

Kemerton Clippings

Issue 16

July 2015

Appeals for Help!

The Trust is looking for volunteer help in the following:

Maintaining Bird Boxes in Aldwick Wood SSSI & The Bushes SSSI:

Do you have a couple of hours to spare once a year to check our bird boxes in Aldwick Wood SSSI and The Bushes SSSI?

We have a number of bird boxes on both sites which need an annual check, clean out and, where required, basic repairs or replacement. Long-term volunteer Roy Cox has been carrying out these bird box checks for 20+ years but has had to step down this year. He has kindly offered to brief the new volunteer on what is required. Both sites are on challenging terrain so a reasonable level of fitness is required but all boxes are reachable from the ground and are designed to make cleaning easy. The once a year visit must be done in autumn or winter after breeding season has finished but can be done at your convenience. If you are interested and would like more details, please contact John Clarke on 01386 725653 or email him kctoffice@btinternet.com.

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.

Wildflower Walk at Upton Ham: Making Hay While the Sun Shone!



Adrian leads the group through the meadow, Upton Ham SSSI

On 7th June, our Chairman Adrian Darby and our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury led a group of Friends of KCT and the general public on a wildflower walk at Upton Ham SSSI.

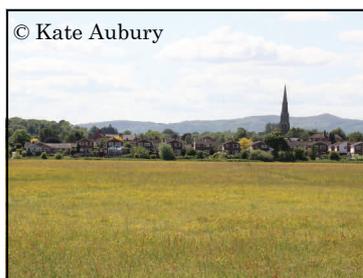
The walk was to celebrate the Trust's purchase of an additional 2ha of land on the Ham in late 2014, whilst also highlighting the wonderful wildflowers that grow on this traditionally managed flood meadow on the outskirts of Upton Upon Severn.

The sun shone down all afternoon as the small band rambled round the meadow searching out interesting plants and spotting rarities. The meadow has a suite of plants officially classed as MG4 *Alopecurus pratensis* - *Sanguisorba officinalis* grassland. The two main plants of this community—Meadow Foxtail and Great Burnet—are both found on the Ham, along with rarities such as Narrow Leaved Water-dropwort. Although the timing of the walk meant some of the plants were yet to flower, we found a good number of those we were looking for including the blood-red flowers of Great Burnet and the Meadow Buttercup was so prolific that the Ham was turned a lovely shade of yellow.



Flowering Great Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis*, Upton Ham SSSI, June 2015

Upton Ham is an example of a seasonally flooded hay meadow which is still managed under the traditional Lammas method, which involves mowing the hay in late July and then grazing the aftermath with sheep after Lammas Day (1st August). The late cut allows the wildflowers time to set seed and is also beneficial to a number of bird species which nest in the long grass, including Curlew, Redshank and Skylark. As we walked through the meadow, we were treated to a spectacular singing display from two male Skylarks, hanging effortlessly in the blue sky above the Ham as they poured out their magnificent melody.



Upton Ham SSSI with the town in the background, June 2015

It was a lovely afternoon and all who attended enjoyed it. The Ham was looking stunning in the sunshine and the wildflowers were wonderful.



Becky Lashley answering questions on Worcestershire's Orchard Wildlife

On Monday 20th April KCT Members were invited to join us for an evening of illustrated talks about Worcestershire's Orchards and KCT's work on restoring our own orchards in the area.

The evening kicked off with a talk about the wildlife of Worcestershire's orchards from Becky Lashley, the Orchards Project Officer at WBRC. Becky has been running an orchard mapping project in the county for the last 2 years, and as part of the project all KCT's orchards were surveyed last

Evening of Orchard Talks Focusses on Worcestershire's Bounty

year (see Kemerton Clippings Edition 14 for more details).

Becky's talk was very interesting and hopefully illustrated how important orchards are as a varied habitat for many different species of flora and fauna. Many people have a few fruit trees in their gardens, so learning about the wildlife that may be using these will encourage their protection and continuation.

After a short refreshment break, KCT's Conservation Advisor John Clarke then gave a talk on the restoration of Kemerton's Orchards, which focussed on the lessons we have learned over the years restoring heritage orchards in the area and on the wildlife that we have found in them. Orchard restoration is something that the Trust is known for and we have shared our knowledge with others

locally to help bring more old, remnant orchards back to life. It's really encouraging to see projects such as COCO (Conderton and Overbury Community Orchard) begin to reproduce the success of Kemerton Orchard Workers' at Daffurns Orchard.

We thank both Becky and John for their time in making the evening a success.



Apple Trees in blossom, Lillans Orchard, April 2015

Funding Update



We started 2015 well by securing a grant of £500.34 from WBRC for some work in Lillans Orchard and another £500 grant for an orchard restoration project at Breddy Croft in Eckington from a donor who prefers to remain anonymous (see page 3 for details of both projects).

We have carried out our feasibility study on the potential new bird hide at KLNR and have now begun fundraising by completing 4 grant applications for a total value of £25,000. We will hear whether we have been

successful on any of these in about 3 months and depending on the results, may be able to start work on the new hide next spring. Building the new hide is entirely dependent on attracting enough grant funding so we are keeping our fingers crossed and will update you in the next newsletter.

Long-term corporate sponsors Cotswold Agricultural Merchants have agreed to support our new Pollinator Project for the next 5 years at £200 per year, which is very

generous of them. We are seeking another 3-4 sponsors to match this.

A grant giving trust, Miss Harbinson Charitable Trust made a donation of £500 in January which is for general Trust work and is invaluable in helping us pay for ongoing costs for tools and materials to carry out maintenance work on the reserves etc.

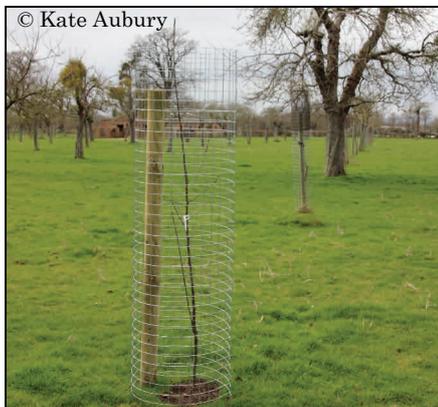
We have also had a few new people join Friends of KCT.

Thank you to all who have supported us this year!

WBRC Funds Restoration Work in Lillans Orchard

Following on from KCT's involvement in Worcestershire Biological Records Centre's 'Wildlife of Orchards' survey project in 2014 (see Kemerton Clippings Edition 14 for more details), we were delighted to be offered grant funding from the centre for some restoration work in Lillans Orchard earlier this year.

Thanks to a grant of £500.34, the Trust was able to purchase 12 heritage apple trees from Walcot Organic Nurseries, as well as the guard materials



Newly planted apple tree, Lillans Orchard, March 2015

required to protect the young trees from the cows and sheep that graze Lillans Orchard as part of its management and also some pruning tools for the volunteers to use for ongoing tree maintenance. All labour involved in the project, including planting and guarding the trees and carrying out mistletoe reduction on older trees was supplied as a donation in kind by the Trust's volunteer work party and volunteer warden John Threadingham.

As part of the project, our work party volunteers spent a morning in January removing up to 50% of the mistletoe from our older trees in the orchard. This had become necessary as the quantities were such that they were threatening the health of the trees (mistletoe is a parasite plant) but care was taken in the timing of the work and in the amount removed to ensure that plenty remained for the rare Mistletoe Marble Moth larva that use the plant and which have been recorded within the orchard.



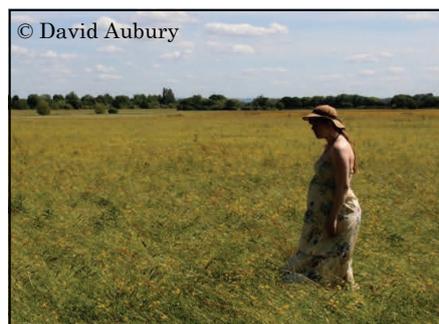
Work Party Volunteers trimming mistletoe, Lillans Orchard, Jan 2015

The project has now completed but we have recently received a £500 grant from a funder who wishes to remain anonymous to carry out similar work at Breddy Croft Orchard in Eckington. This is a remnant orchard, primarily apple, that needs some new trees to ensure continuity into the future. We are also going to have some of the wonderful, old trees pruned to extend their life. This project will commence in the autumn and will be completed early next year so more details will follow in later newsletters.

News in Brief

In January, Support Coordinator Kate Aubury gave an illustrated talk to Tewkesbury & Mitton Townswomen's Guild on behalf of KCT. The talk looked at a year in the life of KLNR and included information on the Trust. The talk was well received and the Guild kindly made a donation to the Trust as a thank you for the talk.

This summer, the Trust will be getting involved in a partnership project led by Plantlife called Save Our Magnificent Meadows. This ambitious project aims to raise the profile of wildflower



Support Coordinator Kate Aubury & Bump enjoying the wildflowers at Upton Ham SSSI, June 2015

meadows, including restoring existing meadows and creating new ones.

KCT has been invited to take part in the Cotswolds area, where work is being led by the

Cotswolds Conservation Board. We will be using seed from our existing wildflower areas to create new, flower-rich areas. More details will follow in the next newsletter.

Finally, Support Coordinator Kate Aubury is delighted to be expecting her first child in August. Kate will be stepping down from supervising the volunteer work party for a few months but will continue in her role administering the Friends scheme, planning events and writing this newsletter. You can continue to contact Kate as normal but she may not respond quite as fast as usual—so please bear with her!

Work Party Update by George Elliott

I began volunteering with the Trust as voluntary work for my Duke of Edinburgh bronze award. I had done it before though as both my brother and my sister did this for their volunteering and I had joined them a few times. I have found the conservation work very enjoyable, calming, and educational volunteer work, and I highly recommend Kemerton Conservation Trust for anyone who is doing Duke of Edinburgh and not sure what to do as their volunteering.

I attend once a month (last Saturday of the month) usually

between 10:00am to 1:00pm depending on the weather. I am joined by Kate, her husband and a group of friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable adults. My favourite session so far was the faggot making, which involves collecting sticks and twigs and tying them together to make a bundle of branches, which will be put into the lake for the crayfish to inhabit.

I like volunteering with KCT as it gets me out of the house and I learn new skills that I would otherwise not have picked up and I am looking forward to continuing my voluntary work



George (right) & David Aubury with some faggot bundles, Kemerton Woods, April 2015

here and seeing what else nature has got in store.

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



In this edition of Kemerton Clippings, we are focussing on another of our volunteer Recorders, who help the Trust by donating their time and expertise to help monitor our reserves for wildlife.

Mike Averill is the Midlands Regional and Worcestershire County Recorder for Odonata (Dragonflies & Damselflies), a position he has held since the mid 1980s. Mike has been visiting Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve and Beggar Boys Wetland Complex for many years and thanks to his diligent recording, we know we have 23 species of dragonfly and damselfly at KLNR—making it one of the

Focus on a Friend: Mike Averill

best spots in the county for these jewel-bright predators!

Mike has always had an interest in Natural History, but traces his particular fascination with dragonflies to watching a Southern Hawker catch and eat a hornet whilst he was on holiday in Falmouth in 1983. In his own words; ‘that deserved some respect I thought!’.

Worcestershire’s most notable species is perhaps the Club-tailed Dragonfly, as the River Severn is one of its strongholds nationally. It is a difficult species to see readily as it doesn’t spend much time by its larval home the river. The most likely place to see it is whilst walking through meadows near the riverside (we have recorded it at Asham Meadow, one of the Trust’s sites near Eckington—Ed). Sharing the same habitat is the White-legged Damselfly which is also scarce nationally.

Mike says his favourite dragonfly is the one he is currently

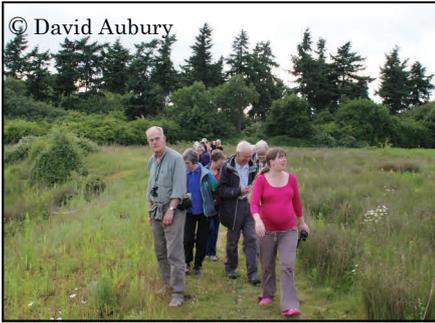
watching, although; ‘Who isn’t captivated by the sight of a beautiful Emperor as it patrols its pool, showing flashes of colour as it engages in aerial dog fights with anything that dares to enter its area.’

Alongside Kemerton Lake, other good sites in the county to spot these stunning insects include; Worcestershire Wildlife Trust reserves like Monkwood, Grafton Wood, Upton Warren and the trust HQ at Lower Smite Farm.

If anyone is interested in what is going on in the world of dragonflies in Worcestershire you can catch up and send sightings to dragonfliesofworcestershire.weebly.com.

At KCT we are very grateful to Mike for his expert help in recording our Odonata species on our wetland reserves. If you want to learn more about these fascinating aerial insects, why not join Mike for a guided walk around KLNR on August 29th (see ‘Dates for the Diary’ on the back page for more details).

KCT Hosts a Visit from WWT's South East Worcestershire Group



Support Coordinator Kate Aubury leading the visitors around the reserve, June 2015

On Friday 19th June, KCT hosted a visit at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's South East Worcestershire Group.

Led by Support Coordinator Kate Aubury, the group had a guided walk of the reserve, including areas not open to the public, and were given a talk on the various habitats on the site, the flora and fauna found here and the various ways we manage the reserve to look after the wildlife.

In June, the highlight of any visit to the reserve is our array of flowering orchids, so the walk included a visit to the Lagoon, where they grow in profusion. Large numbers of Southern Marsh, Common Spotted, Pyramidal and Bee orchids were in flower, looking stunning in the early evening sunshine, whilst eagle-eyed attendees managed to spot the one flowering Twayblade as well.

As well as the orchids, we were delighted to spot a Hobby hunting over the lake—looking for dragonflies—and the juvenile Great Crested Grebes on the water were a nice sight as well. Four herons and a Little Egret were hunting in the Lagoon's reed beds, flying off when disturbed by our chatter, to return as we left the area to continue fishing. Some arable wildflowers, including St John's Wort and Ragwort, were just

beginning to bloom as well, although July is the peak season for many of the arable wildflowers on the reserve.

The visit was a great success, with everyone enjoying the relaxed ramble around the reserve (the only speed that our 7 month pregnant walk leader could manage!) and it was great to be able to share the sights with a knowledgeable and enthusiastic group of fellow naturalists and nature lovers, led by long-term Friend of KCT, Harry Green.



Southern Marsh & Common Spotted Orchids growing by the Lagoon, KLNLR, June 2015

Update on Kemerton Woods Forestry Work

In our last newsletter we informed you about the forestry work that was taking place in Kemerton Woods over the winter.

Although the operation took longer than originally planned, the thinning has now been completed and the woodland is beginning to recover.

Because the weather was mild and quite wet, the vehicles did do some damage to paths and the woodland floor. We have begun restoring the paths, including filling in the ruts that crossed the public footpath and the permissive path into the wood, but we cannot

repair the vehicle access track until the last of the timber is taken away, which we hope will be by the end of this month.

Although the thinning looked quite drastic when completed, the woodland is already bouncing back and soon it will be hard to tell that the work took place! Visitors using the paths will notice that there are more nettles onsite at present than in previous years—this is as a result of letting more light in to the woodland floor and will be short-lived. Once the canopy closes over again, the nettles will gradually die back.

Although the logs were sold for timber, we have been using the brash for habitat work on the reserve. So far, we have made brash piles for invertebrates and other wildlife and also used the thinnings to make faggots to go in the lake as shelter for the crayfish.



Volunteers George Day & Rob Burcombe making faggots, Kemerton Woods, March 2015

Update on Current & Potential KCT Partnership Projects

- by John Clarke, May 2015

The Environment Agency completed the restoration of a (Kemerton) oxbow on the Carrant Brook and is to restore two for Overbury Estate. They are also restoring the flora of a meadow using seed from Kemerton. They have a 'wishlist' of projects for both estates – including a PhD project. During monitoring of the crayfish in Kemerton Lake they caught a very large male so they are clearly doing well.

I showed my Pollinator Habitat Mapping idea to Councillor Adrian Hardman and his environmental team from Worcestershire County Council. They will now carry out trials for improving the flora of some minor road verges which could act as important wildlife corridors. Buglife also seems keen on the mapping idea so we hope to develop it.



© John Clarke

Restored Oxbow on Carrant Brook



© Buglife

Male White-Clawed Crayfish caught in trap, KLNLR, 2014

Huntsmans Quarries Ltd were the company that quarried the gravel and then landscaped Kemerton Lake in the eighties and nineties. Subsequently they supported us by donating materials for various projects. Huntsmans has now been taken over by Breendon Aggregates. Pamela and I were Conservation Advisors to Huntsmans so were delighted when the new owners agreed to continue to support KCT. They have donated ten tons of crushed stone (estimated to be worth £250-300) to help with repairs to the main vehicle access track to the lake.

Colin Creese and Cotswold Agricultural Merchants (CAM) were sponsors of our Woodland Shrubs and Wildflowers Project,

which ended in 2014. They have now agreed to sponsor the new Pollinator Project at £200 per year for five years. We need a few more local sponsors as generous as CAM to help our work.

I was asked to meet with British Rail and one of their contractors who expressed interest in supporting our work. However, here I failed because it turned out that they might help by donating materials from their stocks. We had no projects running at the time which required materials but should a suitable situation arise I will contact them again.

In June I met with Natural England representatives who were looking to see how they might help our work.

A local farmer has been using trail cameras to survey Otter in the area and now has a collection of pictures and video clips.

Professor Dave Goulson, (author of two books about Bumblebees/pollinators) is looking to see if there is a PhD project potential here – perhaps centred on orchard pollination.

Building a Bug Hotel for New Pet Crematorium

On April 22nd, our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury was invited to attend the grand opening of Cheltenham Pet Crematorium and supervise the construction of a bug hotel in their new wildlife-friendly Memorial Garden, with the help of pupils from Tewkesbury School's Year 9 Horticultural Club, who designed the Memorial Garden.



Kate Aubury, KCT, with Adam Henson & Year 9 pupils from Tewkesbury High school building a Bug Hotel at CPC

The crematorium & garden was opened by Adam Henson from Countryfile and he was more than happy to get stuck in and help us with the bug hotel. The end result was a beautiful and practical home for creepy crawlies, which was much admired by the guests at the ceremony. CPC liked the bug hotel so much the staff are now planning a second one!

Dazzling Dragonflies & Damselflies in our Wetlands

August on the wetland reserves is when a group of flying insects really takes centre stage; the dragonflies and damselflies. These brightly coloured aerial acrobats can be found by lakes, streams and rivers, with some species appearing as early as late March, but the best time to try and spot them is in the hottest days of summer, when the majority of species have emerged and are on the wing.

Dragonflies and damselflies start as eggs, laid on or by water, before hatching into larvae which, on average, spend the first couple of years of their lives as underwater predators; voracious in their pursuit of prey such as insect larvae, crustaceans, worms, snails, leeches, tadpoles and small fish. Each larva will go through many moults (up to 14) as it grows.

When the larva is ready to emerge, a final moult takes place above water. Usually the larva will choose some vegetation close to the water's edge (such as a reed) where they will sit and begin the moult. On first emerging from the larval case, their

© Kate Aubury



Female Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum*, KLNLR, September 2013



Male Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta*, Beggar Boys Wetland Complex, August 2013

wings are soft and require about an hour or so to harden sufficiently for a maiden flight.

Once on the wing, adults adopt various strategies for survival. The Libellulidae (Skimmers, Chasers & Darters) are the largest family of dragonfly and include common species such as the Black-tailed Skimmer, the Broad-bodied Chaser and the Common Darter. Most of these are perch predators, returning to the same spot on the ground or on a fence post or area of vegetation after short flights. They generally prefer still water and large numbers of them can be seen at Kemerton Lake throughout the summer and autumn, particularly Common and Ruddy Darters.

The Aeshnidae (Hawkers & Emperors) are the largest and most powerful of the dragonflies and spend most of their time on the wing, catching other insects whilst in flight. Superbly strong flyers, they patrol territory along the edge of lakes and pools, or hunt in woodland and vegetation

further from the water. When they do come to rest it is often high in trees so they can be hard to spot when not zooming by at speed. Migrant Hawkers can be seen in large numbers at Beggar Boys Wetland Complex and the spectacular Emperor Dragonfly is found at Kemerton Lake, patrolling the shallow water and reeds on the north shore.

The Gomphidae (Club-tails) prefer pristine running water. The Common Club-tail can be found at Asham Meadow on the River Avon at Eckington and is very distinctive with its striking yellow and black colouration and club-shaped abdomen.

Damselflies are much more delicate than dragonflies and, when at rest, close their wings together. Usually earlier to emerge than dragonflies they can be found by any garden pond, stream or lake, with the most common species falling within the Coenagrionidae family (Red & Blue). Weak fliers in comparison to their larger relatives they usually rest amongst the vegetation close to water. Many species can be found on our wetlands.

© Kate Aubury



Male Common Blue *Enallagma cyathigerum*, KLNLR, May 2012

Kemerton Clippings July 2015

Edited by Kate Aubury

Contact email: kate@aubury.co.uk

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This newsletter is published bi-annually. The next edition will be issued in July 2015.

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



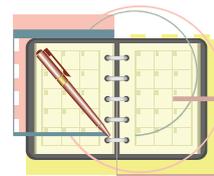
© Kate Aubury

Cinnabar Moth caterpillar on Ragwort, KLNR, July 2014

Save the Date!

- **Saturday 25th July** - Working Party (10am start, KLNR)
- **Saturday 22nd August**- Working party (10am start, Upstones Orchard)
- **Saturday 29th August** - **Dragonfly Walk at KLNR** led by **Mike Averill** (10.30am start) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 26th September** - Working party (10am start, Beggar Boys Wetland Complex)
- **Sunday 11th October** - **Annual Open Day, KLNR** (gates open 11am) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 17th October**—**Kemerton Apple Day, Victoria Hall, Kemerton** - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 31st October** - Working party (10am start, Beggar Boys Wetland Complex)
- **Saturday 28th November** Working party (10am start, Lillans Orchard)

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.



KEMERTON COURT
TEWKESBURY
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
GL20 7HY
Tel: 01386 725 254

Registered Charity No. 702488

www.kemerton.org



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