



Conserving Nature through the Lockdown



Small Copper on Buttercup, Long Meadow, May 2020

On March 23rd the government announced a countrywide lockdown to tackle the spread of Covid-19, and we all entered an unknown world, isolated from our family and friends, schools closed and the majority of businesses affected too. Here at the Trust our work was immediately impacted as we had to cancel all work parties and events, key personnel had to switch to home working, some were shielding, and, to keep visitors safe, we closed our hides at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve (KLNLR).

From the beginning, one of the few activities still possible (except for high risk shielders) was exercise outdoors, and for many, getting out into nature every day was incredibly helpful for coping with the scale of change. The sun was shining through most of April and May, nature was unaffected by the pandemic (in many places wildlife benefited from the lack of human activity), and KLNLR became a popular destination for locals taking their exercise. Whilst this did cause some issues for us, with an increase in antisocial behaviour, trespassing and littering, we were glad that for most visitors, our reserve was a place they could come to recharge. Many people from the surrounding villages visited for the first time, and we had some nice emails from some who were delighted at finding such a lovely spot right on their doorstep.

Throughout the last 3 months we have continued to work, albeit in slightly different ways, and the majority of our habitat management has been completed despite the lockdown. Our wonderful warden John Threadingham chose to continue his weekly work, just keeping away from the public areas to minimise risk. Contractors were able to return after one month, so all projects are still on course, and Conservation Advisor Pamela Clarke and Support Coordinator Kate Aubury continued their work unhindered, carrying out monitoring, checking sites and spending as much time outdoors as possible. One of the groups that particularly benefited from the long hot spring were butterflies, with large numbers being seen on all our different reserves and survey areas.

The Trust's income has been unaffected by the lockdown, and in fact, we have seen an increase in membership as new visitors have been inspired to support our work, and as we go to press, we are making arrangements to start our volunteer work parties again, and have tentatively scheduled a couple of member-only events for later in the year. Only time will tell if the worst is behind us but whatever happens, the Trust will continue to focus on conserving nature in the local area, for the benefit of both wildlife and people.



Mating Marbled White on Knapweed, KLNLR, June 2020

KCT Secures Severn Trent Support for New Boat & Storage Facility



Community Fund

KCT is delighted to announce it has been awarded £3600 funding from Severn Trent Community Fund for the purchase of a new boat and secure storage facility at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve. Work on the project will begin immediately and will be completed by end of December 2020.

Kemerton Lake consists of a mosaic of habitats, with the open water, small islands and large areas of reedbed an essential part of the habitat, providing nesting for Reed Bunting and Reed Warbler in the reedbeds and Oystercatcher on the islands, while the open water is used throughout the year by a wide

range of wetland birds and other wildlife such as grass snake, otter and dragonflies.

Managing Kemerton Lake requires the use of a boat to maintain the islands (removing vegetation annually to keep areas bare for waders), cut reedbed sections when needed, carry out water-based surveys and clean up litter which is thrown into the water and threatens wildlife.

The Trust has for many years used a heavy, wooden boat which was difficult for our Warden to use solo, unstable when used for habitat management works, and had reached the end of its useful life. Following a spate of vandalism incidents, we had also been forced to store it away from the site, which made using it even harder. The purchase of a new, much lighter, more stable boat will make our water-based management and surveys much easier in future, and the addition of a secure storage facility onsite

will allow us to store the new boat at the reserve, allowing our warden and volunteers quick and easy access when needed.

We are very grateful for the support from Severn Trent Community Fund, which will allow us to continue our important management of this beautiful nature reserve for the benefit of both the wildlife that relies on it and the people who love to visit it.

For more information about Severn Trent Community Fund visit their website stwater.co.uk/communityfund



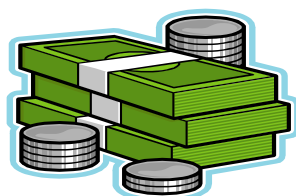
Swan family on the lake, with the islands in the background, KLNLR

Funding Update

In the first half of 2020 we completed three grant applications, all of which were successful, a terrific result.

In April we secured £2000 from the Rowlands Trust for a new moth trap and additional funding for our Natural Networks Project (see page 4 for more details).

In June we received a grant of £1572 from Postcode Local Trust for the purchase of tree poppers for our volunteers (see page 3 for more details).



In July we were awarded a grant of £3600 from Severn Trent Community Fund for a new boat and secure storage at KLNLR (see article above for more details).

Warden John Threadingham arranged the sale of our old boat and a woodchipper which was no longer needed, raising £700 for the Trust which will go towards general funds for the year. The governors were

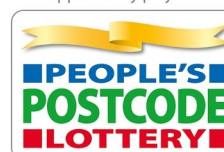
very grateful for John's help in organizing the sale.

We have had a big increase in the number of new members joining since lockdown, as more locals have discovered our reserves and decided to support us. Membership donations are a key source of income for us; unrestricted funds help us cover running costs and pay for ad-hoc contractor work and materials such as fencing posts, tree guards and nails etc.

Thank you to all who have supported us so far this year!

Postcode Local Trust Funding Secured for Volunteer Equipment

Supported by players of

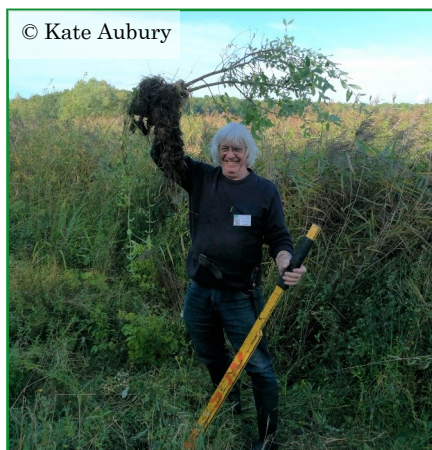


Awarded funds from



Kemerton Conservation Trust (KCT) is delighted to announce it has been awarded £1572 funding from Postcode Local Trust, a grant giving charity funded entirely by players of People's Postcode Lottery. The funding will pay for the purchase of 5 tree poppers to be used by our volunteers for essential habitat management at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve. Work on the project will start in August.

© Kate Aubury



Warden John Threadingham with a tree popper and popped sapling

Kemerton Lake, which has a mosaic of habitats in addition to the lake itself, is particularly well known for its wetland birds, dragonflies, butterflies including Common Blue and Marbled White and grassland flora including native orchids such as Pyramidal Orchid. However, in recent years the grassland and reedbeds have become increasingly scrubbed up with self-seeding willow and alder saplings, despite sterling work by our volunteer warden and work party volunteers. If left unmanaged it will soon transform the grasslands and the reedbeds into woodland, reducing the value of these key habitats.

Funding from Postcode Local Trust will be used to purchase tree poppers, which are specialist tools which allow the user to remove large saplings or small trees roots and all from the ground, without damaging the grassland or reeds around them, and without the use of herbicide,

which is currently our main tool in managing the spread of willow and alder on the reserve. The tree poppers will be used by our Warden John Threadingham, and our enthusiastic work party volunteers, while the project is being managed by our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury. The project runs until end of March 2021, but the equipment will be used for ongoing site management for years to come.

Sapling removal is done on a three-year rotation at the lake, which allows us to manage the spread whilst ensuring there is always some scrub available for the wildlife that needs it. By correctly managing the reedbeds and grassland, the project will benefit wildlife including the nationally scarce Dingy Skipper, which is found on the grassland, and birds such as Reed Bunting which nest in the reedbeds.

News in Brief

In late January our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury gave a talk on fungi to Broadway Natural History Society, which was very well received.

At the start of the year the Trust was contacted by locals from Eckington concerned about the amount of litter on Asham Meadow, partly as a result of flooding, and after liaising with the other meadow owners, it was agreed that KCT would hold a litter pick work party on the meadow in February, before the waders returned to nest. Every-

© Kate Aubury



Male Scarce Chaser *Libellula fulva*, Beggar Boys Wetland, May 2020

thing was arranged and lots of locals were ready to join us but unfortunately the river Avon had other ideas and burst it's banks just days before the planned date. As the Curlew returned a few weeks later, the litter pick has been put on hold

until later in the year (we hope!)

In late May we added a new dragonfly to our list with Scarce Chaser recorded at Beggar Boys Wetland on 29th May by Kate Aubury. This stunning dragonfly is similar to the Black-tailed Skimmer but can be identified by it's bright blue eyes and a coppery sheen on the front wings. Our dragonfly recorder Mike Averill confirmed the record and noted that it was proving a great year locally for the species, with high numbers being recorded along the Avon and Severn nearby. Kate later spotted it at a second KCT site.

Phase One of Natural Networks Funding Project Completed



In our last newsletter we announced that KCT had successfully bid for £2417.74 funding from the England European Regional Development Fund through the Natural Networks programme delivered in partnership between Worcestershire County Council and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. The funding will contribute to an important programme of habitat restoration and creation at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve. Work on the project commenced in December and phase one was completed by the end of March.

The first phase of the project included installation of bat and bird boxes on trees along the edge of the lake, scrub clearance including sapling removal by our contractors around the Lagoon and Settlement Ponds, and the creation of a new bee scrape and reptile hibernaculum near the Settlement Ponds.

The wet winter weather played havoc with our works, but the contractors were great, and by making the most of the few drier days we got everything complete before bird nesting season began. Our bee scrape initially resembled a lake but had dried out by the end of March and we were delighted to record mining bees and their parasites using it within a few weeks, the distinctive holes and piles of soil easy to spot on the bare ground.

Our volunteer warden and work party assisted in the project work, helping to clear cut saplings and rake up flailed scrub areas to allow the grassland species to return. One area cleared of bramble in autumn is now covered in purple Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata*.

Phase two of the project starts in September, with contractor works to clear the gravel islands of vegetation to

© Kate Aubury



Contractor digging new bee scrape
KLNR, February 2020

improve them for nesting Oystercatcher, along with additional scrub clearance by the Settlement Ponds.

By restoring the reedbeds and grassland, the project will benefit wildlife including the Marbled White butterfly, which is found on the limestone grassland, and birds such as Reed Warbler, which nest in the reedbeds.

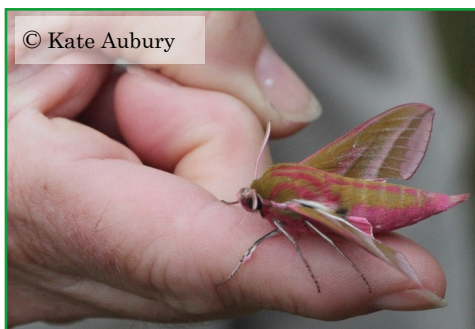
If you want to learn more about the project, why not join us for a Member-only walk at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve on 16th August at 2.30pm. More details on our website www.kemerton.org.

Moth Trapping Night Reveals Over 150 Species

In April the Trust was thrilled to receive £2000 grant funding from the Rowlands Trust. Some of the funds were for the purchase of a moth trap for moth surveys, with the balance going towards our Natural Networks Project.

With the help of Friend of KCT Gavin Peplow, who has many years' moth trapping expertise, KCT held a moth trapping night at KLNR in late June. Our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury was excited to join

© Kate Aubury



Elephant Hawkmoth *Deilephila elpenor*

Gavin and Oliver Wadsworth, another moth trapping expert, for a wonderful night recording the different moth species that were attracted to the five traps

set out on the grassland (Gavin and Oliver kindly brought their own kit), with the total tally recorded an amazing 154 species. In addition to the many moths, the traps also attracted thousands upon thousands of Caddis Flies, newly emerged from the water.

Our first moth trapping night was a big success and we are planning another soon. The records we gather will help us to manage our sites better for moths, which is great news.

A Keen Eye: news from the hides

- by David Keen, Friend of KCT



© Kate Aubury

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*
adult & chick, KLNLR, July 2020

Editor: David was shielding for much of the period, so only visited in June & July. Our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury, who monitored the reserve during lockdown, has contributed a few notes for the earlier period.

Kate's notes: In late January a small number of starlings murmured at the lake, roosting in the reedbeds. Nowhere near the numbers we had in 2018/19, but lovely to watch nonetheless. The wet wintry weather meant only a few visits until late March, but as lockdown began, the weather turned sunnier and spring was soon underway. Late March the chiffchaff began calling in the woods by the lake, and soon reed warbler and reed bunting could be heard singing in the reedbeds around the lake.

By 10th April, the swans had built a nest near the lake edge which could be seen from the footpath. A coot was brooding eggs in the reeds by the boardwalk too. On 17th April the first coot babies were seen on the water.

On 15th May 5 cygnets had hatched successfully, a pair of oystercatchers were nesting on the islands, lots of greylag

goslings were seen and 3 common tern were fishing in the lake, diving effortlessly. Their noisy calls were in stark contrast to the silent grey heron stalking fish nearby.

David's notes: It seems such a long time since my last visit to the lake, it is now the 14th of June and my first visit for over three months due to lockdown. It was great to get out and see not everything had changed, the wildlife I saw was carrying on as normal although I fear we have missed the best part of the year.

There was still plenty to see it is just a matter of putting the time in so I set off to see what I could find. I crossed over the stile and set up my camera at the end of the boardwalk, and the first thing I saw was a family of jays skipping from tree to tree, up to no good I would say, but colourful nevertheless, also woodpeckers green and greater spotted. People may not think woodpeckers are much of a threat to small birds but they are nest robbers and well equipped to take small birds from nests and not be content until the nest is empty. The next thing I saw was a fox making his way home and a young muntjac wandered out into the open.

My next visit was 2 weeks later on the 28th and it was almost a repeat of my previous visit; the jays and woodpeckers were there, the muntjac was in the same place but on close inspection of the photos that I had taken it was not the same one, this was a more mature male. As I made my way

around the lake it was good to see the swans with their 5 cygnets after the disastrous time they had last year, one or two Canada geese and a family of greylags, and not to forget the coots and the little grebe.

One thing we do not seem to be short of is sparrowhawks, I saw one adult and 2 juveniles, a kestrel and a buzzard, but I wanted to find a spot with a good view hoping that if the hobbies returned I would catch of sight of them. I caught a glimpse of what I thought was a raptor flying over the grass field on the far side of the lake, I could not say for sure, and as I had not had any confirmed sightings I made a call to George Day and he told me that one had been seen on a couple of occasions so the next sunny day is booked to see if I can get a shot of them.

I returned on 6th July, a bright but windy day, and had a good couple of hours by the lake. It was a good day for bird watchers but not for photography, I saw lots of birds at a distance; a common tern, a little egret, hobby, red kite, and a family of herons.

Hopefully the next few months should make it easier to get out and see new winter visitors.



© David Keen

Male Muntjac Deer, *Muntiacus reevesi*,
KLNLR, June 2020

Curlews of the Severn and Avon Vale Talk



Curlew Nest at Cobney, 2017

On March 11th our Members and the general public filled Eckington Hall to hear more about Curlews of the Avon and Severn Vale from Curlew champion and Friend of KCT Mike Smart, who has been coordinating Curlew nest monitoring in the area for many years and is a key member of Curlew Action Group.

With Curlew numbers in serious decline nationally, the work of volunteer groups such as Curlew Action are vital in monitoring breeding Curlew

and taking action to protect the few nests we have left locally.

Once common in the lowland meadows of England, Curlew numbers have dropped dramatically in recent years and now only a handful of nests are recorded in this area annually. The Trust owns strips in two of the best breeding sites locally; Twynning Ham SSSI near Tewkesbury and Asham Meadow near Eckington, and Mike and his team have helped monitor and protect these nests for several years now.

One of the main problems for the Curlew is that farming practices have changed and the hay meadows they nest in are cut earlier nowadays, which is why traditionally managed meadows such as Asham and Twynning, where the hay is still cut late

(usually late June or July) are so vital for the birds.

Mike's talk included some exciting plans underway for releasing 'headstarted' chicks into the area to boost the local population, but all plans for the 2020 breeding season were sadly ruined by the Covid 19 lockdown which was implemented a couple of weeks later.

Thanks to Mike for a great talk, and to Curlew Action Group for all their vital help.



Attendees waiting for the talk to start, Eckington Hall, March 2020

Curlew Nest Destroyed at Asham Meadow

In late May the Trust was contacted by a concerned local who reported that a strip of Asham Meadow near Eckington had been cut early, in a location where Curlew had been seen. A few days later the worst was confirmed when a walker photographed a destroyed curlew nest in the mown strip.

As soon as we were aware of the situation we notified Mike Smart from Curlew Action Group, who normally monitors the nests in the meadow. We also contacted the Hay Warden to let her know what had happened. The lockdown this year had stopped the planned curlew



The remains of a curlew nest, Asham Meadow, May 2020

nest monitoring so the farmer was unaware of the nest when he cut the hay, and the difficult weather conditions earlier in the year had led to a shortage of grass for his animals so he had cut much earlier than usual.

It was very disappointing

news, as the Trust has worked hard in recent years to raise awareness of the breeding Curlew among the other owners and partnered with Curlew Action Group to find and protect nests but the unique circumstances of this year had conspired against us all.

The Trust and Curlew Action Group have come up with a plan for next year which, with the support of the other owners, should avoid a repeat of this year's failure, while still allowing the farmers to cut hay as needed. Curlew nests are so rare locally, we cannot afford to lose another.

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

Over the last year the group has increased to 36 members covering 10,221 hectares of land from Tewkesbury to Cheltenham. Most of the land in our group is in Countryside Stewardship and those whose current agreements are ending have applied for Higher or Mid-tier 5 year schemes with the aim of switching to the new Environmental Land Management scheme in October 2024. Through our baseline mapping we have been able to gain a huge insight into the state of our natural capital and how it can be improved and enhanced by with regenerative agriculture. There is also opportunity to lever in additional benefits for farmers and land owners from the expertise and additional funding from our many project partners that support and regularly contribute to our facilitated group to assist with our aims to improve wildlife corridors, habitat connectivity across the local landscape, and water quality. Our quarterly events cover a lot of these topics, as requested by farmers, and dovetail as educational investment into a new generation of farmers just starting on their career.

FWAG see lots of opportunity for farmers to rise to the challenge of reducing atmospheric carbon and becoming part of the solution for climate change resilience, rather than being labelled the issue. To date our external funding has planted 3.5km of native hedgerow, 800 native trees and 385 orchard trees. With further investment from project partners there is an opportunity to collaborate with Forestry Commission carbon mitigation projects and be more strategic with planting around water bodies, incorporating natural flood management techniques, thus improving water management as well as infiltration into aquifers, refuelling our natural resources.

Many of our farmers in the group have used Countryside Stewardship options to aid recovery of declining key species and to fund habitat restoration, such as restoring wood pasture which covers many holdings on Bredon hill. Some of these farms have also participated in trials by project partners Back from the Brink as part of their 'Ancients of the future' project.



Wildflowers growing in a traditionally managed wildflower meadow, Long Meadow LWS, Kemerton Estate (CCARP project members)

This has included mapping veteran trees from Bredon to Dixon and, more recently, monitoring bat activity at key locations. Project partners the Cotswolds Conservation Board have been promoting diverse pastures through their Glorious Grasslands project. This project resurrects tired Cotswold grassland meadows, bringing them back into the magnificent meadow they once were, and supporting pollinators in the process. We are very much a part of this growing movement toward inclusivity of farming, community, protecting natural resources and climate change resilience. Further information on joining our group can be found at www.FWAGSW.org.uk or by emailing Joanne Joanne.leigh@fwagsw.org.uk

Changes to Bird Hide Access at Kemerton Lake NR

At the start of 2020, the East Hide at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve became a target for repeated antisocial behaviour and minor vandalism, carried out by persons unknown visiting regularly after dark.

Each incident was reported to the police and, after vehicles were photographed several weeks in, they were able to track down those involved and warn them away. However, on the advice of the police we made the decision to

add a combination code to the hide to prevent such issues in the future. The hides are all currently closed due to the pandemic but once they re-open the code is available to all members and any regular birdwatcher on request.

Kemerton Clippings July 2020

Edited by Kate Aubury
Contact email: kate@kemerton.com

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

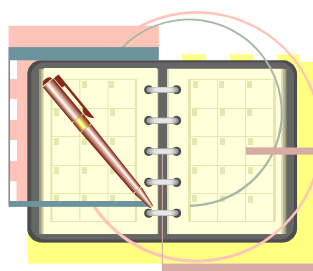


Common Emerald *Hemithea aestivaria* in moth trap, KLNLR, June 2020

Save the Date!

- **Saturday 8th August** - Working party (10am start, KLNLR)
- **Sunday 16th August** - 'Natural Networks Project Member-only Walk at KLNLR' (2.30pm start) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 5th September** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 27th September** - Orchard Walk, Lillans Orchard (2.30pm start)) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 3rd October** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 7th November** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 5th December** - 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@kemerton.com or by phone on 07765 334 776.



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