

Identification of Conifers

Led by Mark Duffell

Friday 18th – Sunday 20th October 2019

FSC Preston Montford

Arrive for evening meal 6.30pm

Depart 4.00pm



Casting lights on the dark art of practical conifer identification. Photo: M. Duffell

Course Overview

Even experienced botanists tend to ignore and avoid Conifers, but what can seem like an initially challenging group can be broken down and identified. By a range of workshops, lectures and field visits, you will build confidence to accurately identify Conifers. By the end of the course you should be able to identify in the field and laboratory a range of the major genera of conifers, and have had practice looking for appropriate characters to confirm the species. Key identification features for genera and species will be taught, using a range of handouts, keys and visual presentations. Identification will focus on foliage and cones for the different groups within conifers (characters suited to both adult and juvenile material). We will look at some of the trickier species within the genera e.g. *Abies*, *Picea*, *Pinus*. A special focus will be made of the 'Leylandii' types including *Chamaecyparis*, *Cupressus* and *Thuja*). Recent taxonomic changes and how these have affected current naming of Conifers will also be discussed.

The resources available to the surveyor will also be discussed, from identification guides and books, through to keys for conifers as a whole and for individual genera. Use will also be made of the excellent FSC Conifer Identikit. Please feel free to bring along any specimen that you would like help with identifying.

Species to be covered (provisional).

- *Abies*
- *Cedrus*
- *Cryptomeria japonica*
- *Cupressus*
- *Larix* (*L. europaea* & *L. kaempferi* plus hybrid).
- *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*
- *Picea*
- *Pinus* (as many species as available)
- *Pseudotsuga menziesii*
- *Sciadopitys verticillata*
- *Sequoia sempervirens*
- *Sequoiadendron giganteum*
- *Taxodium distichum*
- *Taxus*
- *Thuja plicata*
- *Tsuga*

Other species may be covered dependent on material available.

Course Tutor



Mark Duffell has had a lifetime interest in plants gaining the RHS Diploma in Horticulture and completing an MSc in Biological Recording. He now runs **Arvensis Ecology** splitting his time between conducting botanical surveys and teaching botanical identification and survey techniques to undergraduate and postgraduate students of universities, consultants and environmental organisations.

What to Bring

- You should bring a x 20 hand lens (or at the very least a good quality x10 lens). As you will be taking notes in the field, a weather-proof notebook or Weatherwriter is required and some sample bags (Ziplock freezer bags) are useful.
- If you have a copy of Stace's Field Guide this will be very useful although there may be some to borrow for the duration of the course.
- A sandwich box, flask and/or water bottle and a bag to carry your kit.
- Outdoor gear (stout boots, waterproofs and warm clothing)

Useful Books

Please bring along any Identification guides you regularly use.

Particularly useful are:

- Johnson, O. & More, D. 2006. *Collins Tree Guide*. Collins, London.
- Rich T & Jermy A.C. 1998. *Plant Crib 1998*. Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI)
- Stace, C.E. 2010. (3rd Edition). *The New Flora of the British Isles*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Course fees

Sole occupancy: £295

Shared occupancy: £270

Non-resident: £215

The residential course fee includes

- Full Board accommodation with sole occupancy (**shared occupancy is available at a reduced fee**) including cooked breakfast, picnic lunch, afternoon cake and evening meal.
 - Vegetarian and other dietary options are available
 - Tea and coffee making facilities are available throughout the day
- Transfer to and from Shrewsbury train station
- Up to 10 hours of tuition a day, with breaks for meals and refreshments
- In course transport and necessary admission fees
- Use of centre facilities including library, workrooms, studios and the Centre grounds
- Rigorous and proven health and safety procedures including 24 hour emergency cover
- Insurance to cover cancellation, personal belongings, personal accident, legal liability and medical emergency / emergency travel arrangements

The non-resident course fee includes all of the above except breakfast and accommodation.

To make a booking contact: FSC Preston Montford directly by

- Telephone: 0845 330 7378
- E-mail to: enquiries.pm@field-studies-council.org
- Online at: www.field-studies-council.org/prestonmontford

Timetable (Provisional).

Friday 18th October

7:30pm Introduction to Conifers

Saturday 19th October

09:30am Vegetative features
13:00pm - 14:00pm Lunch
14:00pm - 16:00pm Field visit to Nesscliffe Woods
16:00pm - 16:30pm Break
16:30pm - 18:00pm Lab session (cones and other material)
18:00pm - 19:30pm Break and then into evening meal
19:30pm - 21:00pm Lab session.

Sunday 20th October

09:30am Visit to the Royal Forestry Society 'Leighton Redwoods'
15:00pm Leave Leighton Redwoods and return to Preston Montford.
16:00pm Course finishes.

General Information 2019

FSC Preston Montford was opened as an outdoor education centre in 1957 by the Field Studies Council. Since then it has been delivering high quality, inspirational curriculum related outdoor education. Our teaching staff are expert in their field and we work with the widest possible range of learners; from pre-school to Masters level. We can provide courses for schools, universities or individuals; for infants, school students, undergraduates or enquiring adults; anyone with an interest in the natural world. We offer day and residential courses and the Centre is available as a venue for others to use; there are bed and catering facilities for 130 visitors along with 6 fully equipped teaching and meeting spaces, a library, common rooms and a bar.



About The Centre

Location and site: FSC Preston Montford is very accessible by road or rail. The site is 10 km west of Shrewsbury just 3 minutes drive from the A5 and 15 minutes drive from Shrewsbury Station.

Buildings: The campus has a complex of three main buildings built between 1700 and 1990 located around a central pond. Each building has bedrooms, classrooms and office space with additional classroom or meeting spaces set in a wooded garden area. The Main House has undergone a major re-furbishment in the first half of 2014 to provide modern bed and bathroom facilities as well as enhanced reception, meeting and library space. The Wenlock building has also undergone re-furbishment in the middle of 2016 to provide modern bed and bathroom facilities.

Facilities and services: A dining room and kitchen are part of the Main House; all catering is done in house with a fully trained and experienced Catering Team who cater for a full range of dietary requirements. The main teaching, recreation and dining areas are on ground floor level and some accommodation is available for wheelchair users. The different ages of our Centre buildings means that bedrooms range in style from dormitories to twin rooms with full en-suite.

The centre has a wide range of specialist equipment for teaching geography, ecology and other subjects outdoors as well as microscopes and laboratory equipment for examining and analysing samples indoors. Classrooms are fully equipped with interactive whiteboards and Wi-Fi access.

There are common rooms, drying areas, a library, a shop and a bar. We operate a 24 hour duty system and all staff are first aid trained and DBS checked.

Site and grounds: The Centre has 11 hectares of ground with a range of habitats. To the north lies the River Severn Montford SSSI which has a bank of semi-ancient woodland growing on a steep bank of glacial drift. Most of the area is grazed fields with hedges, 18th century specimen trees and some more recently planted copses. The eastern side of the estate is an area of more specialised habitats; ponds, wildflower meadow, ancient orchard, the remains of a walled garden and a Bee hotel.

Around the campus there is a sensory garden with a willow classroom area, weather monitoring plot, compost heap with wormery and installations for simulating rainfall-runoff relationships. The lawns, ponds, grassland and woodland are used for introductory teaching activities as well as student recreation.