

Kemerton Clippings

Issue 19

January 2017

Appeal for Help!

The Trust is looking for volunteer help in the following:

Our Monthly Reserves Work Parties:

Do you enjoy the Great Outdoors? Are you looking for some exercise to keep you fit in 2017? Do you want to learn more about our reserves and the wildlife on them? If you answered yes to the above, then why not consider joining our friendly team of work party volunteers!

Our reserves work party team meets once a month on a Saturday throughout the year (except December) to assist with a variety of habitat management tasks on our reserves, all in or around Kemerton and Bredon Hill. The work parties run from 10am till 1pm and tasks suit a range of fitness levels. Typical activities include planting trees, repairing tree guards, cutting back overgrown paths, raking up hay, painting hides and litter picking. All tools and safety wear are provided.

If you are interested and would like more details, please contact Support Coordinator Kate Aubury on 07765 334776 or email kate@aubury.co.uk.

The Trust is dependent upon the assistance it receives from its many volunteers to continue its important work in the local area, so please let us know if you can assist in any way.

Winter Waterfowl Watching at the Water's Edge Hide



Brett & attendees bird watching during the winter walk

Our final event of the year was a bird watching walk around Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve led by our Governor, keen birder Brett Westwood, on 7th December. We were delighted to be able to share Brett's knowledge with our members, many of whom will be familiar with his natural history work as a BBC 4 radio presenter, author and naturalist working on BBC's Springwatch.

The primary focus of the walk was the large numbers of waterfowl that arrive at the lake in late autumn/early winter to overwinter here, although we were also on the lookout for other winter migrants such as Snipe, Redwing and Fieldfare. We also hoped to see a display of murmuring Starlings, although because of the mild weather, the large flocks we normally get had not so far materialised.



Brett & attendees on the new Water's Edge Hide boardwalk



Mute Swans & other waterfowl on the lake during the walk

The walk started at our new Water's Edge Hide, where attendees could enjoy views of Pochard, Wigeon and large numbers of Teal, as well as the usual Coots, Greylag Geese and Mute Swans. A Grey Heron on one of the nearby islands proved popular as well. We then continued around the north edge of the lake where we saw Snipe in the scrapes, small flocks of Redwing & Fieldfare, Meadow Pipits flying up from the grass as we walked by and even heard a Water Rail, a very shy reed bed bird that is almost impossible to spot. There were the usual Cormorants and Oystercatchers along the lake edge, a few Lapwing flocking and we were treated to a lovely flying display from the hundreds of Teal which were disturbed by our presence. The walk ended at twilight, with the fine weather resulting in a stunning sunset over the water, and a small number of Starling managed a mini murmuration for our viewing pleasure.

All in all it was a fantastic way to finish the year and everyone who came enjoyed themselves. Thank you to Brett for bringing his expertise.

Bountiful Fruit Harvest ensures Annual Apple Day Success!



Local children filling the Apple Scratter outside the hall

Kemerton Orchard Workers' Annual Apple Day was held at Victoria Hall, Kemerton on Saturday 15th October 2016. The event raised £434 for the group, which manages Trust owned Daffurns Orchard in Kemerton for the community.

The highlight of the event is the apple pressing, where for a small fee you can bring your own apples to be pressed into juice using KOW's lovely press. In 2015 the harvest

was quite poor and as a result there weren't many apples to juice, but thankfully 2016's harvest was plentiful and there were queues down the path for the press! Children in particular love helping to throw the apples into the Scratter to pulp them and then to turn the handle on the press to squeeze out delicious, golden liquid. Freshly squeezed apple juice tastes wonderful.

The Trust was there to support our sister organisation with an information stand highlighting the work we do locally restoring and maintaining traditional orchards. It was great to chat to lots of visitors about the importance of orchards as a wildlife habitat, especially as many attendees have at least a couple of apple trees in their own

garden which we encourage them to look after in a nature friendly way.

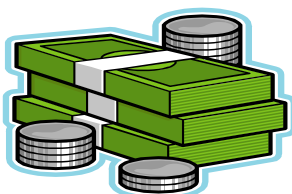
In addition to the apple pressing, stands selling KOW's calendars, greeting cards and tea towels and our own information stand, visitors could also enjoy some tasty treats including apple cakes and scones washed down with a cup of tea. All in all a lovely afternoon of orchard fun.



KCT's information stand manned by volunteers David & Lottie Aubury

Funding Update

We are delighted to confirm that our funding proposal for a Facilitator for the Carrant Catchment Area Restoration Project (CCARP) was successful, with Jenny Phelps starting in the post in last September (see page 7 for more details). Natural England has agreed funding for 5 years for this part-time post and additional funds aimed at supporting restoration work and learning opportunities within the project area. Jenny is looking to recruit more partners to this important and ambitious project so we hope it will continue to grow.



CCARP - along with various offshoot projects - is currently the main focus for the Trust, alongside our ongoing reserves management etc. so no other grant funding work was completed in the second half of 2016.

The Trust has been chosen as one of the recipients of a dividend from local oil buying club SeSaME, which began in Sedgeberrow but now has members in 12 local villages. We will receive a dividend of £0.25ppl from Kemerton

members. The scheme is looking for more members so if you buy oil and want to know more and get great prices, check out their website www.sesame.me.uk. The more members the group has from Kemerton, the more money the Trust receives!

Long-term local supporter Bredon Forest School donated an incredible £1100 to the Trust in the second half of 2016. These are unrestricted funds which are used to help with general costs including volunteer tools and materials for reserve management. We are very grateful for their generous support.

Thank you to all who have supported us this year!

KCT Governors' Annual Board Meeting 2016

At least once a year KCT Governors meet for a Board Meeting to review the past year's work and set goals for the new year. In addition to the governors the meeting is also attended by John Clarke and Kate Aubury, who both report on their activities for the year.

2016 has seen grant funded restoration work carried out on a remnant apple orchard in Eckington, the completion and Grand Opening of our new Water's Edge Hide at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve following a big fund-raising effort in 2015, and the expansion of CCARP after a successful funding application for a Facilitator (see page 6 for more details).

After reviewing the past year, the governors identified their priorities for 2017, which include focussing on CCARP and its associated projects, and recruiting more

volunteers for the work parties as numbers have slumped recently.

One particular concern for our Governors is the impact that Brexit may have on the Trust's income stream, as a significant portion of our unrestricted funds come from agricultural subsidies which are currently paid by the EU. Unfortunately at this stage we do not know what changes the government will make to farming subsidies and whether that will negatively impact us so all we can do is wait for more details.

Following the meeting and lunch, the governors visited Kemerton Lake and the new hide for a spot of bird watching, although as Kate had brought her noisy toddler along there were less birds to be seen than usual! However, the governors were delighted with the hide and enjoyed a lovely walk around the reserve, which looked stunning in the golden



KCT's Chairman, Governors & key volunteers outside the new hide

autumn light. Brett's eagle eyes spotted a pair of male Pintail in eclipse plumage on the lake, Snipe in the Scrapes, Redpoll in the woodland and the holes of an emergent Hornet Moth at the base of a large Poplar tree in Kemerton Park. Not a bad haul for one afternoon!

The 2015/16 Chairman's Report, Annual Accounts, Conservation Officer's Report and Support Coordinator's Report are all available to read on our website now in the 'News & Events' section.

News in Brief

Our new hide is proving popular with members and new visitors alike. Regrettably it has already been targeted for petty vandalism, with damage done to the door, the noticeboard and items such as binoculars and bird ID sheets stolen. However, on a more positive note we have received lots of feedback from delighted users who have been lucky to get extremely close to our resident Kingfisher. This stunning bird has decided that a small post in the water in front of the hide is the perfect perch and has therefore afforded birdwatchers some brilliant sightings and photo op-



A female Marsh Harrier over KLNLR, September 2016

portunities. The Editor has yet to get a snap but has spotted the beautiful bird out on the lake on several occasions.

One of our new Members went one better and spotted a Marsh Harrier there in September

2016. A fantastic photographer, David Keen managed to capture the wonderful shot shown here. The bird was only at the reserve for a day, so a brilliant spot!

Crayfish Monitoring was carried out at the lake in 2016 as part of the ongoing Ark Project in partnership with Buglife. This was the final follow-up check five years after the crayfish were relocated. Staff from the Environment Agency carried out the checks and the traps caught 1 male and 1 female. This is really positive as it shows there are still crayfish in the lake and they could be breeding.

Ash Dieback Disease Detected in Local Woods

It is with regret but also a sense of inevitability that we can reveal that Chalara Dieback of Ash (commonly called Ash Dieback) has been detected in young ash trees in woodland on Kemerton Estate adjoining Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve.

Ash Dieback is a disease of ash trees caused by a fungus called *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*, which has been widespread across Europe for some time but only arrived in the UK in 2012. Since then, it has spread far and wide despite efforts to contain it, so it was always probable it would ultimately affect our local area. The disease has been confirmed in other woodland locally in 2016 suggesting it may already be widespread.

Ash Dieback causes leaf loss, crown dieback and bark lesions in affected trees. Once a tree is infected the disease is usually fatal, either directly, or indirectly by weakening it to the point where it succumbs more readily to attacks by other pests or pathogens, especially Armillaria (honey) fungi.

Young trees generally die quite fast while older trees can resist for some time, but sadly once infected trees cannot be cured. The fungal spores are mostly transmitted by wind and can travel tens of miles, so

potentially all ash trees in the area are now threatened.

Our best hope is that some ash trees will be resistant to the disease however worse case estimates by the Forestry Commission suggest 95% of ash trees may be killed. On the continent the disease has decimated ash trees and according to a recent review led by Dr Peter Thomas of Keele University and published in the Journal of Ecology, "between the fungal disease ash dieback and a bright green beetle called the emerald ash borer, it is likely that almost all ash trees in Europe will be wiped out - just as the elm was largely eliminated by Dutch elm disease". (The emerald ash borer has not yet arrived in Britain but it is only a matter of time.)

What does this mean for the British Countryside? Ash trees are a key woodland and hedgerow species (second only to oak in numbers) so their loss would represent a devastating change to the landscape and to the wildlife which depends on them. An estimated 1,000 species are associated with ash or ash woodland, including 12 types of bird, 55 mammals and 239 invertebrates. Some are wholly dependent on ash and will therefore likely become extinct as a result. Some may be able to survive on other trees such as alder and lime, but the loss of millions of mature trees in the space of only a few years will obviously have an impact on biodiversity as well as the scenery.

So what can we do to mitigate this catastrophe? Unfortunately replacing woodland and mature hedgerow trees is a long-term project but as a first step, the Trust is looking at ways to control deer browsing of self-sown ash seedlings so that any



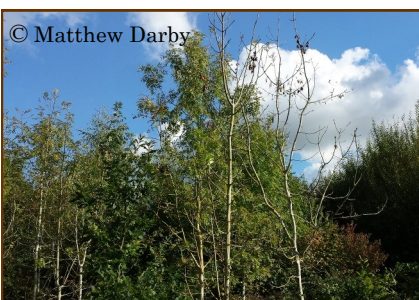
© Kate Aubury

View towards Aldwick Wood SSSI - likely to change in the future

trees showing a degree of resistance have a chance to mature and set seed themselves. Woodland planted over the last 40 years prior to the disease's arrival (including much of the younger woodland around or near Kemerton Lake contain a mixture of ash, oak, birch, alder, hazel, rowan etc. so although it is likely all these younger ash trees will die in the next couple of years the majority of this woodland will still remain.

The biggest concern is for local ancient semi-natural woodland which is predominantly ash. This includes Aldwick Wood SSSI on Bredon Hill, which is part-managed by the Trust for its exceptional wildlife value. There ash make up approx. 75% of tree cover, along with sycamore, and a few oak and beech. If the disease kills off all of the ash the woodland will be devastated and a vital wildlife habitat will be lost. We can only hope that some individual trees will prove resistant and survive. The UK's ash trees have a wider genetic base than those on the continent so it is possible that some strains may not be affected by the disease. Only time will tell and it is likely to be a decade or more before we know the true extent of the damage.

So next time you take a walk in the woods or through the fields, take a moment to appreciate the beautiful ash trees as in a few years they may not be there.



© Matthew Darby

Dying Ash trees in the foreground of a young woodland, October 2016

Fascinating Fungi are Focus of Member Talk



© Kate Aubury
Kate Aubury giving her fungi talk in Victoria Hall, September 2016

To coincide with autumn - the best fungi foraging season - Support Coordinator Kate Aubury gave an illustrated talk to Members about this fascinating but poorly understood Kingdom. Kate carries out fungi surveys for the Trust and the photos in the slideshow were from her many forays in the local area, illustrating the diversity of fungi found here.

The talk covered the basic biology of fungi, fungi as food (and drink!), mythology, their ecological function, how to safely foray for edibles and a closer look at some of the many different types to be found in our woods and fields.

The intention was to follow up with a fungi foray in October led by our Governor Peter Marren, with assistance from Kate, but unfortunately autumn 2016 was so dry that the season was a complete failure locally for fungi and the walk had to be cancelled due to lack of specimens. Recent years have seen some topsy-turvy weather affect the fruiting of many fungi, so that it is no longer as clear when they will appear and autumn

fungi have started fruiting in spring or summer if conditions are right. What long-term effect this will have on them is unknown but it's certainly a challenge for surveyors!

The talk was held at Victoria Hall and was - as always - free for Members. Sadly turnout was low, a trend we have experienced over recent years with our talks, regardless of subject matter. As a result we have decided to concentrate on walks as these seem more popular and do not cost the Trust so much to organise (the talks make a loss thanks to hall hire etc.) If we feel there is sufficient interest for a specific talk we will of course arrange it.

Kemerton Confirmed as Hotspot for Cellar Beetle

The latest copy of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's member magazine contained an interesting article written by Harry Green (a well-known local naturalist and Friend of KCT) about the animals that live alongside us in our homes. Included in the piece was mention of a beetle that lives in cellars, stables, barns etc., feeding on spilled food, cereals and other vegetable matter. Known as the Cellar Beetle *Blaps mucronata* was once extremely common throughout England but it has become rarer as general hygiene and food storage in homes and farm buildings has improved.

In his article, Harry appealed for records from readers if they spotted the beetle, as there were only a handful of county sightings and Worcestershire Biological Records Centre was



© Kate Aubury
Cellar Beetle *Blaps mucronata*, Kemerton Court, December 2016

hoping to add to this to improve their knowledge of the beetle's current status.

Our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury saw the article and photo and recognised it as a beetle she had found and identified previously in the cellar at Kemerton Court, where she works. In fact over the years she had seen many dead beetles in the cellar. She therefore contacted Harry, and after a search located 2 live

beetles and 3 dead ones on 19th December 2016. After photographing one of the live beetles she sent a dead beetle to Harry for his collection and the record was confirmed.

Interestingly, of the 9 records of Cellar Beetle in Worcestershire from 1950 to 2015, 3 are from Kemerton and 2 more are from nearby, and in 2015 Jake Poloni, a local gardener and landscaper (and coincidentally Harry's Grandson!) found Cellar Beetles in the village on 4 separate occasions in 2015, all in or near old stone houses or outbuildings. Kemerton therefore appears to be a hotspot although given the rather elusive nature of this beetle it may be more widespread than the records suggest. Have you seen one in your outbuildings or cellars? Let us know if you have!

Carrant Catchment Area Restoration Project (CCARP) Update - by John Clarke, KCT Conservation Advisor

For several years the Trust has been investigating the possibility of local farmers and others collaborating at landscape scale to improve water quality, reduce water and silt run-off and improve wildlife habitats. This would be a farmer-led initiative. The initial response was so great that I had to admit that I was no longer fit enough to organise such a big project. I took the idea to Natural England (NE). We wanted to include both the Worcestershire and Gloucestershire sides of the catchment – plus the rivers Isbourne and Washbourne – aiming for 20-50 members.

NE representatives were keen for us to apply for funding (EU money!) to enlist the help of a 'Facilitator' – or Project Manager. Jenny Phelps has worked for the Farming and Wildlife Group (FWAG) for many years. She has a lot of experience in farming, is acting as Facilitator for a large project in the Upper Thames area, has a pretty good knowledge of wildlife and could work for us part-time via FWAG. Perfect! But Brexit caused months of delay before we got enough funding to pay Jenny – plus a bit for contractors. The grant should last us for five years. The collaborative scheme will be voluntary with farmers free to participate (or not) in any aspect. (More details about Jenny can be found opposite).

After meeting the original project members Jenny has been planning the way ahead. And we have partners. As per earlier project updates the

Environment Agency has already started work on reinstating former oxbows (or meanders) and hopes to do more to help alleviate flooding and improve water quality. We have already begun trials, funded by Worcestershire County Council, to see if we can improve the flora along our local road verges. Charities Buglife and LEAF (Linking the Environment And Farming) are keen to work with us. We have our first sponsor too – Cotswold Agricultural Merchants has offered support for five years. Two local Orchard Volunteer Groups are willing to help too.

Meanwhile some CCARP members have been busy too. The work of KCT is well-known. Less so is what Overbury Enterprises has been doing in improving wildlife habitats around the farm, in devising an ongoing, farm-wide monitoring scheme and developing a simple database on which to store the wildlife records. Another local farmer Jamie Smith has been using trail cameras to help study the use of our local streams and pools by Otter (see opposite for more details). Jamie Hobbs and his nephew Ollie helped us to collect cuttings material from two large Elm trees on his land which had apparently survived Dutch Elm Disease. The cuttings are being grown for us by another supporter – Avonbank Nursery at Pershore College – under the RELIC project (Replanting Elms in the Countryside) started a few years ago by me with Bob Hares from the college. They will also try to grow Whitebeam from



A kingfisher at rest—one of the species which will benefit from water quality improvements

seed collected on Bredon Hill. The plan is to target the planting of Whitebeam up on the hill, Elm on the middle ground and Black Poplar on the lower ground. Other farmers are already asking me how they can help. Three students are carrying out various research projects on farmland. Local wildlife experts have offered to help. We have designed and printed a leaflet outlining our plans. If any farmers (or potential sponsors) want to find out more please contact me on jclarkekem@btinternet.com. If you feel that you have a skill or expertise that would help us please do get in touch.

On 14th December 2016 Jenny organised the official launch of the CCARP. After her project presentation there was a great deal of 'meeting and greeting'. Discussions continued as existing and new members, other farmers and local village and council groups enthusiastically spoke about the project while enjoying local food from the buffet. It is likely that further opportunities to promote this important project will arise. Open Farm days and public meetings – or an occasional newsletter – all come to mind.

Tracking & Filming Otters on Local Waterways



A female Otter cub on Squitter Brook at night, Dec 2016

Local farmer and CCARP member Jamie Smith, who lives in Ashton under Hill, has been perfecting the art of filming Otters on local waterways including the Carrant, Squitter, Isbourne and Washbourne (all part of the expanded project remit).

Using only a Bushnell Trail Camera Jamie has managed to capture a huge number of outstanding otter clips revealing fantastic behaviour that even a keen wildlife watcher would be unlikely to see in person.

Work already carried out on the Carrant Brook as part of CCARP and other works in the project pipeline will hopefully improve the brook for Otters.

Jamie has spent considerable time filming these charismatic animals. In his own words he explains; "My dear wife gave me a Bushnell camera for my birthday present in February 2012. Initially I set the camera up in our garden at Ashton under Hill. I was so pleased that within a week I had videos of 2 foxes, a sow badger and 3 fallow deer. My wife was not so pleased to see the deer eating her beloved garden!"

I have always been interested in otters and have been delighted to see their success over the last 25 years. Otters are wonderful to film with this camera as they are very predictable. I have nearly 1000 video clips of otters mostly on

the Carrant, Isbourne, Dickler and Windrush. The photos of an otter cub shown were taken over the period of one week in early December on Squitter Brook just below Kemerton."

Jamie has kindly allowed us to share a selection of his otter clips so to view them search for Kemerton Conservation Trust on Youtube or visit our Facebook page.

There are also a couple of clips on there taken at Kemerton Lake using the Trust's own Bushnell Trail Cameras.



The same female Otter cub at the same site in daylight, Dec 2016

Introducing Our CCARP Facilitator Jenny Phelps



Jenny Phelps MBE, Senior Farm Conservation Advisor, FWAG

Jenny has been facilitating landscape scale environmental delivery for over 30 years. Working with landowners, farmers and partners across the Cotswolds, she has helped

to deliver complex Countryside Stewardship schemes, farmland bird target areas and wetland habitat under the water framework directive.

Her experience and landscape knowledge has been integral to the development of the Integrated Local Delivery framework (ILD), which was part of one of the first Landscape Heritage Lottery funded projects in 2004, 'Caring for the Cotswolds'. Since then, the ILD framework has been recognised by government as a tool that helps deliver multiple objectives

in a sensitive manner, valuing the farming community and respecting the connectivity people have with places dear to them. Through projects like the Facilitation Fund, ILD has been at the heart of Jenny's work to help communities make successful and prominent landscape scale recovery and benefit from being more resilient to climate change. For more information on how to join the Carrant Catchment Area Restoration Project group, please email Joanne.leigh@fwagsw.org.uk / Jenny.phelps@fwagsw.org.uk.

Kemerton Clippings January 2017

Edited by Kate Aubury
Contact email: kate@aubury.co.uk

Print services provided by Fleet Graphics (Tewkesbury) Ltd

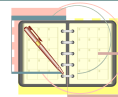
This newsletter is published bi-annually. The next edition will be issued in July 2017.

For more information on the work of KCT please visit our website: www.kemerton.org



Old Man's Beard *Clematis vitalba*,
Bredon Hill, November 2016

Save the Date!



- **Saturday 28th January** - Working party (10am start, Lillans Orchard)
- **Saturday 25th February** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 25th March** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 22nd April** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 6th May** - Dawn Chorus Walk, KLNR (5.30am start) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 27th May** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 3rd June** - Annual Open Day, KLNR (gates open at 11am) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 24th June** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 29th July** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)

For details on any of the above events, please contact KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury by email kate@aubury.co.uk or by phone on 07765 334 776.

KEMERTON COURT

TEWKESBURY

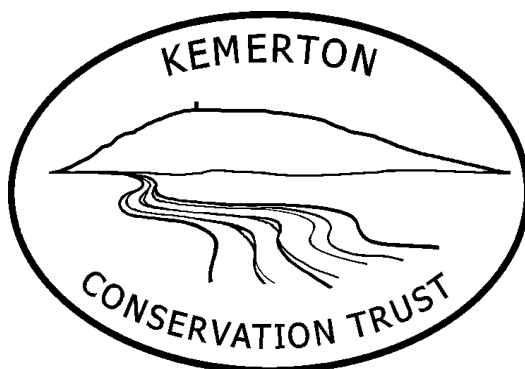
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

GL20 7HY

Tel: 01386 725 254

Registered Charity No. 702488

www.kemerton.org



GOVERNORS:

A. M. G. DARBY, O.B.E.
(Chairman)

M. G. DARBY

P. S. DOBLE

LORD HOWICK OF GLENDALE

P. MARREN

DR. M. PALMER M.B.E

B. WESTWOOD

R. H. WORKMAN