recipe and a large sample of her winter tonic (a bit like a non-alcoholic Mulled wine, but better, despite no alcohol!).

Feedback from the event was fabulous and many suggestions for the next SSE have already been drafted into the plan by our secretary John Jackson, including stone carving, foraging and green skills workshops. The success of all our 2024 SSEs has prompted us to double our participant numbers to 24 (tickets available through Eventbrite). Dates for our future SSE's will be published on the OWL Scotland website. Although MOWL members will have first dibs, we will always welcome other OWL community members.



Forth Valley OWL

Book your place on the Scottish Junior Forester Award training event at Callendar Woods (alternative venue is Slamanan - details nearer the date). 18th January 9am to 4pm. The training will explore the 6 elements of the award and give you the confidence to deliver to your own group. Click [here](#) for more information.

Central West Scotland Round Up

West Dumbartonshire OWL

We are in the process of establishing a temporary committee to ensure the 'Lost Words' project is delivered before the end of March 2025. If you would like to know more about this project, or join the group please email- Wd_owl@hotmail.com





Central West Scotland Round Up

Glasgow & Region

Growl are looking for new members, especially any who would like to help run events with us, look after communicating with our members (over 200) and be involved in our kit library which is based in Glasgow Botanic Garden. Please consider joining as we've some fun events coming up and we're an interesting group. Come along, meet Sophie, Kim, and Hamish and find out what we're doing this year at our monthly online zoom meetings:

GROWL zoom meetings 2025

Thu 6th Feb 6.30pm

Thu 3 Apr 6.30pm

Thu 1 May 6.30pm

Be in touch for the zoom link

info.glasgowowl@gmail.com

2 Feb, 12-3 Pollock Country Park

(meet at carpark 12 pm sharp)

Make Your Own Firestarter & Skill Share

Book via Eventbrite [here](#).



Another chance for old and new members to gather and reconnect with each other in the winter months, and make something useful for your forest school and outdoor learning sessions. We'd love to find out what you're all up to, and we'll have some skills to share.

Sophie will bring materials and tools for you to make your own fire strikers/lighters with wooden handles (pictured). Please pick the striker option at check out if you're wanting to do that on the day so we can order resources in advance.

Feel free to bring along something to share, a song, something for the fire, something you use in your sessions, or something you love to teach. You could stick with the fire theme, or choose any skill related to forest school and outdoor learning.

Any Scotland wide owl group members are welcome. We have shelters in case of bad weather.

Southern Scotland Update

Dumfries & Galloway OWL

DG OWL are continuing their skill share and engagement sessions including the use of their new outdoor resources for maths and english.

Look out for the free 'Just Add Fun' session for childminders, home educators and toddler groups in Dock Park Dumfries, 20 January, 9.30am





Careers in Forestry (Ros Wardman: Scottish Forestry)

Have you ever thought about working in forestry?

Modern sustainable forestry has an incredibly wide range of jobs that need a whole range of different skills. The forest industry starts with cone/seed collecting to grow the millions of saplings in forest nurseries which deliver the Scottish Government's woodland creation targets. Did you know that Scotland is the leading UK country for tree planting?

Forestry Jobs. Land management planning, digital mapping, ground preparation, tree planting and forest establishment, silviculture, conservation of protected species, recreation, education and the use of woodlands for positive mental health all form part of the sector and there's jobs at every stage. And that's before we've even talked about harvesting the timber, machinery, engineering, transport to sawmills and processing plants to make this timber resource into fences, buildings and paper pulp. Then there are science and research roles investigated climate change, carbon storage, pests, AI & remote sensing.

Where to study? In Scotland you can study forestry at either the [Scottish School of Forestry](#), UHI in Inverness, or [SRUC, Barony](#) near Dumfries. Both colleges have a range of qualification levels from SCQF level 4 up to level 10, along with varying delivery methods including work based, part-time or full time.

Support for Forestry Training: If you would like to have a copy of the [Forestry Induction Pack: the wood and the trees](#) for your school careers library please contact ros.wardman@forestry.gov.scot
LANTRA provides financial support for forestry training courses through the [Future Foresters Training Fund](#) and the [Women in Forestry Practical Training Fund](#).

A Career for Everyone: forestry can be a rewarding career whenever you start, and whatever your background, interest or skillset. I began working life as theatre director before becoming a forester. My top tip for enjoying your job is learn how to make a pack lunch! Visit the resource links on page [12](#).





Focus on Argyll OWL & Scottish Junior Forestry Award

Argyll OWL Group have been working with 3 local primary schools to promote and support take up of the Scottish Junior Forestry Award (SJFA). The SJFA is a free programme designed for 4 to 14 year olds to give them an insight into careers in forestry. For more information follow this [link](#).

SJFA has 6 main sections covering practical and theoretical skills: Managing Risk, Tree & Plant ID, Woodland Habitats, Habitat Creation, Woodland Management, Forestry Ambassadors.

Helen Hazlett has been working with 2 age groups at Arrochar Primary, primary 1 to 4, and primary 5 to 7. *“Our first session explored the woodland area within the school grounds, introduced the concept of risk assessment and risk benefit analysis through role play and games and enjoyed some hot chocolate using the Kelly kettle- risk assessing this activity. The children will complete a site risk assessment with their class teachers before the next session when we will begin to identify the species of trees on site and make plans for future sessions - woodland management, habitat creation, tree planting and woodland craft.”*

Marylou Anderson has been supporting Tarbert Primary 6/7 class to begin their SJFA this Friday for a 6 week block, with their class teacher Sharon McDougall. Barcaldine Primary have been progressing with sessions too led by their class teacher. They are looking forward to a tools session this month.

If your local OWL group or school or community organisation would like to take part in the SJFA please visit the website for more details. In addition OWL Scotland is providing training sessions for educators in January 2025.

18 January, 9.00 to 4.00 [Junior Forester Award Training Day, Callendar Woods, Larbet.](#)

20 January, 9.30 to 3.30 [Junior Forester Award Training Day, Chatelherault Country Park, South Lanarkshire](#)





Awards & Competitions

[Scottish Junior Forester Award](#) - find out how you can take part & visit our [events page](#) for training opportunities.

Woodland Trust: [Igniting Innovation Conservation Challenge](#) for young people 16-25. Applications open until 20th of January. Winning projects (individuals or small group) will be awarded £6000 & 6 months mentoring.



Projects



Ash Rise Exhibition

The free Ash Rise Exhibition and Film coordinated by the Scottish Furniture Makers Association celebrates the ash tree through the work of 20 different craftspeople & artists.

13 Sep - 12 Jan 2025 [John Hope Gateway Edinburgh Botanic](#)

18 Jan - 22 March 2025 [Gracefield Arts Centre Dumfries](#)

29 Mar - 17 May 2025 [Inverness Museum & Art Gallery](#)

NatureScot:

The Nature Discovery Map Scotland (NDMS) is a new toolkit of 6 map-based tools to support teachers and pupils with 'Learning for Sustainability'. The NDMS was implemented after a pledge at COP26 in Glasgow & supports outdoor learning, digital skills and learning for sustainability. Visit the NDMS Hub [here](#).

Make the outdoors your classroom.





Resources (Online & Hard Copy)

OWL Scotland Resources

OWL Scotland has a wide range of free downloadable resources and videos. Visit our [Resources Page](#) for more information.

Information on Careers in Forestry

Forestry & Land Scotland: [What we do](#)

Institute of Chartered Foresters: [Forestry Careers in 60 seconds](#) Youtube video.

LANTRA: [Careers and training in forestry and arboriculture](#). Read '[the wood and the trees: forestry induction pack](#)' Some hard copies available: email

Ros.Wardman@forestry.gov.scot for details (1 copy per learning organisation)

Scottish Forestry: [Starting out in forestry.](#)

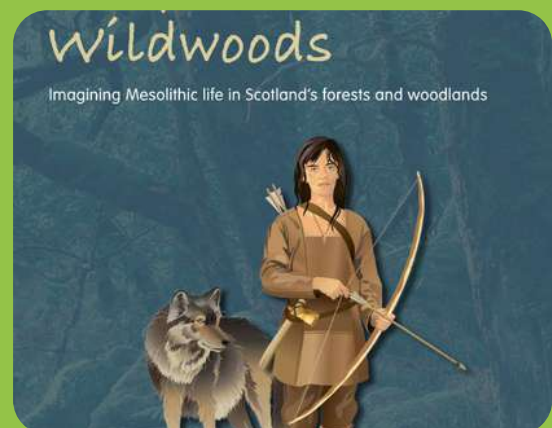
Hard Copies of OWL Scotland Resources

If you would like hard copies of some of our resources please email

Eilidh.Malcolm@forestry.gov.scot

If you would like to review the resources first the links to the digital pdfs are below.

- [Sensory Woodland Stories](#)
- [Tree Measuring](#)
- [Tree Stories](#)
- [Wolf Brothers Wildwoods](#) - better for primary than early years but ideas could be adapted
- [Woodland Workout Guide](#)
- [Ogham](#) - Using the ancient tree alphabet in outdoor learning (new resource and limited copies in stock)



Contacts

Visit the [OWL Scotland Website](#) for a wide range of resources and information and links to local OWL groups.

Find out more about your local OWL Scotland Groups across Scotland. [Click Here](#)

For more information about the work of OWL Scotland please email Eilidh Malcolm (Eilidh.Malcolm@forestry.gov.scot)

To subscribe to this newsletter [click here](#).