Case Study: Environment

Orchid Conservation: Callander Golf Club

INTRODUCTION: Callander Golf Club, situated within the beautiful Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, is blessed with stunning scenery; the course consists of stylish wooded parkland with panoramic views to the foothills of the Scottish highlands. The charming and challenging 15th is one of the most famous par 3s in Scotland.

THE ISSUE

Grasslands containing Butterfly Orchids became overgrown with gorse, bracken and rank, tussocky grasses. Butterfly Orchids were recorded by Plantlife surveyor, John Snodin and Dr Roy Sexton of Scottish Wildlife Trust (SWT) in an area of deep rough bounded by the 13th, 14th and 16th fairways. Thick gorse and a large area of bracken were encroaching and creating shade, ultimately reducing light penetration required for orchid germination.

THE SOLUTION

John and Roy met with Greens Convenor, Hector Macmillan and Head Greenkeeper, John Gray to discuss management options to assist orchid colonization. It was agreed that a 3 metre band of bracken could be controlled using withies as it emerged and some gorse and rank grassland could be cut back and removed from places where Butterfly Orchids had been previously recorded. The rank grassland and gorse work was undertaken in area B by three volunteers, John, Roy and Lynn Jopling (SGEG) in April 2010 with the verbal agreement of the Greens Convenor and tools being provided by SWT. It was agreed that depending on how well that work proceeded would determine the strategy for future work either in autumn 2010 or spring 2011. Bracken bashing, between the 13th fairway and the footpath (area C), was carried out on three occasions in June and once in early July. An experimental approach was taken, leaving a control area uncut to monitor the effectiveness of the conservation works. Plantlife have continued to monitor the orchid occurrence throughout the course.

AT A GLANCE…

>> Following a survey from Plantlife and Scottish Wildlife Trust, Callander GC decided to conserve and encourage the colonization of orchids found on the golf course.

>>By managing some areas of bracken, and removing some gorse and rough grassland, various species of orchid were able to grow increasing the population.

Greater Butterfly Orchid - *credit P. Precey*

SCOTTISH GOLF

In March 2011, rank grasses and tussocks were cut in area B again and all tussocks either side of the ditch were dug out using mattocks, with all cut vegetation being removed. Bracken bashing in area C was carried out In May and June with great care being taken not to damage any orchids or disturb nesting birds.

Area B: Before rank grassland and gorse removal 2010.

Area B: Ditch where gorse removal took place 2010

OUTCOMES

During the 2010 Plantlife survey, John Snodin noted "In the areas where management took place 4 Greater Butterfly Orchids were recorded and 1 Lesser Butterfly Orchid, where none had been present in 2009. An increase of Greater Butterfly Orchids was also noted in area C where bracken control had been undertaken." This evidence suggests the management techniques employed were effective and so it was agreed this management would be continued in the future.

The Plantlife survey of 2011 notes a 24% increase in Greater Butterfly Orchids, sadly the number of Lesser Butterfly orchids dropped from 5 to 3 but very interestingly Dr Roy Sexton identified one further plant as a Lesser/Greater Butterfly Orchid hybrid, which is very rare.

The results also suggest bracken control is having a greater impact than the grassland management.

Area B: Rank grassland removal 2011

Callander golf course has various other orchids present around the course, these include: Heath Spotted Orchids, Fragrant Orchids, Purple Orchids and Northern Marsh Orchids.

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

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