

## **A best practice guide to foraging for wild food, fire lighting, bush craft and wild camping in Pembrokeshire.**

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park has some of the most unspoilt and spectacular coastal scenery in the UK. It is an area rich in wildlife and is designated as internationally and nationally important for species and their habitats.



The following best practice guidelines have been drawn up by Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter members who offer bush craft, wild camping and foraging activities. Advice has been contributed by conservation experts, land owners, the fire service and local authorities in order to help preserve the coastline & seek to promote and protect continued access to the outdoors for all to enjoy.

Bush craft and foraging activities with groups are not about survival at all costs - it should not be a true survival situation after all! So the key message is to undertake activities with respect for other people, to protect the environment and wildlife, and enjoy the outdoors and stay safe.

### **Fire Lighting**

#### **Before Fire Lighting:**

- Consider if you really need a fire. What is its purpose - warmth/ cooking/ to teach how to light a fire?
- Ask landowner's permission
- Ring 01267 222044 Fire Control room to explain you are having a fire, where it will be and when it will be put out.
- Conduct a thorough risk assessment for fire, taking into account location, nearby vegetation / structures (tents!) & wind direction.
- Have plenty of water to hand. 20 Litres + is recommended.
- Pack a first aid kit with burn treatment gel & cling film.

#### **Lighting Fire**

- Do not use accelerants (e.g. petrol)
- Keep your campfire small and manageable – it will be easier to maintain with fewer materials.
- Consider using a fire wok / Kelly Kettle base etc to isolate fire from ground – makes it easier to clean up and keeps it small
- Try not to use local materials – fallen branches and dead wood is often important wildlife habitat, and left to rot as part of the management of woodlands. Instead bring your own firewood.
- Clear the surrounding area of any excess debris and create a small boarder using damp logs or dry stones.
- If you have permission to use local materials, protect the trees - use only

- materials that are already dead, and sourced carefully not to disturb any habitat.
- Never burn wooden outdoor furniture, fences, signs or other people's gathered firewood.
  - Great care should be taken when locating a fire. Build a fire pit on bare ground, sand or mineral soil - not on living or dead vegetation. Take up turf if on grass & replace after use.
  - Do not build a fire on peat soil which can burn underground.
  - If on the beach, build fires in a scrape below the mean high water mark – plan for tides! Do not place rocks around fire that have been in water, as water in cracks can flash to steam and cause explosions with rock shards.
  - Never leave your campfire unattended
  - If appropriate with your group, discuss / teach social and environmental consequences of poorly managed fire.

### **Afterwards:**

- Drown your fire in water when it's ready to put out, (20Ltrs +) - Everything should be cool to touch including the materials that make up the boarder.
- Using spade or stick, break ground surface to allow water to cool underground
- Once all materials are cool to touch, scoop and scatter carbonized wood into bushes so can't be seen, or carry out.
- Replace turf if removed
- Scatter leaves / local materials over area so there is no trace left of fire
- Remove all litter

### **Wild Camping**

In Wales and England wild camping is illegal unless you have the landowners permission. You should always follow these good practice guidelines

- Ask the land owner's permission
- Keep your group small
- Pitch late (just before dark) and pack up early (gone by 9am) in order to cause as little disturbance as possible.
- Keep out of the way and be as unobtrusive as possible – keep noise down.
- Leave your camp as you found it, or if possible tidier than it was when you arrived by removing any litter you find.
- Toilet etiquette: If it can be carried out, carry it out, if not a small hole 6 inches deep and 50 meters away from any water source must be dug, used and filled back in. All sanitary products must be carried out.
- Keep your stay to a minimum, one night in one location is good, 2 or more nights and you start to overstay your welcome & damage the vegetation beneath you.
- Once a site looks like a campsite it will attract other campers who may not treat it with the respect that you have. So the key is to leave as small a trace as possible.
- Where possible / necessary, inform others that you are on site with permission of the land owner.

## Shelter Building

- Don't cut down materials unless absolutely necessary and you have permission from the land owner
- Unless you have permission to leave up temporarily, disassemble structure afterwards
- Leave no trace that your structure existed.

## Foraging

- Don't break the law in order to forage.
- If you are collecting ingredients for commercial sale, you may require consent from CCW (Countryside Council for Wales). Or a license from the landowner
- Never gather a rare or protected species (Ref: - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) - it is your responsibility to be aware of what conservation designations / listed species there are in any area you plan to use.
- Know what you gather, if you don't have a knowledgeable tutor or guidebook then only eat what you are 100% certain is safe and not a protected or poisonous species.
- Limit sessions to 'taster sessions', not 'harvesting sessions' for full meals. Bring your main food source with you and use the minimum of foraged items to supplement or add flavor to your meal.
- Don't be greedy; once it's gone it's gone, leave a healthy amount so animals / plants can repopulate / recover quickly. Picking berries will have an impact on wildlife – it's a major source of food and therefore survival, so leave plenty behind.
- Don't pull up whole plants. Use appropriate equipment - a good knife or pair of scissors can help to remove the desired part of plant without causing too much damage to the rest of the plant, and to surrounding vegetation
- Learn which part of a plant can be picked without causing harm – tips are often the growing point and often mentioned as the best bit of the plant to eat but when picked can cause the plant to die, or have severely reduced growth, flowering, & fruiting.
- Try to encourage clients to continue best practice going forward – suggest growing favoured plants at home and pick up litter as you go.
- Pass on knowledge and methods without harming life if possible by employing methods such as 'catch and release' of fish / crustaceans.
- Minimise damage to rock pools, carefully replace any upturned rocks. Take particular care to avoid damage to soft tissue animals in sea caves / low light areas.
- Limit using key species such as limpets as harvesting too many will have an impact on the habitat.
- Report wildlife sightings – unusual fungi, amphibians and reptiles as well as marine wildlife are all of interest to West Wales Biodiversity information centre: [www.wwbic.org.uk](http://www.wwbic.org.uk)