



## December 2021

### OWL Scotland National News

#### Updates

Hello and a warm welcome to the December 2021 OWL bulletin. The last bulletin of 2021 but the start of a new chapter for the OWL groups in Scotland. Earlier this year Sally York announced her retirement from Scottish Forestry and Bonnie Maggio stepped up to take on the reigns of the Education and Skills Policy Advisor post.

I am incredibly excited to be joining the team as the Education Programme Manager and meeting the members of the OWL groups across Scotland next year. Several people might recognise me as I was a member of the GROWL group for several years and also a community ranger with Forestry and Land Scotland covering the Glasgow area for nearly eight years. Previous to that I have had a range of jobs including working with the Woodland Trust, Froglife, and North Lanarkshire Council in a variety of engagement and educational posts.

The majority of my work has been in and around urban areas of Scotland and although these areas are not always the most stunning of locations they are the wild spaces and often the only connection to nature for much of the population of Scotland.

I have two young children who have really opened my eyes to how important nature is not just for learning and inspiration but somewhere that provides a sense of calmness amidst the busyness of modern life.

So here is to 2022 with hopefully lots of fun adventures in front of us all!



## **Scotland's Finest Woods Award**

Scotland's Finest Wood Award is an annual award programme to celebrate best use and best practice in woodlands within Scotland. There are 6 categories including the Schools/Early Years Award. This category is open to nursery/ primary and secondary schools. Winners not only receive a cash prize but also goodies such as a Mag post, tree pack and a lovely wooden trophy.



For more information on the award and for previous winners please use the following link- [Schools Award \(sfwa.co.uk\)](https://www.sfwa.co.uk). The 2022 application has not yet been released but the deadline should be on the 31st of March. Please check the SFWA webpage for updates on this.

## **Dates for your diary!**

18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> February 2022 - **OWL Scotland National Networking Event** at Dounans Aberfoyle. This can now be booked through Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/owl-scotland-networking-event-2022-tickets-199206601307> . The event will be following Scottish Government guidance on Covid prevention.



**Priority booking for OWL members will be open until the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2022.** Workshops will include Magical Moss, Winter tree ID, Nature Weaving and many more great activities.

This event is usually fully booked so please reserve a place early to avoid disappointment. **Please note if this event has to be cancelled due to restrictions to prevent the spread of Covid a full refund will be issued to those signed up for this event.** More information on the event and the cancellation policy can be found through the Eventbrite booking page and will be updated if/ when needed.

## **Forest Kindergarten Subsidiary Courses**

Scottish Forestry/ OWL Scotland will be running **additional subsidiary courses for Forest Kindergarten** in the new year in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Moray on **Woodland Ecology and Ropes and Shelters**. Dates have still to be finalised but are likely to be in March 2022. We will inform our subscribers of the details when these are finalised. [Subscribe to OWL Scotland's Newsletter | Outdoor and Woodland Learning](#).

## **Covid 19 Guidance update:**

We have been asked about OWL Scotland's policies on changing restrictions around Covid prevention measures and would like to reiterate that groups should follow Scottish Government guidance at all times.

All the Scottish Government documents are online here: [Coronavirus in Scotland - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-school-visits-and-trips)

Guidance on school trips and visits <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-school-visits-and-trips>

## **Local OWL events and news**

### **Joint Network Event**

The North, West and South Highland OWL groups are holding a joint networking event

- Date - Saturday 18 June
- Time - access to site from 9am until 6pm
- Location - [Fairburn Activity Centre](#)

There will be several of workshops to take part in as well as a brilliant opportunity to make contact with other outdoor learning practitioners and organisations. More information on this event will be in the next OWL Scotland Bulletin.

## **South Highland OWL**

We had a wonderful autumn and early winter of CPD workshops. One of the workshops was postponed until 2022 – Literary Woodland Landscapes. We are in the process of planning workshops for 2022, some are confirmed and some are proposed.

### **Squelchy old wellies and some hubble, bubble lichen trouble**

Now that some of the restrictions have eased we have recently been able to run a few of the pandemically postponed workshops. Logistics had to be carefully thought through to ensure safe, but still sociable, distancing was adhered to.



Christine ran an informative session on identifying lichens and using windblown samples to dye locally shorn and spun wool. No mordants were required to obtain a good mix of fast colours so the participants



went away happily planning their next textile creations. Some samples can be seen in the basket and hanging on the willows to dry.

A couple of Saturdays later Roni led a squelchy stroll around the paths after the group had carded rolags, moulded, soaped, wrapped tightly and carefully slipped their dainty feet into outsized, old wellies.

Photos below show the lovely slippers and the beautifully clean pedicure which resulted from the process.



### **Lost Words in the woods @ Abriachan on Sat 18 September**

The team at Abriachan Forest Trust both hosted and led this innovative workshop. We had a good turn-out of 12 outdoor practitioners who were looking for ways of using the books *Lost Words* and *Lost Spells* by Robert McFarlane & Jackie Morris in an outdoor setting. Practical examples were used in the woods which make the books interactive and inspiring.

### **Getting Crafty for Christmas @ Abriachan on Sat 20 November**

We had a magnificent turn-out for this event of over 30. We decided to make this more of an informal networking event where participants could bring their families. The team at Abriachan kindly made homemade soup and offered hot drinks with scones and other treats. Workshop leaders Trish Matthews, Christine Matheson and Rachel Avery showed participants how to make some lovely Christmas crafts using

natural materials. Trish led on making simple wooden crafts which could be decorated, Christine on leaf pattern cards/pictures and Rachel on using willow to make stars and other lovely shapes. Participants brought examples of other crafts to share with everyone. Here are some photos of the wonderful crafts made at the event:



## CPD workshops and Networking event 2022

CPD workshops:

### 1. **Literary Woodland Landscapes** @ Kincaig, Strathspey with Merryn Glover on Sat 5 February

Through different activities, participants are encouraged to see the landscape through new eyes. The Literary Landscape resource is free and can be used to support interdisciplinary learning with groups or schools at a range of levels. More information will be forthcoming closer to the time.

### 2. **Campfire Savouries** @ Abriachan with Abriachan Forest Trust on Sat 26 March

We will help participants to make a range of different fires safely in the outdoors and show them a range of tasty savoury recipes. This workshop is being offered due to popular demand and we will be showing savour rather than sweet as this was requested by participants.



### 3. **Story Walks** @ Strathspey (exact location to be confirmed) with Sarah Hobbs on Sat 7 May

This will be a mix of storytelling, 'show and tell' with things made from trees, ecology, Gaelic culture and heritage, a bit of foraging, and tea tasting. Sarah will focus on the cultural heritage and folklore side of nature, including songs and stories.

We are planning more CPD workshops and will update at the next bulletin.

## Edinburgh OWL Group

### OWL Choir “Let's it Grow” for COP26!

The OWL Choir project was funded through an OWL Scotland Special grant from an idea planted by myself in the Edinburgh OWL Group in 2020. I have been part of the Edinburgh-based, Soundhouse Choir since 2016 and we recorded the version of ***Enough is Enough*** for COP26 in October and November 2020. It didn't happen, of course, but the postponement gave us the opportunity to create something quite life affirming together in 2021.



The *Enough is Enough* project seed grew into the, ***Let it Grow*** Community project which has invited community groups throughout Scotland and the wider world to record their own versions of the song.



19 OWL Choir group members signed up from over 8 OWL Scotland groups and joined weekly rehearsals over 10 weeks with the larger, Soundhouse Choir to practice for two, high profile performances. In between, Sally York and I went on a brilliant road trip to meet with our wonderful, OWL Choir members and others at Newbattle Abbey Grounds - Midlothian, The Hermitage - Tayside and across to

Ardkinglas - Argyll and Bute (& a quick visit to *The Ark* in Tighnabruaich) and capture some of our amazing, Scottish trees and landscapes in addition to all beautiful voices to use in our own wee video.

All elements for the performance of *Enough is Enough* gathered together to join **Karine Polwart**, Songwriter and Musician, and **Oi Musica** creators



of the *Let it Grow* project, at Dynamic Earth on November 6<sup>th</sup> - expertly choreographed by esteemed Director, **Heather MacLeod**. Flushed with enthusiasm and euphoria from our first performance, Govan was a whole new adventure and the celebration of all our collective creativity and hard work. The enclosed



video gives a sensation of this happening event where we were joined by more, street band musician friends from *Brass Eye* and *Samba Ya Bamba* on November 10<sup>th</sup> along with Vision Mechanics with giant puppet, *Storm* and the amazing, *Little Amal*. A happening and a half!



There was a further opportunity for OWL members and others to join a Flash Mob at Govan and online rehearsals were offered and taken up by a huge group of folks as seen in the film. I had met members of Minga Indigena -Forest Peoples and Indigenous Leaders from across Latin America who were highlighting the destruction of the Rainforests and invited them to join us too, along with friends, Alan Hampson and his daughter, Grace.



It was an altogether incredible experience and we hope that you enjoy the video. Thanks to OWL Scotland for the Special Grant! It lifted our spirits through darker times, enabled us to join kindred communities throughout Scotland and beyond and gave us all an experience that we will never forget – singing our song to safeguard our natural environments.

**Thanks everyone -on-line and in person for jumping in to this OWL Choir adventure.** We think that this has planted several good seeds for future collaborations between ourselves which is only to be celebrated. To be continued!

EOWL look positively forward to 2022 for our re-scheduled Nature Play Conference and further happenings.  
Barbara Middleton

**Enough is Enough OWL Choir** (first edit) <https://youtu.be/ywDYtehzUkk>  
**Enough is Enough Performance, Govan November 10<sup>th</sup> 2021 for COP 21**  
<https://vimeo.com/644533046>

## **Tayside OWL Group**

Members of the Tayside OWLS Group were delighted to be invited by the Edinburgh OWL group to take part in a woodland rendition of [Enough is Enough](#). Tayside OWL Members joined the OWL Choir in the beautiful setting of the Hermitage, in Dunkeld with their voices and enthusiasm. Massive thanks to Barbara Middleton from Edinburgh OWLS group for creating such a wonderful opportunity to come together.



There is a free downloadable [Schools pack](#) if you want to support your own group in playing/ singing this beautiful song.

## **West Fife OWL Group**

West Fife OWL has received funding for the Special Play Grant No.2 and will begin planning the 5 outdoor sessions in the new year. We aim to build on the success of the Special Play sessions last summer and run bush craft style sessions for older local children. This will also enable us to enlarge our resource kits. The new year will also see us picking up the pace with a few local schools asking for outdoor guidance.

West Fife OWL Group have different resource kits which are available to borrow. Each kit contains enough materials for a class of up to 30 pupils and can be loaned out for an initial period of two weeks. One of our committee members has kindly offered to drop off and collect kits.

Kits available include Den Building, Fire, Pond dipping and woodland play and include a range of useful equipment and relevant safety kit. To borrow a kit, enquiries have to be emailed to the group on [westfifeowl@gmail.com](mailto:westfifeowl@gmail.com) giving your name, School, kit(s) wanted and date required. Please 'like' our Facebook page, Outdoor and Woodland Learning-West Fife.

## **Moray OWL Group**

AGM due to be held in December but this has been postponed until further notice due to the current levels of covid infection and new Government guidance.

## **Dumfries and Galloway OWL**

Lots is happening in DGOWL at the moment. Youngsters are going to be playing across Dumfries and Galloway with our 3 Owl Scotland play grants. Six of our members will be looking forward to delivering these.

In the west we have one at Glen Luce focusing on early years' children and their families the sessions will have a health and wellbeing strand throughout including shelter making and fire. The other elements will be included within water, wood, earth and air sessions plus a session focussing on knots, ropes and string. There is a strong social element with children and their families encouraged to talk about what they have been doing.



The next based around Gatehouse is the Wonderful Winter Woodlands. Where P1-3 children will spend time engaging in age appropriate nature connection activities. Using the core routines as described in the Coyote's Guide to Connecting with

Nature, together with a child-led pedagogy with a focus on engaging all the senses, heart and hand, and developing social skills in the children.

In Annandale in the east there will be day-long drop-in sessions, with various activities available throughout the day. Equipment and materials which suggest play will be provided for children to explore on their own or with their parents. The wood is rich in natural play materials including access to water. These sessions will cover a period from deep-winter to the first signs of spring.

We have also been working a lot with both pupils and teacher schools promoting outdoor numeracy across the region (Maths Week Scotland Grant) and with teachers through 3 sessions focusing on Health and Wellbeing, Literacy and Numeracy in the outdoors (OWL Scotland Special Grant). These have all been really well received and as we have been working with the Council's Education and Learning Directorate well evaluated too.

Our first Branching Out (Scottish Forestry and ADP Grants) programmes have just finished and from the feedback we have received we have made a real difference to participants'



lives. It was amazing to see participants with mental health issues really gel and gain confidence over the 12 weeks. They learned new skills, found self-worth and realised how much they enjoyed being outside.

Working with the Council's Public Health Directorate there are lots of health initiatives who would like us to work with them on similar delivery programmes from children's healthy weight schemes, cancer patients or heart and stroke recovery patients plus more. We already have a grants from our local NHS Endowment Fund and Scottish Forestry that combined will allow our Branching Out Leaders to deliver more Branching Out and other DGOWL health initiatives in the next 18 months. We will be working on some more grant applications in the new year to allow more people to get healthy outdoors.



ADP (Alcohol and Drugs Partnership) Support workers enjoying some hammock time on the Branching Out sessions.

## Argyll and Bute OWL Group

The group are running another playscheme on Mull with funding from OWL Scotland.



## North Highland OWL

Saturday 4th September dawned clear and crisp to the delight of the North Highland OWL group. Two and a half years after their first meeting the group were finally hosting their Launch Day! The launch was held on the beautiful woodland estate of the Fairburn Activity Centre; which lies at the foot of Strathconon glen.

The launch celebrated a wide range of outdoor experiences and was enjoyed by over 40 teachers, home schoolers, families and outdoor specialists, who gathered to share the day, exchange knowledge, stories and experiences.

The day kicked off in the courtyard, where Julie B. had set up an impressive welcome stand which showcased the fantastic OWL Scotland resources - thank you Bonnie! Julie had also set up and displayed photos and information from events and training that NH OWL had hosted and attended previously. After a brief welcome and safety talk the attendees were able to sign up for the sessions they wished to participate in and then... it was all systems go!



Shirley Anne led a Bug Hunt session using minimal equipment to discover the fascinating world of woodland insects and bugs.

Kerry led a Tarpaulin Shelter Building session using basic knots and shelter shapes. She encouraged teamwork and a sense of fun as folk got rather knotty.



Petria found a lovely spot beside the outdoor classroom to take An Introduction to Willow Weaving. This was aimed at how to teach children to form small fish and stars and an opportunity for some gentle chat along the way.



Local artist and storyteller Lizzie McDougall wove her stories through the trees to a captivated group and fired everyone's imagination. This session was a real delight.

Judith, from West Coast OWL, took the trip over to support our launch with a Cordage session. She showed folk the art of creating amazingly strong cordage using local plants.



Larissa gathered attendees together in a dappled stand of birches to take a Meditation session. The group were led in calming mind and body to allow for a deeper connection to themselves and their beautiful surroundings



Julie G. and Gregor were fairly easy to find; all you had to do was follow the smoke and smell of campfire cooking! Julie and Gregor kept two fire bowls going all day and welcomed attendees to come and make their own bespoke pizza pockets and pancakes. The fire pit area was the hub for lunch where everyone gathered to talk about the sessions they had attended, to catch up and get the craic and enjoy the good food and company.

Juliet from South Highland OWL joined us to lend her support and took the fabulous photos – thank you Juliet.



The launch had been a long time in coming and at the end of the day the NH OWL group felt a sense of pride at having worked together to host a successful day of outdoor learning and experiences. The group hope this has helped to make the local area aware of them and that it will encourage future outdoor learning and collaboration in the North Highlands.

## Resources

### **OWL Resources**

This is a reminder of the wealth of resources that are available on our website. Please encourage members, colleagues and others of what is available including our most recent [TreeID.8.pdf \(owlscotland.org\)](#). The resource is designed to be accessible to all levels of knowledge and to summarise and link through to existing resources as well as provide activities for identifying trees at different levels of knowledge.



We are always keen to have feedback on these resources and others that you would like to see in the future. there is currently no stock of hard copies of resources until they have been rebranded and reprinted which we will be looking at later in 2022.

## Training

**Online Introduction to the John Muir Award** – 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022, 09.30-12.00  
Join John Muir Trust for a training session aimed at anyone who wants to develop and lead John Muir Award activity. Find out more and book here:

[www.johnmuirtrust.org/john-muir-award/training/online-introduction-to-the-john-muir-award](http://www.johnmuirtrust.org/john-muir-award/training/online-introduction-to-the-john-muir-award)

## Other News

**16<sup>th</sup> European Forest Pedagogics Congress 2022**  
**How to learn in and with nature in times of climate crisis? European perspectives and solutions**  
**Zürich, Switzerland, 11th – 13th May 2022**

Registration for the Congress will open in mid-December 2021

See more: <https://www.silviva.ch/weiterbildung/tagungen/european-forest-pedagogics-congress-2022/>

### **Scottish Government Consultation- Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency**

The Scottish Government have recently opened a consultation on Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments. Given the strong play theme to much of our work it would be great if individuals/ groups could respond to this to ensure a rich variety of spaces are considered for play and not just more traditional playgrounds. The consultation will close for comments on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2022.

[Open Space Strategies and Play Sufficiency Assessments - Scottish Government - Citizen Space \(consult.gov.scot\)](https://consult.gov.scot/open-space-strategies-and-play-sufficiency-assessments)

### **Check out the latest Outdoor Learning news from Scotland**

Have a look at <https://outdoorlearningdirectory.com/> where you'll find fresh updates, including news and resources from the Learning in Local Greenspace project.

### Contact:

To contact your local OWL group please go to [Local Groups | Outdoor and Woodland Learning \(owlscotland.org\)](https://www.owlscotland.org/)

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