

BUILDING CONFIDENCE TO USE TOOLS SAFELY ACROSS VOLUNTEERS, STAFF AND SCHOOLS

How Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust is using The Outdoor Teacher's Using Tools Training to support volunteers and help deliver its growing outdoor learning programmes.



THE
OUTDOOR
TEACHER



**Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
& Oxfordshire**
Wildlife Trust

ABOUT BBOWT

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) inspires people to connect with nature while protecting and restoring wildlife across the three counties it serves.

Its Engagement & Learning Team delivers outdoor learning programmes for schools, families and young people, helping children experience nature, develop practical conservation skills and build confidence outdoors.

Alongside its long-established work with young people and families, BBOWT is now expanding its support for schools through its ambitious Wilder Schools programme.



MEET LYNN HUGHES

Lynn Hughes

Head of Engagement & Learning

Lynn began her career as a teacher before moving into environmental education and now leads BBOWT's Engagement & Learning Team.

She oversees programmes delivered by both staff and volunteers, ensuring outdoor learning is engaging, inspiring and delivered safely.

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We wanted a consistent way of making sure everyone working with children and using tools had completed appropriate training. The online module fitted perfectly with our safeguarding procedures and gives people the flexibility to complete the training in their own time before supporting sessions.

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THREE PROGRAMMES WHERE TOOLS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE

BBOWT currently uses tools across three learning programmes.

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Younger Rangers (8–12)

Monthly Saturday clubs where children explore and engage in the outdoors and gradually develop practical conservation and outdoor skills.

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Teen Rangers (12–17)

Young people return month after month, allowing them to build confidence, independence and practical conservation skills over time.

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Nature Tots

A monthly parent-and-toddler group where young children are introduced to simple tool use through carefully supervised activities.

Because many participants attend regularly over long periods, BBOWT is able to introduce tools progressively, allowing confidence and practical skills to develop safely over time.

A LONG-TERM APPROACH TO WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

In January 2026, BBOWT began an exciting new direction for its education work through its **Wilder Schools** programme.

Rather than delivering one-off visits, the programme partners with primary schools over three years, helping schools increase biodiversity across their grounds while supporting teachers to become more confident leading learning outdoors.

Following a successful pilot involving six schools, the programme expands in September 2026 to eight primary schools across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. Most activities take place on the school site, with each school also visiting a BBOWT nature reserve once each year.

The Wilder Schools approach first emerged within another Wildlife Trust following the COVID pandemic. As each Wildlife Trust is an independent charity, successful programmes are often picked up and adapted by other Trusts to meet the needs of their own communities. Today, around ten Wildlife Trusts are running similar initiatives.



BUILDING A CONSISTENT APPROACH TO TRAINING

Lynn first came across The Outdoor Teacher while looking for practical training to support staff using tools with children.

Initially, one member of the Learning Team completed **The Outdoor Teacher's Using Tools Course** and used the guidance from the course to develop BBOWT's own tool-use risk assessment.

After seeing how well this worked in practice, BBOWT invested in 50 licences for staff and volunteers.

The licences are now issued as new volunteers join the organisation, ensuring everyone receives the same training before leading or supporting activities involving tools with children.



TRAINING THAT WORKS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Like many Wildlife Trusts, BBOWT regularly welcomes new volunteers.

Providing face-to-face training every time someone joins would take considerable time and organisation.

Instead, volunteers complete the Using Tools Online Course at home, in their own time, before supporting sessions involving children.

Each learner receives a certificate on completion and retains lifetime access to revisit the training whenever they need a refresher.

Purchasing licences in bulk has given BBOWT a simple, scalable and cost-effective way of providing consistent training while reducing the administration involved in inducting new volunteers.

Today, completing the Using Tools training is a mandatory requirement for every employee or volunteer leading or supporting activities involving tools with children.

BBOWT'S SAFEGUARDING CODE OF PRACTICE STATES:

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All employees and volunteers using tools with children as part of these specified activities should also complete this specific training before they will be able to lead or support a group.

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WHAT VOLUNTEERS LEARN

Using Tools is a module from The Outdoor Teacher's Forest School Activities Online Training programme which consists of eight different modules, all of which are available as stand alone courses or part of the full programme.

The Using Tools module provides practical, video-based training covering:

- Bow saws
- Pruning saws
- Secateurs
- Loppers
- Hammers

Volunteers also learn:

- Safe tool protocols
- How to establish a safe tool-use area
- Age-appropriate supervision
- Risk and benefit assessment
- Practical demonstrations from Marina Robb, drawing on more than 30 years' experience in Forest School and outdoor learning.

The online format allows learners to pause, replay and revisit lessons whenever they wish.



THE IMPACT

For Lynn, the biggest benefit has been consistency.

Every member of staff and volunteer receives the same practical training before leading or supporting activities involving tools with children.

The Engagement & Learning Team can be confident that everyone understands the same tool protocols, safeguarding expectations and approaches to risk and benefit assessment, while volunteers value being able to complete the training at a time that suits them.

As BBOWT continues to expand its outdoor learning programmes, including Wilder Schools, that consistent approach to training will continue to support safe, confident and high-quality experiences for children and young people.

KEY OUTCOMES

- 50 licences supporting staff and volunteers
- Mandatory training before leading or supporting tool use with children
- Consistent safeguarding standards across the organisation
- Flexible online learning completed at home
- Lifetime access for refresher training
- Simple induction process for new volunteers
- Reduced administration
- Supporting Rangers, Nature Tots and Wilder Schools

SUPPORTING CONFIDENT OUTDOOR LEARNING

The Outdoor Teacher supports schools and educators to build confidence in outdoor learning through practical training, online courses and nature-based educational approaches.

Designed for real educational settings, the training helps schools create meaningful outdoor experiences that support wellbeing, resilience, creativity and engagement.

Find out more at: www.theoutdoorteacher.com