

# Valley Conservation Society

Holder of the KCC Award for Volunteering Excellence

[www.valleyconservation.org.uk](http://www.valleyconservation.org.uk)



## Missing Kingfishers!

The emblematic bird of our Society has fallen dramatically in numbers this year with few if any sightings. The rapid decline has surprised members as film recordings of adult Kingfishers



feeding young, were made during 2010 at their nesting sites along the Valley. The strikingly electric blue bird which is known to fly low, rapidly over water, hunts fish from streamside perches often seen in the valley concentrating from a bough moving up and down in the wind. The Kingfisher is vulnerable to harsh winters; it is a short lived bird with less than one quarter of a brood surviving to breed in the following year. A hungry brood can eat over one hundred fish a day. Human presence close to nesting sites is known to deter parents from feeding their young.

Despite high breeding productivity with two or three batches in a good year populations can take years to recover, let's hope that this year sees an early return of our favourite valley bird.

## Summer VCS Barbecue Date !

It is time again to enjoy the wonderful setting of the gardens at

### **The Manor Hayle Place.**

Members are invited to bring friends and family to enjoy the ambience of this unique location with a welcoming drink and locally produced food barbecued to perfection. This year the barbecue is taking place on 23<sup>rd</sup> July. Full details with this newsletter.

## UK green space worth £30bn in health benefits!

A recent report by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) stated that about one third of the UK's natural assets, including green spaces, rivers, wetlands and important wildlife habitats are in danger of being lost to development or degraded by neglect. The national ecosystem assessment found a marked decline in urban green space, with 10,000 playing fields sold between 1979 and 1997 with only 10% of the UK's allotments remaining.

An attempt to put a price on the natural environment values maintaining the UK's green spaces as at least £30bn a year in health and welfare benefits. The report suggests the benefit of living with a view of green space of up to £300 per year per person providing areas for exercise and visual amenity.

Bob Watson, chief scientific advisor to Defra and co-author of the report suggests that this assessment should be used to shape governments policy at national and local level. "Putting a value on the natural eco-services enables them to be incorporated into policy in the same way other factors are. We can't persist in thinking of these things as free. We have to become much better at managing our ecosystems" he said.

The report also concluded that the value of Inland wetlands to be £1.5bn a year in improving water quality. Pollinators such as bees are worth at least £430m a year to agriculture.

## Enjoyable Kingfisher singers evening:

A most successful evening was enjoyed by all those who attended this event. The Kingfisher singers, who gave their services free, collected £180 on the evening for its chosen charity; The Medway Young Carers. More than one hundred fish and chips were purchased and devoured on the night. Special thanks go to Ann King who supplied additional refreshments. Paul Amner for printing flyers advertising the event, and those committee members involved in the organisation and fulfilment of this entertainment. Ideas for future events would be most welcome.



Photo: Maggie Davis

### **Local Landmark Disappears**

If you have been walking through the Loose Valley over the last several years, you will recognise the photo of the dead tree about half way between Great Ivy and Kirkdale. Over the years the weather had taken its toll on the tree so that recently only one branch remained – that was until the Bank Holiday weekend at the end of May.

The base of the tree had been set alight, probably on Friday evening, by person or persons unknown (as they say on The Bill). Saturday morning it was smouldering and there was a fair amount of smoke. It was reported to LAA and a local resident tried to douse the embers but on Sunday it was still smoking and by Monday morning the tree had fallen.

It was a real shame as it had become a bit of a local landmark – “I’ll meet you at the dead tree” – for local dog walkers coming from different directions.

VCS also suffered vandalism over the Easter week end. Bonfires were lit on the land around the ponds using the stakes supporting the new saplings. Rocks were thrown into the sluice and beer cans and bottles were strewn over the area. The irresponsible lighting of bonfires could become a real issue if the hot weather continues into the summer. **M.D.**

## SBS appeal planning decision.

As we go to print we have been informed that the SBS planning decision is being appealed by the company. This application (Reference 10/0167) is for a waste building materials recycling facility, involving the import by skip lorry, treatment (crushing and sorting) and export by heavy goods vehicles. A public meeting has been organised for 11<sup>th</sup> July at the Archbishop Courtenay primary school in Church road Tovil. VCS will be represented at this meeting and members will be informed of outcomes. The reasons to oppose this unwanted development have been explained in detail previously (dust, noise, pollution and traffic) but have been highlighted by the recent serious accident at the junction of Straw Mill hill and Tovil Hill/Farleigh Hill.

## Planning applications in the Valley.

11/0580 LAND AT HAYLE PLACE, POSTLEY ROAD, MAIDSTONE, KENT

Known locally as The Stud farm or Livery stables

Proposal: Application to extend the time limit for implementing permission

MA/02/0180

Full Description: Application to extend the time limit for implementing permission

MA/02/0180 for the erection of dwellings with garages and access and the use of the land as a country park with the provision of access and car parking with layout, scale, appearance, access and landscaping reserved for subsequent approval.

11/0700 BOCKINGFORD COURT, CRIPPLE STREET, MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME15 6DN

Proposal: Erection of single storey rear extension and alterations to fenestration

Full Description: Erection of single storey rear extension and alterations to fenestration.

11/0699 BOCKINGFORD COURT, CRIPPLE STREET, MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME15 6DN

Proposal: An application for listed building consent for the removal of an existing extension.

Full Description: An application for listed building consent for the removal of an existing extension and erection of replacement extension, and internal and external alterations

11/0417 HILLSIDE, HAYLE PLACE, CRIPPLE STREET, MAIDSTONE, KENT, ME15 6DW

Proposal:

Erection of detached garage with store and entrance gates

Full Description: Erection of detached garage with store and entrance gates and alterations to existing vehicular access as shown on drawing no's 1510/P02, 1510/P03 and a site location plan shown on drawing no. 1510/P01 Rev A received on 16/03/11 and Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree protection Plan received on 12/04/11.

Although not in the Valley the planning application 10/1345 for Papermakers Arms site, 509 Loose Road. has caused concern for many members of the Society.

This is another appeal by developers. It is indicative of the pressures being placed on the planning system and the local infrastructure. The application is for eleven residential dwellings with provision for only five parking spaces. Further details of this application can be found on the Maidstone Borough Council website [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk) and a link to raise objection to this application can be found on the North Loose Residents Association website [www.northloose.co.uk](http://www.northloose.co.uk)

# Invasive Species No8: Chinese Mitten Crab

*Eriocheir sinensis*



The Chinese mitten crab was first recorded from the River Thames in 1935 having been discharged from the ballast tanks of ships. It is now well-established in UK rivers including the Medway. They are the only freshwater crab found in Britain. The body of the crab is Olive greenish brown up to 8cm or 3inches wide. Their pincers are covered in fine hair giving the appearance of mittens.

Chinese mitten crabs prefer to moult in freshwater but are unable to lay eggs in fresh water. Adults therefore migrate down rivers in the autumn to gather in estuaries to breed. Once eggs hatch in spring, juveniles and adults migrate back up the river. They can travel large distances and have been recorded up to 1,500km from the sea in their native China. They are also able to cross dry land and have been found in isolated freshwater ponds. Its ability to travel large distances up river systems and cross dry land means that all water bodies in Britain have the potential to be invaded. Chinese mitten crabs burrow into river banks, affecting their stability and make them more liable to erosion so can cause considerable damage. It has been placed on the IUCN 100 of the world's worst alien species list.

Chinese mitten crab is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 with respect to England and Wales, as such it is an offence to release or allow the escape of this species into the wild.

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*Valley Conservation Society's*

# 2011 Summer Barbecue



## **THE MANOR : HAYLE PLACE**

SATURDAY JULY 23rd Tickets £10 (Children under 14 free)

Admission from 4.30pm

Food served from 5.30pm

Carriages at 11pm

Refreshing drink provided on arrival

Members should bring their own liquid refreshments

Members should bring comfortable seating and picnic tables

Parking is only permitted in the designated parking area

Members are able to drop equipment at the gate but must not obstruct residents  
parking areas

**Sorry no dogs allowed**

**Tickets Sales & Information contact: Alan Smith. 01622 751926**