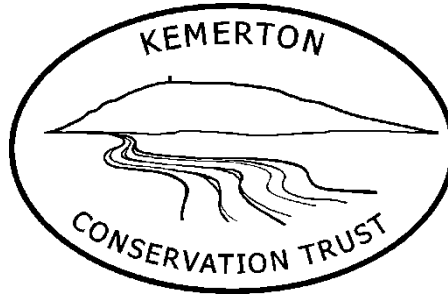


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Restoring an old fruit orchard in Eckington to safeguard the Mistletoe Marble Moth – Final Report 9th May 2016

Project Background

In 2014, larvae of the Mistletoe Marble Moth *Celypha woodiana* were found in old apple trees in a remnant orchard called Breddy Croft in the village of Eckington.

Breddy Croft is estimated to be approx. 100 years old and has a number of old fruit trees – primarily apple but also some pear and plum trees. The orchard, which was acquired by Kemerton Estate in 2009 but is managed for wildlife by Kemerton Conservation Trust, is in need of restoration. The existing trees require expert pruning to increase their longevity and, as many are in the final years and will start to die, new trees need to be planted to ensure the orchard continues to flourish.

Following the important discovery of the Mistletoe Marble Moth (a UK BAP priority species) during an orchard survey in 2014, the Trust wanted to begin restoration of the orchard in 2015. There are only 7 records of the moth in Worcestershire, one of the few counties in which it is found nationally, so the site is very important and needs preserving for the future

In April 2015, the Trust received £500 towards the project from a generous donor who prefers to remain anonymous. The Trust was to provide the balance of funds required and manpower in the form of our warden John Threadingham to assist with the project by carrying out the tree planting and guarding.

Project Aims

The main aim of the project was to restore the orchard through targeted pruning of existing apple trees to prolong their life and provide continued habitat for the Mistletoe Marble Moth and the planting of new apple trees to ensure continuity on the site for many years to come and to provide future habitat for the moth when the existing trees start to die off, which is likely to be soon given their age.

The restoration would also have a positive impact on the many other species which use the orchard through increased habitat and fruit production.

Overview of Works

The project was due to begin in December 2015 but due to weather conditions onsite (the ground was extremely boggy through winter) the work was delayed until March 2016.

In early March 2016 local contractor Jim Aplin carried out a day of pruning on existing trees within the orchard aimed at increasing their life span and fruit production. A photo of Jim in action can be seen in Appendix A – Project Photo Montage.

In early March 2016 farm workers from Kemerton Estate planted 15 Dabinett Cider Apples in the orchard. The new trees were all fitted with sheep-proof guards as the orchard is grazed annually in the autumn by sheep. It was initially planned that the Trust's warden would carry out the planting and guarding but unfortunately he was off sick when the trees arrived so the Estate kindly provided the labour to ensure the project could be completed on budget. A photo of farm worker John Martin planting one of the trees can be seen in Appendix A – Project Photo Montage.

Project Results

All works planned were carried out successfully by end of March 2016.

The pruning of the existing trees should extend their life and improve their fruit production, ensuring continuity of habitat for the rare Mistletoe Marble Moth. The planting of new apple trees should provide future habitat when the existing trees begin to die off and will hopefully increase the biodiversity within the orchard.

Thanks to the generosity of our funder and the hard work of our Governor Matthew Darby, our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury and farm workers from Kemerton Estate, the project was completed on time and on budget.

The Future

The Restoring an old fruit orchard in Eckington to safeguard the Mistletoe Marble Moth Project has now officially finished and all funds have been spent. However, the existing trees will hopefully continue to flourish for many more years and the new trees will begin to establish over the coming years. The Trust will maintain a watching brief on the orchard and repair or replace any guards as required. If funds become available in the future the Trust hopes to plant some more new trees to increase the number onsite.

Acknowledgements

Kemerton Conservation Trust would like to thank our generous project funder, who wishes to remain anonymous, without whom this work could not have been carried out.

We would also like to thank all those who assisted in the delivery of the project, particularly Kemerton Estate who kindly donated labour from their workers at short notice.

Appendix A: Project Photo Montage



1. Kemerton Estate farmhand J Martin planting one of the new cider trees, March 2016



2. Contractor Jim Aplin pruning one of the old apple trees, March 2016



3. Breddy Croft Orchard in flower, May 2016



4. Apple blossom on one of the newly pruned mature trees, May 2016



5. A newly pruned mature tree in blossom, May 2016



6. Blossom on one of the new cider trees, May 2016



7. Pruned branches on one of the mature trees, May 2016