



## New Trust Curlew Logo is Launched!



The eagle-eyed amongst you may have noticed that our newsletter header has changed for this edition. We have updated it following the launch of our brand new Trust logo, above.

It's always a difficult decision to change a logo or other branding, as it is such an intrinsic part of a charity's identity. But Kemerton Conservation Trust's logo was designed by our Chairman Adrian Darby over 30 years ago and frankly, often confused members who did not necessarily recognise the silhouette of Bredon Hill. The logo was also black and white only and therefore restricted the impact when used on our website and print media.

Choosing which animal or plant should become our new emblem was difficult, as the Trust works in a wide range of habitats with many different species of wildlife, and the team argued the merits of various ideas before we ultimately chose the Curlew. The Curlew was the clear winner for a number of reasons; Curlew numbers are currently plummeting at an alarming rate all over the world, but particularly here in the UK, which has over 25% of the world's breeding population. High-

lighting this decline is an important conservation priority for the Trust and partners. One of the biggest reasons for this decline is the loss of breeding habitat in lowland areas, as modern farming methods do not allow the young chicks to fledge successfully before hay-making. The Trust owns several parcels of traditionally managed flood meadow along the Avon and Severn, including parts of Upton Ham SSSI and Twynning Ham SSSI, which are important breeding habitat for the Curlew, and we are working with other partners and meadow owners to manage our holdings to preserve breeding numbers. Finally, it has a wonderfully recognisable silhouette with the long down-curved bill, making it a good choice design-wise.

The new logo is being rolled out across all our communication channels; online and in print. We have just had an updated map leaflet printed to use at events and issue to new members, and the website has been updated too. Inevitably it will take a while to update everything so some older print materials such as existing leaflets will still have the old logo until we finish old stocks and do a new print run.

We hope members like the new logo and feel it gives the Trust a more professional look.

**Are you looking for a new hobby? Do you have a few hours spare a month? Do you have a passion for spotting snakes or counting crickets? If yes, why not volunteer with the Trust? We are always looking for enthusiastic people to assist us to protect local landscapes and the flora and fauna that rely on them. If you would like more details, please contact Support Coordinator Kate Aubury on 07765 334776 or email [kate@aubury.co.uk](mailto:kate@aubury.co.uk).**



Governor Matthew Darby pointing out a fungal find, Kemerton Wood, 2017

In October Governor Peter Marren, author of 'Mushrooms', joined us to lead a fungus foray through Kemerton Wood. Our planned foray in 2016 had to be cancelled after lack of rainfall led to a scarcity of mushrooms and the weather had not been ideal leading up to this walk either, so hopes were not high as we set out in

## Foraging for Fungi Proves Fruitful

search of Sulphur Tufts and Puffballs, Agarics and Milkcaps.

Our walk focused on grassland and woodland and, although by no means as abundant as it can be when conditions are wetter, the walk revealed enough of interest to keep everyone busy. KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury, who carries out fungi recording for the Trust was there to lend Peter a hand and between them they recorded 24 species. Not a brilliant haul but better than expected! Highlights including the poisonous but beautiful Beechwood Sickener (see photo), the colourful Plums & Custard *Tricholomopsis rutilans*, and the pretty sight of hundreds of tiny Fairy Inkcap *Coprinellus disseminates*. In a nearby arable field Kate also spotted some large specimens of the edible Horse Mushroom *Agaricus arvensis* and hundreds

of cream Meadow Puffball *Lycoperdon pretense* dotted through the grass.

In recent years the variable weather has really affected mushroom fruiting times. What the long term effects of changing weather patterns are likely to be remains to be seen, but we were pleased that enough rain had fallen this autumn to allow our foray to proceed! Many thanks to Peter for giving us his time and expertise.

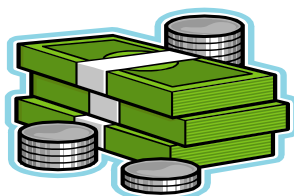


Beechwood Sickener, *Russula nobilis*, Kemerton Wood, October 2017

## Funding Update

Just before Christmas the Trust was one of 130 lucky winners in a special charity draw run by Ecclesiastical Insurance, who were giving away £130,000 in their '12 Days of Giving' event held to celebrate 130 years.

In order to be in with a chance, supporters could nominate any charity for inclusion in the draw and we are grateful to the Friends of KCT who took the time to nominate us when we asked for help. We were one of the first charities drawn in the competition and are delighted to be receiving £1000 from



Ecclesiastical. We are currently deciding what would be the best use of this unexpected windfall and will update you on how it is spent in the next newsletter.

In 2017 we heard that we had 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 receive a dividend of £0.25ppl from Kemerton members and for the 2016/17 year the dividend

we received was £12.38. 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](http://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 amazing £850 to the Trust in the second half of 2017. 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 2017

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. Unfortunately this year John was ill and was unable to attend or produce a written report (see below).

2017 has seen the Carrant Catchment Area Restoration Project (CCARP) expand rapidly thanks to extra funding and the hard work of our Facilitation Team (see page 6 for more details). This landscape scale project has been the main focus for the Trust, but we have also been working with other owners to bring Upton Ham SSSI into a Countryside Stewardship scheme, which would support the current management regime and increase the Trust's income. We hope to

hear whether the application has been successful very soon and will update you in the next newsletter. Kemerton Estate has now secured a local buyer for the organic apples in Lillans Orchard; the 2017 crop was sold in its entirety to Dunkertons for use in their cider, which is good news for the Trust's wildlife management of the site as the income will cover tree pruning and maintaining organic status.

Governor Margaret Palmer, who is also a Buglife Trustee, brought everyone up to speed with details of the new multi-partner Back from the Brink project, specifically the Ancients of the Future sub-project which is led by Buglife but will involve the Trust as one of the target species is the Violet Click Beetle. Aldwick Wood SSSI on Bredon Hill is one of only 3 known sites in England for this rare beetle so we are excited to join this major project and will bring you more details in the next newsletter.



Samples of Dunkertons Organic Ciders, Apple Day, October 2017

After reviewing the past year, the governors identified their priorities for 2018; launching and rolling out our new logo, which they approved at the meeting (see front page) continued focus on CCARP and its associated projects, and looking at ways to tie in our wider work with the Back from the Brink project in partnership with Buglife.

The 2016/17 Chairman's Report, Annual Accounts, and Support Coordinator's Report are all available to read on our website now in the 'News & Events' section.

## News in Brief

In the autumn, our Conservation Advisor John Clarke, who had been unwell for many months, needed a major heart operation. The op went well but involved a long hospital stay and it will be some time before John is back to full strength. It has been an anxious time for all those of us who work with John and we hope that he will be back fighting fit with us soon.

In October we were delighted to welcome an enthusiastic group of Environment Agency (EA) staff who spent the day working at



Group shot of John (left) and some of the EA volunteers, Beggar Boys, 2017

Beggar Boys Wetland carrying out community volunteer work.

Sixteen EA staff joined our unflappable warden John Threadingham, who showed them the ropes and supervised the day. Normally John works

alone (apart from his faithful dog Scamp) so it made a nice change for him to have some company.

We are currently extending the existing path on the reserve; opening up a new section right the way around the lake bund and up to the adjacent woodland (at present it only goes about one third of the way around the bund) and the EA group assisted with clearing the ground of bramble and cutting back hawthorn hedge and other vegetation. We received feedback that the attendees had enjoyed the day thoroughly so we hope they will be tempted to come again.

# A Keen Eye: news from the hides

## - by David Keen, Friend of KCT



© David Keen

A Hobby in pursuit of a dragonfly,  
KLNK, August 2017

In September the Hobbies departed to their winter quarters in Africa having been with us since June. In August we had as many as five hunting at the same time. It was difficult to know which one to focus on, and it was quite entertaining to watch the juveniles trying to mug their parents for food, although this does not last very long as the adults ignore them and force them to hunt dragonflies for themselves. I have seen Peregrine Falcons do something similar but they will fly around carrying food and calling to the young ones, and as they approach they will drop the food, or pass it to them in mid air, this is the way they learn to take birds in flight.

The Hobbies are not the only birds that hunt dragonflies on the lake; the Little Grebe can be seen swimming around looking for dragonflies. If it spots one landing on the water it will swim closer, then partly submerge itself until it is about two meters away and then it will dive, coming up from below to take the insect.

The Kingfisher still seems to be the bird that most people

want to see and so I set about trying to get some close up shots of them, and as one had perched on the window sill of the hide I thought that I would set up a perch through the window and sit back and wait, unfortunately I had forgotten to put my camera where I could reach it and within a few minutes a Kingfisher had landed on the perch.... here endeth the first lesson in Kingfisher photography, never put your camera where you cannot reach it!

As well as trying to photograph Kingfishers I wanted to get some close up shots of Buzzards and if I spot any road kill; like rabbits, pigeons or other small prey on the roads I stop and pick it up and place it on top of fence posts to try and tempt them into range. I'm sure that as the winter continues and food gets scarcer my chance of getting some shots will improve, unfortunately road kill is the downfall of lots of Buzzards as they swoop down on to the road to pick up any victims and become casualties themselves. It is quite a challenge at times to get the photo that you want as you cannot ask the wildlife for a retake and making food available for them can sometimes pay off.

October is a good time to see deer as the rutting season approaches, and this year has been extremely good. I did put in a couple of early mornings spotting Roe, Fallow and Muntjac. The Fallow bucks that I saw were out looking for sparring partners, following

each other around just like boxers waiting for the bell to ring. I did see six individual bucks but unfortunately the weather was not very good and the light was poor for photography but it was great just to stand and watch them.

I visited the lake fifteen times in August and always went home with something interesting to tell my wife or photos to show her. She has suggested that I take my bed there, I said jokingly "what a wonderful idea" but this is a great place to visit and living close to it is a bonus. With winter now upon us we have already seen a few Wigeon and Teal and a pair of Shoveler ducks.

So far this year I have seen my first Barn Owl on the site, also a Goosander, my second Marsh Harrier and a couple of Stoats and on one of my latest visits a juvenile Peregrine Falcon came to take a bath, coming into the water three times and having a good splash about before flying directly towards the hide letting me get several shots of her. The coming spring months will see lots going on with birds starting to pair up and start nest building, this is the time when the lake comes back to life and the waiting is over.



© David Keen

Fallow Bucks locking horns, Kemerton  
Wood, October 2017

## Apple Day Goes Well Despite Wild Weather



Governor Peter Doble at the Trust stand, Apple Day, October 2017

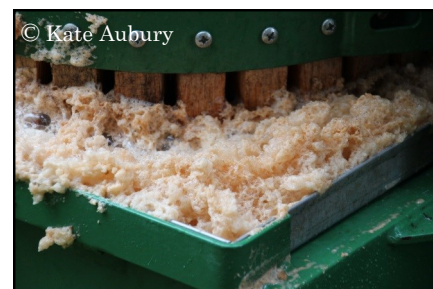
On Saturday 21st October it was Kemerton Orchard Workers' Annual Apple Day at Victoria Hall and the Trust was there to support our sister organisation. KOW manages Daffurn's Orchard in Kemerton for the local community and the annual Apple Day is their main fund-raising event.

As in previous years, KOW had arranged for apple press-

ing and juicing and there were cakes and hot drinks available in the hall, alongside stands selling jams, cards, calendars and tea towels. KCT brought along an information stand focussed on the nine orchards the Trust manages and highlighting their importance for a wide range of wildlife. We also had a display of sample ciders from Dunkertons Organic Ciders as the apples from Lillans Orchard are now sold by the farm to them and will be used in their ciders. This proved a great talking point with attendees, although some were disappointed they were unable to buy a bottle!

The day in question was incredibly windy with rain showers, but the KOW team

were undaunted. Luckily plenty of people turned up despite the wet weather but special mention goes to those KOW volunteers who spent the afternoon at the apple press in the cold and rain. Quick thinking volunteer Brian Harris started offering heated apple juice alongside the teas and coffees, which proved a hit! Overall the event went well and raised valuable funds for Daffurn's Orchard.

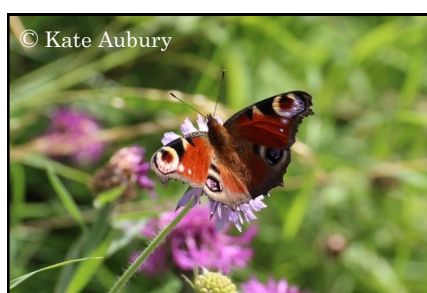


Frothy apple juice residue on the press, Apple Day, October 2017

## Butterfly Bush Salvages Washed Out Walk!

The first Sunday in August saw a select group meet at the top of Westmancote for a Butterfly Walk on Bredon Hill. Led by Chairman Adrian Darby and Friend of KCT entomologist Roger Umpelby, the plan was to show attendees the wonderful wildflower banks on Westmancote Track, which in the height of summer are a magnet for Peacocks, Red Admirals, Small Tortoiseshell, Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Large & Small Skipper and moths such as Cinnabar and various Burnets. Support Coordinator Kate Aubury has spent many happy hours photographing butterflies along the public footpath and, along with Roger, was on hand to give tips to photographers in the group.

Alas, wildlife watching is at the mercy of the vagaries of



Peacock *Aglais io*, Westmancote Track, August 2013

the weather and the day in question was grey, overcast and extremely windy. As soon as we reached the banks it became clear that the butterflies and moths had sensibly decided to remain under cover and, with the flowers swaying wildly in the wind, no decent macro shot was possible even if we had a subject! After some searching, we spotted a few Gatekeepers and Meadow Browns as well as one Common Blue. Roger also pointed out a

parasitized pupa, which was interesting. As the walk continued, a well camouflaged Red Admiral was spotted by a keen eyed attendee in amongst Ivy on a stone wall and our Chairman pointed out a Holly Blue on the wing.

We were feeling rather disheartened as we returned to our meeting point beside Oathill Cottage, despite an enjoyable walk, but all was not lost as the Buddleia bushes that grow alongside the footpath by the cottage had a number of feeding Red Admiral and Peacock and one solitary but gorgeous Painted Lady. Cameras clicked as the butterflies flitted to and fro.

The total species count was 11, but the numbers seen were very low compared to that of a sunny summer's day. Ah well!

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

In the last quarter of 2017 CCARP has been helping farmers strengthen wildlife corridors by improving habitat across holdings. Being part of a group gives Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) the opportunity to join up the landscape as they are familiar with the wider objectives from one holding to the next; applying for funding from Environmental Stewardship has helped to secure the improvements to the landscape features. One of the main aims for the project is to reduce soil erosion by increasing organic matter in fields which can be achieved by herbal leys, reduced compaction and good infiltration. We share this information and knowledge through events such as one held at Overbury in October, which focussed on zero tillage systems (*editor's note: this is a way of growing crops without inverting the soil*). Demonstration events help to share best practice our farms are passionate about. The event at Overbury showed the benefits of no tillage were very encouraging and everyone also enjoyed looking at the prolific Devils Coach Horse! As well as reducing inputs from tillage the soil has built up soil organic matter from being undisturbed and having increasing crops

returned to the soil by means of earthworm activity.

**Plans for 2018:** This year we will be looking at enhancing the rough grassland on Bredon Hill and encouraging farmers to adopt a management plan that allows skylarks to breed. If this is of interest to you and you farm on the hill, please get in touch so as we can visit you.

The Isbourne group have now been integrated into the scheme and we have been visiting farms to look at natural flood management options to improve water quality to the Isbourne river and soil holding capacity. If you have farming neighbours or friends, please pass the details on so as they may share in the benefits of having that extra knowledge and information sharing.

Calling all those with holdings from Bredon Hill to Dixon! We are offering free native trees and hedge plants to link habitat for the Violet Click Beetle; a rare beetle but an indicator species that would help encourage life cycles for many more dead wood invertebrates. We need to plant at least 50 trees this winter and 500 meters of hedgerow. Please step forward and get in touch if you would like to be part of this



Devil's Coach Horse Beetle

exciting project. We will also be holding a demonstration event later in the year to encourage tree tagging. Dead wood is as rare as the beetles these days, but this could be changed if we start to leave dying trees in situ and piles or limbs of dead wood across the site.

Finally, can I round off by saying a well deserved 'Well Done' to Adrian Darby OBE for his FWAG Life Time Achievement Award presented on December 21st at the Crown in Kemerton. It's great to be able to recognise people with this important award for the work to conservation and nature they have accomplished in their life time, especially when nominated by their own farm manager! I hope we have many more years to come Adrian.

For further information of how to get involved please contact [Joanne.Leigh@fwagsw.org.uk](mailto:Joanne.Leigh@fwagsw.org.uk) or [Jenny.phelps@fwagsw.org.uk](mailto:Jenny.phelps@fwagsw.org.uk).

## KCT Chairman Receives FWAG Lifetime Award

To celebrate CCARP's progress in 2017 and welcome on board some of the new members, the project held an informal get together at The Crown in Kemerton on 21st December. At the event, CCARP Facilitator Jenny Phelps presented our

Chairman Adrian Darby with a FWAG Lifetime Achievement Award.

Unbeknownst to Adrian, Farm Manager Peter Doble (also a Trust Governor) had nominated Adrian for his years of work

combining conservation and farming on Kemerton Estate. Adrian was delighted with the award, and Peter's touching tribute. Setting up the Trust in the 1980s is just one of the many ways Adrian has made an amazing difference in the local area.

## Work Party Update by Lawrence Ryan

I became involved with KCT through volunteering as part of my Silver and Gold Duke of Edinburgh Awards. I have helped out the work party group for over a year and this has given me a valuable insight into our fragile and unique ecosystem as well as the opportunity, as the youngest member of the group, to learn from the other members.

I have had many interesting encounters with several of the special residents around Kemerton Lake, including hobbies catching dragonflies over the lake, kingfishers diving for sticklebacks and deer rutting in the Autumn.

The monthly work parties help maintain and protect these residents from the many dangers to their existence which can be as simple as removing weeds and clearing debris. During conversations with other team members I learned that KCT takes such measures as protecting ground nesting birds from tractors by ensuring hay making on the flood meadows takes place after chicks have fledged (particularly curlew - Ed).

Overall, volunteering at KCT has given me a better understanding of the world we live in and a satisfying feeling of being a part of a team that protects it. Also it has



© Kate Aubury  
Lawrence working hard raking up sedge, Beggar Boys Wetland, 2017

encouraged me with thinking about my future, and helped me make a decision to study biological sciences and conservation at university.

*If you are interested in volunteering with the Trust please contact Kate Aubury at [kate@aubury.co.uk](mailto:kate@aubury.co.uk) or by phone on 07765 334 776.*

## Slippery Snakes Turn Out to be Two Species

In August 2017 scientists in Germany proposed a change in classification of European grass snakes.

Genetic sampling of snakes across Europe had shown a significant difference between eastern and western snakes, so it was suggested that those found to the west of the Rhine be elevated from a subspecies of Common Grass Snake *Natrix natrix helvetica* to a new species Barred Grass Snake *Natrix helvetica*.



© Dougal Ziegler  
Common Grass Snake *Natrix natrix*, Beggar Boys, October 2017

The Barred Snake has a greyer body than the Common Grass Snake, and lacks its bright yellow collar. It also has more pronounced dark bands along the length of its body.

Professor Uwe Fritz, from the Senckenberg Research Institute in Germany, who led the team of researchers, said: "We discovered that the barred grass snake, previously considered a subspecies, is in fact a distinct species."

"The barred grass snake is widely distributed throughout Great Britain, Switzerland, Italy and France, and also occurs in the western part of Germany."

During the study, researchers examined two contact areas in Central Europe (where both species were present) and there was evidence of hybridisation occurring.

The Trust is intrigued to learn of this discovery and will wait to hear what effect it has on Grass Snake conservation (the grass snake is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act making it illegal to injure or kill it). The Grass Snake is the most common snake in Europe but this new discovery clearly suggests more work will be needed to understand the exact geographical spread of the different proposed species and how numbers are split between them i.e. which is rarer.

Taxonomical changes do not occur overnight so for now our grass snakes remain *Natrix natrix helvetica* but DNA profiling and other modern techniques are changing our understanding of many family groups and there will no doubt be more announcements along these lines in the future.

## Kemerton Clippings January 2018

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**For more information on the work of KCT please visit our website: [www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org)**

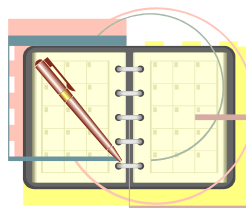


Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare*,  
Kemerton Wood, October 2017

## Save the Date!

- **Saturday 27th January** - Working party (10am start, Lillans Orchard)
- **Saturday 24th February** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 24th March - Spring Walk, KLNR** (10am start) - see 'News & Events' on website [www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org) for full event details
- **Saturday 31st March** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 28th April** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 26th May** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 17th June - Meadow Flora Walk, Upton Ham (2.30pm start)** - see 'News & Events' on website [www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org) for full event details
- **Saturday 30th June** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 28th 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](mailto:kate@aubury.co.uk) or by phone on 07765 334 776.



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