

COFTON LAKE CONSERVATION LTD



Newsletter No.1 August 2005



For those of you who were unable to attend the meeting at the Village Hall on 19th June a copy of the minutes is enclosed. The reason for the delay in sending out these minutes is that a decision had to be made regarding the fence on the South boundary and due to Committee members commitments and holidays the first available date for a meeting was 28th July. We therefore decided to postpone sending out the minutes in order that the final decision made could be reported at the same time. The minutes of that meeting are also enclosed which are self explanatory. The Committee are now in the process of getting estimates to carry out this work which we hope to commence sometime in October which is when we are told is the best time to plant the shrubs.

We thought a newsletter once a year in order to keep all members informed of progress would be sufficient and suggest this goes out in future in September, after the Summer season in order to incorporate any items of interest or photographs any member might have and to also inform members of the date for the AGM. The AGM will be held in February which will give the Accountant time to prepare the accounts following the annual year end in December. The first AGM will therefore be held on Sunday, 26th February 2006 in Cofton Hackett Village Hall, Barnt Green Road, Cofton Hackett (behind the library) at 4.0pm. Please make a note in your diary. The £10 subscription will be collected at this meeting. At the AGM all Directors and Committee Members will resign and stand for re-election if they so wish. Anyone wanting to join the Committee must put their name forward in writing to the Secretary not later than 15th January 2006. Keith Newbery has resigned as a Director and Committee member and the Committee have decided to carry on this year without a Chairman until the AGM. I am sure all members will join the Committee in thanking Keith for all the work he has done to date.

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White Swan Piscatorial's Report - "The WSP have had a number of working parties at the lake. During the winter months, we took advantage of the low water to remove branches and trees which had fallen into, or were overhanging the water. Trees which were deemed to be unsafe were also removed. Restocking of the lake has taken longer than we had anticipated which is why the lake is still not open for fishing. The installation of the floating islands was a pre-requisite for the introduction of the fish

into the water. As well as providing a nesting place for the water fowl, the islands provide a refuge from fish eating birds. In particular, we are concerned about the return of the cormorants to the water, whose talent for decimating fish stocks is well publicised in the angling press. Under each island, there is a wire cage which extends about 1 metre below the surface, which will provide a safe spawning area and sanctuary to the fish. Once the lake filled with water, it was possible to gauge the depth required for anchoring the islands, and once installed it has been possible to introduce some fish into the water. To-date we have stocked some 200 Common Carp of between 1 - 10lb. We have not been able to introduce more fish, as during the warm weather, some species have a high mortality rate when they are transported. During the autumn, the remainder of the fish will be introduced into the lake. These will be a mix of Roach, Tench, Rudd, Crucian Carp and Perch. When completed, there will be around 10,000 fish in the lake. We need to give all the fish time to settle in and acclimatise to their new surroundings, which is why the lake will NOT be open for fishing until 2006. For those of you who wish to fish the lake, you will need to take out an associate membership of the fishing club. Details of how to do this will be circulated later in the year. You will of course also need a fishing licence obtainable from any fishing tackle shop. The Committee and members of the White Swan Piscatorials are very excited about the lake, and are counting the days until it opens and we can wet a line. We look forward to a long and happy association with you all, and to meeting you on the bank some day".

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The Secretary collected 11 ducklings from the Vale Wildlife Hospital in Tewkesbury and transported them up the M5 on the backseat of her car and introduced them to the lake and the resident ducks! Although we were told they might not all survive we are pleased to report that all are doing well even though one fell down the sluice and had to be rescued! They have now all integrated well and it is nice to see families strolling along the banks feeding them. Hopefully they will realise how well off they are and will not fly away! We are awaiting news regarding the swans but do hope they will be obtained before the end of the Summer.

We are sorry some of you have had difficulty obtaining access through the 'small' gate. It seems the number on this lock can be changed in error quite easily and phone calls have been received from a number of members finding it impossible to gain entry. We are working on this but of course once the bridge is built across the sluice this 'small' gate can be closed off. Although it is not yet definite it does appear that we will have to have planning permission. This would stop illegal entry as we have had a few incidents where youths have been seen to be breaking in and swimming. Talks are still on going with Bromsgrove Council. It is imperative that we secure the fences and hedgerow to stop illegal access and as you will see from the minutes lengthy discussions have taken place on this matter. We are in the process of gaining quotations for blocking up the gaps in the hedgerow and also for erecting more 'No Entry' signs.

Quotations are being received for benches which need to be sturdy and maintenance free. We are also hoping to erect a couple of picnic tables in the car park area ready for next season. Anyone wishing to donate a bench or any funds towards the upkeep, please contact a Committee member.

Following the draining of the lake the water has now started to settle down and many species of birds and other wild life have now returned. Nine baby coots were recently born and three mallards. Several sitings of kingfishers have been reported together with tufted ducks and water rail. Whilst walking around the lake perhaps you could let us know if you see any unusual birds or ducks and any photographs would be appreciated for our next newsletter.

We have had a visit from a representative from the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Cofton Reservoir is on their list of Special Wildlife Sites and as such needs to be checked every couple of years to ensure that it still meets all the requirements needed. Special Wildlife Sites are non statutory sites which are identified as being of at least county importance for wildlife. The best sites for wildlife outside the nature reserves and statutorily protected sites such as sites of special scientific interest. Mr. Graham reported that "the site is still of high conservation value. It is one of the best pieces of marsh and open water in the county, largely due to the management it has received over the years and as such I would like to keep it on the Special Wildlife Site list" Mr. Graham's visit was purely to establish that the site had not been altered since the last inspection and not to advise on any problems we may have. He has however written stating that if we require a visit from the Special Wildlife Site Partnership to help with the further enhancement of the site he can put us in

touch with the appropriate person. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

It has been pointed out to us that our banks have become home to Himalayan Balsam which is growing rapidly around the lake. Himalayan Balsam is native to the Western Himalaya and was introduced into Britain in 1839 and has spread throughout the British Isles, particularly in recent years. It is the tallest annual plant found in the British Isles, growing to more than 2-3 metres high and each plant can produce 800 seeds which are released explosively from the seed pods and can travel distances of up to 7m. These seeds, which are also transported by water, can remain viable for up to 2 years. It is impossible to get rid of but if not kept under control it will completely take over and kill all other plants in the area. In order to help keep this plant at bay, perhaps whilst you are strolling round the lake you could cut it off at the root which will help stop the seed pods from germinating. For those of you who do not know what it looks like it is 2.5 m tall, sappy and brittle stem, leaves have serrated edges and are shiny and dark, purplish pink to pale pink flowers shaped like a policemen's helmet which appear from June to October. We have attached a small laminated photograph to the notice on the car park gate.

We are in the process of constructing a web page, as soon as the web address is known we will be in touch.

The Committee wish to thank everyone for their continued support and patience and would welcome any comments or advice from any member. We trust you continue to enjoy this lake and its surrounding area.

A full list of Committee members and telephone numbers is included in the enclosed minutes or E-mail at diane.carr99@virgin.net