



Spring is springing and OWL Scotland groups have been busy getting ready for all the new outdoor learning coming up. Congratulations to everyone who made the National Networking Weekend at Dounans Outdoor Centre and the Scotland Development Day coordinated by GROWL, so successful. 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

22 March 2025 - Tarp & Shelter Marking (North Highland OWL (**\*Event Postponed** - more details soon))

29 March 2025 - 10am to 1pm - Storytelling by the Fire with Trish Matthews. South Highland OWL at Abriachan Forest Trust. Click [here](#).

31 March 2025 - **Deadline to apply for Early Years and School Award** - Scotland's Finest Woods Awards 2025. Click [here](#).

5 April 2025 - 9.30 to 16.30, Midlothian OWL Spring Skill Share Event at Clifton Hall School. Click [here](#).

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

# Scotland's Finest Woods Award

**\*Deadline for Schools & Early Years Awards is 31st March 2025\***

Why not celebrate your achievements and inspire others to learn outdoors?

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR INFORMATION ON HOW TO APPLY

Scotland's Finest Woods and the Outdoor & Woodland Learning Scotland (OWLS) team up to run the annual Schools and Early Years Awards in Scotland. The Awards are to encourage and reward schools and pre-schools that increase young people's understanding and appreciation of the environmental, social and economic potential of trees, woodlands and forests and of the link between trees and everyday wood-based products.

Entries can be practical or desk projects involving forestry, woodlands or trees. Here are some examples of projects:

A programme of learning in a woodland or forest environment or in a forest industry setting.

A classroom-based study of woods and forests or the forest industry.

Practical tree planting or woodland improvement projects in school grounds or in the local community.

OWL Scotland has prepared 7 case studies of winners in the schools and early years categories. Click [here](#) to find out how Balgreen Nursery, Bushcraft Bairns, The Johnson Nursery, POP Tayside, Linnvale Primary, Priorsford Primary and Pitlochry High School won awards for their outdoor learning.

There is a simple, short entry form and winners get £500 cash, a certificate and a commemorative wooden plaque.

**2024 Winners: Early Years (Newcroft Childcare, Keith); Schools (Selkirk High School)**





## **OWL Scotland National networking Weekend 2025 Dounans Outdoor Centre, Aberfoyle**

**A huge thanks to everyone that attended and made this event a great space to learn, share, relax and have fun. The workshop leaders went above and beyond to support and inspire those that attended. There was also input from Elli from NatureScot about the new Nature Discovery Map Scotland, updates from OWL Scotland and from the wonderful local OWL groups.**

**There were workshops on hammock making, foraging, upcycling, soapstone carving, murder mystery trailblazing, Scottish Outdoor Access Code, Scottish Junior Forester Award, woodland exploration and woodworking.**

**Social activities include the new ice breaker game challenges, a little whittling evening gathering and the annual Kubb championships.**

**There was a great turn out from local OWL group members, and lovely to see new faces also.**

**If you missed this event or are excited for the next one please keep the 29th to the 31st of August free as the OWL Scotland Summer networking weekend (camping) will take place at Pillars of Hercules. We will share more information and booking details on this in a few months time.**



## Scotland Development Day (GROWL - Cuningar Loop, Dalmarnock)



Glasgow Region OWL (GROWL) coordinated a fantastic development skills day for OWL groups across Scotland including North East, Moray, Midlothian, West Coast, West Dunbartonshire, and Dumfries and Galloway, Lanarkshire, Forth Valley. Sessions were delivered by a great range of facilitators including Technology Coaching and Julia Harriman.

The sessions included:

- Planning events
- Setting up your group's processes and community digitally.
- Creating and maintaining group management systems and creating engaging social media content
- Voluntary Group management and administration, plus member recruitment and retention.
- Managing finance in voluntary groups.

The feedback from the event has been extremely positive.

*Joanne Evans (North East OWL): Great day with all the owl groups from all over Scotland learning more about how to keep all the good things happening in the network. So good to connect and brilliant facilitation.*

*West Dumbarton OWL: Some of the committee had a fantastic day yesterday with the Outdoor and Woodland Learning Scotland network figuring out ways to make our nationwide and local networks better. Lots of amazing hints and tips shared between the groups and amazing facilitators Technology Coaching. Thanks to GROWL - Glasgow Region Outdoor & Woodland Learning Group for organising and hosting us all*



## Northern Scotland Round Up



### South Highland OWL

The **South Highland OWL AGM** took place at the Highland Wildlife Park on the 8th of February as well as a Go Wild Session. It was a great day with lots of planning for the year ahead.

### Planned events for 2025

We have a range of exciting events planned from March to June including: **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.

### North Highland OWL

The upcoming **Tarp & Shelter Making Workshop** at Rogart Primary School planned for the 22nd March has had to be **postponed** but we will be back in touch very soon. This free, introductory workshop will cover everything you'd need to know about using shelter building as an activity, and how to use shelters as a space for all other activities - such as how to put up our free-to-borrow tipi tent (the ultimate place for story time)!



## NORTH EAST OWL GROUPS

### Moray OWL

Moray OWL delivered the joint outdoor workshop at Blairs Loch on the 15th March with North East Region OWL for a range of practitioners with woodworking, pewter casting and much more. Moray OWL committee members also took part in the very successful Ogham resource training day took place in Forres in February delivered by Laura Norval of Bushcraft Bairns.





## NORTH EAST OWL GROUPS



### North East Region OWL

It has been a busy time in the North East. We worked with Mintlaw Academy on hedge planting as part of the Scottish Junior Forester Award.

At the joint event with Moray OWL we held a great workshop at Blairs Loch delivering training in Green Woodwork to a great group of teachers, early years practitioners and nature nurture practitioners, from Moray, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City, who wanted to gain skills and extend their experiences in craft skills and Outdoor Learning. In the morning we made spoons and in the afternoon session we made coat peg racks. We also learned pewter casting techniques.



## WEST COAST OWL GROUPS



### Argyll and Bute OWL

Argyll and Bute group have been working with Tarbet Primary School to support the teachers in delivering the Scottish Junior Forestry Award (SJFA). There was a session in January on tree and plant ID skills. Primary 6/7 made hazel wood key rings with Ogham letters and developed their fire making skills. In addition to this an Outdoor First Aid Course run by Andy Craven for local members was a great success.

### West Coast OWL

Our newest committee member Mel attended the Development Day in Glasgow and is looking to using skills shared at this event to encourage new members into this group. If you are keen to join please contact [westcoastowl@protonmail.com](mailto:westcoastowl@protonmail.com)



### West Dunbartonshire OWL

West Dumbarton OWL has a new temporary committee to help take forward outdoor learning in the region. The group are looking at delivering activities related to the beautiful Lost Words book by Robert McFarlane.



## Central Scotland Round Up



### Tayside OWL

Tayside OWL held their AGM at the Shed on Kinnoull Hill on the 15th of March. There was also a Wild Journey session with Catherine Leatherland, Learning and Engagement Officer at Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust. Free resources on Wild Journey can be accessed [here](#).

Tayside OWL have also been working with POP - Perthshire Outdoor Playgroup, and hosted an Ogham Tree Alphabet training day delivered by Laura Norval of Bushcraft Bairns.

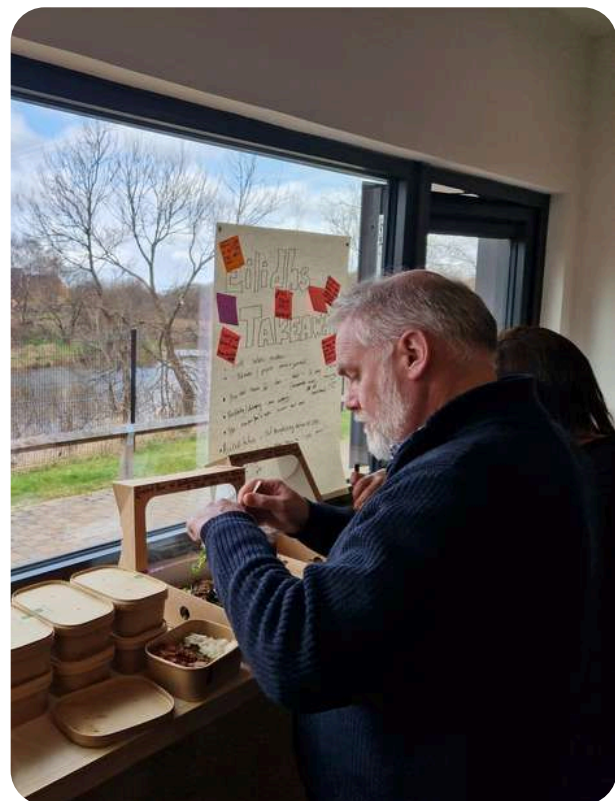


### MOWL

MOWL are getting ready for their Spring Skills Event on the **5th of April** at Clifton Hall School.

Our fantastic workshops include bread making with added foraged ingredients, 'Respect your Elders'-green skills and crafting using Elder, making paracord bracelets and book binding. Tickets were on pre-sale to MOWL members and are going fast...so don't miss out. See you there!

[Eventbrite Link](#)

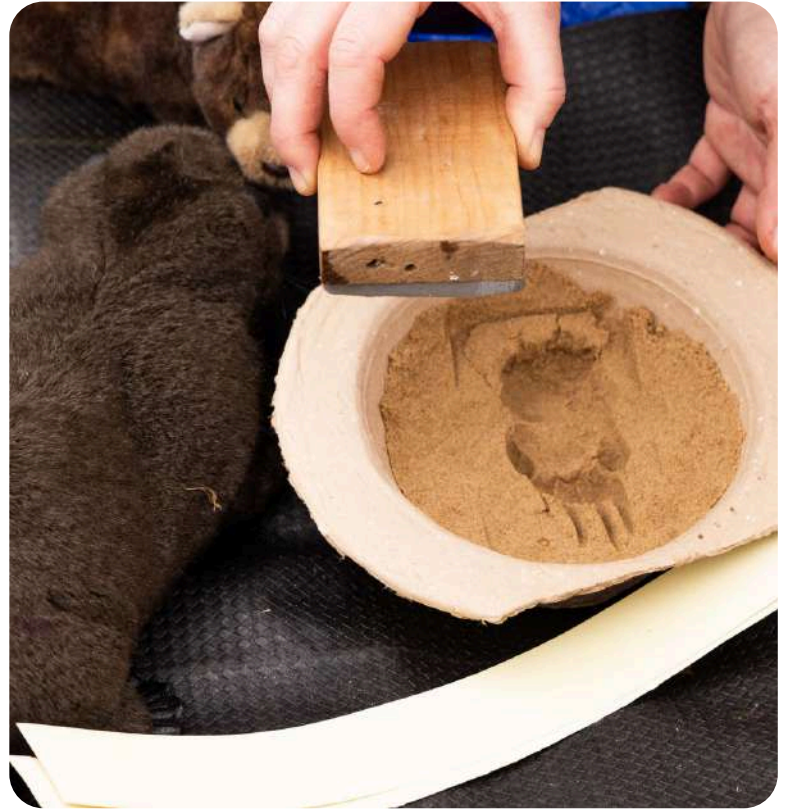




## Forth Valley OWL & Lanarkshire OWL

Two training workshops on delivering the Scottish Junior Forester Award were held at Callendar Woods and at Chateaufherault Country Park in January. If you would like to find out more about how you can take part in the award click [here](#).

Forth Valley held a networking day on the 4th of February and OWL Lanarkshire have a new Instagram Page (@owllanarkshire)



## Glasgow & Region OWL (GROWL)

GROWL have been very busy coordinating the recent Scotland Development Day for OWL groups. Representatives from across Scotland came together to share skills and to develop plans for strengthening outdoor learning networks.

There was great facilitation and participation by everyone, and the feedback has been excellent. The event was hosted at the Bothy, Cunigar Loop, Dalmarnock.

GROWL representatives took part in the recent National Networking Event in Aberfoyle and coordinated a firestarter training workshop at Pollok Park in February.

GROWL zoom meetings 2025  
Thu 3 Apr 6.30pm  
Thu 1 May 6.30pm  
Be in touch for the zoom link  
[info.glasgowowl@gmail.com](mailto:info.glasgowowl@gmail.com)





## Southern Scotland Update

### Dumfries & Galloway OWL

DG OWL have had a busy start to 2025. The Branching Out Project continues to provide outdoor experiences and skill sharing. Our Branching Out groups have been very busy in the last week with the Mabie and Taliesin groups making butter knives and plant labels, and our Mote Wood group busy making charcoal out of different trees. Taliesin's cheesy bread rolls made in a Dutch oven, look delicious!!



DG held our AGM on the 5th of March and thank you to all our members for supporting the organisation.



We are continuing to provide training in taking maths and literacy outdoors based on the 2 publications produced last year. You can download these free resources: [maths](#), [literacy](#)

St Joseph's Primary School have written this excellent blog explaining what we do in outdoor maths sessions and how it relates to the UNCRC Rights of the Child, the Sustainable Development Goals, Meta-skills and SHANARRI Indicators Covered.

You can access the blog [here](#).



## Upcoming Grants

**Local School Nature Grant:** applications are open until the **4th of April**. Find out more about applications and tips for success at the Learning Through Landscapes website. Click [here](#).

**Creative Star** has an excellent list of a range of outdoor learning grants available in Scotland. Click [here](#) to access the grant information.



## 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. The exhibition will move to Inverness at the end of March until mid May.

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

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

### Forestry Apprenticeships

Forestry and Land Scotland are highlighting the stories of three of their 25 forestry apprentices. You can read more about the experiences of Amelia, Robbie and Aidan during their apprenticeships [here](#) and click [here](#) to watch the Youtube video.

If you would like to find out more about these apprenticeships please email: [resourcing@forestryandland.gov.scot](mailto:resourcing@forestryandland.gov.scot)





## Free Resources

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



## Outdoor Learning Directory

The Outdoor Learning Directory, the one stop shop to outdoor learning services and information provided by Scottish public bodies for environment, forestry, heritage, and education, has recently launched a new skills page on its website. This aims to provide direction and information to young people thinking about their career choices. This is a great starting point if you work with young people that are keen to work in this sector but not too sure where to start.



Click [here](#) to access the directory.



## 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](#)

