



KOW Apple Day Celebrates Orchard Bounty

© Kate Aubury



Chairman Adrian with Walk Attendees, Lillans Orchard, October 2021

Kemerton's Annual Apple Day was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic but Kemerton Orchard Workers, who organise this village event, were determined to return in 2021. With Victoria Hall unavailable due to building works, the Herfords kindly offered the use of a building and outside area at Upper Court for the day and so the event was able to go ahead on Saturday 23rd October.

As always KCT was in attendance with an information stand about our orchard work in the local area, but this year we also arranged a member-only Orchard Walk in nearby Lillans Orchard (a heritage apple orchard owned by Kemerton Estate but managed for wildlife with KCT's assistance).

Our Orchard Walk was led by KCT Chairman Adrian Darby, with Kevin O'Neill from Walcot Organic Nursery joining us to talk about some of the heritage varieties of apple found in Lillans Orchard. Walcot Organic Nursery supply all the fruit trees for the orchards KCT help look after, as they specialise in local heritage varieties.

Attendees on the walk were encouraged to try apples from the trees as we walked through the orchard, to compare the many different types grown in Lillans. The walk included a

discussion on why so many of these older varieties of apple have fallen out of fashion and are not commercially grown despite their delicious flavour, what makes orchards so good for wildlife, and how the estate and KCT manage orchards to enhance this.

KOW's Apple Day started just as our walk ended so all our walk attendees headed over to get freshly picked apples pressed into scrumptious juice, enjoy a delicious slice of homemade cake and cup of tea, talk to Kate on the KCT stand and browse the select stalls selling cards, towels and gifts for Christmas.

Turnout for the Apple Day was excellent, the village had missed this annual event and were delighted to come along and catch up with friends while stocking up on apple juice. The kids thoroughly enjoyed helping to scrat and press the apples as always and the weather kindly stayed dry.

All funds from this event are used by KOW to manage Daffurn's Orchard in Upper Kemerton for the community. If you are interested in helping KOW with the upkeep of the orchard email kate@kemerton.com and we can put you in touch with the KOW committee.



Lottie Aubury scratting apples and another child helping to press the pulp at Kemerton Apple Day, October 2021

KCT Governors' Annual Board Meeting 2021

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 Pamela Clarke and Kate Aubury, who both report on their activities for the year. In July 2021 we held an outdoor meeting, a big improvement on the Zoom call of the previous year!

Governor Brett Westwood offered his resignation ahead of the meeting. The Trust is very grateful to Brett for his 5 years service and wish him all the best for the future. Chairman Adrian Darby put forward Rosemary Winnall for consideration as governor, which was unanimously agreed, and she attended the meeting to find out more about the Trust before starting in the role (more details on page 3).

Pamela and Kate reported on highlights from 2020/21 which included completing a 2 year Natural Networks Project at KLNK, securing

funding for 3 more projects, carrying out moth surveys, collaborating with Back from the Brink on a practical wildflower trial, and other activities.

The ongoing impact of Covid-19 was discussed but, with lockdowns behind us and rules loosened, most of our normal activities had been able to resume and the impact on the Trust was thankfully low.

After reviewing the past year, the governors identified their priorities for 2021/22; planning and delivering a suitable memorial for John Clarke (more details to follow soon), raising funds for new projects, delivering more events as a degree of normality returns and working closely with Kemerton Estate on changes to the farming operation as a result of their new Countryside Stewardship scheme, which will see some major wildlife-friendly projects that will enhance habitat around the Trust's reserves and create more wildlife corridors locally.

After the meeting, Governors enjoyed a very sunny walk on

Bredon Hill which included some fantastic arable weed margins, wildflower verges full of butterflies and took in some of the areas where major change is coming in 2022. Everyone was melting by the end of the walk due to the heat but it was great to show the Governors the work on the ground and discuss future projects at the sites.

The 2020/21 Chairman's Report, Annual Accounts, Conservation Advisor's Report and Support Coordinator's Report are all available to read on our website now in the 'News & Events' section.



Governors on Oat Hill Track, July 2021

Funding Update

In the second half of 2021 we successfully completed our stage 2 grant application to the Natural Networks programme for a woodland project at John Moore Nature Reserve. The grant of £1387.52 covers 45% of the costs. We also received a donation of £170 from Cheltenham Tree Group towards tree planting as part of the same project. (See page 6 for more details).



Long-term local supporter Bredon Forest School donated another £1200 to the Trust in the second 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 October from Miss K.M Harbinson's Charitable Trust and we are very grateful for their continued support too. This money will help pay for a water survey planned in 2022.

Wittering SUP, a corporate sponsor, donated £210 from paddle boarding trips on the River Avon. This will also go towards the water survey.

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

A New Face Joins the KCT Board of Governors



Our new Governor Rosemary Winnall

Following the Governors' Annual Board Meeting we are delighted to announce that Rosemary Winnall MBE has joined the Trust.

Rosemary is a Worcestershire naturalist, biological recorder, founder member of the Wyre Forest Study Group and joint author of *The Nature of Wyre*.

Before retirement Rosemary taught in Outdoor Education Centres in Snowdonia and the Gower prior to becoming

Education Manager with the Forestry Commission running the Wyre Forest Discovery Centre, an environmental education centre for children and adults of all ages. With her husband she owned and managed a Special Wildlife Site for over 20 years. Rosemary was awarded the Worcestershire Wildlife Medal in 2011 for 'dedicated services to nature conservation in Worcestershire' and the MBE in 2015 for 'services to the natural environment'.

Nowadays she writes regularly for the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, is a keen nature photographer, and celebrates wildlife through speaking to groups across the midlands. We hope to arrange a talk from Rosemary later in the year but in the meantime she will be joining us at our KLNLR Open Day in June on the morning walk (see page 8 for details) so members can meet her then.

Rosemary's wide-ranging wildlife expertise and experience as a Trustee with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust in the past will be extremely valuable to the Trust and we look forward to working with her in 2022 and beyond. Welcome aboard Rosemary!

Rosemary's arrival coincides with Brett Westwood's resignation from the Board. Brett served for five years but his increasingly busy schedule (working on BBC Springwatch among other things) meant he no longer felt he could give the time needed to his role on the Board. The Trust would like to thank Brett for his service and we will be looking forward to seeing him on Springwatch again soon.

The Trust currently has one Governor post to fill and will be searching for the right candidate over the coming months.

News in Brief

Earlier in the year a routine inspection found that the West Hide needed a roof replacement. Our Warden John was planning to carry it out in the summer but an active wasp nest inside the hide put paid to that idea and the hide was temporarily closed until the wasp nest died off naturally in the autumn. John then spent several weeks cutting back the thorny scrub around the West Hide, removing the old roof, replacing rotten timber and installing a new roof. The hide was reopened to members in November and is looking great, thanks to John's hard work.



Otter, KLNLR, October 2021, with thanks to Mark Everett

In October we were delighted to receive confirmation that otters were visiting KLNLR when our bird expert Rob Pruden spotted 2 otters playing in the water. A week later, one of our members snapped some fantastic shots of 3 otters hunting in the water near Water's Edge Hide. Since

them we have had several more sightings, but they do not stay for long. Otters have always visited the lake but for many years we only knew they had visited because scat and feeding remains were found. In recent years a lucky few have seen them in person, always a high-light and something to watch out for on visits to the hides.

Sadly this autumn did not see the return of the starlings, for the second year in a row. The milder weather meant fewer birds from the continent and murmuration sites were few and far between around the country. With climate change, is this a trend for the future?

Beggar Boys Wetland Walk

On 15th August a small group of members joined KCT Chairman Adrian Darby and Support Coordinator Kate Aubury for a guided tour of Beggar Boys Wetland near Westmancote. This beautiful wildlife site has no public access so it was a rare chance for members to visit, see the

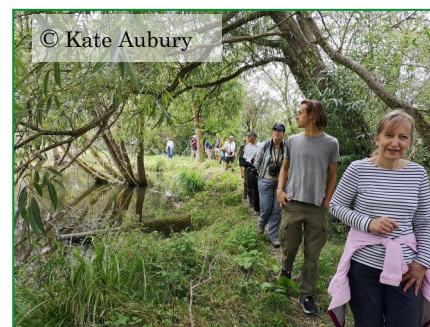


Cinnabar Moth Caterpillar on Ragwort, Beggar Boys, August 2021

reserve and learn more about how the Trust looks after it.

Beggar Boys is normally a fantastic site for butterflies and dragonflies but sadly the overcast weather meant very few were seen. A couple were spotted in the Wet Meadow and the colourful Ragwort had distinctive black and yellow Cinnabar Moth caterpillars eating its leaves.

Attendees were shown the Monk Weir that allows us to control water levels in the lake and seasonally flooded meadow and walked around the lake into the woodland above the wetland, which is



Members walking around the lake, August 2021

managed alongside it for the benefit of wildlife. Several small toads and frogs were spotted on the path, both breed in the wetland.

Although less was seen on the walk than we had hoped, everyone had a lovely time and enjoyed a peek at a site normally open only to nature.

Moth Trapping at Beggar Boys Reveals More Species

In early August our moth trapping experts Gavin Peplow and Oliver Wadsworth joined KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury and two volunteers for a wonderful night of moths at Beggar Boys Wetland.

Weather conditions were not perfect so overall numbers were lower than expected but we still caught enough to greatly enhance our knowledge



Close-up of Canary-shouldered Thorn *Ennomos alnaria*, Beggar Boys, August 2021

of the moth species at this special site.

One micro moth identified by Oliver was *Bactra furfurana*, a wetland specialist with only a few Worcestershire records.

The photographic highlight was the Canary-shouldered Thorn, a quite remarkable looking moth. Our thanks as always to Gavin and Oliver.

Trail Cameras Capture Fantastic Footage

Whilst onsite moth trapping at Beggar Boys, Kate set up a trail camera on the lake bund to see what wildlife made use of our manmade path.

The camera was up for two weeks and captured fabulous footage of deer (Fallow, Roe and Muntjac), foxes, rabbits squirrels, and birds. One fox was recorded nearly every

night using the bund to go out hunting and the deer clearly find our path useful for getting around. We were surprised to also find video of the Heron hunting for frogs in the grass.

The best clips were uploaded to our Facebook page so if you are interested, click on Videos on our Facebook page Kemerton Conservation Trust.



Still from video of two Fallow Deer grazing at Beggar Boys Wetland, August 2021

Deadly Discovery Delights on Fantastic Fungus Foray

On 14th November the Trust led a member-only fungus foray in Kemerton Wood, which adjoins KLNK. The foray was led by Support Coordinator Kate Aubury, who carries out fungi surveys for the Trust.

A lack of rainfall in the preceding weeks had an impact on the number of fungi species seen but there was still a wide range to spot in the woodland.

As we rambled through the



Foray basket with fungi for ID, Kemerton Wood, November 2021

woodland spotting fungi Kate talked about their biology, what fascinates her about them, and where possible, identified the fungi found to species level. She also highlighted some of the features vital to identification and explained why so many cannot be identified in the field and require additional study especially microscopy.

Fungi come in a wide range of shapes, sizes, colours and smells, and members were treated to such highlights as Sulphur Knight (which stinks of sulphur), Jelly Babies (which has a jelly texture) and Common Earthball (which is golf ball shaped and puffs spores through a hole). The most exciting discovery was our first record of Death Cap at the site. This olive-green fungus looks quite unassuming considering one mouthful can kill you, and our attendees



Death Cap *Amanita phalloides*, Kemerton Wood, November 2021

were very excited. Kate was pleased to add a new species to the Trust's fungus records too.

The walk was very enjoyable and everyone learnt more about a fascinating group that is often overlooked. The most common species seen on the walk was Sulphur Tuft, a dead-wood specialist that thrives in woodland. It was spotted so many times that all attendees now have one fungus they can reliably ID!

Rare Barbastelle Bat Recorded in Lillans Orchard

As part of the Back from the Brink Ancients of the Future Project on Bredon Hill, Bat Conservation contacted KCT to ask if they could set up passive acoustic monitoring in Lillans Orchard in 2020.

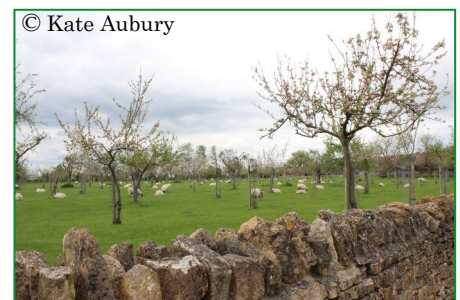
The aim of the monitoring was to collect bat data for the Back from the Brink Ancients of the Future primary target species, the Barbastelle and the Noctule and for the project's secondary target species, the Brown Long-eared bat, Lesser Horseshoe bat, Greater Horseshoe bat and the Soprano Pipistrelle. The Bechstein's bat is also an Ancients of the

Future primary target species but is difficult to identify from its echolocation calls alone because its calls are similar to other *Myotis* bat species.

Joanne Leigh from FWAG volunteered to put out 4 acoustic sensors at fixed survey points within the orchard once a month in July, August and September 2020 and the data was processed through SonoBat, an auto ID software. KCT has now received the final report on the data gathered and is delighted to confirm that Barbastelle, a rare bat, was recorded in the orchard on all 3 surveys. Other species including Noctule,

Serotine, Common & Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared and *Myotis* sp. were also recorded on the surveys.

The monitoring has added to our existing bat records and the high number of species certainly shows the value of a wildlife-friendly orchard.



Lillans Orchard, Kemerton

Woodland Restoration Receives Funding from Natural Networks



© Kate Aubury

Small Stagshorn *Calocera cornea*, John Moore Nature Reserve

Kemerton Conservation Trust is excited to announce we have successfully bid for £1387.52 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

restoration project at John Moore Nature Reserve in Kemerton. Work on started in October 2021 and will complete by 31st October 2022.

The focus of the project is woodland restoration and habitat creation including coppicing, scrub clearance along the stream, new tree planting and installation of bird and bat boxes. The project will improve visitor access with a rustic bench, a new interpretation board and improved woodland path. Although most of the works will be carried out by contractors, our volunteers will also be involved in the project; our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury will be managing it and Warden John Threadingham

will assist with habitat works onsite, supported by our enthusiastic work party volunteers.

John Moore Nature Reserve is a small but tranquil woodland in the heart of Kemerton and the project will benefit both visitors to the reserve and the wildlife found there including birds which nest on the site, invertebrates such as Speckled Wood butterfly and, with new deadwood habitat piles created from coppiced wood, fungi such as Small Stagshorn.

As part of the project, the Trust has written a new management plan for the reserve to ensure the project improvements are sustained in the future.

Regenerative Agriculture By Jake Freestone, Farm Manager, Overbury Enterprises

You may have noticed changes to the cropping (arable) side of Kemerton Estate over the last 2 years since Peter retired as farm manager. I would like to explain how these changes benefit our beautiful Bredon Hill and its wildlife, as well as producing high quality food with a lower carbon footprint.

The farming system we have been using at Overbury since 2013 is called Regenerative Agriculture, and we are now using this at Kemerton too. It has three key aims. Aim one is to move the soil as little as possible (crops established with a direct drill) and this is important because it enables the soil biological life to develop undisturbed, increases soil stability and reduces erosion (important on the hill), water filtration is faster (reduced flooding) and it increases

organic matter in the soil.

Aim Two is to keep the soil covered all the time. We do this by planting cover crops. These are mixes of different species planted between crops. These capture sunshine and turn it into carbon, aerate the soil (roots) and feed the soil microbes. We also return the residue from the previous crop back to the soil, recycling some of the plant nutrients as well as protecting the soil surface from erosion by wind, rain and sun.

Aim three is to introduce a wider rotation so we are not reliant on so many chemicals and fertilisers. These artificial crop inputs contribute towards our farm carbon footprint and with targets to become Net Zero by 2040 managing this is very important. Another vital ingredient to sustainable crop



© Jake Freestone

Direct drilling in an arable field

production is the introduction of manures. These are natural plant feeds and organic matter and are used at certain points in the rotation.

The whole new farming system is aiming to produce higher quality food, with less inputs, whilst improving the environment in which we all live. The results that we are achieving in our farmland bird numbers and species are fantastic as well as higher numbers of insects, wildflowers and invertebrates.

News from the Carrant Catchment Area

Restoration Project - by Joanne Leigh, FWAGSW

Writing this we are about to get approval for another year's funding, so you can expect to see a year long schedule of soil, water and habitat events.

Our last 5 years has been huge for habitat creation on Bredon Hill, in particular wood pasture creation, very much led by farmers. We hope to follow this up with additional planting over winter which aims to link Bredon Hill to Dixon Hill. This is largely funded by Farming in the Protected Landscapes and CPRE and will see over 300 trees and 800m of hedge planted, aiding habitat linkage. This is valued at £7000, with the added value of our wonderful volunteer contribution, which has been tremendous.

We are planning events about the new Environmental Land Management (ELM) and how it will work. The Sustainable Farming Incentive, Local Nature Recovery and Local Landscape Recovery will make up the 3 tiers of ELM; SFI will replace Countryside Stewardship, but the other two tiers will be targeting species and landscape recovery and will look very different.

One difference is that funding can be complimented by third parties or blended finance. As such we have been applying for funding from different sources. Farming in the Protected Landscapes has been one of these successful projects, with work aimed at bird recovery starting soon on Bredon Hill. We will be working with the West Midland Bird Ringing Group (WMBRG) and farmers to monitor birds and restore habitat. The WMBRG have already highlighted some of the wonders on the hill and you can read about them in their annual report, <https://www.westmidlandsringinggroup.co.uk/annual-report>.

The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group are exploring shortened food chains and dynamic procurement; offering more locally supplied goods that support sustainable farming. The pandemic has shown us how fragile these chains can become. Changing how we shop will support farmers and help them and the communities we live in become resilient in the face of climate change. Most of our farmers already supply boxed meat, eggs, milk and vegetables; but we need to find



Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*,
Bredon Hill, 2013

new mechanisms of supporting farming businesses as they can provide so much more than food. We already know that carbon sequestration will reduce the climate emergency; improved management of grasslands will increase water infiltration and reduce flooding; reduced till and covered soils over winter will protect and build soil health. The farmed landscape is more than just a means for producing food, it provides a wildlife refuge, is the green lungs of the country and can help keep communities safe and resilient in the climate emergency we all face.

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

Muddy Footpath Gets a Makeover at KLNR

The public footpath at KLNR has been a muddy quagmire in recent winters due to a build up of clay soil retaining water for months on the surface of the path. The state of the path was causing annoyance to visitors so in 2020 the Trust contacted Worcestershire County Council to request the surface be redressed with new gravel.



Newly gravelled footpath, KLNR,
November 2021

WCC agreed the proposal in 2021 and in November their contractors spent a week on-site scraping off soil and redressing the path with a deep layer of Cotswold stone gravel. The end result is a much improved surface to walk on and it has remained dry and mud-free over the winter since its installation. Our thanks to the council.

Kemerton Clippings January 2022

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



Buff-tip Moth Caterpillars
Phalera bucephala on Alder,
KLNR, August 2021

Save the Date!

- **Saturday 22nd January** - Working party (10am start, KLNR)
- **Saturday 19th February** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 26th March** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 10th April** - **Member only Bird Watching Walk, KLNR** (2pm start) - *pre-booking essential, see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details*
- **21st April** - **World Curlew Day Events at Upton Ham in partnership with Severn Curlew Project**, see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 30th April** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 8th May** - **Member only Village Birdsong Walk** (5.30am start) - *pre-booking essential, see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details*
- **Saturday 28th May** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 11th June** - **KLNR Open Day** (Gates open at 11am, walks at 11.30am & 2pm) - *see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details*
- **Saturday 2nd July** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 10th July** - **Grand Opening of John Clarke Walk, Upper Westmancote** (2pm start) - *pre-booking essential, see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details*

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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