



Citizen Science in Community Woodlands

Online training event: 17 May 2022, 10.30 – 11.30

Introduction

This free online workshop was hosted by CWA, the main speaker was Fritha West from the Conservation Outcomes and Evidence Team at the Woodland Trust. The event aimed to explore how members of community woodlands groups can contribute to ongoing research projects on climate change, tree diseases and ancient trees in the UK. The main topic of the workshop was the Nature's Calendar project which focuses on the timing of natural events and most recently how they are influenced by climate change.

Event report

Joanna Rodgers welcomed delegates and explained housekeeping arrangements. She introduced Fritha West from the Woodland Trust who gave a presentation before responding to questions from attendees.

Fritha gave an overview of citizen science projects at the Woodland Trust, including the Observatree project, which aims to protect UK trees, woods and forests from existing or new pests and diseases; and the Ancient Tree Inventory, which maps the oldest trees in the UK. Her presentation mainly focused on Nature's Calendar which records the timings of natural events and is led by the Woodland Trust. Nature's Calendar is one of the world's longest running citizen science projects and Fritha described how contributions by individuals since the 1700s have provided scientists with valuable information about climate change today.

Fritha explained that phenology is the study of the timing of natural events. There are 69 species and over 150 seasonal events tracked by Nature's Calendar, and participating is as simple as recording the date you see your first flower opening in Spring or ripe blackberry in Autumn. From this data scientists have calculated that the timing of biological Spring events is on average 8 days earlier than it was between 1891-1947. This is important to know because the timing of these events can have a big impact on ecosystems.

Fritha explained that there are gaps in data across large areas of Scotland and encouraged members of community woodlands to get involved in recording information about their local woodland for Nature's Calendar and other citizen science projects. She explained that records are open access, so contributing to Nature's Calendar will also help community woodland groups to record and track data about their own local area. To participate, Fritha recommended 1) Choose the species and events you want to record; 2) Choose your recording locations and check them regularly; 3) Add your sightings to the Nature's Calendar [website](#).

Q&A

The presentation was followed by an extended Q&A and discussion amongst attendees. Lorraine Whittle from the Woodland Trust joined Fritha to answer some questions.

There were a wide range of questions which included whether the Covid-19 lockdowns had increased engagement with citizen science as people spent more time in nature; advice for engaging communities with citizen science projects; and which species had changed most in recent decades.

Attendees also discussed the health benefits of participating in citizen science projects. Fritha mentioned [an ongoing research project at the University of Edinburgh](#) which explores how participating in phenology projects like Nature's Calendar can affect how people think about time and influence how they live.

Recording

A recording of the event is available at: [Citizen Science in Community Woodlands - YouTube](#)

Resources

[Nature's Calendar \(woodlandtrust.org.uk\)](#)

[What does phenology mean to you? \(woodlandtrust.org.uk\)](#)

[Blog - Nature's Calendar \(woodlandtrust.org.uk\)](#)

[Finding Nature | Nature Connectedness Research Blog by Prof. Miles Richardson](#)

Attendees

Fritha West	Woodland Trust
Lacey Lindsay	Inchinnan Development Trust
Kerry McInnes	Forres Friends of Woods & Fields
Bill Boggia	Uigshader Living Forest Project
Gemma Jennings	Urban Roots
Elizabeth Stanyer	Aberdeen City Council
Johnny Wells	Water of Leith Conservation Trust
Nev Kilkenny	Gifford Community Woodlands
Chris Hogarth	Natural England
Kristina High	Strathnairn Community Woods
Lorienne Whittle	Woodland Trust
Jo Rodgers	CWA

CWA events and services

CWA organises regular training events on a broad range of topics: see our website for details of upcoming events www.communitywoods.org/newsandevents Please get in touch admin@communitywoods.org if you have an idea for a training event that we could organise.

We send out a monthly e-bulletin with details of relevant funding opportunities, news, events and jobs & a quarterly e-newsletter with updates and stories from Scottish community woodlands. Sign up to our mailing list here <https://eepurl.com/g-JJ0L>

Follow CWA on social media for regular updates on relevant funding opportunities, news, events and jobs: Facebook www.facebook.com/Communitywoods, Twitter [@CommunityWoods](https://twitter.com/CommunityWoods) & Instagram www.instagram.com/communitywoods/

CWA moderates a Google Group where people involved in community woodlands can come together to share their experiences, advice & ideas. Email joanna@communitywoods.org to be added to the e-group.