

Risk Assessment: Pruning, Coppicing and Felling

Venue	Rewilding Adventure Site, Dunsdale	Completed by:	Morgan Lax	Date:	14th April 2025	Review Date:	14th April 2027
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Description of site / activity / tools:

Coppicing, pruning and felling is an optional element of bushcraft and Forest School, and one which is only likely to take place with longer-term FS groups or those who are older. Clearly, if every group was to prune, coppice or fell the woodland we are using would become devoid of trees. The use risk assessments which considers the use of bow saws and loppers should also be considered when pruning, coppicing and felling. Any use of a chainsaw will be done outside of activities, and sits under a separate risk assessment.

Pruning: removing individual branches either for the benefit of the tree or to use in greenwood working

Coppicing: is the removal of several lengths of wood from one tree in order for re-growth to occur

Felling: is the removal of an entire tree at its base

Note: all pruning, coppicing and felling will be done for an ethic of consideration for the sustainability and conservation of the woodland, and with the landowner's consent.

	Hazard	Harm	People at Risk	Existing Control Measure	Likelihood (1-3)	Severity (1-3)	Rating LxS (1-9)	New Control Measure Who? When?	Comments
1.	Struck by falling tree	Crush injury	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal warning of the risk • Fall zone identified and made clear • Use an appropriate cut that creates a hinge to control encourage the direction of fall • Consider the weighting & natural lean of the tree and wind- which will indicate the direction of fall • Survey the tree for its condition- especially a decay, loose branches above head height or <i>rotten tops</i> • Avoid felling in strong winds • Identify and clear escape routes • Use a buddy system- one cutting one watching • Communication between cutter, observer and instructor • Use of bow saw to cut rather than chainsaw • Felling only done with small participant to instructor ratios (1:6 or 1:8) • Only one tree to be felled at a time 	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider use of ropes and pulleys to encourage the fall- likely to be done without participants • Use of goggles, high visibility vests and hard hats not necessary in this situation 	

2.	Struck by falling branch	Injury	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal warning • Explain the collapse zone of a branch • Cutting outside of the collapse zone • No cutting above head height • Two arms and tool circumference around the tree as an exclusion zone 	2	2	4		
3.	Falling/stuck in tree	Injury/exposure	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal warning • All coppicing to be done from the ground 	1	2	2		
4.	Pulling on <i>hung up</i> branch/tree	Strain/falling when it comes loose- injury	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal warning • Avoid felling <i>difficult</i> trees with groups • Clear lower branches so the branch/tree falls to the ground • Use of pole to <i>walk</i> the butt considered • Ropes and <i>basic</i> (z-drag) pulleys to free the <i>hung up</i> branch considered 	1	2	2	If a tree is hung up we don't leave it, don't climb on it, don't fell the tree it's hung up in and don't fell another tree onto it	A tree is considered grounded when the butt is totally severed from the stump and the crown is largely supported to ground height
5.	Pruning, felling or coppicing in windy conditions	Uncontrolled branches/trees causing injury	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal warning • Avoid cutting in windy conditions 	1	2	2		
6.	Saw dust in eyes	Eye irritation/ injury	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal warning • No cutting above head height • Avoid cutting in windy conditions • Use of exclusion zone 	2	1	2		The use of goggles will be considered if this presents an issue (March 2025- this has not presented an issue since the previous revision)
7.	Lone working	Injury whilst isolated	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No participants to work alone • If instructors are working alone then the notify a responsible person of the location, the expected return time and the nature of the activity • No felling or other high risk issues to be undertaken whilst alone 	1	3	3		
8.				•					
9.				•					
10.				•					

Comments/Concerns: This risk assessment will be reviewed in the event of any incident or near miss in order to be fully informed for the future. It is not an exhaustive list, and is written with experience of FS and bushcraft activities in mind and the incidents (or lack of) that have been encounter in the preceding 11 years.	Recommendations: For bi-annual review- due March 2027
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