

Kemerton Clippings

Issue 11

January 2013

Appeals for Help!

The Trust is looking for volunteer help in the following:

Gardener Required for Wildflower Nursery:

Are you a keen gardener who could you spare an hour a week to help our grow rare wildflowers in the Trust's small nursery in Kemerton? The work involves harvesting seed, processing, sowing, hand weeding and hoeing. The piece of land is only about 20x12 feet and has strips where seed is planted each year. If you are interested and would like more details on the role please contact Pamela Clarke on 01386 725547 or email pmclarke12@btinternet.com. There is also an article on the nursery on page 6.

Event Helpers Needed

The KCT Easter Egg Hunt is on Saturday 30th March. We are looking for helpers to assist with the admissions stand and with general tasks on the day including set up. If you are able to volunteer for an hour or so, your help would be appreciated! If you are interested, please contact KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury either by phone on 07765 334 776 or by emailing kate@aubury.co.uk.

The Trust is dependent upon the assistance it receives from its many volunteers to continue its important work in the local area, so please let us know if you can assist in any way.



Carrant Catchment Restoration Project

Kemerton Conservation Trust is involved in an exciting partnership project called the Carrant Catchment Restoration Project. This project, involving KCT, the Environment Agency, Worcestershire Biological Records Centre, Huntsman Quarries, Avonbank Nurseries - Pershore College and LEAF, is supporting landowners in the Carrant, Squitter and Washbourne Brook catchments to restore natural habitats and create vital corridors for wildlife.

The project, which is currently funded by the Environment Agency, began in 2011 and has continued throughout 2012. The aim is to improve wetland habitat along the brook by creating new backwaters for fish and eels and re-establishing connections between the watercourse and areas of marsh or wet woodland. The project is currently restoring two dried oxbows by re-connecting them to the channel and pollarding some of the surrounding willow. There is also work underway with a local landowner to build silt traps at the end of main ditches leading to the brook to capture silt before it enters the watercourse. Silting up and clouding of the brook has a detrimental effect on wildlife.

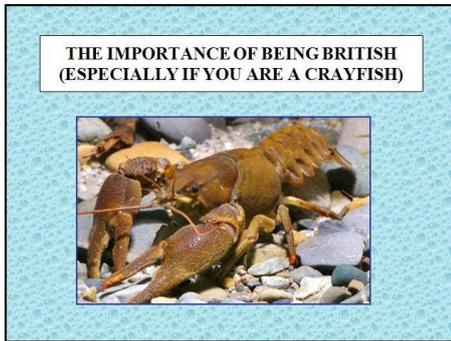
Unfortunately, progress on the project has been hampered by the incredibly wet weather experienced in 2012, which has made access to the brook impossible on occasions, but we hope more will be achieved in 2013. Further funding is being sought to expand the project to restore adjacent habitats such as woodland and wet grassland, and the project is also seeking more local partners and landowners to support the project. One of the project's more ambitious aims is to improve habitat connectivity between Bredon Hill and Oxenton Hill, linking two Special Areas of Conservation for Violet Click Beetle and restoring the veteran trees they rely on. We will keep you posted!



© Kate Aubury

Looking South from Bredon Hill across the Carrant vale to Oxenton Hill

Friends enjoy slideshow and talk about native British White-clawed Crayfish



One of the slides from the talk

The last member event of the year was a talk at Victoria Hall in Kemerton about the White-clawed Crayfish given by KCT Governor Dr Margaret Palmer.

Dr. Palmer, who is a freshwater ecologist and is also on the board of Buglife, the national invertebrate charity, told us about the detailed detective work she and her colleagues undertook

recently to prove that the White-clawed Crayfish was native to Britain, after the IUCN cast doubt on its status.

Proving that the White-clawed Crayfish was present in Britain before 1500AD (the cut off date used by the IUCN to determine native v alien species) was absolutely crucial to ensuring all the years of work that had been spent saving it from extinction had not been wasted. If it was re-classified as non-native, then funding for the continuing work would probably cease. Luckily Dr. Palmer and her colleagues were successful in proving the case, but it was a fascinating tale of research involving hours combing historical records, ancient cookbooks and nature records, patiently building up evidence, with an aside on how

the many different common names the crayfish has enjoyed in the last five centuries added to the difficulty of the task!

It was an enjoyable evening for everyone who came and we will be holding another slideshow in March 2013 (see page 8).



A berried female White-clawed Crayfish, KLNLR, April 2011

Funding Update



Time and work pressures meant no grant applications were completed in the second half of 2012, but as the new year begins, we are already at work on several applications so hope to have more news in the July edition.

In the last edition, we told you about a new appeal for Friends of KCT run by KCT governor Roger Workman. This appeal has now finished and resulted in recruitment of 16 new members (individual and joint), raising almost £1000 for the Trust. Many have also opted to complete standing orders for automatic renewal in 2013, so we feel the appeal has been very successful and we are

delighted to welcome all the new members into the fold!

The income we receive from our Friends scheme is really important to us. Although it represents a relatively small part of our income every year, it does not have any restrictions on spending (unlike grants which have to be used only on identified project spending) and can therefore be used to pay running costs such as office expenditure, tools for the volunteers and materials for maintenance and repairs on the reserves.

Our Governors have now chosen a project to use £1000 of the legacy we received from Monica Tooth. Turn to page 5 for more details.

Finally, we were surprised and delighted to receive a £500 donation from the Miss K.M Harbinson Charitable Trust in the new year. The Trustees of this trust, based in Glasgow, choose recipients to support every year and unexpectedly chose us this year. A nice start to the new year! We are now considering several potential project ideas including a possible project to monitor the effects pheasants have on bluebells. More details will follow in the next newsletter.

Thank you to all who have supported us in 2012!

A warm welcome to our new Warden

Following Alan Marsh's retirement in June last year, the Trust has been working hard to find a suitable replacement for the part-time warden position. We are delighted to announce that our new warden is local man John Threadingham.

Many of you will know John and will have seen him out and about in the area, as he has for many years worked as a forester for Kemerton Estate and KCT. As a



Our warden John in his other role as forester on Kemerton Estate

result, he is already familiar with the Trust, our Governors, and our reserves, which was one of the reasons we felt he would be the right man for the job.

John started in the post in early December and is getting up to speed on all the day to day tasks of the warden. After a hiatus of six months, quite a backlog of tasks has built up, so there is plenty to keep John busy in the coming months. One of his first tasks has been to repair the roof leaks in both the West and East Hides, so if you have visited recently, you will hopefully have spotted that these have been fixed.

Although John has run his own forestry company for a number of years, he brings lots of wider wildlife management experience to the role, having



John Threadingham with his tractor and KCT's side rake

spent 33 years working for Charlton Abbott Estate in the Cotswolds, helping to create one of the biggest private habitat schemes in Europe at the time. He is also a dab hand with machines after years as a motor cycle enthusiast so can repair any engine.

The Trust would like to welcome John as the new warden. We look forward to working with him and wish him luck in the new role.

News in Brief

Every autumn, we are treated to a **wildlife spectacle** at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve with the arrival of a large roost of starlings. They are attracted to the reed beds at the lake, which they use as a night-time roost, and gather in great numbers just before sunset to perform their incredible flying display - or **murmuration** to give it its correct name.

The total flock size each year can vary greatly, boosted by the arrival of winter migrants, and 2012 proved to be a peak year at the reserve, with an estimated **18,000** birds counted in November. The best time to enjoy this incredible



Murmuring starlings, KLNR, November 2012

sight is in October, November and December, although in cold winters the flocks can continue to gather in January. As the breeding season approaches, the birds begin to split into much smaller groups and the stunning sight of thousands of starlings swirling in perfect synchronicity is over for another year.

KCT has recently purchased a small polytunnel to replace the greenhouse that has been used for many years but that had become dilapidated and unsafe. The polytunnel will be used by John Clarke to grow shrubs and trees for our reserves.

In early January, KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury gave a talk to the **Probus Club of Tewkesbury** at their request. Following a comprehensive talk and slideshow about the work of the KCT and a look at KLNR through the seasons, we were delighted to receive a new joint donor and two potential new volunteers from the attending audience. The group were very welcoming and it was a most enjoyable experience.

Work Party Update by David Aubury

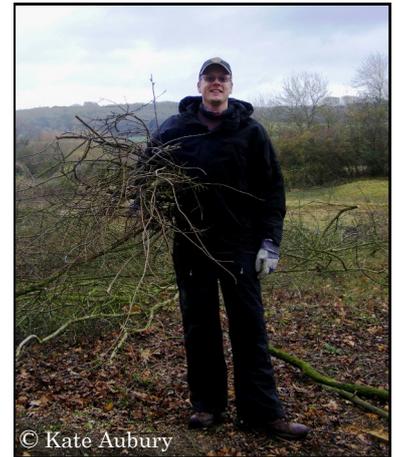
I have been attending the work parties since their inception in January 2008. As my wife Kate is the work party supervisor, I never actually got a choice!

In the early years, I helped to make up the numbers, as we were only a small band back then. Some months, it was just Kate, myself and one or two others. However, as the group's numbers grew, so did my role. Now, I help supervise the work as it's often necessary to split the group into 2 or 3 groups to each tackle a different task on a site.

I really enjoy getting out on the reserves to do some practical work. We have a great group of people and it makes a nice change from my day job as a

computer consultant. I've learnt a lot over the years. When we first began I would have struggled to identify an oak tree (as Kate can testify!) but now, thanks to her expert tutoring and to the hands-on experience gained on KCT's reserves, I have a reasonable level of natural history knowledge.

One of the best points about the work parties is the variety and chance to see different habitats. In the last six months we have worked at KLNLR, Kemerton Woods, Upstones Orchard and the KCT tool shed in the Box Yard. We have been taking down fences, raking hay, clearing paths, making bat boxes and cleaning up the tool shed, so it's never boring! In January we will be in John Moore

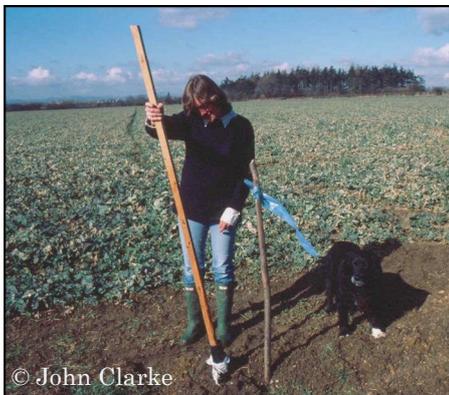


© Kate Aubury

David at Beggarboys Wetland Complex, November 2011

Reserve planting shrubs and coppicing hazel. I look forward to another year of fun in 2013 - why not join us?

If you are interested in volunteering with the Trust please contact Kate Aubury at kate@aubury.co.uk or by phone on 07765 334 776.



© John Clarke

Pamela checking water levels on the future site of KLNLR, 1985

In this article, we would like to focus on Friend of KCT Pamela Clarke, who has been involved with the Trust since its inception in 1989, and with the Darby family and Kemerton Estate since the early eighties.

Pamela and her husband John arrived in Kemerton in 1982, when John, a keen amateur naturalist, was offered the position of voluntary warden on Kemerton Estate by Adrian

Focus on a Friend: Pamela Clarke

Darby, who wanted conservation at the heart of his farm.

From 1982-86, John and Pamela walked the estate through the seasons, surveyed the flora and fauna, built up their combined wildlife knowledge and began a number of farm conservation projects that improved, restored or created wildlife habitats.

In 1986, the Clarkes moved to the hebridean island of Colonsay where they were employed to monitor wildlife and habitats, and to study Chough, Corncrake and more. But they continued to visit Kemerton every year and remained involved in various projects, including the set up of the Trust and the creation of Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve.

In 1994, John and Pamela returned to Kemerton and John

took up the post of Conservation Advisor to KCT, which he has held ever since. Pamela returned to nursing part-time (her original vocation) but continued to assist John with conservation work in her spare time.

Since her retirement from nursing, Pamela has taken on more volunteer work with the Trust, helping with monitoring on the reserves, data inputting, writing reports, running the wildflower nursery and assisting John in lots of different ways. One of her personal highlights has been her involvement in the regeneration of local orchards.

Pamela has been a key part of KCT's success for over 20 years, but has not always received due credit for her work. So this is our opportunity to highlight all she does and say thank you!

KCT Board Governor Meeting 2012

Every year KCT Governors meet for the Annual Board Meeting to review the past year's work and to set goals for the new year. In addition to the governors, the meeting is also attended by John Clarke & Kate Aubury, who both report on their activities for the year.

2012 has been a mixed year for the Trust. On a positive note, our new 'Friends' appeal gained us more local support and funds and work has continued on the Carrant Catchment Restoration Project which began in 2011. However, lack of time and competing priorities meant that no new grant applications were submitted this year, and warden Alan Marsh's retirement in June left us short-handed for 6 months.

One of the key priorities for the

Governors was finding Alan's replacement, which as you will have seen on page 3, was finalised in late November, with new warden John Threadingham starting in the post in December.

After reviewing the past year including the annual account, dealing with the governance of the Trust and setting the next budget, the Governors finished the meeting by identifying several priorities for 2013: raising more funds for projects, expanding the bat box scheme (see below), recruiting more local landowners to participate in the Carrant Catchment Restoration Project and carrying out a long-overdue update if the Trust website.

Having completed the business of the day, the Governors took



KCT Governors Lord Howick & Dr Palmer enjoy a walk through Kemerton Woods & Arboretum, November 2012

the opportunity to walk around KLNR and Kemerton Woods to view recent work and, in Lord Howick's case, check out how exotic specimens donated from Howick Arboretum were faring!

For those interested in more information, the Chairman's Report, Annual Accounts, Conservation Officer's Report and Support Coordinator's Report are all available to read on our website.

Bat box scheme expansion project

In 2012, KCT received a legacy of £3000 from the estate of Miss Monica Tooth. Some thought was given to the best way to use this unexpected windfall, with the Governors deciding to spend £1000 in this financial year on a project and save £2000 for 2013/14. The project chosen to receive the money is our bat box scheme.

KCT currently has 14 bat boxes scattered across 7 sites, which are monitored twice a year by KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury with help from licenced bat worker David Worley. The widely spread location of the boxes and the small number at each site makes monitoring more difficult and the value to bats minimal. We therefore plan to purchase 24 new bat

boxes, make an additional 20 wooden boxes, and then set up two box 'hotspots' at KLNR and Beggar Boys Wetland Complex.

The boxes will be erected 3 to a tree (giving the bats options during varying temperature conditions) within woodland at both reserves. The boxes will be monitored bi-annually along with the existing boxes. The wetland reserves have been chosen because our surveys have shown they are the best Trust sites for foraging bats.

Hopefully, the concentration of boxes on these sites will encourage a higher rate of bat occupancy than our boxes have had to date (11.67%). By using 4 different types of boxes we also hope to see a wider range



KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury cleaning a bat box after checking, November 2010

of species using them - only Common and Soprano Pipistrelle have been recorded in our boxes to date.

On a bat related note, the trust is delighted to announce that Kate has just received her scientific bat licence after two years of training, which will make future monitoring of bat boxes and roosts easier.

KCT Wildflower Nursery Update

- by Pamela Clarke

Many of you will have known and loved Margaret Boulton of Westmancote who so tragically died in July 2012. A keen gardener and lover of all wild things she was keen to be part of a project to conserve some of our endangered wildflowers so became a volunteer working in the Trust's wildflower nursery. She was an enthusiastic worker and a very congenial companion. The Trust is greatly indebted to her for her support and she is much missed. Our sympathies are with Colin and her family.



© Alan Marsh
The Trust hopes that one day, fields full of poppies like this will be common once more

As many of you will know, the nursery was set up some 15 years ago. Seeds from plants collected from wild, local sources were sown and these were grown on to set seed which in turn was harvested. This second generation seed was planted out in appropriate monitored, controlled sites. As part of the Trust's outreach remit and with our continuing 'seed bank' we are now in a position to offer seed to farmers to join our trials and so far 7 farmers have done so.

One of the project's successes has been the propagation of the rare, true native species of Cornflower and this year was a good harvest despite the wet weather. Other flowers include Corn Buttercup and Shepherd's Needle (both classified as Critically Endangered), Night-flowering Catchfly and Rough, Long-headed and Prickly Poppy.



© Pamela Clarke
KCT volunteers Sue Chandler and Margaret Boulton working in the Trust wildflower nursery, Ivy Cottage, June 2012

Looking after the nursery involves infrequent but regular attention - an hour or two a week - through spring to autumn. We are very grateful to Sue McLeish, our first volunteer, who for some years so conscientiously helped to keep the nursery viable. Sue Chandler then picked up the baton and the work continues but we do need one or two more volunteers to help Sue so that the nursery can continue. If you think you can help and would like more details please contact me by phone on 01386 725 547 or drop me an email at pmclarke12@btinternet.com.

Ash Dieback Disease - the newest threat to our landscape

In October 2012, the news broke of a new threat to our countryside from Ash Dieback Disease.

This disease, caused by the fungus *Chalara fraxinea*, has been present in Europe since 1992 and affects all species of Ash. There is currently no cure for infected trees, and most trees die, although a small number appear to have natural immunity.

The disease was first detected in ash trees in a nursery in

Buckinghamshire in February 2012, on a consignment of trees shipped from The Netherlands. It was subsequently found in a number of sites across the country where recently imported ash trees had been planted.

However, the disease hit the headlines in November 2012 after infected ash trees were found in the wider countryside, unconnected to recent imports. As these sites are so far all on the eastern seaboard, experts believe the fungal spores may have been carried by the wind, raising



© Kate Aubury
Aldwick Wood SSSI, Bredon Hill, one of the local woodlands that is threatened by Ash Dieback Disease

concerns that all 80 million of our ash trees are now under threat.

So far, no infected ash trees have been found in the local area, but here at KCT we will be monitoring the situation closely and any suspected case will be reported the Forestry Commission immediately. For now we can only wait and see.

Warblers in the woods - a spring delight!

Although small songbirds can be found at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve and adjoining Kemerton Woods throughout the year, our resident birds get a boost in spring, when the summer migrants arrive.

It's early March, and in the woods the birds are singing, setting up territory for the mating season, which is already underway. If you go for a walk at this time of the year, you can hear robins, tits, wrens and thrushes all filling the woods with their lovely songs. But wait a few more weeks and return in early April, and you will hear much more, because by then, the warblers will have arrived.

Warblers, summer migrants to the UK, arrive in late March and early April from Africa and Southern Europe to breed in our productive woods. Like the vast majority of summer arrivals, they are insectivores, and they make their amazing journey every year to take advantage of our warm, wet weather and the resulting bonanza of insects to raise their young, before heading back to sunnier Africa for the winter.

The warbler family is a large group of mostly nondescript little brown birds, but their



© Kate Aubury

A Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*,
KLNLR, May 2012



© Kate Aubury

A Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* at KLNLR, July 2012

size and subdued plumage do not detract from their amazing story, and many of the warblers have stunning songs.

The first to arrive at the reserve is usually the Chiffchaff, a small, olive-brown bird with a very distinctive song that sounds like 'chiff-chaff', hence it's common name. Chiffchaff spend the winter in southern Europe and western Africa, although small numbers have begun to stay all year round in southern England. As the days begin to lengthen, these tiny birds fly approximately 2000 miles to arrive at KLNLR in late March. For many birders, the sound of their song is the signal that spring has sprung!

The chiffchaff is soon joined in the woodland by the almost identical Willow Warbler, which arrives slightly later from sub-Saharan Africa. This species is so similar to the Chiffchaff, that the best way to identify it is to listen to its song - a simple, repetitive, descending whistle.

Both the Chiffchaff and the Willow Warbler are woodland birds, but out on the lake, other warblers have arrived to take up territory within the reed beds.

Reed warblers are browner than their woodland relatives, and they build their nests at the base of reeds. As the males sing from within the reed bed, they are more often heard than seen. Their song is a rhythmic 'churring' sound. Like the Willow Warbler, they winter in sub-Saharan Africa, making a round trip of approx. 8000 miles each year!

Other warblers to keep an eye out for at the reserve include Blackcap (migrants but also resident in small numbers), Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler, and Cetti's Warbler (a rare visitor but recorded in 2012).

So as the weather warms up this spring, why not pick up a pair of binoculars and head down to the reserve to play hide and go seek with the warblers in the reed beds and the woodland. You may find that you hear them more than you see them, as they are small, brown and shy, but with perseverance you may catch a glimpse of one as it flashes by through the reeds or hops from branch to branch above your head in the trees. And as you listen to the sweet sound of their songs, spare a thought for the extraordinary journeys these small birds have made - to enjoy that much maligned affair, the great British summer!



© KCT

A Reed Warbler nest, KLNLR

Kemerton Clippings January 2013

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

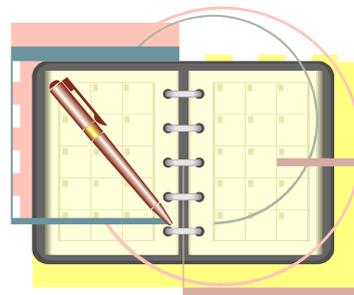


© David Aubury
Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*
in the reeds, Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve, May 2012

Save the Date!

- **Saturday 26th January** - Working Party (10am start, John Moore Reserve)
- **Saturday 23rd February** - Working party (10am start, KLNR)
- **Friday 1st March** - **Slideshow & Talk, Victoria Hall, Kemerton** (8 - 10pm)
- **Saturday 23rd March** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 30th March** - **Annual Easter Egg Hunt, Kemerton Court** (10am - 1pm)
- **Saturday 27th April** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 25th May** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 29th June** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)

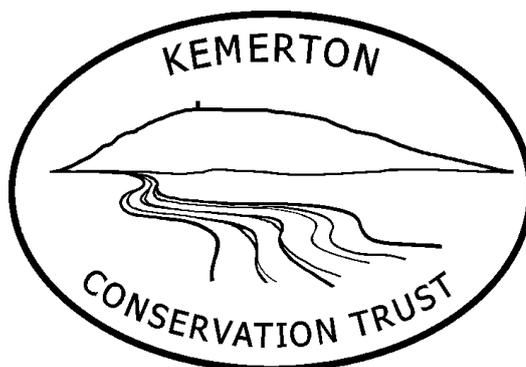
For details on any of the above events, please contact KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury by email kate@aubury.co.uk or by phone on 07765 334 776.



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