

All the Kit You Need

Essential tools and accessories + an animal

Owning a woodland provides an ironclad excuse to buy new stuff. We consulted with woodland manager Jon Snape and his friend and colleague, Bryn Reynolds, and discovered that there is some agreement about the basic kit you need.

'The TCV Guides [The Conservation Volunteers] are the bee's knees,' said Jon. 'After that, if you're going to become qualified to use a chainsaw, a PPE Starter Pack. The ideal pack would include a helmet – with a visor – and earmuffs, gloves, good steel toe capped wellies, waterproofs. And a first aid kit, specified for chainsaw use, a good quality one with plenty of plasters.'

On the subject of tools, Jon reckoned, 'A Silky Fox saw, a folding one is okay. Not a bow saw – those are really novice tools for beginners that would generally be fine for small diameter branches. A billhook would be useful. Antique ones are better than some newer ones. And I'd say a strimmer, preferably Stihl, with a strimmer cord and brush-cutter blade to keep internal tracks clear.'

'You don't need qualifications for that,' piped up Bryn. 'To use a strimmer.'

John went on, 'And if you've got a strimmer, you're going to want a proper fuel can with a non-spill nozzle, Stihl or Husqvarna.'

'I think an axe is good,' said Bryn. 'A small one. A hatchet.'

'A 'hatchet'? A *hatchet*? That's so American,' said Jon. 'You mean an 'axe'. So you'll need sharpening tools, a flat file. Not a whetstone.'

'It's difficult to get the technique right with a whetstone. You can get a good sharp edge with a file,' said Bryn.

'For the axe, Gransfors Bruk are the best you can get,' said Jon. 'My advice is to pay for quality all the way. And a knife.'

Bryn said, 'For making pointy sticks.'

Jon gave him a look. 'For non-specific tasks, a knife is incredibly useful.'

'You could use it to cut your strimmer cord,' said Bryn.

'You want to enjoy spending time in your woods, so the first thing is –' Jon started.

'– a Kelly Kettle,' interrupted Bryn.

'Yes, a Kelly Kettle,' agreed Jon.

'And chairs! Foldable, comfortable chairs!' said Bryn.

'He's such a glammer,' Jon rolled his eyes. 'You need stuff for making a fire. A windproof lighter.' He indicated Bryn. 'He wants a tent. I'm happy sleeping in my car.'

'Tipi Tents are very hot right now,' said Bryn. He warmed to the subject. 'With raised beds off the ground...'

Jon returned the conversation to basic kit. 'To keep



Alex Ramsay / Alamy Stock Photo

Points of agreement: Kelly Kettle and dog

your site safe, tool sheds are what people start thinking about, but keeping expensive bits of kit in one? No. And get proper training for the tools you use. A little knowledge is dangerous. Another good ID book is the *Collins Tree Guide*. A head torch might be useful. Some people get a tripod and kettle and Dutch oven, but it is a different way of cooking, so maybe not 'basic kit', mused Jon.

'Cool boxes!' said Bryn.

'We don't even have a cool box,' said Jon.

'I know we don't, but...' said Bryn. 'How about a chopping board? A spatula?'

'You can make those with your 'hatchet',' said Jon.

A moment's thought.

'A dog is a must-have,' said Bryn.

'When you're camping in your woodland, you will feel so much safer if you have a dog,' said Jon. 'What would I say to new woodland owners? Be an optimist and don't let things get you down. And have a good sense of humour.'

See p 47 for stockist info.