

CONNECTIVITY IN GOLF COURSES

In the UK, golf courses have an overall land coverage of somewhere in the region of 410,000 hectares. By comparison, our nature reserves cover in excess of 275,000 and gardens over half a million hectares. Golf courses, therefore, can play a vital part in developing the CONNECTIVITY required to open up our world of ever-increasing isolated 'islands' of nature. It is a fact that many species of plant, animals and insects are lost to our world every year. The break-up of habitats through, among other things, modern farming methods and development into green field sites, plays a significant role in this loss.

The smaller the area the smaller the habitat range, so connecting to the gardens, fields, hedgerows, woods etc. in close proximity to a golf course will greatly enhance the chances of increasing the biodiversity of the life forms that are either living there, are regular visitors, or are just passing through. The larger the expanded area the greater the opportunity for a variety of completed food chains, and therefore a better chance of attracting an increasing number of animals of all shapes and sizes. Within any individual golf course, the principles of CONNECTIVITY are just as important to the inhabitants as they are across the ecology of the wider world.



The existence of wild flower patches, unkempt areas (off the golfing line) with bramble and brush, all aim to bolster disparate populations by bringing them together through hedgerows, ditches, extended ecology rough, trees and bushes. The linking of such fragmented areas in this way will provide a much larger reach without the area having to become a 'nature reserve.'

Trying to form small habitats in a number of different areas could prove to be a thankless task unless CONNECTIVITY creates the life cycles and food webs that are required for a healthy, varied and diverse environment.

With most golf courses the immediate wider landscape will help a greater variety of life forms to survive within its boundaries with its adjoining woodland margins, open spaces, and in some cases, even dunes.

The key to knowing what to do for the best in your own particular neck of the woods is to identify that which already exists in respect of habitat, flora and fauna and to build on that. It is obviously 'horses for courses' and what you get depends on what you've got and where you are. However, any increase to wildlife populations, whether it be birds or bees, or flowers or fungi, will be worth it when spotting any ever-wider variety of biodiversity becomes part of the golfing experience.

It is possible that most ecology groups within a golf club will encounter some resistance to any changes. Small steps are advisable, if not a necessity. Financial or manpower constraints could be a factor in speed of progress but little additions and improvements will add up in the end.

Nature takes some time to establish itself and over that time and into the future it could, or even should, be possible to partake in our favourite sport in the most convivial of environments played in harmony with wildlife and without harm to the earth.

Enjoy the journey!

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