

Kemerton Conservation Trust

Report to the Governors from John Clarke – Conservation Advisor

October 2013 to October 2014

Nb This year Pamela Clarke has been increasingly involved and this report reflects work by both of us.

Monitoring/Surveys

I continued to monitor Skylark and Lapwing numbers in the usual areas. Pamela organised Glow Worm surveys on Bredon Hill above Westmancote. I made as many Site Visits as possible, recording wildlife and reporting back with findings and recommendations.

Health and Safety

I continued to record details of visitors and volunteer activities. I heard of one accident when a boat capsized on Kemerton Lake but was given no details so was unable to record it.

Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve

I continued to check the three mining bee breeding areas and to record other wildlife during my Site Visits. Geoff Trevis continued his surveys of *Aculeates* on the reserve. Steven Falk, the Buglife expert on *Aculeates*, visited to assess if the management regime for the mining bee banks which I had been running for about twelve years was suitable and safe. He found no fault in it and re-affirmed that this is one of the most important regional sites. Cetti's Warbler was proved breeding this year – fledging at least three young.

Wildflower Nursery

Pamela and her volunteers continued to manage the project. Via English Nature we provided arable wildflower seed mixtures for six farms in the Cotswolds and later visited one site. We also provided seed for our neighbours – Overbury Estate – where there are now about 4 kilometres of arable wildflower margins.

Greenhouse Project

I continued to grow a few selected species of native trees and shrubs – present stock stands at an estimated 200.

Recorder Database

Pamela and I continued to collect and enter wildlife records provided mainly by us but also by volunteers. We have discovered that there may be a large hole regarding *Lepidoptera* records in that the records from the Rothamsted moth trapping period – between 1986 and 1993 – appear not to have been entered onto our database. I have obtained duplicate records from Rothamsted and if we still cannot find them on Recorder we will have to enter them. Worcestershire Biological Records Centre has offered help and advice. I also discovered that WBRC had not passed our data on to the National Data Base. They had not been given permission in the past and assumed that when I took over Recorder the situation would remain unchanged. I have now given permission for KCT's data to be passed on.

Relic

I continued to be involved in a minor way.

Outreach

I continued my work with local voluntary groups at Tewkesbury, Overbury and Conderton, and at Beckford.

I continued my involvement with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Worcestershire Recorders, Worcestershire County Council, Worcestershire BAP Group, Worcestershire Orchard Group, Marcher Apple Network, AJM Apple Enquiries and other groups.

I gave a presentation on the history of orchard restoration at Kemerton to about 100 voluntary wardens from across Worcestershire during a 'Thank You Day' based at Bredon village hall and organised by Worcestershire County Council

Carrant Catchment Area Project

I did not continue with work on this project. I hope to see it become part of a future collaboration between KCT, Buglife and other organisations, farmers and local groups in the area. I am pleased to report that the Environment Agency has finally completed the restoration of the oxbow on Carrant Brook and I am delighted with the results.

Buglife

After many years of trying to forge links with Buglife Adrian and I met with Sarah Henshall, their Senior Ecologist. Peter Doble attended for part of the meeting. It was agreed that Buglife could use Kemerton Estate land to carry out research and trials. SH proposed that we prioritise the various ideas put forward by her and myself – the first one should be based on Pollinators. I presented an idea for Pollinator Habitat Mapping to assess and evaluate the various habitats at farm and landscape level. I provided sample maps which I had compiled from a feasibility survey on both Kemerton and Overbury land. I was also able to say that Overbury are keen to be involved with some projects, and that that the EA and Entrust may also wish to be partners. Prof. Dave Goulson of Sussex University has also shown interest.

We agreed that we will need to find and fund a suitably experienced and qualified 'Project Manager' and that I will act as contact/liaison for KCT. This partnership may prove to be one of the most important projects that KCT has undertaken to date.

Volunteers

I continued to liaise with Kate Aubury and her team, with Kemerton Orchard Workers and with individuals who carried out surveys on *aculeates*, birds, butterflies, bats, Dormouse, dragonflies, fungi and Otter. Pamela worked with volunteers in the wildflower nursery and the Glow Worm surveys.

New Ideas and Funding

As KCT is now trying to function with reduced resources I did not propose any new projects and therefore did not seek funding. However, see Buglife above.

Trust Machinery

KCT owns thousands of pound's worth of machinery and equipment which need regular maintenance (and preferably regular use) to keep them in a usable condition. Before Alan Marsh left he ensured that this was so. At present KCT relies on the tractor and attachments provided by John Threadingham although these may not always be best suited for the job. When JT retires I assume that the Trust will need to find a new warden. I doubt very much if that person will come fully equipped for the job and so the Trust will have to turn to its own machinery and equipment. I fear that if it is not better maintained between now and then most machinery will be unusable and KCT will be faced with buying expensive replacements.

Acknowledgements

George Day continued the survey of Butterflies and Bumblebees and provided occasional other wildlife records. Mike Averill continued to monitor Dragonflies and Damselflies. Rob Prudden carried out regular bird counts at the lake. Geoff Trevis continued his work on *Aculeates*. Kate Aubury continued to monitor bats and is now recording fungi. Roger Cox has been growing a small sample of arable wildflowers for us. Geoff Bryant, along with several other birdwatchers, sent us their records. Jamie Smith continued his survey of Otter along the brooks. Lis Coates, Sue Chandler, Anne Trott and Sue McLeish have been helping Pamela with the Wildflower Nursery project and/or the Glow Worm Survey. Whenever I was away John Millichap looked after the Trust greenhouse. Elizabeth Pimley continued her Dormouse surveys. Clive and Mark Cleaver provided us with records of Woodcock seen during shoot days – these comprise almost all of the annual records for that species. Roger Umpleby is one of several local people who provide wildlife records from elsewhere on Bredon Hill. Peter Doble cut the hedge at Daffurn's Orchard.