

Encouraging Wildlife on golf courses



WETLANDS

Many golf courses exhibit some water feature, natural or artificial. This section will deal with the management of these features for wildlife.

PONDS need careful management to ensure the continuation of a balanced community. Older ponds are more likely to have established communities of amphibians: frogs, toads and newts. The Great Crested Newt is protected by law: advice on this creature can be obtained from local wildlife organisations or the Flora and Fauna Preservation Society, or British Herpetological Society

Plants which are attractive to all types of wildlife are yellow and white waterlilies, water crowfoot in the pond, reedmace (generally known as bullrush) and bogbean, yellow flag, and water forget-me-not. In the marshy surrounds plants such as marsh marigold, bugle and meadowsweet will flourish. Dragonflies and damselflies will be attracted to a healthy pond and add a great deal to the visual interest.

POND CREATION and management is a relatively simple business as long as the following are borne in mind:

- do not allow water from fertilized areas to drain into the pond. This will create an imbalance in the nutrient levels in the water and will lead to excessive algal growth. The pond will soon look like pea-soup and will be of little value.
 - do not allow trees to overshadow the pond. This prevents light reaching the pond and prevents water plants from producing the oxygen which is vital to the health of the water. Falling leaves are also a problem as they can cause serious silting.
 - do remove tall trees from the south edge of the pond. This will allow light to reach the plants. Do leave trees, shrubs, and grass on the other edges. This provides cover for young amphibians and other creatures. It is best to leave an unmown area around the pond edge.
 - do not spray chemicals nearby if the wind will carry the "drift" towards a pond. Wind blown chemicals can have a disastrous effect on the pond life.
 - do remove excess silt from the pond but only in the autumn. At this time of year amphibians are not breeding or hibernating and so damage is minimised.
 - do refer to the diagram of suitable plants. Planting of ponds must be planned to include various plants for different levels.
- A great variety of insects live and breed in the pond: dragonflies, and damselflies spend their larval stage in the pond but also require emergent vegetation when they leave the pond to take to the air. These and other insects are snapped up by swooping housemartins and bats.

DITCHES, STREAMS AND RIVERS support a different, more hardy vegetation as conditions fluctuate from season to season. Rushes, mosses, liverworts, ferns, and various flowering plants, frogs and toads, grass snakes and even eels are all common in these environments. Management of the vegetation should be planned to remove excessive growth but is best done by implementing a rotation, so that certain areas are left growing while others are cut back.

This extract from a report by the London Wildlife Trust is part of a survey aimed at encouraging wildlife on golf courses.

The Trust formed in 1981 is among the country's leading nature conservation groups.

The results of the work by Maureen Fordham and the Director of the London Wildlife Trust, Jeremy Iles is worthy of far greater distribution than confined to the areas around London.

Copies of the full report can be obtained price £1.25 from London Wildlife Trust, 80 York Way, London N19AG or by telephoning 01 278 6612.

Golf Greenkeepers are grateful to the Trust for their permission to print extracts from their survey. Golfers and Greenkeepers alike have a common interest in encouraging wildlife to their courses.

It is part of the pleasure in golf to see and hear Britain's indigenous birds and animals in their natural habitat.

This section of the report deals with ponds, ditches and streams. In later issues of the magazine other natural habitats will be examined.

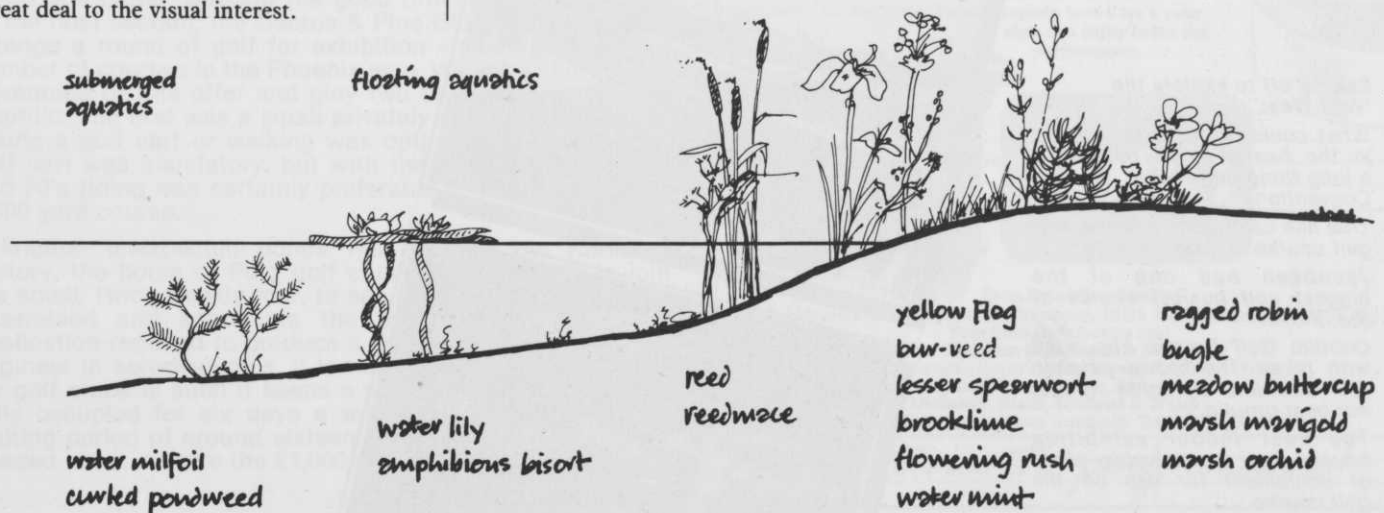
The Editor would also like to hear from Greenkeepers about their own efforts to encourage wildlife on their courses.

Editor's note - The green construction article will be held over for a future date.

marginal plants

emergent plants

marsh plants



yellow flag
bur-reed
lesser spearwort
brooklime
flowering rush
water mint

ragged robin
bugle
meadow buttercup
marsh marigold
marsh orchid