



Wonderful Wildflowers are Highlight of Open Day

© Kate Aubury



Open Day Attendees admiring Southern Marsh Orchids, KLNR, June 2022

After a two year pandemic hiatus, Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve's Open Day returned on 11th June for a fantastic day in the sunshine (with a couple of heavy downpours to keep us on our toes!).

This year the morning walk focused on orchids and invertebrates, with Chairman Adrian Darby joined by Governor Rosemary Winnall to lead the large group of attendees round the reserve and admire the array of fantastic flora and fauna on display. As always the orchids were the star of the show, with hundreds of Pyramidal, Common Spotted, Southern Marsh, Bee and Common Twayblade Orchids, but there was plenty more to see including butterflies, bees, dragonflies and beetles. One of the younger attendees spotted a baby toad.

After the walk, refreshments were available back at the woodland glade, and the kids enjoyed doing some nature-themed artwork too. KCT governors and volunteers were on hand to talk about our work and answer questions about the wildlife.

The afternoon walk, led by Governor Matthew Darby, assisted by Conservation Advisor Pamela Clarke and Support

Coordinator Kate Aubury, focused on orchids and the new mob grazing regime on Lake Meadow. This regime (whereby a large herd of cows grazes the site for only 3-4 days once or twice a year) has already made a significant difference to the limestone grassland on the north side of the lake, with a greater variety of wildflowers now flourishing, and the bramble kept in check. Attendees also heard more about plans to convert the field next to Lake Meadow into a wader meadow under stewardship, with pollarding of hedgerow trees designed to remove covid perches and improve breeding success for Lapwing, which already use the area in small numbers. New fencing is going in to allow grazing of this meadow as well, to assist with ongoing management.

Attendance at the Open Day was excellent, with many members old and new joining us, as well as locals interested in learning more about the reserve. We signed up some new members on the day and made a small profit from entrance fees and refreshment sales.

Our thanks to all our wonderful volunteers without whom we could not run this event.



Yellow-wort *Blackstonia perfoliata* (left) and Pyramidal Orchid *Anacamptis pyramidalis* (right), KLNR, June 2022

Grand Opening of the John Clarke Walk on Bredon Hill



Pamela Clarke, Penelope Bossom & Adrian Darby at the grand opening



the route, look at the wonderful flora and fauna, and hear more about why this route was chosen to reflect some of John's proudest achievements; highlighting as it does the recovery of rare arable plants in Oat Hill, Pad Piece and Tueswell Hill, and the abundance of wildflowers and insects along Oat Hill Track and Westmancote Track and in the adjoining calcareous grassland.

The Greater Knapweed, a Bredon Hill specialty, was looking stunning in the sunshine, attracting plenty of pollinators including Marbled White, Six-spotted Burnet and various bee species. Large, Small and Essex Skippers were also seen in good quantities along the route.

The John Clarke Memorial Walk Project was made possible thanks to a generous £1000 grant from Highfields Trust CIO, and a £500 Magic Little Grant through the partnership between Localgiving and Postcode Local

Trust. In addition, Overbury Enterprises and long-term corporate sponsor Cotswold Agricultural Merchants both kindly contributed.

We hope visitors to Bredon Hill will enjoy the new walk and that it will be a fitting testament to John Clarke, now and into the future.

If you would like more details about the new route, a downloadable map of the walk can be found on our website http://www.kemerton.org/habitats/arable_farmland.htm



Marbled White on Greater Knapweed, Westmancote Track, July 2022

On Sunday July 10th our Conservation Advisor Pamela Clarke officially opened the John Clarke Walk, a circular route designed to honour her husband John Clarke's vital contribution to the Trust's work and to conservation in the local area from 1982 until his death in 2019.

Chairman Adrian Darby made a speech before the new board and bench unveiling and we were also joined by Penelope Bossom of Overbury Enterprises, with whom John worked closely on a number of conservation projects for the estate, alongside his role at KCT.

After the unveiling, attendees braved the hot sun to walk

Funding Update

In the first half of 2022 we submitted five grant applications for projects. We applied for funding from Highfields Trust CIO for two projects and received £2000 total for the Fish & Aquatic Plant Survey Project (see page 5) and the John Clarke Memorial Walk Project (see above). We also received £500 from the Gordon Gray Trust for the Fish & Aquatic Plant Survey Project, and a further



£500 from Magic Little Grants for the John Clarke Memorial Walk Project. Two applications were rejected.

Long-term local supporter Bredon Forest School donated another £500 to the Trust in the first half of 2022, funds which go towards volunteer tools and materials etc. We

are very grateful for their generous support.

We also received another £200 donation in March from Miss K.M Harbinson's Charitable Trust and we are very grateful for their continued support too.

Broadway Natural History Society also kindly donated £370.25 towards our work.

Thank you to all who have supported us this year!

Natural Networks Project Successfully Completed at John Moore Nature Reserve



© Kate Aubury

Contractors CRC Ecology coppicing Hazel at JMNR, February 2022

Kemerton Conservation Trust has successfully completed a woodland habitat restoration project at John Moore Nature Reserve thanks to funding from the England European Regional Development Fund through the Natural Networks programme delivered in partnership between Worcestershire County Council and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Work on the project started in September 2021 and was completed end of July 2022.

John Moore Nature Reserve is a woodland site in the heart of Kemerton, named after the famous local writer, who lived in the village and owned the land, which was subsequently gifted to the Trust in his memory. Although only small, this woodland is a tranquil spot to visit and attracts a wide range of birds including Marsh Tit who have nested on the site in past years. The nature reserve is managed by the Trust with the help of our volunteer Warden and work party volunteers, but a lack of time has meant it has been neglected.

Funding from the Natural Networks programme, together with a donation from Cheltenham Tree Group and KCT's own funds, allowed us to undertake a programme of hazel coppicing, scrub clearance along the stream margins, new tree and shrub planting and installation of bird and bat boxes. The project also

improved visitor access with a new interpretation board, new rustic bench and improved woodland path. Our volunteers were vital in delivering the project; Support Coordinator Kate Aubury managed it, carried out fungi surveys and moth trapping, and our warden John Threadingham assisted with habitat works onsite, supported by our enthusiastic work party volunteers. They pulled invasive Himalayan Balsam along the stream and laid the new chippings path.

A new management plan for the reserve was written as part of the project, which will help us maintain the woodland into the future.

Our grateful thanks to Natural Networks and Cheltenham Tree Group for supporting this project. A full project report is available on our website.

News in Brief

In early February Support Coordinator Kate Aubury gave a talk to Kemerton WI about the Trust using the new audiovisual equipment at the recently refurbished Victoria Hall, which was a pleasure to use. The talk was very well attended and the Trust signed up some new members on the night. Kate also gave a talk to Tewkesbury and Bredon Hill Probus Club at Bredon Village Hall, which was very well received, and led to the group visiting Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve in mid-June for a guided walk focusing on our orchids. Both groups



© Kate Aubury

Probus members on orchid guided walk, KLNr, June 2022

gave the Trust a donation for their talks and Probus Club also gave us a donation for the guided walk.

Visitors to Kemerton Lake will have spotted some substantial path and fencing works that

started in January and, after a long delay due to contractor issues, are currently being completed. The works are being carried out by Kemerton Estate Partnership under the farm's Countryside Stewardship scheme but will benefit the Trust, our visitors and the site's management. The public footpath has been widened through Fir Wood to hopefully alleviate the mud issues in winter and prevent the path becoming so overgrown in the summer. The new fencing is to assist in mob grazing Lake Meadow and the northern edge of the lake, which is part of the site's management.

Bird Watching Walk at KLNLR

On 10th April a small group of members joined KCT Conservation Advisor Pamela Clarke and Ornithologist Rob Prudden for a bird watching walk at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve.

Rob has been recording birds at KLNLR for more than 25

years so has an in-depth knowledge of the site, its bird species, and their behavior and it was fantastic for attendees to have his expertise on hand.

Walking around the lake in the weak spring sunshine, a highlight was hearing a male Cetti's Warbler singing from the reedbeds (they are rarely seen but their unique song carries), and a look through our binoculars at the islands confirmed the Oystercatcher had returned to start breeding.

In the scrapes above the lake we accidentally disturbed Common Snipe, which flew off in their characteristic zigzag.

© Kate Aubury



Members walking around the lake, April 2022

A small number of male Reed Bunting were also seen in the reedbeds, having recently returned to the site for the summer, and the swans were doing their courtship dance while we were there.

A lovely walk and our thanks to Rob for sharing his time and knowledge with us.

© Kate Aubury



Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, KLNLR March 2022

Braving an Early Start for Beautiful Birdsong Bonanza

Despite the 5.30am start, a large group of members joined Governor Matthew Darby and Support Coordinator Kate Aubury in early May for a walk around Kemerton to hear the dawn chorus in a variety of village habitats.

The walk started outside St Nicholas Church, where the dulcet tones of a Blackbird could immediately be heard. Walking through the mature oaks in Kemerton Court's garden, the loud song of a Wren was unmistakable, alongside Blackbird and Song Thrush, and the call of a Wood Pigeon. The walk continued through Lillans Orchard, where Jackdaws were noisily cawing, and down Jobs Lane to follow the public footpath through woodland, with Chiff Chaff singing overhead. After walking around the lake at Upper Court the walk followed



Matthew Darby leading the group in Lillans Orchard, May 2022

the public footpath down to John Moore Nature Reserve, where the attendees heard about the newly finished project and the work done to improve the woodland for birds and other wildlife. Overhead birds continued to sing, with the familiar 'teacher, teacher' of a Great Tit calling and the lovely lilting song of a Robin too.

The walk ended as the village started waking up, and every-

one headed home for a well earned breakfast!

More than 20 species of birds were heard, including Blackcap, Chaffinch, Dunnock, Goldfinch, Mistle Thrush, Nuthatch and Raven.

The walk was well worth the early start and it highlighted just how many birds are to be heard in our village environs. The dawn chorus ends before most people are awake but it's an amazing symphony to hear, we recommend making the effort at least once!

© Kate Aubury



Blackbird *Turdus merula* in tree

Fish and Aquatic Plant Survey Project gets Underway

© Kate Aubury



Will Watson surveying aquatic plants, KLNLR, May 2022

At last year's Board Meeting, Governors discussed the increasing impact of invasive Nuttall's Waterweed *Elodea nuttallii* on the aquatic ecosystem at Kemerton Lake. The invasive waterweed was first recorded at the lake in 2002 but recent mild winters had resulted in a significant increase in the spread of the plant and there was serious concerns on the impact this

would have on the species dependent on the waterbody. Of special concern was the effects on fish and native aquatic plants.

One issue hampering us was the lack of good data on what fish species were in the lake, and in what numbers, as although Roach and Rudd were introduced many years ago, no surveys had been done since as we lack the knowledge in-house to do them. We also had old records of aquatic plants but again, no recent data. We needed specialist surveys to gather this data.

In January 2022 we began fundraising for a new 'Fish and Aquatic Plants Survey Project'. Generous donations

© Kate Aubury



Fishtrack electro-fish surveying KLNLR, April 2022

from Highfields Trust CIO and the Gordon Gray Trust meant the project could begin in April 2022. More funding is still sought.

So far Fishtrack have carried out electro-fishing of the lake and Will Watson has carried out one aquatic plant survey. A further survey is taking place in August. We look forward to sharing results later this year.

Bird Ringing at KLNLR Nets Some Brilliant Results

A group of dedicated bird ringers from West Midlands Ringing Group, led by Fergus Henderson, have started a programme of ringing birds at Kemerton Lake as part of the wider Bredon Hill Bird Recovery Project, funded by Farming in Protected Landscapes.

Meeting regularly through the year, these expert volunteers set up nets to catch birds at specific sites on the reserve. Once caught, the birds are identified, sexed, aged and weighed before being ringed. The birds are then released back into the wild, unharmed but feathers a little ruffled!

Bird ringing is an important

tool in better understanding bird populations, migrations, local movements and life expectancy, so the Trust is delighted that Fergus and his team are generously giving their time and expertise to provide us with valuable data on our birds at KLNLR.

One of the highlights to date was when the team caught a male Cuckoo at one of the spring sessions. At a later session, the acoustic lure brought 4 Cuckoos (2 male and 2 female) to investigate, giving us confirmation of greater numbers than expected on site. Thanks to an excellent photograph by ringer Nick Berry, one male was confirmed as a BTO tagged bird called Ripple. You can see more about Ripple

on the BTO website here: <https://www.bto.org/our-science/projects/cuckoo-tracking-project/ripple>

We will update members in the next edition with more on this fantastic project, no doubt there will be further interesting and exciting developments as the ringing continues.



© Kate Aubury

Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*, KLNLR, May 2022

Shedding Light on Bredon Hill's Glow-worms

- by Conservation Advisor Pamela Clarke



© Roger Umpleby
Female Glow-worm *Lampyris noctiluca*,
on vegetation

In the July 2021 edition of Kemerton Clippings I touched on the subject of Glow-worms *Lampyris noctiluca* and the fixed transect which I've walked annually for KCT since 2007 - with at least one volunteer - to map these fascinating (and not at all worm-like) beetles.

Bredon Hill with its herb-rich unimproved grassland makes an ideal site for Glow-worm and historically they were very common. In 2007 a small pilot study was carried out by Sue Chandler along a 1.25 km transect above Kemerton and Westmancote recording glowing females and the results suggested a correlation between the richness of plant diversity and their populations.

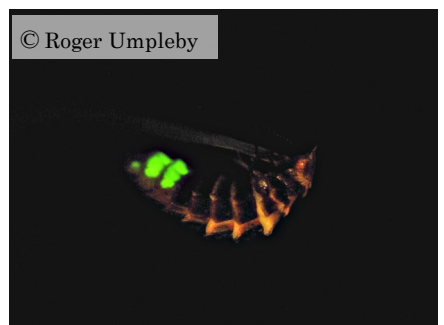
The report on this generated local interest and in 2008 John asked for volunteers to widen the scope of the survey elsewhere on Bredon Hill to cover the southern side of the hill from west of Woollas Hall to east of Elmley Castle. Ten keen teams of two were allocated a route and asked to make three visits after dusk (when colour could no longer be distinguished) in late June, July and early August to

search for glowing females. At the same time a survey of snails (the main food source of Glow-worm larvae) was conducted by expert Terry Knight and results indicated that the number of snails also related to habitat and, not unsurprisingly, to Glow-worm numbers.

Glow-worm show a preference for unimproved grassland, track sides, railway embankments and field margins - particularly on limestone and chalk. Any changes such as 'improvement' of roadside verges, the use of pesticides, light pollution, the scrubbing-up of fields (Glow-worm prefer more open areas) can result in surviving colonies becoming isolated. (Tidy churchyards for instance mean no Glow-worm: places need to be left for snails on which the larvae depend). On Bredon Hill local populations were found to comprise loose groups in isolation from others: the immobility of wingless females means that re-colonisation has to rely on the limited movement of female larvae.

Glow-worms are soft bodied with the female measuring up to 25mm in length, the male 18mm. At night the adult female emits a yellow-green glow to attract a male using bioluminescence: he flies up to about 1m in height. She will climb onto a plant stalk clear of other vegetation and bend her abdomen to display the glowing bands on the segments towards the tip. The female glows until she

successfully mates. She will then lay her eggs (typically between 50 and 100) and will die soon after. The eggs hatch into larvae and remain as such for up to two summers, feeding almost exclusively on snails which they inject with a neurotoxin which both immobilises and liquefies the victim for the larvae to ingest. (Adult Glow-worm have no mouth parts, living off food stores acquired as a larva. They live between 7 and 14 days and their sole purpose is to reproduce). The larvae also glow though faintly and intermittently for a few seconds at a time in effect twinkling. The two or even three-year gap between mating and the appearance of an adult explains why it is possible to find plenty on a site one year and few or none the next - a fact which is reassuring to surveyors who can find visits inexplicably disappointing! In mid-July 2020 we saw 40 glowing: the same time this year we saw only 12. We know that windy, wet, cool or full moon nights are not good for surveys: the unknown is the effect of this abnormally hot weather, although in the past it has not deterred females from glowing. We'll see how they perform in 2023!



© Roger Umpleby
Female Glow-worm *Lampyris noctiluca*,
glowing at night

News from the Carrant Catchment Area

Restoration Project - by Joanne Leigh, FWAGSW

What a start to the year we have had and so much extra funding I have not been able to keep up! Farming is certainly becoming a very trendy word/ career with all the great local products produced and the benefits to wildlife and the environment!

We at CCARP and FWAG encourage farming businesses to work with nature to improve farm productivity and that is certainly true of the funding recently received from new funders Severn Trent with their Boost for Biodiversity fund. We have combined this with Farming in Protected Landscapes funding to help improve wildlife on Bredon Hill and beyond into the Lower Avon vales. Its exciting to have farmers come forward to offer land that supports breeding and/or migratory birds, or the insects that feed them, which will make a big difference locally.

We have already mapped several farms for their bird populations with West Midlands Ringing Group stars

Ben Dolan and Paul Hopwood and their fantastic team, and now we are working with farmers to enhance those sites to increase the populations. We have some wonderful features being worked on such as wetlands, scrapes, ponds and over winter feeding; what great news for birds who live in or visit the area.

We have also been holding events on herbal leys, woodland management, and agro-forestry; farming the landscape is forever changing and farmers are always looking for new ways to farm in harmony with nature. Recent funding and support from Woodland Trust has offered farmers the opportunity to look at interesting new ways of farming with trees. This could be in a silvo-arable or silvo-pasture scenario, or enhancing the hedgerows to broaden and improve field biodiversity throughout the year and to allow livestock to shelter from the environmental extremes we are facing. We are starting to see a change in livestock breeding to allow for out



© Kate Aubury

Red Polls grazing in wood pasture
On Bredon Hill

wintering; this not only helps with Nitrate Vulnerable Zones regulations but also improves the diet of livestock and moves away from cereal based diets to grass and tree fed. Lots of local designations and regulations need to be considered in these situations, so its not a light hearted move and requires a lot of livestock management to get the system working for farmers and landscape management; You can see an excellent demonstration at Kemerton Estate on the wood pasture fields leading up to Bredon Hill.

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

Clearwing Moths Confirmed through Lure Survey

In May and June naturalist Jason Kernohan visited KLNR to survey for clearwing moths. These elusive moths do not come to moth traps and are rarely seen so distribution is still poorly understood. In recent years Jason has been surveying sites in Worcestershire using a pheromone lure, which attracts males, to improve our knowledge of their location and numbers locally.



© Jason Kernohan

Six-belted Clearwing
Bembecia ichneumoniformis

At KLNR Jason confirmed the presence of nationally scarce Six-belted Clearwing, with 12 males coming to the lure during the June survey. The caterpillars feed on Bird's Foot Trefoil, so the limestone grassland by the lake is perfect for them. We are very grateful to Jason for donating his time and expertise, it is a new record for the site and highlights the importance of the grassland.

Kemerton Clippings July 2022

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

© Kate Aubury



Common Centaury *Centaurea erythraea*,
KLNR, July 2022

Save the Date!

- **Saturday 30th July** - Working party (10am start, Lillans Orchard)
- **Sunday 21st August** - **Member-only Dragonfly Walk, KLNR** (2pm start) - *pre-booking essential, see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details*
- **Saturday 3rd September** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Friday 9th September** - **Member-only Bat Walk, KLNR**, (8pm start) - *pre-booking essential, see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details*
- **Saturday 1st October** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 22nd October** - **Kemerton Apple Day, Victoria Hall** (2pm start) - *see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details*
- **Saturday 5th November** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 13th November** - **Member-only Fungus Foray, Aldwick Wood SSSI** (10am start) - *pre-booking essential, see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details*
- **Saturday 3rd 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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