



## Advice on Ponds (following visits from BBOWT and Froglife's Pond Doctor):

### Pallett's Pond (The Duck Pond) on Cholesbury Road

The willow which is growing in the middle of the pond should ideally be removed. However, the chances of the clay lining being breached are unknown and so a more cautious approach is advised. The branches should be removed but the stump left behind, and each year any regrowth should be removed. In any case, the stump provides valuable habitat for invertebrates and amphibians giving cover in an otherwise open environment. The trees around the margin of the pond provide useful shade for certain pond creatures and inhibit the growth of plants such as duckweed which can cover entire bodies of water. On the other hand, they limit the range of wildlife by dropping their leaves into the water, thereby adding large amounts of nutrients. In addition they suck up a large volume of water which assists the natural drying out which tends to take place towards the end of the summer. A balance should therefore be struck between complete removal of the trees and allowing them to grow to maturity.

The presence of ducks in/on the pond is probably the main reason for the complete lack of submerged plant life and the reason that the pond never seems to clear. They stir up the mud, thereby stopping plants from rooting and also by stopping light from reaching any submerged plants. Their faeces can be highly polluting and they also feed on invertebrates and detritus that they find in the mud so they are very effective at discouraging plants from growing there. Fish and other higher life forms have a similar effect, as well as tending to eat the amphibian and invertebrate life out of existence. Any feeding of the ducks should be kept to a minimum and spare food should not be left to rot beside the pond. No creatures should be artificially introduced into the pond, especially those which are high level predators, such as duck, fish and terrapin. To check how important Pallett's pond is in terms of the wildlife it supports, a basic survey should be carried out of what is in the pond already. The survey could just take the form of someone running a fine-meshed net through the mud, weed, and open water, and making a basic attempt to identify the creatures caught. This would give us a reasonable idea as to whether the pond is poor in diversity or rich.

If this were a pond on a nature reserve, vegetation would not be removed at this stage. However, since the fringe of vegetation on the southern side has expanded rapidly in the last couple of years this southern fringe requires a programme of occasional clearance. The reedmace in particular can spread rapidly by sending out tubers to form new plants and also by seeding from its bulrush heads. The plants are, however, all of value for wildlife. It is important therefore that any management programme hinges on the aim of controlling the spread of the vegetation whilst minimising the impact on wildlife rather than blitzing it. Clearance work, therefore, should be limited and avoid times of the year when certain creatures are particularly vulnerable. It is better to do a small amount of vegetation clearance every year or two as needed rather than blitz the pond every ten years. The best time of year to remove vegetation is generally considered to be in the autumn as at this time there are fewer young creatures in the water and disturbed wildlife does not have to face the harsh mid-winter weather.

Overall, the pond appears to be in pretty good health. In trying to decide how to manage Pallett's pond, a balance should be struck between encouraging wildlife and aesthetic value.

### The Dew Pond on Cholesbury Common

This is a more interesting pond from a wildlife point of view partly because it was dredged in the last ten years, and partly because of a lack of large trees in the vicinity. The abundant water purslane is rare in Buckinghamshire and is clearly thriving in this location. Many ponds that are overgrown or are little more than damp depressions can harbour unusual plants and invertebrates and are therefore of particular value. It would be better to keep the bushes and trees around it quite small (by coppicing in a cycle) so that they can provide cover for small mammals, birds, amphibians and other creatures. They should not be allowed to grow to the point where significant amounts of leaves fall into the pond

The combination of Pallett's pond and the dew pond provides a diversity of conditions which will maximise the value to a wider range of wildlife than each single type. Both should be managed in such a way as to play to their strengths rather than with an identical aim.

**We are hoping to organise a walk around the ponds later in the year which everyone is welcome to join.**