



Stunning Orchids Sparkle in the Sunshine at KLNR



Pyramidal Orchids in Limestone Grassland, KLNR, 2021

Our 2020 Orchid Walk was cancelled because of Covid-19 so we had our fingers crossed that our rescheduled member-only event could go ahead in June 2021. Thankfully, although numbers had to be restricted to ensure Covid-safe guidelines and social distancing could be followed, we were able to hold our orchid walk on 13th June as rules began to ease slightly.

The sun was shining as Chairman Adrian Darby, along with Governor Matthew Darby, Support Coordinator Kate Aubury and Conservation Advisor Pamela Clarke, led our small group around Kemerton Lake to see the stunning display of Common Spotted, Southern Marsh, Bee, Pyramidal and Common Twayblade Orchids in bloom in the limestone grassland and around the reedbed margins. 2021 was a good year for orchids, and numbers of Pyramidal were particularly high on the reserve, forming pink drifts among the Oxeye Daisies. Also to be seen were the larger, more vigorous Common Spotted/Southern Marsh hybrid orchids, which are now widespread across the site. A tiny green stem of flowers, Common Twayblade is easily overlooked in comparison to the brighter colours and larger size of the others, but its delicate flowers are beautiful when looked at closely. Our attendees were very busy photographing the beautiful blooms as they

learnt more about this fascinating group of plants and how we manage the reserve to ensure they flourish.

Although orchids were the main focus of our walk, there was of course plenty more to see as we walked around the reserve, including dragonflies (large Emperor Dragonflies were hawking along the lake margins), butterflies, other insects and birds on the water. Our Oystercatchers were indignant at the brief interruption to their solitude and flew over us calling noisily. One pair has successfully raised three young this year and all five birds could be seen on one of the islands.

With the sunshine proving a little fierce for some it was a relief to head into the woodland for the final part of the walk, seeing more Pyramidal Orchids scattered along South Ride under the trees, woodland butterflies such as Speckled Wood holding territory on the rides and, as we headed back to the car park area and the ditch nearby, the iridescent wings of Beautiful Demoiselles as they fluttered by.

With the pandemic still affecting large scale events, the Trust has decided not to hold an Open Day in 2021 but we hope to do so in 2022 so more visitors can enjoy the orchids.



Common Twayblade,
KLNR, June 2021



Hybrid Orchids, KLNR,
June 2021

Postcode Local Trust Project Successfully Completed



In 2020 KCT received £1572 funding from Postcode Local Trust, a grant giving charity funded entirely by players of People's Postcode Lottery, to purchase 5 tree poppers for used by our volunteers in habitat management at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve. Work on the project started in August and was successfully completed by March 2021.

Kemerton Lake, which has a mosaic of habitats in addition to the lake itself, is 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 increasing scrubbed up with self-seeding willow and alder saplings, despite sterling work by our

volunteer warden and work party volunteers. If left unmanaged these saplings will soon transform the grasslands and the reedbeds into woodland, reducing the value of these key habitats.

Our Postcode Local Trust grant was 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 was previously our main tool in managing the spread of willow and alder on the reserve. The new tree poppers were used at several work parties by our enthusiastic volunteers in the second half of 2020, helping remove saplings from key limestone grassland areas. The project has now finished, but the equipment will be used for ongoing site management for years to come by our Warden John Threadingham and our work party volunteers.

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 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 Warbler and Reed Bunting which nest in the reedbeds.

We are incredibly grateful for the support of Postcode Local Trust. A project report can be found on our website www.kemerton.com/news.



Project Manager Kate Aubury tests the new popper, KLNLR, August 2020

Funding Update

In the first half of 2021 we completed phase one of a two step Natural Network grant application, with stage two in progress now. More details to follow in the next edition if we are successful.

We continued to see a rise in membership as more locals discovered our reserves during lockdown two and wanted to support our work. We are delighted to welcome



them.

Long-term local supporter Bredon Forest School donated another £500 to the Trust in the first half of 2021, funds which go towards volunteer tools and materials etc. We

are very grateful for their generous support.

We also received another £300 donation in April from Miss K.M Harbinson's Charitable Trust and we are very grateful for their continued support too. This money will help pay for West Hide's new roof.

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

Dawn Chorus Walk Hits the Right Note



Attendees listening to the birds, The Bushes SSSI, April 2021

Last year the Trust was forced to cancel our dawn chorus event because of the pandemic and lockdown restrictions. We were eager to schedule it this year, but with lockdown restrictions back in force in the new year, it was uncertain whether we would be able to proceed. Luckily by the time the date came round, small, socially-distanced groups were allowed again and we could go ahead with a member-only guided walk to The Bushes and Aldwick Wood SSSIs, led by Governor Matthew Darby.

Despite the early start the walk was fully booked and at 5.45am on 17th April a small group of enthusiastic members met in Upper Westmancote to start the walk. The morning was crisp and chilly but sunny, perfect conditions for a dawn chorus walk, so we headed up the hill to The Bushes SSSI first.

The Bushes SSSI, which has no public access, is a mix of scrub and calcareous grassland, which attracts lots of nesting birds in spring. The highlight was a male Yellowhammer singing away from a hawthorn, but we also heard Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Song Thrush, Whitethroat, Dunnock and more. After enjoying the views across the vale as the sun rose higher we headed into nearby Aldwick Wood SSSI, which also has no public access, where we heard and saw many more birds including Rook, Jay, Great Tit, Nuthatch, Great Spotted Woodpecker drumming on the trees and the familiar sound

of a Blackbird's melodious song.

As we returned back to the start we could hear the Raven, who nest by The Bushes SSSI, and back at the cars we were treated to the stunning songs of several Skylarks hanging in the sky over the arable fields. A Robin serenaded our return from a flowering cherry on the farm track too.

Despite the difficulties of leading a socially distanced walk (we had to speak up a bit!) the dawn chorus event was a total success and all the attendees enjoyed the experience. We may repeat it next year, when hopefully a larger group would be possible.

In total we recorded 27 birds singing or calling during our ramble through the woods, well worth the lost sleep and home in time for a hearty breakfast!

News in Brief

Unfortunately the Trust has had more vandalism at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve to deal with; over the Easter weekend a large hole was smashed into the wall by the door of our West Hide.

Our warden was on holiday when the vandalism happened and we needed urgent repairs to make the hide watertight, so asked for help on Bredon Facebook page and received several kind offers. Local man Richard Price donated his time and carpentry skills to repair the hide promptly and we are very grateful for his help.



East Hide after addition of wire netting, KLNLR, April 2021

After reviewing the situation, our Warden John has added wire netting to both East and West Hide to hopefully prevent a repeat, and we have used CCTV in recent months to monitor the hides.

The police are aware of the issues and the community team patrol when they can but we also rely on our visitors to report issues if spotted. You can report any issues to Kate Aubury on kate@kemerton.com, by phone 07765 334776 or via Messenger on our Facebook.

On a happier note, we have added three rustic benches to Kemerton Wood on the member-only paths, as well as replaced the rotten bench on South Ride near the East Hide. The new benches were made using wood from the trees in the woodland, including two made from a fallen limb of Coastal Redwood.

Grant Funding Pays for Tree Popper Purchase

In 2020 we successfully applied for £400 funding from a local Trust who prefers to remain anonymous to purchase an additional tree popper. This specialist tool, alongside others purchased with separate grant funding in 2020 (see page 2), will be used by our Warden and work party volunteers to carry out essential habitat management at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve.

Self-seeded willow and alder saplings are managed in the

limestone grassland and reedbeds to prevent them scrubbing up and losing key habitat for the flora and fauna that thrives there. 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 butterflies and moths in the grassland and



© Kate Aubury

Work Party Volunteers popping saplings at KLNLR, March 2021

nesting birds including Reed Bunting and Reed Warbler in the reedbeds.

We are very grateful for the grant giver's support.

Water's Edge Hide is Reopened to Visitors

As the third lockdown ended earlier in the spring, the Trust made the decision to reopen Water's Edge Hide to all visitors again.

When we closed the hide in late March 2020 at the start

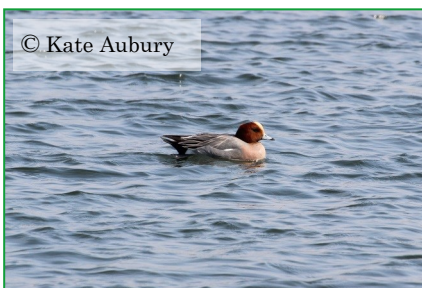
of the pandemic we had no idea that it would be more than a year before we could safely reopen, and we know many visitors have missed the view of the lake and its wildlife so we are delighted that all can now use the hide again.

For the moment we ask that only one household or social group use the hide at any time, to keep visitors as safe as possible. Because of vandalism issues we cannot leave hand sanitiser so please bring your own.

25 Year Bird Report on Kemerton Lake Published

Long standing Friend of KCT, ornithologist Rob Prudden has been watching, counting and recording birds for the Trust and for the BTO for over 25 years.

Although he visits various sites for us, much of his focus has been on the birds at



© Kate Aubury

Male Wigeon, one of the wildfowl Rob counts, KLNLR

Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve, and he has detailed records spanning 25 years, with his monitoring beginning while it was still a working gravel pit in the mid-1990s and continuing right up to the present day.

Recently Rob has pulled all his records, along with any others that appeared in the annual records of West Midlands Bird Club for the same period, into a comprehensive report on every species seen at the site, with a colour coded key, along with pertinent information on rarities or unusual sightings such as the single record for a Hen Harrier from 1996 or the

two records for Common Crane from 1999 and 2015 respectively. Rob sent the report to us and has very kindly given us permission to publish it.

Rob's bird report is available from our website www.kemerton.com/species_records. The report is very interesting, showing how the site has changed over the years, highlighting the loss of certain species and an increase in others.

Thanks to Rob for all his incredible hard work over the years helping us monitor our birds, which continues today.

Work Party Update by Ken Potter

Moving can be a traumatic event at the best of times, even more so in the middle of a pandemic, which was when we moved to Kemerton in August 2020. It was really difficult to meet people with the Rule of Six, Social Distancing, Bubbles etc. etc. Fortunately we managed to meet (at a distance) many neighbours and villagers during our many lockdown walks. While walking round Kemerton Lake, we saw notices about Kemerton Conservation Trust, so enjoying the outdoors, not adverse to a bit of manual labour and with the desire to meet people and add to the community, I contacted Kate to be enrolled in the monthly

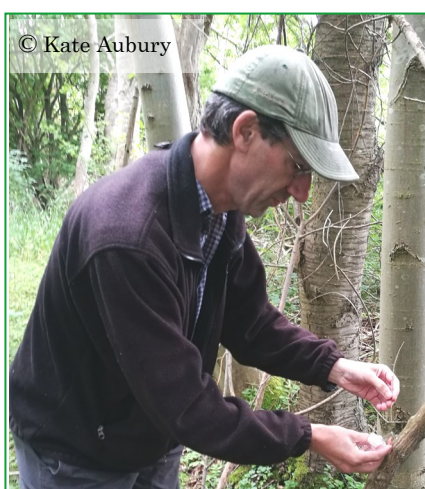
volunteering work. My first volunteering session was popping tree saplings around the lake. There were about a dozen of us braving the wet weather. It rained solidly for three hours, we were totally soaked! But Kate kept us going, a fountain of local knowledge. The conversation was lively and we popped a lot of trees, protecting the reed beds from the encroaching woodland.

I have been to a few now, my favourite being at Beggar Boys Wetland Complex where we were clearing brash and felled wood following a contractor's visit; it was particularly nice as it is an area not open to the public.



Ken popping saplings in the rain, KLNLR, January 2021

So if like me, you like the outdoors, meeting new like-minded people and don't mind a bit of graft, I would highly recommend coming along and helping out.



© Kate Aubury

Gavin releasing a moth, KLNLR, June 2020

A birder from a young age (Gavin remembers a Hoopoe landing on the school lawn as a 10 year old helping to spark his interest), Gavin started visiting KLNLR when it was still a working gravel pit, attracting waders on passage. Over many visits, as the site matured, his interest extended to breeding birds, dragonflies, butterflies and orchids. Along the way Gavin met our Conservation Advisor the late

Focus on a Friend: Gavin Peplow

John Clarke and, at his request, began to send the Trust his records.

Gavin's Dad and Grandad were both keen birders who always carried binoculars, so he was taught the basics from a young age. As he grew older, his interest was fostered by family trips to Norfolk and the Camargue in France. Although birds were his first love, he was intrigued by the moths he would occasionally see in the garden, including the stunning Hummingbird Hawk-moth, and his Grandad lent him a copy of the 2 volume book *The Moths of the British Isles* by Richard South, so he could try to identify those he saw.

In the early 2000s an electrician friend furnished him with his first MV moth trap, and after a successful night trapping in his garden he was hooked!

As a local naturalist Gavin has

had some brilliant experiences on Bredon Hill, including tracking a migrant Honey Buzzard in autumn 2000 to see it joined by a second and then a third bird above Westmancote, whilst at the lake he loves to see Hobbies hawking dragonflies, or stumbling across something more unusual such as a Gannet which turned up unexpectedly one July day.

Gavin's recent role helping the Trust record moths has been great fun too, as with relatively few existing records every night has produced something new to add to our understanding of the sites, and catching a Netted Pug (see page 7) was a highlight.

The Trust is very grateful Gavin has so generously given his time and expertise over many years to help us record more of the wildlife, particularly birds and moths, at our sites. We look forward to more successful moth trapping nights in the future!

Update on Projects & Works Being Undertaken by KCT

- by Conservation Advisor Pamela Clarke



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Noble Chafer in NE Germany, CC BY-SA 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons

Below is an overview of a few projects that the Trust is currently involved with.

The Trust was contacted by Plantlife in connection with their various projects to re-introduce certain threatened plant species under their Back from the Brink initiative. In October last year 7,000 seeds of Red Hemp-Nettle *Galeopsis angustifolia* were sown in a northern margin on the hill. The chosen area is already under conservation headland management for arable plants with a number of rare and threatened plants present on these Cotswolds Brash soils. (The seeds were produced by Kew Millennium Seed Bank in 2018 by propagation from seed collected at Cleeve Common, Cheltenham).

Supervised by a Plantlife officer we sowed the seed of this annual herb last October and searched the site in early July. We were warned that as the seed case is very hard it can take a long time to break down: indeed we found no plants but will continue to monitor the site for the next few months (it flowers from July to October) and again next year. There is still a good chance that the seeds will germinate in the future given correct conditions - it can take a few seasons to break down the casing so germination is slow and sporadic. (In fact Kew MSB data suggests a 5%

germination rate).

Another survey which we got involved in was monitoring the Rugged Oil Beetle *Meloe rugosus*. In October 2020 Adrian and I attended a zoom Rugged Oil Beetle ID and Survey Workshop held by Butterfly Conservation. This nationally scarce Oil Beetle is common in established sites in the Cotswolds and is most active in autumn and winter. It is nocturnal so in October/November we searched suitable habitat (south facing slopes) at KLNK and again with Ray Thomas (a new volunteer) at Quarry Field. We found several beetles but sadly not the target one: we will try again. (The beetle is found at other local sites viz. Prestbury Hill, Cleeve Common, Juniper Hill and Rodborough Common).

In January 2021 we were contacted about a monitoring scheme which was being set up through Royal Holloway University, London, to assess Noble Chafer beetle *Gnorimus nobilis* presence. (This rare beetle is a beautiful metallic-green and can be found in traditional orchards: it is on the wing over summer, feeding on Hogweed and Elder. Larvae live in the decaying wood of old fruit trees. Although mainly found in Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, there are also records from New Forest, Kent and Oxfordshire.)

The Trust was keen to be involved and a suitably mature orchard was chosen. In spring we received our instructions and Adrian and I set the traps and lures in June. I have been checking them daily or on alternate days according to the weather – which has been very mixed! To date no beetles have

been trapped but I understand one or two have been found at Tiddesley Wood. 300 of us were involved so we look forward to the overall results.

Beetles again! Surveys have been going on here since 2008 during most years to map and count Glow-worms *Lampyrus noctiluca*. We have a fixed transect on the hill which I walk with at least one eagle-eyed volunteer to search out these fascinating beetles. Last year I contacted Buglife and they were keen to have our data and now have copies of all our maps etc. which they have digitized; we hope they will be useful in their work. In one evening in mid July last year we saw 40 glowing (flightless) females seeking to attract the flying males - it was quite a sight! By early August there were just 4. (Once mated the females turn their light off).

Some villagers in Upper Kemerton are monitoring their un-trimmed verges which attract glow-worms. Sadly some of these sites continue to be cut though householders have made valiant attempts to get their property's verge exempted with some success. We are grateful for their efforts to protect this rare beetle and for their records.

I'd be glad to receive any of your sightings by email: pmclarkel12@btinternet.com.



© Kate Aubury

Female Glow-worm, Bredon Hill, July 2021

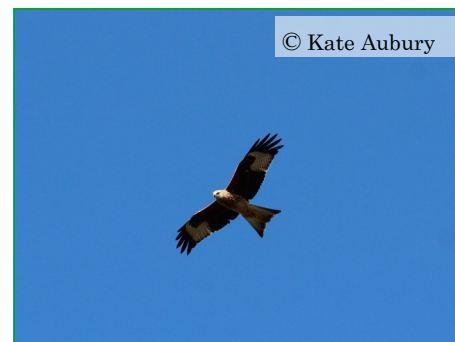
News from the Carrant Catchment Area Restoration Project - by Joanne Leigh, FWAGSW

The group is in its 5th year of funding from Rural Payments Agency and we hope to spend the next six months putting on events discussing farm business innovation and restoration of habitats across our project area. We have been holding online events for so long it was great to get out and see our members at the Raptor event in May. Jimmi Hill from Raptor Aid gave a good walk and talk on raptors and their habitats, focussing particularly on barn owls; improving raptor habitat provides a plethora of benefits for other species. The increase in margins against the hedge and higher grass length hosts thousands, if not millions, of insects for breeding birds, providing homes for voles, mice and nesting sites for bumble bees; so a really good all round improvement for the farm.

Over winter we completed £30,000 of Natural Flood Management (NFM) on Bredon Hill, given to the group by the Environment Agency. We used the funds to

divert water off tracks, plant new hedges and hold back water with leaky woody dams; this should see a reduction in flooding in the lower villages. We were also given a further £20,000 for planting trees and hedges which was given out across the catchment to aid with further NFM. Natural Flood Management is a really good, proven method to slow water flows in the upper regions of the catchment and has attracted further funding from DEFRA for the whole of Worcestershire with thanks to an earlier pilot 'The Cotswolds and Avon Tributaries' that is led by Wendy Bufton and Brian Smith. Please get in touch if you think you can help us with this valuable work to keep our homes high and dry whilst keeping soil on the farm, it also gives me an opportunity to talk to you about our group and other funding that can be levered in to help with farm productivity.

Our next planned event will be on plum tree pruning and will take place in one of the Overbury Orchards in August,



Red Kite on Bredon Hill, 2019

Martin Haynes from Gloucestershire Orchard Trust will lead us on a walk and discussion, details will go out to the group so please join us if you are free.

We are getting into harvest now so it's a great opportunity for me to visit farms to see where we can help so if you are a farmer or landowner please call or get in touch, it is never too late to join us and gain some of the benefits of being part of a facilitated group.

Further information on joining our group can be found at www.FWAGSW.org.uk or by emailing Joanne Joanne.leigh@fwagsw.org.uk.

Moth Trapping Night Nets a Notable Rarity

In June KCT held a moth trapping night along the Sunken Lane above Upper Westmancote, with kind permission from landowner Overbury Estate.

Support Coordinator Kate Aubury was once again joined by experienced moth trappers Gavin Peplow and Oliver Wadsworth, as well as Steve



Netted Pug *Eupithecia venosata*,
Westmancote Hill, June 2021

Whitehouse. Although we were interested in all moth records, a key aim was to check whether Netted Pug, a limestone specialist found on Bladder Campion, was still at the site following a record from more than 20 year ago. To everyone's delight one Netted Pug was recorded, along with a large number of other moths. A great success!

Kemerton Clippings July 2021

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

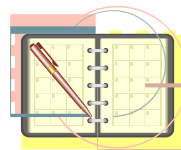


German Wasp *Vespula germanica*,
KLNK, 030621

Save the Date!

- **Saturday 31st July** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 15th August** - Member only Walk, Beggar Boys Wetland (2.30pm start) - *pre-booking essential, see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details*
- **Saturday 28th August** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 25th September** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 23rd October** - Kemerton Apple Day, Lillans Orchard & Victoria Hall (1pm start for walk & 2pm start for hall activities) - *see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details*
- **Saturday 30th October** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 14th November** - Fungus Foray, Kemerton Wood (10.30am start) - *pre-booking essential, see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details*
- **Saturday 27th 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@kemerton.com or by phone on 07765 334 776.



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