



# Niddry Castle GC: Pond Management and Biological Recording

**INTRODUCTION:** Niddry Castle Golf Club in Winchburgh, West Lothian is an 18 hole, Par 70, 5914 yards parkland course with tremendous panoramic views towards the Pentland Hills while playing around historic Niddry Castle

## THE ISSUE

In 2012 the pond on Niddry Castle golf course had become very overgrown with vegetation, such as reedmace and various grasses. This increased detritus and silt build up meant the pond was shrinking in volume, a natural process of habitat succession. Ponds must be managed in order to maintain a mosaic of habitats, including open water.

## THE SOLUTION

Advice was sought from the Scottish Golf Environmental Group (SGEG) regarding the procedure the club should adopt to clear some of the vegetation. SGEG arranged for Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) conservation volunteers to assist with the practical pond management along with club volunteers from members and staff.

Biological records held by the Wildlife Information Centre (WIC) were requested and no newt records were on file. During the vegetation removal palmate newts were seen so work was halted until a newt license holder was on site. The club was legally obliged to apply for a Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) license to have the site surveyed for newt species: [www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/species-licensing](http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/species-licensing)

In Britain, it is an offence to kill, injure, disturb or capture newts or to damage, destroy or obstruct places (including ponds) where newts rest or breed. There are significant penalties for breaches of the law. Lynn Jopling from SGEG carried out six extensive newt surveys (using net, bottle trap and torch survey techniques) in May and June 2012 to assess whether a further licence was required to carry out vegetation removal.

## AT A GLANCE...

>> As part of pond clearance works at Niddry Castle Golf Club, palmate newts were found.

>>As palmate newts are protected, by law the club had to be formally surveyed and the results reported to the Wildlife Information Centre.

>>The club were asked to restrict pond weed removal to a third per year to avoid damage to the newts.

>>With volunteers from the club and the Scottish Wildlife Trust, the ponds were eventually cleared improving ecological value and aesthetics of the pond with no impact on the newts.



At the same time a survey of other pond and plant life was conducted and the results reported to the Wildlife Information Centre: [www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/recording.php](http://www.wildlifeinformation.co.uk/recording.php).

The pond was found to have a small population of palmate newts. It was advised that up to a third of the vegetation could be removed in one year and the most appropriate time to remove it was between late October and February when the risk to wildlife is minimal.

Any vegetation removed was stock piled at the edge of the pond it was removed from for 48 hours so any invertebrates or newts could return to the pond unharmed.

## OUTCOMES

The ponds were successfully cleared and all volunteers and staff involved were lucky enough to see several palmate newts in their natural habitat, a course wildlife education opportunity that all enjoyed.

The club continued clearing a further third of the vegetation from the pond in the late autumn over the next couple of years. The club also planned to build hibernacula, increase pond buffer zones and re-survey to monitor these conservation improvement measures. These results will then be reported to the WIC.

## FIND OUT MORE

If your club would like to promote its business success story or require support in this area, please contact your Club Development Officer or Environment Manager Carolyn Hedley [c.hedley@scottishgolf.org](mailto:c.hedley@scottishgolf.org)



*One of three satellite ponds in Niddry Castle golf course, with only 10% open water*



*Volunteers removing one-third of pond vegetation*



*Vegetation removed and left at the pond margin for 48hours*

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