

L&D News

The latest from the Learning and Development department at BIGGA

Learning & Development News has the latest updates on CPD and everything related to greenkeeper education

and training, supported by our BIGGA Partners, BIGGA Education Supporters and Individual Contributors –

funding your future. Contact the Learning & Development team at BIGGA House for more information.

FIELD GUIDE UPDATE



The benefits of being a member of BIGGA far outweigh not being a member. In the coming months, we will look at some of the six sections of the On Course Field Guides.

The Field Guides are funded from the L&D fund. Firstly, let's make this clear - Field Guides are free to all members, that's right - FREE! Non-members can purchase a copy but it will cost £25. As an added bonus, 1 x CPD Education credit will be available for completing the quiz.

This month we will look at the newest section, Protected Species. The section consists of four areas:

- Legislation
- European protected species
- Nationally protected species
- Other species of conservation concern

The following are two examples of the content of the Protected Species section.

Smooth Snake (Annex IV Species) - Introduction to the ecology of the smooth snake

The smooth snake is a non-venomous slender snake, now confined to the South East of Dorset, South West Hampshire and within a small area of East Hampshire and West Surrey.

It is represented almost exclusively on dry lowland heathland. Smooth snakes normally emerge during early March, giving birth to live young in August/September.

Snakes may take four years to reach sexual maturity. Smooth snakes have undergone serious decline due to a loss of habitat through agricultural intensification and development, through a reduction in habitat suitability, i.e. habitat fragmentation, shading, scrub invasion, fires etc.

Legislation

The smooth snake is strictly protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Habitats Directive where it is listed under Annex IV of the Regulations. Under the legislation it is an offence to capture, disturb, injure or kill smooth snakes and/or to damage or destroy their breeding or resting places.

Factors likely to impact on the smooth snake


Activities likely to contravene the legislation would be ground works through areas used by foraging or basking snakes, loss of south-facing banks, removal of materials used by resting snakes, i.e. deadwood, rubble, etc., and renovation of buildings involving excavation. A major threat to this species is the ongoing loss of our native heathlands.



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The funding and assistance provided by BIGGA Partners and BIGGA Education Supporters underpins the Associations considerable investment in Continuing Professional Development and all our educational activity. They are investing in the future of BIGGA members, we are hugely grateful and urge you to show them your support.

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Opportunities for management

Golf courses can contribute positively to the future conservation of this species. A number of golf courses do support smooth snakes. Their conservation can be enhanced by the provision of deadwood, i.e. log piles, stockpiled brush (caution fires), careful scrub and bracken control, working under a strict management programme, and appropriate restoration and management of lowland heathland to maximise a strong habitat patchwork vegetation mosaic.

Increasing the extent of heath on the golf course could involve surveying to find all areas being managed unnecessarily, it may mean managing to control natural succession.

Opportunities could start by increasing more heath vegetation on the sides of the tees.

Also ensure that gorse is managed as discrete groupings, rather than one contiguous belt to reduce fire risks.

Bats (All Species) (Annex II and Annex IV) - Introduction to the ecology of bats

There are 17 species of bat known to be breeding within the UK, all of which are protected by law due to the massive declines in their number. Bats are flying mammals that, as well as requiring a constant source of water, feed almost exclusively in the UK on insects. Bats require a diverse range of habitats, from grasslands through to scrub, linear hedgelines, trees and waterways including ponds. Bats will hibernate and roost in the crevices of trees, in buildings and within ivy that often grows in association with trees.

They require different conditions for summer roosting to winter hibernation and/or breeding. In the winter, the main requirement is constant humidity and temperature, and thus they will tend to hibernate in deeper crevices. For breeding, summer warmth is vital and they will use a different aspect on a tree for this purpose.

Bats require a variety of insect prey and thus use hedgerows as navigational landmarks for their nocturnal flight paths. Woodland margins

and hedgerows are, in effect, linear features (corridors) for bats, enabling commuting from one area of the countryside to another. Water bodies are particularly important for bats in providing midges and flies, and also for drinking. The Daubenton's bat is one species that is heavily dependent upon aquatic habitats.

Legislation

All UK bats and their roosts are protected by European and national law, which for all countries within the UK can be summarised as follows:

- It is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat (or a group of bats) in a roost.
- Damage or destroy a bat roost, even if unoccupied.
- Possess or advertise bats dead or alive.
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

In court, 'deliberately' will probably be interpreted as someone who, although not intending to capture/injure or kill a bat, performed the relevant action, being sufficiently informed and aware of the consequence his/her action will most likely have.

Factors likely to impact on bats

Bats have declined as a result of hedgerow loss, indiscriminate tree removal and particularly the removal of dead standing trees.

Building renovation can also result in a loss of breeding and roosting habitat. Work is generally undertaken without any surveys being carried out and without consideration to any mitigation.

Opportunities for management

On golf courses the woodland fringe, the marginal rough and associated grasslands, ponds, etc. are all extremely important features and will help considerably in the conservation of our native bat population.

There are 17 species of bat resident within the UK (almost a quarter of our mammal species).

Encouraging and conserving bats on a golf course would best be achieved by avoiding, where



possible, use of pesticides (particularly insecticides), planting structurally diverse woodland margins, increasing the grass and rough contribution (marginal and ecology rough), managing for wildflowers, leaving deadwood (particularly standing), leaving ivy (ivy is not a parasite and will not kill trees to which it is attached), and creating small ponds or marsh areas from which to drink and to encourage insects.

Prior to any work on property or trees, it is imperative that a bat survey is carried out by a suitably qualified ecological consultant.

Even after works have been consented, if there is potential for bats then as part of the mitigation a bat handler should be engaged onsite to deal with any bats dislodged during any works. It is illegal to handle a bat without an appropriate licence.

These are just two examples that can be found in the Protected Species section.

Next month:

The identification of Trees and Shrubs on the Golf Course.



CPD Quiz

Earn 1 CPD credit for correctly answering these questions



www.surveymonkey.com/s/Protected_Species_CPD_Quiz

Which habitat can the smooth snake be found most commonly in?

How long do they take to reach sexual maturity?

Which act protects the Smooth Snake?

Which one of the following is a cause of a decline in Smooth Snakes?

What can be done to improve habitats?

What family of animals do bats belong to?

During hibernation what type of environment do they prefer?

What type of food do Daubenton's bats prefer?

Which of the following has an impact on the bat's habitat?

What should you do before working on properties/trees on the course??

TO THE MANOR BORN

Congratulations to Rhys Norville, greenkeeper at Celtic Manor, who is the latest student to be awarded a BIGGA Higher Education Scholarship supported by Jacobsen worth £1,000.

Rhys will attend Elmwood College to study his Higher National Certificate in Sportsturf.