



Focus on Fantastic Flora at KLNR Open Day



Pyramidal Orchids and Ox-eye Daisies, KLNR, June 2024

There was a great turnout for our Annual Open Day at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve (KLNR) on Saturday 15th June. Despite a couple of showers, the day was warm and there was plenty of sunshine.

The focus this year was on the wonderful wildflowers, including our orchids, which are always a highlight of the event. There were two guided walks around the reserve, showcasing areas not open to the public, where thousands of Pyramidal, Common Spotted, Southern Marsh and Bee Orchids bloom, along with meadow flora such as Ox-eye Daisies, Grass Vetchling, Bird's-foot Trefoil, Agrimony and Common Knapweed.

Along with seeing the wildflowers, attendees learnt more about the reserve's management, including some of the challenges, and saw wetland birds on the lake, dragonflies and damselflies, grasshoppers, flower beetles and much more. We spotted a Scarlet Tiger Moth in the grassland; this iridescent day-flying moth seems to be having a good year locally.

2024 has been a poor year for many insects, especially butterflies, moths, bees and flies, and that was reflected in the low numbers seen on the reserve at the Open Day; Common Blue are normally numerous on the Bird's-foot Trefoil, but none were seen on the walks.

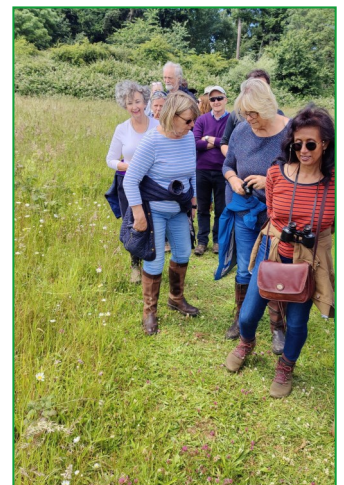
Although insects are in decline nationally and have been for decades, as a result of habitat loss, pesticide use and climate change, this year's drastic falls are likely because of the unusually wet weather over the last 18 months. Seeing so many beautiful blooms bare of pollinators in a nature reserve managed primarily for wildlife is deeply worrying, and a sombre reminder that more is needed to help reverse the biodiversity crisis in the UK. Nature reserves are an important tool in the conservation of species, but we need to increase good quality habitat in the wider landscape too, including our gardens and road-side verges, as well as reduce pesticide use.

On a more positive note, numbers of orchids, especially Pyramidal Orchids, were higher than usual, so the warm, wet weather has suited some plants at least. Attendees were also interested to see Hemlock, a poisonous native umbellifer that has also enjoyed the wetter conditions, appearing in many new locations this year.

Our huge thanks to all the volunteers who helped us run the Open Day, including those who baked brownies and flapjacks, helped erect gazebos and supervised car parking. We could not do it without you!



Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera*,
KLNR, June 2024



Attendees on an Open Day
walk, KLNR, June 2024

Bioblitz Reveals Biodiversity of Daffurn's Orchard



Experts Roger Umpelby and staff from CSA Environmental, along with attendees, at the bioblitz 27/04/24

surveys of the orchard during the day and night to record as many different types of flora, fauna and fungi as possible.

Experts led surveys looking for bees, butterflies, plants, birds, fungi and more, and we also had face painting, an art station and an art competition for children, as well as a small lab in the hall.

But despite the downpour, our experts, volunteers and a few hardy visitors managed to record more than 100 species on the day, with another 40+ recorded at the rescheduled moth trapping. The full project report can be seen on our website: <http://www.kemerton.org/news.htm>.

Our grateful thanks to all who made the event possible; our experts (special thanks to CSA Environmental staff), our volunteers, and of course our funder Welcome to our Future.

On Saturday 27th April we held a bioblitz at Daffurn's Orchard in Kemerton, funded by Welcome to our Future. KCT volunteers, experts and enthusiasts carried out

The weather was rather wet on the day, so that impacted both visitor turnout and number of insects seen, and the rain meant we had to postpone the planned moth trapping session until May.

New Nature Trail & Circular Path Opens at Daffurn's Orchard

Our Welcoming Visitors and Supporting Volunteers at Daffurn's Orchard Project successfully completed in April.

This small project, which was fully funded by the Dent-Brocklehurst Family Charitable Trust, included designing and installing new

signage in the orchard (see photo of new information poster), creating a new nature trail for children onsite, creating a new circular path through the trees, and purchasing incinerator bins for the volunteers to use.

We updated our orchard webpage and used social media to increase the site's profile locally.



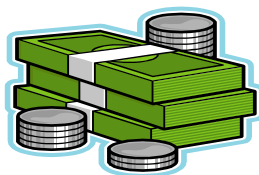
The new interpretation board, Daffurn's Orchard, March 2024

Our grateful thanks to our generous funders. The full project report can be seen on our website: <http://www.kemerton.org/news.htm>.

Funding Update

In the first half of 2024 we submitted a major funding application to FIPL, which was successful (see page 3 for more details). A second application was submitted to Natural Networks for an aquatic project at KLNK, we are waiting for their decision as we go to print.

Long-term local supporter Bredon Forest School donated another £750 to the Trust in



the first half of 2024, funds which go towards contractor costs etc. We are very grateful for their generous support.

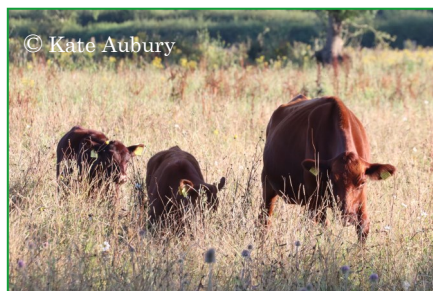
We also received another generous £200 donation in February from Miss K.M Harbinson's Charitable Trust, which will pay for new tools and gloves for our volunteers.

Supporter Sadie Hawson donated £165 from charity fundraising she carried out whilst training in Thai Yoga Massage, which will go towards our new project at KLNK. Thank you Sadie!

Finally, we received £125 in donations from Verity Lacey Photography, after Kemerton Estate gave her permission for photoshoots in local fields.

Thank you to all who have supported us this year!

Farming in Protected Landscapes Funding Secured for Project at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve



© Kate Aubury
Red Poll Cattle conservation grazing at KLNLR, 2023

We're excited to announce a successful bid for £18,826.48 from the Farming in Protected Landscapes Fund delivered by Cotswolds National Landscape. The funding will contribute to an important programme of fencing and habitat works together with visitor improvements at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve and the Lake Walk. Work on the project commenced in June 2024 and will be completed by March 2025. The project is a joint partnership between landowner Kemerton Estate and Kemerton Conservation Trust (KCT), which manages the nature reserve on a long-term lease.

The focus of the project is a programme of works including a new perimeter fence and gates at the Lake Walk to allow woodland grazing as part of the habitat management. The project also includes replacement fencing along a section of the public footpath, new benches for visitors, planting of native bluebell and daffodil bulbs in the woodland, removal of unsightly redundant fencing and tree guards, new information leaflets, and the installation of an interpretation board and signage for visitors to the nature reserve. Although most of the works will be carried out by contractors, KCT volunteers will also be involved throughout. Our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury will be managing the project and doing some of the design work, and our Warden John Threadingham will assist with habitat works onsite supported by our enthusiastic work party volunteers.

Occasional woodland grazing by Kemerton Estate's organic cattle will confer multiple conservation

benefits including promoting natural regeneration, maintaining glades, disturbing ground to assist in seed dispersal, suppressing vigorous species such as nettle and bramble, and increasing the diversity of ground flora, insects etc. Grazing will also complement the woodland thinning which has recently taken place.

Visitors to the nature reserve will benefit from new signage around the reserve and three new oak benches will be installed along the Lake Walk and the public footpath to aid visitors with reduced mobility. A new map leaflet and a new information leaflet will be created, and four seasonal activity sheets will be added to the trust's website, available to download by QR code to encourage and educate younger visitors.



**Cotswolds
National
Landscape**

News in Brief

In January, volunteers from KCT and Kemerton Orchard Workers attended an orchard pruning workshop at Conderton in partnership with Conderton and Overbury Community Orchard group. The workshop was funded by Worcestershire County Council, delivered through the Heart of England, and the workshop was led by Worcestershire orchard expert Wade Muggleton.

The workshop began with some theory and then we headed out



Attendees of the workshop pruning an old pear tree, Conderton, January 2024

into the orchard to put it into practice, pruning beautiful old apple and pear trees. Working

together, we tackled some trees that urgently needed trimming. It was an excellent workshop and attendees now have the skills needed to manage the fruit trees in Daffurn's Orchard.

On a less positive note, the Trust was sadly the victim of theft earlier in the year when our trailer was stolen from a locked farm building, along with other items belonging to the Estate. We have replaced the trailer, as it is essential kit, and have improved our building security.

Talking Lammas Meadows and Curlew Conservation



Mike Smart giving a talk, March 2024

In March we held a slideshow evening at Twynning Village Hall to celebrate our purchase of 16 acres of flood meadow at Upham Meadow SSSI in 2023. The event was free and open to all, and the hall was packed with locals, members of the Trust and representatives from our grant funders, all interested to learn more about flood meadows and the flora and fauna found on them.

The first talk of the evening, delivered by KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury, focused on Lammas Meadows, of which Upham Meadow is an example; what they are, how they are managed, and why that works for wildlife. The talk highlighted the importance of traditional hay making to the unique wildflowers found on these now rare meadows, how the multiple owners work in common, and looked at some of the threats to these special sites in the future.

The second talk was delivered by Curlew expert Mike Smart, who is part of the Slimbridge WWT Curlew Project Team locally, working closely with landowners and farmers to

monitor and protect breeding Curlew on the flood meadows. Mike's talk included the latest data on nest numbers and breeding success rates in the Severn and Avon Vales, information on ringing, tagging and satellite tracking individual birds, and what the project has been learning about these enigmatic waders, who are sadly in steep decline in the lowlands. The extreme flooding of winter 2023/24 was discussed as well.

The evening ended with a lively Q&A session.

Feedback from attendees was excellent and it was a great way to end the project. Our grateful thanks to Mike for his time and an excellent talk.

Curlew Celebration at Upham Meadow SSSI



Mike Smart talking to attendees, Upham Meadow SSSI, April 2023

To celebrate the purchase of additional land at Upham Meadow SSSI (see front page), we held a member-only Curlew Walk on 28th April on the meadow. A small group of members were joined by Councillor Cate Cody, who helped fund the project through Gloucestershire County Council's Build Back Better Fund, and Trustee Ian Smith from The Rowlands Trust, who also generously supported the project.

Chairman Adrian Darby gave a talk about the history and management of the meadow and why it is important to preserve such rare Lammas meadows into the future, and we were also joined by Mike Smart from WWT Slimbridge's Curlew Project team, who told attendees more about the site's importance to these declining waders. Juliet Bailey from Gloucestershire Naturalists Society also gave a talk about the flora of the meadow and highlighted flood meadow specialists such as Narrow-leaved Water-dropwort.

We were lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the Curlew whilst onsite, although they were some distance away and only visible through Mike's telescope. Mike and his team had already confirmed birds on

nests in the meadow, although the wet conditions in April had delayed the start of egg-laying by several weeks.

Our walk kept to the edge of the meadow to avoid disturbance to nesting Curlew and Skylark but everyone enjoyed visiting this unusual and important site.

Our thanks to Mike Smart and Juliet Bailey for their time and expertise on the day.

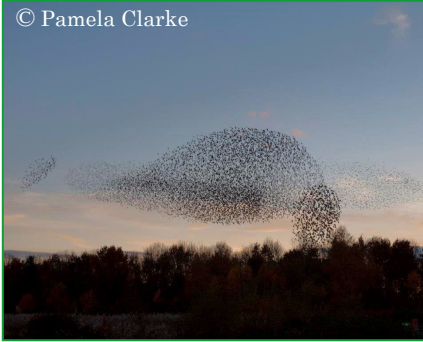


Adrian talking to attendees, Upham Meadow SSSI, April 2023

Stunning Starlings

- by Conservation Advisor Pamela Clarke

© Pamela Clarke



Starlings murmuring, KLNr

This bustling squabbling bird with its iridescent green and purple plumage and spangling of pale spots used to be seen in a variety of habitats, from gardens to farmland. However despite its large range, population numbers are declining. Their UK conservation listing has been upgraded from amber to red as the decline has become more severe with widespread declines in Northern Europe.

Lots of interesting research on the starling has been undertaken and studies reveal that though number of fledglings per breeding attempt have increased, reduced survival rates has resulted in overall decline, in part due to changes in pastoral farmland management and its effects on the food resources needed to provision the young.

UK numbers swell every autumn with birds arriving from Northern Europe to escape harsher winters. Tens of thousands of birds form breath-taking murmurations from October to February/early March with numbers

peaking in December and January. In March the migrants begin to return to the continent, by which time our own birds will start to breed.

At dusk, after their mesmerising aerial displays, they go down to roost in their thousands – here in the reed beds at KLNr or nearby in local conifer stands or other local reed beds. They are notoriously fickle and having arrived at a chosen roost site can then move to another site after a very brief stay, only to return at a later date. Or they can be site faithful for a time until the reeds become flattened, resulting in less protection from the prevailing weather and also a lack of cover from raptors. With such huge numbers the amount of excrement produced overnight is considerable: the smell can be very powerful as witnessed around Water's Edge Hide and the boardwalk area a few of years ago! We have seen Sparrowhawk and Peregrine, but also Merlin, Tawny and Barn Owl, taking advantage of this food source, and mammals such as Fox, Badger and Rat will also enter the reed beds and take unwary birds at roost. A build-up of predators may lead to site desertion.

To see a murmuration, go about an hour before sunset. It is best to get there a bit earlier and watch as first one bird, then a few more start to appear - all from different directions - until moving in perfect synchrony they form

one huge ever varying pattern. Finally, they will with one accord descend - like water down a plughole - into the reeds.

I always go to Shakespeare to see if he mentions a particular species and this gregarious bird is mentioned in his Henry IV, Part 1, when Hotspur fantasizes about teaching a starling to torment the King by repeating the name of his majesty's enemy 'Mortimer'. This reference implies the starling is just a mindless mimic; but it is an intelligent linguist as birdwatchers know, annoyingly imitating the songs of other birds, as well as accumulating an impressive vocabulary of human speech.

We await the spectacular displays of this chatty bird this winter.

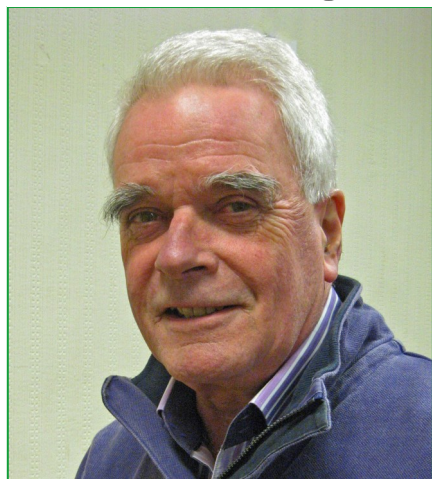
Editors note: if starlings return to KLNr this autumn and start murmuring, we will send out an email update to those on the mailing list. We will also put a post on Facebook. The starlings do not choose the lake every year but we hope they will be back soon.



© Kate Aubury

Starling, *Sturnus vulgaris*, KLNr

Ashton Bugman joins the KCT Board of Governors



Our new Governor Roger Umpelby

We are delighted to announce that entomologist Roger Umpelby, affectionately known as the Ashton Bugman locally, has joined the Trust's Board of Governors.

Roger's working career was as an applied entomologist. After initially joining the Ministry of Agriculture's Harpenden Laboratory, he was

subsequently out-stationed to Wye in Kent for 15 years before moving to MAFF's Evesham Laboratory. Roger's work involved both research and advisory work, mainly on integrated pest management. Ultimately, biological control and habitat management to encourage naturally-occurring beneficials, became the focus of his work.

With a life-long love and respect for the natural world, moving to live on the edge of Bredon Hill in 1983 was a wonderful opportunity to record and photograph all its diverse wildlife. Roger regularly gives talks to professional and amateur organisations, many of which are about local wildlife. *(Editor: many of you will have attended one of Roger's excellent talks, as he has given*

several to our members over the years). He also writes articles and papers for various publications and submits records to the Worcestershire Biological Records Centre.

When considering possible new Trustees, we wanted someone local who knew the area and its wildlife, and Roger fitted the bill perfectly. His invertebrates expertise and knowledge of Bredon Hill wildlife will be extremely valuable to the Trust and we look forward to working with him in 2024 and beyond. Welcome aboard Roger!

Roger has already hit the ground running, helping out as one of our experts at the Daffurn's Orchard Bioblitz in April (see page 2 for more details).

One of our Original Governors Says Goodbye

In June, Governor Charles Lord Howick VMH announced his resignation from the Board. Charles - who is KCT Chairman Adrian Darby's brother-in-law - has served as a Trustee since the very beginning, when KCT was founded in 1989.

A well-known horticulturist and plant collector, Charles founded the world famous Howick Arboretum at Howick Hall in Northumberland in 1985. He received the Victoria Medal of Honour (VMH) in 2009 for services to horticulture for his work at Howick Arboretum and involvement with other organisations including the



Charles Howick with Governor Matthew Darby on a walk, Asham Meadow, 2009

Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh and Westonbirt Arboretum.

Having set up a charity at Howick Hall and sat on the board of several other large charities Charles brought a wealth of knowledge about charity governance to the

Trust, which will be missed. However, after 35 years serving on our Board, Charles felt the time had come to step down and make way for new blood.

Our Chairman Adrian Darby and the Board of Governors extend grateful thanks to Charles for his long service to KCT and his invaluable help steering the Trust through many regulatory changes over the years. You will be hugely missed Charlie!

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

Spotlight On: Fantastic Fungi

September and October are perfect times to go looking for fungi, especially after a period of wet weather, as most fungi need moisture to start growing the fruiting bodies. Fungi are found in a wide range of habitats, but woodlands are the best place to start your search.

Some fungi are saprobic, meaning they feed on dead and decaying leaves, wood and other organic material. These include the common and colourful Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare*, which can be spotted sprouting from deadwood piles and stumps on the side of paths. These can be spotted in many of our woodlands after rain, including John Moore Nature Reserve.

Mycorrhizal fungi grow in symbiosis with a plant and are beneficial to their host. Many fungi are very host-specific, like the Birch Brittle-gill *Russula betularum*, which only grows with (unsurprisingly) Birch. These can be seen under birch by the South Ride at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve.

Parasitic fungi kill their host. This group includes the bizarre zombie fungi which infect insects and take control of them before killing them. It also includes the velvety brown Shaggy Bracket *Inonotus hispidus*, which grows on broadleaf trees, particularly Ash and Apple. These can be spotted in Daffurn's Orchard on the old apple trees.

There are thousands of different fungi in the UK. Keep your eyes peeled after rain this autumn and see how many you can spy!



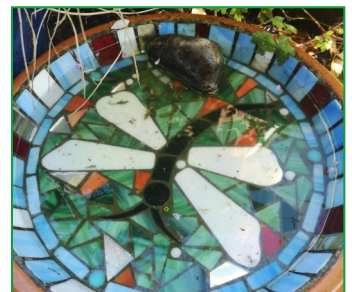
Gardening for Wildlife

This is a feature designed to give you ideas to make your garden more wildlife-friendly. Gardens in England cover an area bigger than all of the country's nature reserves combined, so your actions can have a bigger impact than you may think. And whether you have a small garden or a large one, there is plenty you can do to help tackle the biodiversity crisis. The bonus is close encounters on your doorstep!

As we hit the peak of summer, here's a few ideas to support thirsty animals in your garden!

1. Water can be difficult to find in hot weather, so popping out some water bowls can be a lifeline for hedgehogs, foxes and other garden visitors. Plastic or ceramic plant saucers are perfect, as they are shallow and easy for smaller animals to drink from. Bees and flies also need water, so add small pebbles to some of the water dishes to allow them to drink without drowning.
2. Butterflies need water and minerals to stay hydrated. They can't land on open water so prefer muddy puddles and wet sand to get the water and minerals they need. Create a simple butterfly paddling station by adding sand/soil and small gravel to a shallow dish. Add enough water to saturate the sand but ensure some gravel remains above water. Pop out by butterfly friendly plants. Remember to top up in hot weather!

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Kemerton Clippings July 2024

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

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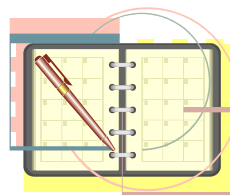


Common Poppies, Pad Barn Track,
June 2024

Save the Date!

- **Saturday 3rd August** - Working party (10am start, Lillans Orchard)
- **Sunday 11th August—Member-only Walk at Beggar Boys Wetland (2pm start)** - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full details
- **Saturday 7th September** - Working party (10am start, Daffurn's Orchard)
- **Sunday 22nd September - Member-only Fungus Foray, Kemerton Wood (10.30am start)** - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full details
- **Saturday 5th October** - Working party (10am start, Beggar Boys)
- **Saturday 12th October - Kemerton Apple Day, Victoria Hall (2-5pm)** - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full details
- **Saturday 16th November** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 24th November - Member-only Autumn Walk, Aldwick Wood & The Bushes SSSI (10.30am start)** - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full details
- **Saturday 7th 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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