



Ecology and Sustainability Strategy at Childwall Golf Club

John Fox





Ecology and Sustainability Strategy at Childwall Golf Club

1. The Origins of Childwall Golf Club (CGC)
2. What CGC looks like now
3. Ecology and Sustainability Strategy at CGC
4. The Value of CGC to wildlife
5. Species at CGC

1. The Origins of Childwall Golf Club (CGC)

- ▶ The course was built *in 1938* on *farmland*.
- ▶ There were *no trees* other than an *orchard*, of which only an odd *apple and plum tree* remain.
- ▶ There is also the remnant of a *hawthorn boundary hedge*.
- ▶ *All the current trees were planted shortly after the course was opened and some are now over 80 years old.*
- ▶ The course is described as *parkland*.



2. What CGC looks like now

Aerial Plan of CGC



CGC is **6,600 yards**
(6,000 metres) long
covering over **100 acres**
(40.5 Hectares)



3. Ecology and Sustainability Strategy at CGC

- ▶ Childwall Golf Club is committed to a *sustainability policy*.
- ▶ We have been awarded ‘*OnCourse*’ *accreditation for sustainability*; an award linked to the GEO Foundation for sustainable golf.
- ▶ The club’s website has more information: <https://childwallgolfclub.co.uk/ecology>



2030 Climate Target Plan



- ▶ EU climate action and the European Green Deal. Climate Targets were agreed by EU leaders in December 2020
- ▶ The European Commission's proposal is to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 (68% by 2035?), and
- ▶ to set Europe on a responsible path to becoming climate neutral by 2050

CGC Ecology and Sustainability Mission

- ▶ Childwall Golf Club recognises the importance of ***good environmental practices***.
- ▶ The Club ***already had many initiatives*** in place which promote sustainability and minimise any impact on the environment (reduced use of pesticides and the use of alternative non-toxic pesticides; double glazing throughout the clubhouse, for example)
- ▶ The R&A defines golf course sustainability as: ***“Optimising the playing quality of the golf course in harmony with the conservation of its natural environment under economically sound and socially responsible management.”***

4. The Value of CGC to wildlife

- ▶ The course is *rich in species* that would be associated with *a woodland*.
- ▶ One of the *first projects was to install bird boxes* around the course in 2019. *Members were invited to make, donate and/or sponsor a bird box.*
- ▶ The *RSPB offered free advice* and helped to install *37 bird boxes* at various locations around the course (mainly in copses near the 6th, 7th and 16th tees).
- ▶ *The Ecology and Sustainability Committee was established in May 2020*

Nest Boxes

- ▶ We *now* have *over 80 nest boxes* installed including two Kestrel nest boxes
- ▶ Kestrel boxes were erected behind the 10th green and in trees along the 13th fairway




Kestrel box at the 10th Green



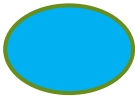
Kestrel box at the 13th

Aerial view of Childwall Golf Course


 = *Nest box (a total of 82 installed)*

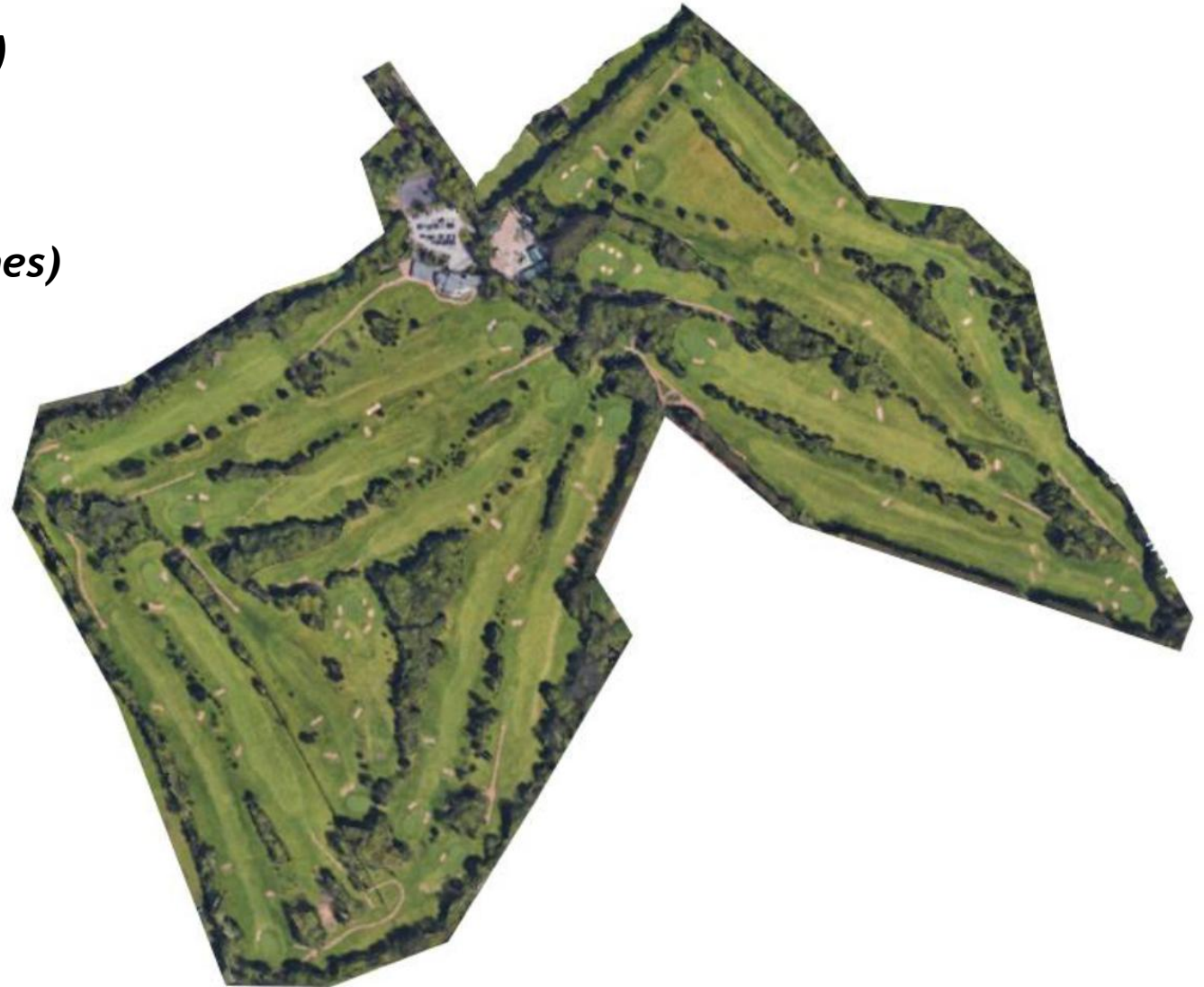
 = *Log pile*

 = *Brash (heap of twigs & branches)*

 = *Pond*

 = *Wildflower zone*

 = *Bat Box*



3rd hole

Mixed deciduous trees

Starling boxes



6

7

8

9

78

79

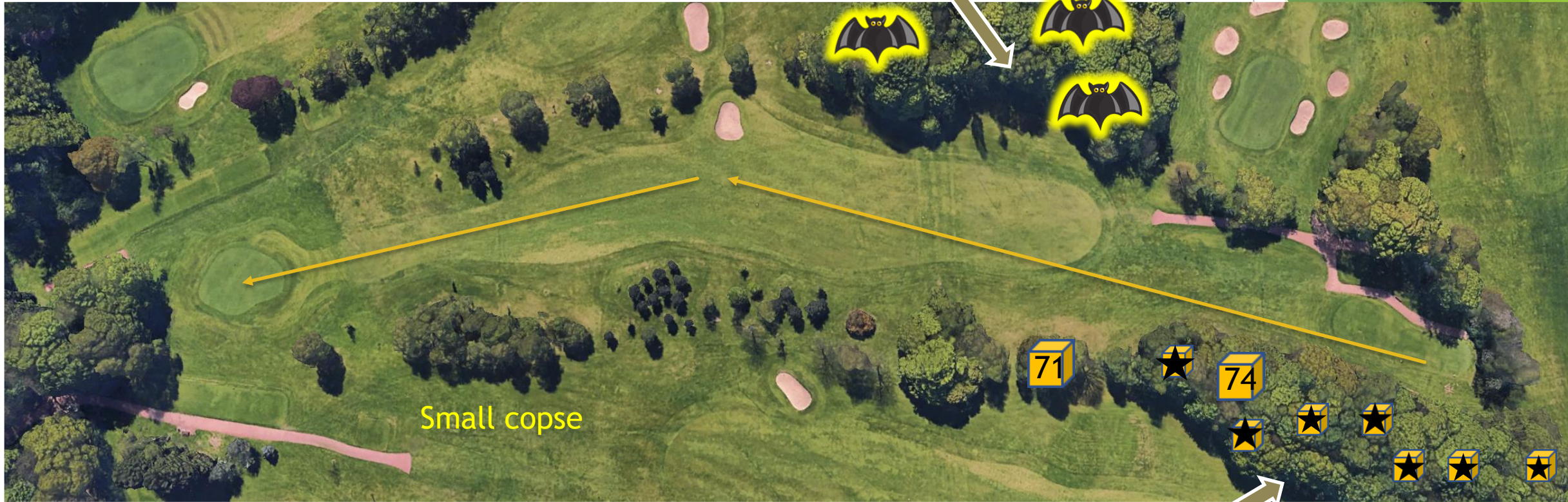
80

Drainage ditch (flowing water)

Mixed deciduous copse

7th hole

Mixed deciduous copse



Small copse

71

74



= missing nest box

Mixed deciduous copse

9th hole

Pond (secluded)

Mixed deciduous copse

Starling box

Rows of Poplar trees



Mixed deciduous copse

Our Bird Boxes

Over 80% handmade by members except the Kestrel boxes which were purchased



Nest box damage



Wind, weathering and decay



Great Spotted Woodpecker



Grey Squirrel

5. Species at CGC

- ▶ 83 different species of shrubs and trees;
- ▶ 48 different species of flowering plants, mosses, liverworts and ferns;
- ▶ 295 different species of fungi;
- ▶ 66 species of birds;
- ▶ 12 species of mammals;
- ▶ 81 invertebrates (including Butterflies, Moths, other insects, arachnids, crustaceans, myriapods etc);
- ▶ 2 species of amphibians

Bird Feeding Station

- This area contains about **10 bird feeders**.
- It is situated near to the Clubhouse so that **members can view a whole variety of birds feeding**.
- This is especially important in the **winter months** when **food can be scarce**.
- **A Sparrowhawk** is often seen perched nearby ready to swoop for a **small-bird meal!**





One of our many Bluetits

Ecology Strategy at Childwall Golf Club GEO Foundation



Siskins (left) and Redpolls (below) are regular winter visitors to the feeding station



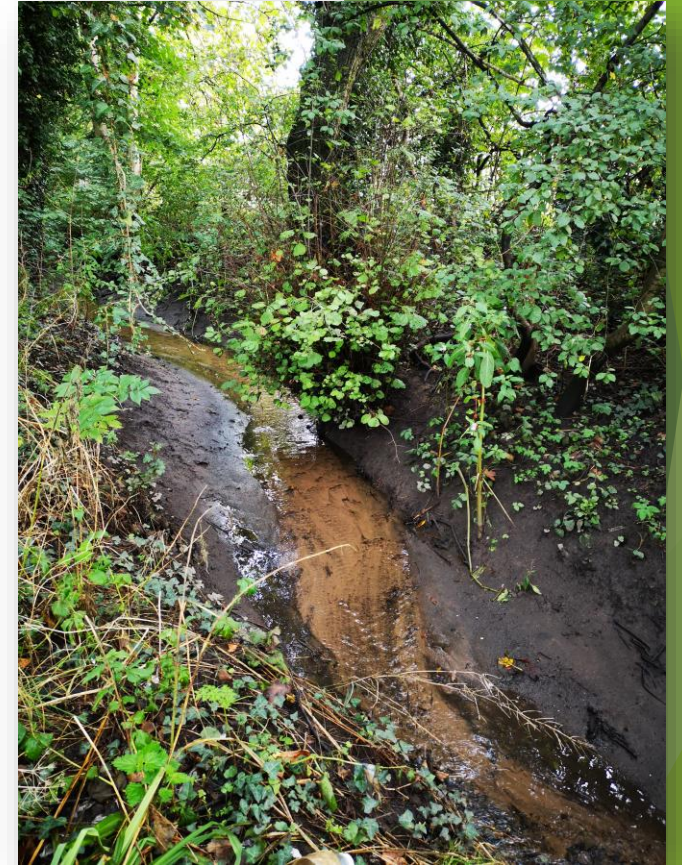
Bee Hives and Honey at Childwall Golf Club

- The *Liverpool Bee Keepers' Association* has a number of hives at CGC
- We are able to sell **50+ jars of Childwall Golf Club honey** every year
- They sell out very quickly!



River Monitoring

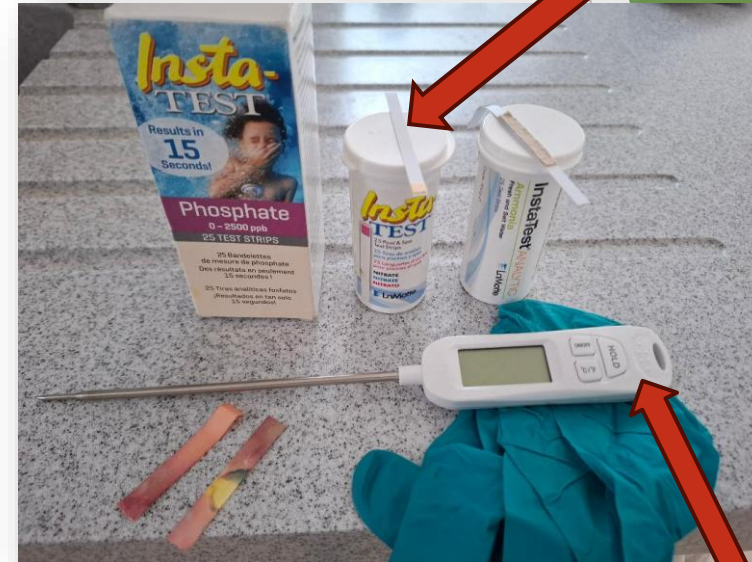
- **River Guardian Project** - Netherley Brook partly runs within the boundary of CGC.
- It has been **monitored** at two sites on the golf course on behalf of the '**Mersey Rivers Trust**'.
- **Site 1** was chosen as it is immediately **AFTER** the outflow pipe from **South Liverpool Sewage Works**.
- **Site 2** is where a **drainage channel** from CGC leads into Netherley Brook (see photo).



River Guardian - monitoring the water quality of Netherley Brook

- ▶ Both sites were monitored for 12 months for levels of *Phosphate*, *Nitrate* and *Ammonia*.
- ▶ Also, *water/air temperatures* and *pH levels* were recorded.
- ▶ *Acceptable or low levels* of Phosphate, Nitrate and Ammonia were found at both sites. Levels of pH remained at **7.0 (neutral)** in all tests.
- ▶ This is a good sign indicating that **NO** pollution or water contamination had occurred from *South Liverpool sewage works* or from chemical treatments of *CGC course* by our *greenkeepers*.

Nitrate, Phosphate & Ammonia test kits



Thermometer to measure water and air temperature



Homemade water sample collecting cup

Creating a Wetland area



Phragmites planted to create a 'wetland' area



Phragmites australis
(Common Reed)



Josh Styles

- ▶ **Joshua Styles – a local Ecologist and Environmental Consultant**
- ▶ Josh helped with advice in creating ***Wildflower Zones, and***
- ▶ ***Set-a-side areas*** on the edge of fairways where the grass has been allowed ***to grow ‘wild’***.
- ▶ The picture shows Josh sowing wildflower seeds in these areas



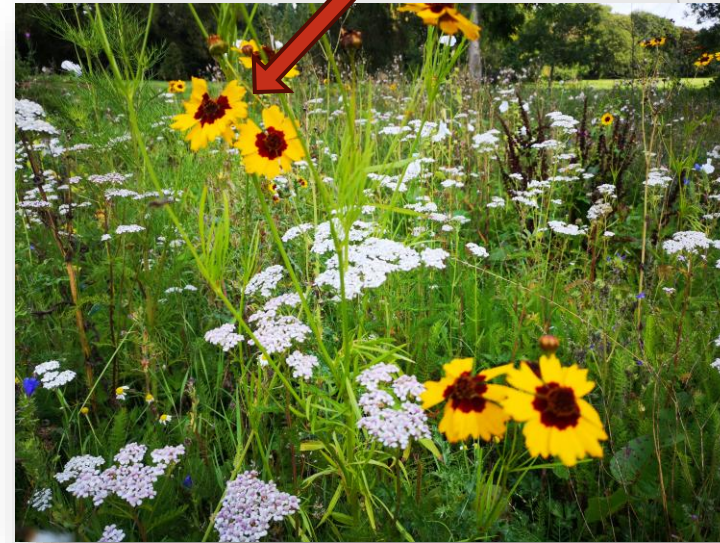
Wildflower Zones

We have 5 'Wildflower Zones'
with 2 more to be added



Wildflower Zone by the 3rd tee

American 'Golden Maine' or
'Gold Rush' daisies



Wildflower Zone by the 12th fairway



Mexican Aster along
with Cornflowers

Bat Boxes

- Three ***Bat Boxes*** were erected last year on trees in a copse where a channel allowed bats to move in and out safely
- ***Pipistrelle bats*** have been spotted on the course



Log Piles and Brash

- ▶ A lot of *tree cutting and pruning* takes place on a parkland golf course.
- ▶ *Log piles and Brash* are left around the course to create *wildlife habitats*.
- ▶ This in turn encourages *microbial decay and invertebrate numbers to increase* providing food for birds.

Abbey Hides from the 'Mersey Rivers Trust' helping out



Brash is basically a pile of sticks and branches

Wildlife Pictures



Fly Agaric (*Amanita muscaria*)

The ***Fly Agaric*** was traditionally used as an ***insecticide***. The cap was broken up and sprinkled into saucers of milk. It's known to contain **ibotenic acid**, which both attracts and kills flies – which gave it its name.



Comma
Butterfly



Goldcrest



Blackcap (male)



Great Spotted Woodpecker at its nest site (a natural hole in a tree) feeding young



Chiffchaff



Buzzard



Cowslip (*Primula veris*)



Song Thrush



Common Aeshna - a
Hawker Dragonfly

Ecology Strategy at Childwall Golf Club GEO Foundation



Great Spotted
Woodpeckers



Redwing
(left) &
Fieldfare
(right)



Bluetits staying warm in Winter



Our local,
breeding
Buzzard



Fly Agaric (top left);
Fieldfare (lower left);
Sparrowhawk (top right);
Redwing (lower right)



CGC Ecology Brochure

Lancashire Golf provided a grant to sponsor the publication of a *Childwall Golf Club Ecology brochure*.

It provides information about the *wildlife* to be seen at the golf course during the *four seasons*.

All photos were taken at CGC by Steve Young (a member who is a professional wildlife photographer)



Bird and Butterfly Survey



**Orange Tip Butterfly (above);
Peacock Butterfly (top right);
Speckled Wood Butterfly (lower
right)**

Birdie of the Month

► <https://childwallgolfclub.co.uk/ecology>



Birdies of the Month 5

The **Swallow** (*Hirundo rustica*) or the **Barn Swallow**, as it is now called, are small birds with dark, glossy-blue backs, **red throats**, pale underparts and **long tail streamers**.

They are extremely agile in flight and spend most of their time on the wing.

During late Spring and Summer you will see them all over Childwall Golf course but often in large numbers around the 10th green and 11th tee. This is due to the close proximity of South Liverpool Sewage Works which provides an abundance of flying insects which the swallows scoop up on the wing.

The **House martin** (*Delichon urbicum*) is similar in size to the swallow but with darker, glossy blue-black backs and pure white under parts. It has a distinctive **white rump** with a **forked tail**.

It also spends much of its time on the wing collecting insect prey.

Both **Swallows** and **House martins** build a mud nest which is usually sited below the eaves of buildings.

In their natural surroundings Swallows and House martins will build a nest in caves and cliff/rock faces (Sand martins build nests in holes on a muddy bank).

They are both summer migrants and spend their Winter in Africa.



Swallows are abundant around Childwall Golf course in the late Spring and Summer especially around the 10th green and the 11th



Swallows in flight catching flying insects on the wing



House martins: perched & in flight



SCAN ME SCAN ME



Birdie of the Month 12- the Sparrowhawk

Sparrowhawks (*Accipiter nisus*) are fierce, small/medium birds of prey.

They're adapted for hunting birds in confined spaces like dense woodland. They can regularly be seen around Childwall Golf Club on the open fairways and in the wooded copses. Gardens are also an ideal hunting ground for them.

Adult male Sparrowhawks have a bluish-grey back and wings and orangey-brown stripes on their chest and belly.

Females and young birds have a brown back and wings, and brown stripes underneath.

Sparrowhawks have bright yellow or orangey eyes, yellow legs and talons.

Females are larger than males which is the case with all birds of prey.

Keep an eye out for Sparrowhawks hunting around the course where they will ambush small birds and Woodpeckers.

They can be seen over towns, with their flapping flight interspersed with glides and classic raptor silhouette.

For more information scan the QR Codes below.



Male Sparrowhawk with bluish-grey back and wings; orangey-brown stripes on their chest; bright yellow eyes and legs



Female Sparrowhawk with a brown back and wings; brown stripes on their chest; bright yellow eyes and legs



Sparrowhawk hunting in woods

Mammal of the Month

► <https://childwallgolfclub.co.uk/ecology>



Mammal of the Month

The Red Fox

The **Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)** is our only wild member of the dog family.

They are not fussy eaters and will happily eat small mammals, birds, frogs, worms as well as berries and fruit!

Foxes that live in towns and cities may even scavenge in bins to look for scraps.

Foxes breed locally to Childwall Golf Club as adults and cubs have been spotted, quite regularly, around the 12th and 13th holes. You will often see 'fox paw prints' in the bunkers by the 12th green.

A male fox, called a dog, makes a barking noise whereas the females, called vixens make a spine-chilling scream sound.

The Red fox is the largest of the true foxes and one of the most widely distributed, however, they are absent from the Channel Islands, the Isles of Scilly, Scottish islands and the Isle of Man.

Red foxes live in a burrow system called an 'earth'. The burrows are divided into a den and temporary burrows. They scent-mark their territorial borders with urine, creating a very strong, recognisable odour. They also have scent glands on their feet to mark well-used trails so they can follow them easily at night.

Foxes produce dog-like droppings that are usually pointy at one end and full of fur, feathers, tiny bones, seeds and berries.



A medium-sized dog, the red fox is orange-red above, white below, with black tips to the ears, dark brown feet and a white tip to the bushy, orange tail (known as the 'brush')



Foxes have been spotted around the 12th and 13th holes at CGC. They often leave their paw prints in the bunkers

(Above left photo courtesy of Frank Sanderson)



Look out for Fox poo near the 12th and 13th holes. It has a distinctive 'musky' smell (known as 'scat')



Mammal of the Month

Common Pipistrelle Bat

The **Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)** is so small, it can fit into a matchbox! Despite its size, it can easily eat 3,000 insects a night. Look out for common pipistrelles darting about on the golf course as they hunt for insects just after sunset.

We have installed bat boxes on trees at Childwall Golf Club. The bats should use the boxes to roost and breed in during the Spring/Summer, and to hibernate in during the Winter.

The common pipistrelle is our **smallest and most common bat**. All UK bats are **nocturnal** – preferring to come out only at night. They feed on midges, moths and other flying insects that they find in the dark by using **echolocation** (the location of objects by reflected sound).

They roost in tree holes, bat boxes and even the roof spaces of houses, often in small colonies. During the summer, females form maternity colonies and have just a single pup each.

They hibernate over winter, usually between November and April, but may come out to feed on warm days.



The common Pipistrelle is our smallest bat



A Pipistrelle in flight. They navigate and catch insect prey by echolocation



Pipistrelle bats roost in tree holes, bat boxes and roof spaces



Newsletter

- ▶ An *Ecology and Sustainability Newsletter* is produced every *quarter* (February; May; August; November)
- ▶ This provides up-to-date *information to members*



Childwall Golf Club Ecology & Sustainability Newsletter August 2024

"From sustainability and conservation of wildlife, to health and well-being for all ages, to jobs and economic value through local supply chains. *golf is good for nature and communities*" (Golf Environmental Organisation (GEO) Foundation)

Wildlife News

- The Summer season has brought many birds to CGC including Kestrels breeding in a raptor nest box by the 13th fairway. Three young Kestrels have fledged.
- Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, Blackcaps, Blue tits, Great tits, Coal tits, Woodpeckers, Nuthatches (and many other birds) have been spotted breeding in nest boxes or shrubs and trees around the course.
- A pair of Blue tits have bred again in the cigarette box on the upstairs lounge balcony!
- The warm weather has brought out a number of butterflies including Orange Tip, Peacock and Speckled Wood.



Great Spotted Woodpecker (juv) on our feeders



Buzzard soaring over the golf course



Woodpecker nest hole on the 7th

Pictures courtesy of Steve Young



Coal tit at the feeding station by the 18th green



Wildflower Meadows and Seeds



Our wildflower Zones (all five of them) are in full bloom but have been affected by the adverse weather conditions during the Spring. The meadows have been left, since last year, to re-seed. However, if you would like to provide or donate any wildflower seeds for next year's wildflower meadows, please give seed packets to Carl in the Pro Shop by the end of the year.



Native Trees



Our dead and dying trees need replacing. If you would like to donate any UK native trees (like Oak, Sweet Chestnut, Hazel etc) please bring, as seedlings in pots, to Mark Kofoed (Head Greenkeeper) or Carl in the Pro Shop. Please check with Mark Kofoed which other species of trees would be suitable to donate.



Sustainability News

- As mentioned previously, Carl is promoting sustainable golf accessories including water bottles, tees and 'biodegradable' leather golf gloves in recyclable packaging.
- A review is ongoing regarding the installation of solar panels.
- Thank you to all members who continue to use our recyclable bins for plastic and paper waste.
- Thank you to the "100 Club" for providing bird food for our feeders by the 18th

Eco Team Photo Competition



Eco Team Photo Competition - 'Spring/Summer' season 2024

Picture courtesy of John Fox - "Blue-Chested Hummingbird"

The deadline for the 'Spring/Summer' Eco Team Photo Competition is 31st August 2024 (in time for the November Newsletter). Photos can be taken anywhere and are not restricted to the grounds of CGC. Send your entries to Helen Gale (h.gale@2271@hotmail.co.uk).

Prizes courtesy of the Pro Shop



One of the competition entries by Anthony Higham

Survey Monkey

- ▶ In a recent *survey* (a ‘Survey Monkey’ questionnaire) of members at CGC, we asked them a variety of questions regarding our ecology and sustainability strategy.
- ▶ One question was: “*Do you think that enhancing wildlife areas at Childwall Golf Club is an important aspect of course management?*”
 - ▶ Over 88% responded with a “*strongly agree*”



Wildlife Log Book

- ▶ A *log book* was established for members to record any unusual wildlife sightings.
- ▶ One, in particular was a *Bluetit* using a *cigarette ashtray box* to make its nest
- ▶ Others included the sightings of a *Woodcock* (flushed out from a copse) and a *Barn Owl* hunting very early one morning



A Bluetit made its home in a cigarette ashtray box

NRN - Nature Recovery Network

- ▶ CGC has links with the NRN
- ▶ The NRN is linked to Natural England
- ▶ Natural England is part of DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

The logo for Natural England, featuring the words "NATURAL ENGLAND" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font on a green rectangular background. The background of the slide is decorated with abstract green geometric shapes and lines.

NATURAL
ENGLAND

What does the NRN do?



- ▶ The NRN is a national network of **wildlife-rich places**.
- ▶ Its aim is to **expand, improve and connect** these places across **towns, cities and countryside**
- ▶ Effectively producing “**corridors of wildlife**”
- ▶ It is part of the government's major commitment to a **25 year plan** in the forthcoming **Nature Strategy**.

Who is the NRN in Partnership with?

- ▶ The NRN is committed to creating partnerships with various organisations including *land owners, businesses, local communities* and *conservation groups*.

- ▶ *This includes Golf Clubs!*



- ▶ Here is a link for more information: [Nature Recovery Network - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/nature-recovery-network)

Sustainability at CGC

1. **Renewable Energy** - CGC continues to pursue the feasibility of *solar panels* and *electric vehicle charging points* in the car park.
2. **Heating and Insulation** - a review is ongoing regarding a *new boiler* which would be more *efficient and reduce heating costs*. Also, the Clubhouse is fully *Double-glazed*.
3. **Recycling** - *Recycle bins* are provided between the 1st & 18th holes for members to use.
4. **Reducing Plastics** - our Professional Shop sells *bamboo tees* as an alternative to plastic and *metal water cannisters* (with the CGC logo on the side) which can be refilled and re-used.



Working with Nature

Nature needs protecting to preserve these benefits by understanding how all the various living communities link together:

- ▶ The ***communities below ground***: the ***soil microbial*** population; the ***Detrivores*** like earthworms, woodlice etc
- ▶ The ***communities above ground*** by protecting and managing areas such as....
 - ▶ Mown turf
 - ▶ Fairways
 - ▶ Greens
 - ▶ Tees
 - ▶ Light rough



Junior Golfer's Ecology "Eye-Spy" Quiz

Childwall Golf Club Ecology "Eye-Spy" Quiz



1. Can you spot this bird soaring around the golf course? Can you name it? _____



2. Can you see any nest boxes around the golf course? What number is it? _____



3. Can you spot these yellow "Golden Maine" daisies around the golf course? Whereabouts did you see them? _____



4. Can you spot these lovely pink "Mexican Aster" flowers around the golf course? Whereabouts did you see them? _____



5. Can you spot these lovely blue "Cornflowers" around the golf course? Whereabouts did you see them? _____



6. Can you see any white butterflies around the golf course? They could be either "Large whites", "Small whites" or "Cabbage whites".
Where did you see it? _____



7. Can you spot any red "Poppies" around the golf course? Whereabouts did you see them? _____



10. Can you spot any "bumblebees" around the golf course? Whereabouts did you see them? _____



8. How many of this bird did you spot around the golf course? Can you name it? _____



11. Can you spot any "peacock butterflies" around the golf course? Whereabouts did you see them? _____



9. Can you spot any "fungi" around the golf course? Whereabouts did you see them? _____



12. Can you spot a "Great spotted woodpecker" around the golf course? Where might you see it? _____

Childwall Golf Club Ecology "Eye-Spy" Quiz

Childwall Golf Club Website

- ▶ For more information please take a look at our website:
- ▶ <https://childwallgolfclub.co.uk/ecology>