

Kemerton Clippings

Issue 20

July 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.

Beautiful Orchids, Butterflies and Sunshine on our Open Day



© Kate Aubury

Attendees walking through the orchids, KLNLR, June 2017

Our Annual Open Day at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve was on Sunday 3rd June. We had a good turnout as the sunny weather enticed people to join us in the great outdoors.

The focus again this year was on the ten native orchid species found on the reserve, particularly the five species which were in flower on the day (Common Spotted, Southern Marsh, Pyramidal, Bee and a hybrid Common Spotted/Southern Marsh cross). Two guided tours led by our Chairman Adrian Darby and Governor Matthew Darby took visitors on a lovely trail around the lake edge to admire these stunning plants - and many other sights on the reserve - and we also had an information stand and refreshments available in the Circle Glade.



© Kate Aubury

Green Hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*, KLNLR, June 2017

Although the highlight was undoubtedly the profusion of orchids, the eagle eyes of one attendee spotted the shimmering emerald iridescence of a Green Hairstreak, which is a rare sight locally, and there was also lots of dragonflies and other flying insects zooming about as well in the sunshine. Visitors also enjoyed bird spotting in our Water's Edge Hide.

We made a small profit from entrance fees, refreshments sales and new member donations on the day. The money raised all goes towards the work of the Trust, helping us safeguard the site for the future. We also introduced more members of the public to the wonderful wildlife right on their doorstep, which is one of our key aims.

Thanks goes to all our fantastic, hard-working volunteers who assisted both in the run-up to the event and on the day itself, we couldn't have done it without you all!



© Kate Aubury

Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*, KLNLR, June 2017



© Kate Aubury

It's worth getting up for the early morning view of the lake alone!

On Saturday 6th May a small group of early birds met at 5.30am at KLNK to hear one of the most magical sounds of spring - the Dawn Chorus.

Early Risers were Rewarded on our Dawn Chorus Walk

After a slight delay caused by walk leader Matthew Darby missing his alarm (!), the group headed off through Kemerton Woods to listen to the symphony of songs from the breeding birds seeking a mate or defending their territories in the woodland and by the lake edge.

The attendees were rewarded for their lost sleep with the wonderful

warbling of Song Thrush, Blackbird, Wren, Robin, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Chiff Chaff, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Blackcap, Reed Bunting, Reed Warbler, and many more. The dominant song in the woods was the Wren - it's amazing the level of volume such a tiny bird can attain!

Work Party Update by Hugh Corbett

Both Sarah and I are (relative) newcomers to Kemerton, although we have lived most of our lives in the country. Living, as we do, on the edge of Bredon Hill we regularly go walking up its lower slopes.

Just past Pad Barn the footpath takes a left turn and there is a magnificent view. Spread out below is Kemerton village and just beyond it one can see Kemerton Lake glinting in the sunlight. What a marvellous sight. It makes one appreciate how lucky we are to live in such beautiful surroundings. However, we need to be more than just observers.

Now that we have both retired, we have the time to contribute towards the maintenance of the countryside. It's not that we want to "freeze" the current position, it's more about ensuring that we pass it on to future generations so that they can enjoy it too.

As a result we volunteered to do our bit by working with KCT although at the time we were not sure what we had let ourselves in for. During our first 6 months, we have been assisting in a wide spread of activities, ranging from clearing and organising the store (thankfully not too many spiders!) to removing invasive thistles and working on the track to the lake.



© Kate Aubury

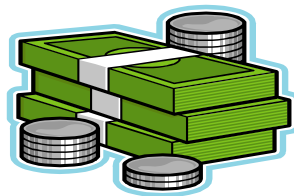
Hugh & Sarah (left) helping fill potholes, KLNK, March 2017

What will they ask us to do next, and who will we be working with?

The monthly Saturday jobs are usually interesting and we get together with like-minded people who care for the environment. To anyone else thinking of joining us, we would say it can be enjoyable and thoroughly worthwhile.

Funding Update

The Trust successfully applied for a £500 grant to be used in a small project planting bulbs in Kemerton Woods this autumn, which will hopefully improve the ground flora of this young woodland. Our generous funder wishes to remain anonymous, but we are very grateful for their support.



No other grant funding work was completed in the first half of 2017.

Long-term local supporter Bredon Forest School donated another £500 to the Trust in the first half of 2017. These

are unrestricted funds which are used to help with general costs including volunteer tools and materials for repairs etc. We are very grateful for their generous support.

We have also received two generous donations totalling £500 from Miss K.M Harbinson's Charitable Trust in the last 6 months.

Thank you to all who have supported us this year!

Giant Hogweed is on the March

Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum* is an invasive alien weed, originally from Russia. A close relative of Common Hogweed and Cow Parsley, it can grow to an astonishing 3m+ in height, and has spread throughout the UK since its original introduction as an ornamental plant in the early 1800s. Although its size is impressive, its biggest claim to fame is its toxic sap.

The sap of Giant Hogweed contains toxic chemicals known as furanocoumarins. When these come into contact with the skin, and in the presence of sunlight, they cause a condition called phyto-photodermatitis: a reddening of the skin, often followed by severe burns and blistering. The burns can last for several months and the skin can remain sensitive to light for many years. Every year there are reports in the media of people who have suffered sometimes horrific burns from coming into contact with this plant.

Giant Hogweed favours river banks and streams, although it can also be found in wasteland and parks. In the local area, Giant Hogweed has been found along the Carrant Brook; Kemerton Estate has had to remove plants in the last two years. Recently the Environment Agency has warned us that the plant has now been identified in multiple locations along the brook (the seeds spread by wind or water), so they are asking landowners and members of the public to be vigilant.

The main issue with identifying the plant is its similarity to the native Common Hogweed. Key identifying features are as follows; Giant Hogweed can reach 3-4m tall whereas Common Hogweed is normally around 1m tall and does not exceed 2m. In addition, it has much larger flower umbels with up to 50 individual flower stems per umbel compared to around 15-20 on Common Hogweed. Its leaves are smoother, shinier and more serrated, and the basal leaves can be 1m wide. Its green stem is thick, with extremely



© Pamela Clarke

Giant Hogweed, Carrant Brook, 2017

hairy leaf joints and reddish-purple blotches (see above), whereas Common Hogweed rarely has blotches and its stem is uniformly hairy. If in doubt, steer clear, as even Common Hogweed can cause skin rash and minor burns, although it is much less dangerous than the Giant Hogweed.

For detailed information on this invasive weed, please visit GB Non Native Species Secretariat www.nonnativespecies.org/.

News in Brief

One of the highlights of Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve - and the frequent focus of our Open Days - are the numerous orchid species which grow on the site and in the surrounding woodland. At the start of the year we had 9 species (including a hybrid) but we can now reveal a new species has been recorded.

The eagle eyes of our Chairman Adrian Darby spotted two Green Winged Orchids growing on one of the paths through the reserve in early May, a first record for the site. Also known as Green Veined Orchids (a name which more



© Kate Aubury

Green Winged Orchid *Anacamptis morio*, KLNLR, May 2017

accurately describes these purple orchids with green veins), they flower earlier

than the Common Spotted and Southern Marsh Orchids which are abundant in June.

We're delighted to add another orchid species to the site list and hope they will flower again next year.

In June KCT hosted a visit from National Trust's Croome Park leadership team who visited our reserves to explore new ways of working together to increase wildlife in the local landscape. As a charity we are always seeking new partnerships and collaborations which will amplify the impact of our work so we were delighted to share our experiences.

A Keen Eye: news from the hides

- by David Keen, Friend of KCT



© David Keen
Great Crested Grebes performing their mating dance, KLNLR

It is just twelve months since I became a member of Kemerton Conservation Trust and in that time I have seen and photographed many of the birds and some of the wildlife around Kemerton Lake. I meet lots of people - some bird spotters, some just out for a walk - but most of them are taken back by the stunning view and sheer number of birds that you see from the Water's Edge Hide.

March and April is a great time to see the Great Crested Grebe trying to impress his mate by gathering weed from the lake bed and sometimes offering her a freshly caught fish, some of which look too large to swallow. The Little Grebe are good at catching small fish, taking

minnows and larva from the lake bed. When the water is clear you can often see them swimming around under water quite freely. There are always a number of gulls on the lake; Herring Gull, Lesser Black Backed and Common Gull, they can be spotted diving and bringing up mussels which they fly off with and then drop onto the island hoping to break them open, this doesn't always work as most of the time they drop them back into the water.

As we move from summer towards winter large numbers of Wigeon, Teal and other waterfowl will arrive and as many as 100 Coots can be counted on the water. The one question that lots of people ask when they come into the hide is "are there any Kingfishers?" The answer is "yes", there are but in my own view you have more chance of seeing them if the rivers and brooks are flooded and the water is discoloured as they need to see their prey and so they turn to still water lakes and even garden ponds to

fish. You may think that with all of these fish-eating birds plus Herons, Egrets and Cormorants that the fish stock would be low but from what I have seen recently the lake is thriving.

My own passion is for birds of prey and in September 2016 I was lucky enough to see six individual raptors in one day; Hobby, Peregrine, Buzzard, Red Kite, Kestrel and my first ever Marsh Harrier. These are just a few of the many birds to be seen at the lake, it provides a great opportunity for bird spotters and photographers as you never know what may turn up and I hope that one day we may see a passing Osprey or a Berwick's or Whooper Swan as the seasons change and birds move to and fro. I am sure that the coming months will hold some surprises for us, and if the Hobby return they are fascinating to watch as they hunt for Dragonflies at speed over the water. If you have a couple of hours spare to sit and watchyour patience WILL be rewarded.



© David Keen
It's not just birds that can be spotted from the hide! Look out for Grass Snakes sunning on the bank, slithering among the reeds or swimming across the water.

The Call of the Curlew Continues in the Severn & Avon Vales Despite Falling Numbers



Curlew Nest, Cobney, April 2017

According to survey data collated by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, the Curlew *Numenius arquata* is one of our most rapidly declining breeding birds, showing a 46% decline across the UK from 1994 to 2010. Curlew was added to the UK red list in December 2015, and some fear it will be extinct from southern England within less than 10 years. A decline in population is being seen across the entirety of its global range, but the decline is steepest here in the UK, where approx. 25% of the world's Curlew population breeds.

Curlews are wonderful wading birds, whose plaintive calls have been heard in the flood meadows of the Severn and Avon Vales for centuries, but this once familiar sound may be gone forever without significant action. It is estimated that there are just 300 nests left south of Birmingham. So why are Curlew declining so rapidly, particularly in the lowland areas of their range?

Research carried out in recent years suggests that the biggest driver in falling

Curlew numbers is loss of suitable breeding habitat, although increased predation is also playing a major role. In the local area, as is the case across much of the western world, modern agricultural methods are the main culprit. A desire to maximise efficiency has led to earlier hay cutting on many of the flood meadows where the curlew breed. This results in failed nests and very low breeding success. One report studying breeding Curlew in Shropshire in 2016 found that from 21 nests, only three hatched any chicks. None of these chicks survived to fledging (Cross, A., Perkins, A. & Tompkins, D. *Curlew Country. Shropshire Hills and Welsh Marches Curlew Recovery Project. (2016)*).

In 2016, a coalition of local birding volunteers coordinated by Mike Smart, birdwatcher and long-time member of Gloucestershire Naturalists Society, carried out a survey of breeding curlew which attempted to cover the main known breeding areas in the Severn & Avon Vales, along with a few other local hotspots. This included areas along the Avon which KCT part-own including Upham Meadow & Summer Leasow at Twynning and Asham Meadow near Eckington. These meadows are both managed traditionally as Lammas Meadows with a late hay cut which protects the floral biodiversity of the sites and allows nesting birds such as Curlew and Redshank to raise their young before the hay is cut. Results from the

2016 survey showed that there were 14-15 breeding pairs in the surveyed areas along the Avon. Of these, only 4 pairs definitely succeeded in raising chicks to flying stage and 3 of these pairs were on meadows part-owned by the Trust. Although the success rate is sadly low, it is encouraging that our meadows supported successful breeding. This is a really positive sign that the land management followed on these sites is working well.

The plight of the curlew is a tragic story and one which is unlikely to be halted unless significant action is taken. The Trust is trying to play its part by purchasing traditional flood meadow locally when possible and continuing the wildlife-friendly farming methods that allowed birds to coexist alongside farmers for centuries. We hope that our efforts, in conjunction with the work of others, will help save the Curlew and allow future generations to enjoy their evocative call.

On the next page, John Clarke discusses some of the birds that have sadly already been lost at Kemerton, highlighting how easily these things can happen without strong action.



A Juvenile Curlew, Coombe Hill, 2016

Lost Birds at Kemerton

- by John Clarke, KCT Conservation Advisor

When Pamela and I came to Kemerton in 1982 the term 'Farming and Wildlife' had hardly been coined. The farmer-led Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) had only just been born. So we were feeling our way as we worked to establish Adrian Darby's idea of integrating farming and wildlife. A somewhat revolutionary dream then but so much has happened since. Today we are looking at working at landscape scale! The work – first at Kemerton and more recently, also with Overbury Estate - has been a huge success and people come from miles around to see what has been achieved. So should we be pleased with what we have done? Well, yes – but also no.

When we first came to Kemerton we surveyed all the birds that were found here. Now, after 35 years we find that, despite all our best efforts, we, like everyone else in the area, have been unable to stem the loss of a number of bird species. It seems unbelievable and it is depressing to think that even where so many resources have been invested in conserving wildlife we have 'lost' some bird

species. Marsh Tit, Willow Tit, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Tree Sparrow all come to mind and I'm sure there are more. We have failed to attract back - amongst others - Nightingale and Corn Bunting. Others, like Spotted Flycatcher and Willow Warbler are in serious decline. Similarly House Martin and Swallow are declining but in these latter cases the loss of nest sites or destruction of nests may be factors outside of the Trust's control. But we should look at other possible factors.

It could be argued that had we not made the effort we may have lost more. It may also be argued that the losses are part of a national trend. We could easily blame the trapping and netting of migrating species on southern Europeans or the African states where they overwinter. But have we been doing things wrong? Most of the species that I have mentioned do not migrate so we cannot blame our European and African friends for their demise! It could also be argued that species like Skylark, Nuthatch and Song Thrush have done extremely well over the years. So that's alright then?

Marsh and Willow Tits prefer woodland with an understorey of shrubs. They need standing dead/decaying timber in which to excavate their nest holes. We have tried to provide both. Marsh Tit does come to bird feeding stations. In fact, that was our own last record for



© John Clarke
The Spotted Flycatcher has problems finding food here in the UK as well as on migration and on its wintering grounds

the species and since 2008 there have been only 4 records across the estate. The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker also has particular needs but not that different from the above tits. There have been only 2 records since 1995 – the last in 2008. Could it be food that is lacking? All of the species that I have mentioned eat insects sometimes or feed them to their nestlings. I've written previously about the loss of breeding and overwintering habitat for insects – such as Bramble, Ivy and Nettle. I've also written about the loss or serious decline in insects that we might easily notice. No moths attracted by our house lights, no insects splattered on our car wind-screens during night driving and no insects on cow pats for example.

After 35 years of trying to help our local wildlife there are plenty of reasons to celebrate our successes. But that should not prevent us from pausing for a while, taking stock and reminding ourselves that we haven't got it all right. Is it now time to focus our efforts on getting back our lost bird (and other wildlife) species? Or do we assume that some losses are inevitable? Now that we are working at landscape scale perhaps we should at least try?



© Sue Cooper
The Song Thrush seems to have plenty to sing about

News from the Carrant Catchment Area Restoration Project - by Joanne Leigh, FWAGSW

The Carrant Catchment Area Restoration Project, CCARP, links habitat by restoration and enhancements across the Carrant and Isbourne rivers. The project has received keen interest and FWAGSW have been round all the farms in the group to look at farming techniques, also what great opportunities the farms can offer in terms of showing off their practises that aid soil protection and improved water quality. Several farms have made land changes that help breeding waders and sky larks and in doing so have further enhanced biodiversity on their own farms. As we know all animals including

pollinators need the Big Three; nesting, foraging and over winter food to survive and breed successfully. This is becoming ever more of a challenge with climate change and tidy management. Luckily for us we have received funding from the Cotswolds AONB to put in 1km of hedgerows, 100 infield trees and 5km of tree tagging to help link the habitat for the Violet Click Beetle. *(editor's note: the Violet Click Beetle is found on Bredon Hill in the Special Area of Conservation. It is only known to occur in three sites across the whole of the UK. Very little is known about the beetle except that it breeds in the hollow trunks of ancient trees.)* This little fellow is extremely shy and has only be detected by its frass, but there are ongoing studies, from Buglife, in connection to the Butterfly Conservation's 'Back from the Brink' project. We have been given the opportunity to help the survival of this beetle by planting trees that they would ordinarily live in,



Violet Click Beetle Larva

once mature. All dead wood is vital to the survival of insect larvae including those all-important pollinators so, before you tidy up any site, think about the benefits of leaving dead wood in piles or as standing trees and the integrated pest management benefits these insects can provide for you and your farming business.

If you are a local landowner or farmer and would like to get involved in CCARP or would just like more information on either project, please get in touch with Joanne Leigh by phone 01666 503668 or email joanne.leigh@fwagsw.org.uk.



Violet Click Beetle *Limoniscus violaceus*

New Logo Design for the Trust Coming Soon!

For the more observant amongst our members, the Trust's logo has frequently been a puzzle! We've had confused conservationists ask why we have a jellyfish as our emblem, not realising that it is in fact a line drawing of Bredon Hill, complete with Parson's Folly and the Avon.

Our logo has remained the same since the Trust's inception in 1989, when it was designed by our Chair-

man Adrian Darby to reflect the main focus of our conservation efforts but recently the Governors felt that we needed a change, something that would stand out more, could be used in colour and black and white and was more recognisable to our members, the public and partner organisations.

After some research, it was decided that our new emblem will be the Curlew. As the article on page 5 highlights, the Trust has made saving

traditional flood meadows locally a priority for many years and whilst we obviously work hard to protect a wide range of flora, fauna and landscapes, the flood meadows of the Severn and Avon are unique and with Curlew in decline, these birds are a symbol of all the we work to do.

The new logo will be offered for approval to the Governors at the annual meeting in October so, assuming they agree it, will be unveiled to you in January!

Kemerton Clippings July 2017

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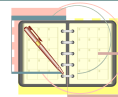
This newsletter is published bi-annually. The next edition will be issued in January 2018.

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



Mute Swan on the water,
KLNR, May 2017

Save the Date!



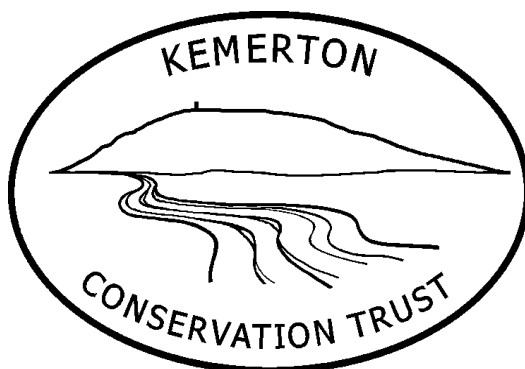
- **Saturday 29th July** - Working party (10am start, KLNR)
- **Sunday 6th August - Butterfly Walk, Upper Westmancote, Bredon Hill** (2.30pm start) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 26th August** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 30th September** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 15th October - Fungus Foray, KLNR** (2.30pm start) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 21st October - Kemerton Apple Day, Victoria Hall, Kemerton** (2-5pm) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 28th October** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 25th November** - 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.

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