



KCT Celebrates Purchase of Land at Upham Meadow

© Kate Aubury



Upham Meadow SSSI, June 2023

KCT has successfully purchased additional land at Upham Meadow SSSI near Twyning thanks to the support of six generous funders including Build Back Better from Gloucestershire County Council, waste management company Grundon through the Landfill Communities Fund, The Rowlands Trust and The Summerfield Trust.

KCT has received £11,000 of grants towards the purchase of 3 parcels of flood meadow totalling 16 acres on the Avon riverbank near Twyning. Upham Meadow SSSI is an example of a riverside meadow still managed under the old “Lammas Meadow” system. Lammas meadows are shut up for hay in early spring, cropped in June/July, and grazed after Lammas Day on 1st August. Nutrients are supplied by flooding episodes in winter. This unique system results in a rich meadow flora in late spring/early summer, dominated by Greater Burnet in June (classified as NVC type MG4 grassland), and provides vital nesting habitat for Curlew and Skylark.

Such MG4 meadows are singled out in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan as a special type of Lowland Meadow because less than 3,700

acres (1,500 ha) of flood meadow now exist in the UK. It is vital that the few remaining examples such as Upham Meadow SSSI are preserved and protected. KCT is therefore very grateful to Build Back Better from Gloucestershire County Council, Grundon Waste Management through the Landfill Communities Fund, The Rowlands Trust, The Summerfield Trust and our two other funders for supporting our purchase of this valuable habitat to manage for future generations.

The flood meadow parcels purchased will continue to be managed in the traditional manner, which has probably remained unaltered since the Norman Conquest. KCT hopes to add the land into an existing Countryside Stewardship Scheme at the site, and the flora and birdlife on the reserve will be monitored by the trust, volunteers, and partnership organisations. The Trust will also continue to work closely with the other land-owners at the site, who play an equally key role in managing the meadow and conserving the curlew.

To celebrate our purchase, which completed in February, KCT held a member-only Curlew Walk at Upham Meadow in April led by Chairman Adrian Darby (details on page 4). Representatives from our funders, including Councillor Cate Cody from Gloucestershire County Council, attended the walk to see the new land and learn more about the site.

In June our Work Party Volunteers spent a morning pulling ragwort in the new parcels to prepare them for haymaking in July. By hand pulling Marsh Ragwort (which is toxic to livestock if left in the hay) we avoid the need for herbicides, which would have a negative effect on the unique plants of the meadow.

Grasshoppers Galore at KLNR Open Day



© Kate Aubury

Gary checking the sweep net, KLNR,
June 2023

Our annual Open Day was held at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve on Saturday 10th June and we had sunny weather for most of the day (it ended with torrential storms that caused flash flooding locally and brought down several trees on the reserve but thankfully that was after the visitors had all gone home!)

On our morning walk we were joined by Gary and Nicky Farmer, to look at the reserve's grasshoppers and crickets, while also enjoying the orchids and other wildlife along the way. Gary is the county Orthoptera recorder, as well as Manager at Vale Landscape Heritage Trust, so

it was great to have his expertise to identify the many grasshopper and cricket nymphs spotted along the walk including a Long-winged Conehead nymph. With his sweep net we caught lots of other insects as well, including Thick-thighed Flower Beetle, which were out in large numbers. Sadly butterflies were scarce, as they have had a poor year so far.

On our afternoon walk Chairman Adrian Darby, Governor Matt Darby and Support Coordinator Kate Aubury led the orchid walk, focussing on the Bee, Pyramidal, Common Spotted, Southern Marsh, Hybrid and Common Twayblade orchids in flower on the reserve. The weather was very hot and humid by then, not ideal for walking in the open, but it brought out the dragonflies in large numbers, with good views of Emperors hunting along the lake edge and Common Blue Damselflies everywhere, and a Hobby was spotted briefly over the water. The orchids were looking glorious, it has been an excellent year for Pyramidal in particular and the Bee Orchids were a highlight for many who attended.

After each walk attendees could enjoy refreshments in our woodland glade, the shade very welcome after a long walk in the sunshine!

The event attracted about 60 attendees, and a small profit was made after events costs. We also signed up several new members on the day.

As always, we could not hold our Open Day without the assistance of our fantastic volunteers, so our grateful thanks to all who came and helped with set-up, takedown and running the various stands or supervising car parking. Our thanks too to Gary and Nicky for giving up their time to share the day with us.



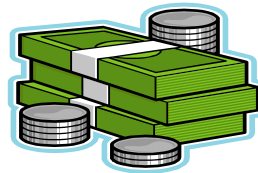
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Orchids and Ox-eye Daisies, KLNR,
June 2023

Funding Update

In the first half of 2023 we were primarily focused on our land purchase at Upham Meadow so only two grant applications for a proposed project at Daffurn's Orchard were submitted, One was rejected and one is pending. We have now started work on costing up a major new project in Kemerton Wood.

Long-term local supporter Bredon Forest School donated



another £1000 to the Trust in the first half of 2023, funds which go towards volunteer tools and materials 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 go towards survey equipment for monitoring water quality in the Carrant Brook, a small project KCT Governor Peter Doble is carrying out.

Finally, supporter Christina Kulakundis kindly donated her £80 winnings from the Kemerton 200 Club draw to the Trust, which was much appreciated.

Thank you to all who have supported us this year!

Natural Networks Aquatic Project Completed Successfully at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve



© Kate Aubury

Kingfisher with Stickleback, KLNR, August 2022

KCT is delighted that our aquatic habitat restoration and creation project, which received funding from the European Regional Development Fund through the Natural Networks programme delivered in partnership by Worcestershire County Council and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, has been successfully completed.

Kemerton Lake is well known for its wetland birds, including Kingfisher and Great Crested Grebe, and other species dependant on aquatic habitats, such as dragonflies and Otter.

In recent years the lake habitat has degraded because of invasive non-native Nuttall's Waterweed, which has out-competed native wetland plants and impacted on fish and other aquatic species. Recent surveys also highlighted a lack of fish refuges in the lake, which was leading to overfishing by Otter, Cormorant and Heron.

Funding from the Natural Networks programme, along with additional grant funding from Highfields Trust CIO and KCT's own funds, allowed the Trust to undertake a programme of works including trialling manual waterweed removal, creating new fish refuges, replanting with native aquatic plants and installing tern rafts to encourage Common Tern to nest at the lake. Contractors carried out many of these tasks, but our volunteers were involved throughout; Support Coordinator Kate Aubury managed it and our Warden John Threadingham assisted with habitat works onsite, supported by our work

party volunteers, who built and filled gabions ready for the contractors to put in the lake.

Visitors to the lake can now see the tern rafts from the public hides. They were sadly not used this year, but we hope Common Terns will nest there next year.

The Trust is very grateful to Natural Networks and Highfields Trust CIO for supporting this project.

A detailed project report is available on the 'news & events' page of our website.



© Kate Aubury

Volunteers with filled gabions, KLNR, March 2023

News in Brief

In February our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury was invited to give a talk to the Hartlebury Common Local Group about Fantastic Fungi. It was lovely to meet another group of nature enthusiasts and the group made a donation to KCT to show their appreciation.

In March a keen group of nine volunteers from DSL Flooring in Evesham spent the morning with KCT Warden John Threadingham carrying out conservation work in Kemerton



© John Threadingham

DSL Flooring volunteers, Kemerton Wood, January 2023

Wood, including putting new guards on deer-damaged Holly and Yew shrubs, training honeysuckle up trees and collecting old guards for disposal. John also gave them a talk about our work and they visited Water's Edge Hide.

In July KCT's toolshed was targeted by thieves, along with a number of other sheds in Kemerton. The criminals were looking for power tools so came away empty-handed from our shed, but items were stolen from others sadly, including our Warden John.

KCT's Annual Board Meeting was scheduled for 10th July but had to be postponed due to our Chairman having a family emergency. The meeting will be held later this year and will be reported on in the next edition of this newsletter.

End of an Era at Daffurn's Orchard



© Kate Aubury

Daffurn's Orchard in spring, April 2023

Daffurn's Orchard in Upper Kemerton was purchased by the Trust after a village-wide fundraising appeal in 2000. It is a community orchard and has been looked after since its purchase by the Kemerton Orchard Workers (KOW), with advice and assistance on habitat management from KCT when needed. KOW has been run by a Committee consisting of Neil and Olivia

Chance and Steve and Anna Fletcher, village residents who live near the orchard and wanted to look after it for the village.

After more than two decades of sterling work running KOW and organizing the popular Apple Day, which raises funds for the group, the Committee has made the decision to stand down and enjoy a well-earned rest. Management of the orchard and KOW has now passed to KCT and we will do our best to continue the fantastic work at this tranquil site.

One of our first actions has been to recruit a new team to organise the annual Apple Day and we are delighted that

Charlie Taylor, Andrew Millington and Tom Martin have stepped forward to take on the challenge. Apple Day 2023 will be on 14th October at Victoria Hall from 2-5pm.

We are planning a small project to encourage more visitors to the orchard and we hope to hold more events at the orchard in 2024. We are also planning an apple tree pruning training event this autumn for volunteers.

KCT would like to thank Neil and Olivia Chance and Steve and Anna Fletcher for all their hard work and dedication over many years running KOW and taking care of the orchard so the village could benefit from this beautiful nature amenity.

Curlew Celebration at Upham Meadow SSSI



© Kate Aubury

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.



© Kate Aubury

Adrian talking to attendees, Upham Meadow SSSI, April 2023

Concerning Cuckoos in the Nest - by Conservation Advisor Pamela Clarke



© Nick Berry

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, KLNLR,
2022

In this article I thought I'd focus on arguably one of our best loved summer visitors - the Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*.

This globally threatened species is now Red Listed as a Bird of Conservation Concern in the UK, with numbers of this iconic bird dropping by 65% since the 1980s. Since 2011, the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) has been satellite-tracking a number of cuckoos to identify what factors are driving differences in bird survival – from the variation in migration routes and deterioration in conditions along them, to the situation in over-wintering grounds in Sub-Saharan Africa. These issues are giving concern to a range of migrants which cross the Sahara including the Wood Warbler and the Spotted Flycatcher. Climate change is resulting in a general move towards colder, wetter and earlier springs with the arrival time of migrants not keeping up with this shift, putting them out of sync with prey availability (including - in the case of the Cuckoo - hairy caterpillars). Declines in host species can

also reduce the number of nests available for the Cuckoo to parasitize - the main hosts in the UK being Dunnock, Meadow Pipit (both reduced in numbers) and Reed Warbler: here Kemerton Lake provides the latter. Reed Warbler nests in reed beds are inaccessible to most predators (save for grass snake and mice) and the timing of their breeding chimes with the requirements of the Cuckoo.

The male Cuckoo arrives back on the breeding ground from late April and starts to call to attract a female. She will lay 10 to 15 eggs depending on body condition, possibly more. Her call - not often heard - is a liquid water-bubbling chuckle made particularly after egg-laying. The Cuckoo has evolved to look like a bird of prey so that when she is ready to lay an egg and approaches the nest the host bird panics and flies off, leaving the Cuckoo to remove an egg and lay her own – it all takes just a few seconds.

Aristotle was aware of the old tale that cuckoos turned into hawks in winter. In his *The History of Animals* he commented 'The cuckoo is said by some to be a hawk transformed, because at the time of the cuckoo's coming, the hawk, which it resembles, is never seen' (certainly the Sparrowhawk is less evident here in the summer).

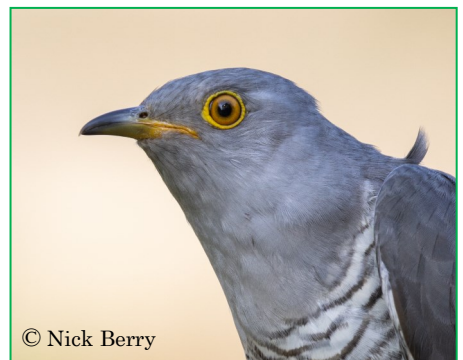
Here at Kemerton a team from the West Midlands Ringing Group are collecting data on

what bird species are using which habitats, and at Kemerton Lake on 7th May this year they ringed a Cuckoo (2 Cuckoo were ringed in 2022). Their records are lodged with the BTO, adding to our understanding of the cuckoo's breeding season.

Reed Warblers are double-brooded; the second clutch will normally be after the Cuckoo has finished egg laying and good numbers of these Reed Warbler juveniles are seen in September, maintaining a pretty constant population.

The Cuckoo leaves our shores by the end of June/beginning of July. I try to note the last date I hear it every year and this year it was July 6th at KLNLR – later than usual - in subsequent days I realised they'd gone!

In his book *Say Goodbye to the Cuckoo*, Michael McCarthy's chapter 'The Wandering Voice' explores the symbolism of this bird enacted in literature, music and folklore; we must now wait another year for its evocative two-note call signalling the coming of spring.



© Nick Berry

Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, KLNLR,
2022

'An Admiration for Aculeates' Talk is Bees Knees



Rosemary delivering her talk, Beckford Village Hall, March 2023

On Thursday 9th March KCT Governor and naturalist Rosemary Winnall delivered a brilliant talk about Aculeates (bees, wasps and ants) at Beckford Village Hall.

Despite torrential downpours on the night, the turnout was excellent and all who came thoroughly enjoyed learning more about a group that

includes some of our favourite insects such as bumblebees, as well as some less loved, like wasps. Rosemary's fascinating talk was illustrated by her excellent photography and covered many unique members of the group, such as the stunning Ruby-tailed Wasps.

Rosemary has spent many years recording wildlife in the Wyre Forest where she lives, and was one of the editors of 'The Nature of the Wyre', so she was able to call on many anecdotes from her nature adventures to entertain us with. Learning more about the lifecycles of parasitic wasps that target solitary bee larvae was particularly

intriguing, and Rosemary's close-up photos of the contents of her solitary bee nesting tubes were incredible.

After the talk we held a Q&A with Rosemary taking questions on the talk, gardening for bees, and more.

Our thanks to Rosemary for an excellent evening.



Rosemary delivering her talk, Beckford Village Hall, March 2023

CSA Environmental Partnering with KCT on Surveys

Local ecology company CSA Environmental has kindly offered their expertise to the Trust for surveys involving protected species such as bats, as the company wants to support practical conservation in the local area and do some team volunteering.



CSA Ecologist Rhiannon Taylor checking a bat box, Kemerton Wood, April 2023

In April an enthusiastic group joined Support Coordinator Kate Aubury for bat box checking at Kemerton Wood, which was long overdue. Disappointingly no bats were found this time but their help was much appreciated and it was a fun morning.

Emperor Moth Survey A Spectacular Success

In April naturalist Jason Kernohan visited KLNR to survey for Emperor moths. These spectacular 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.



Male Emperor Moth *Saturnia pavonia*, KLNR, April 2023

At KLNR Jason confirmed the presence of Emperor Moth, with 2 males coming to the lure during the survey.

The caterpillars feed on Bramble among other things, so there is plenty of habitat for them at the reserve. We will all be on the lookout for the enormous green spiky caterpillar from now on!

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 scrub for many species.

Bird Ringers on a Roll as Year Two gets Underway



© Kate Aubury

Reed Warbler & Lesser Whitethroat in the hand, KLNLR, April 2023

A group of dedicated bird ringers from West Midlands Ringing Group, led by Fergus Henderson, have continued a programme of ringing birds at Kemerton Lake which started in 2022. The ringing is part of the wider Bredon Hill Bird Recovery Project, funded by Farming in Protected Landscapes.

Having completed a year onsite in 2022 and gathering a great deal of useful data, 2023 started with a focus on putting up additional nest

boxes for target species including Marsh Tit, Barn Owl and Kestrel on KCT reserves and Kemerton Estate sites that KCT help monitor. The boxes were made and donated to the project by ringer Nick Berry.

As spring arrived, so did the breeding migrants, and the group was busy at Kemerton Lake catching and ringing migrant species such as Reed, Sedge & Cetti's Warbler, White-throat, Linnet, Chiffchaff, Reed Bunting and even a Cuckoo!

Once breeding season was underway the ringing paused to allow birds to feed their chicks unhindered, but the group carried out nest box checks and ringed Little Owl (see photo right) and Marsh Tit chicks.

More ringing will be underway soon and this autumn we are

holding a member-only event where you can watch the team in action - places are limited so we recommend booking early.

The group has produced a great report on their first year at Kemerton, which is on our website (on the 'News and Events' page).

KCT is very grateful for the team's ongoing dedication and hard work.



© Fergus Henderson

Ringers Claire, Nick and Jess with Little Owl chicks, Lillans Orchard, April 2023

May Moth Trapping Highlights Poor Start to Season



© Kate Aubury

Scorching Wing *Plagodis dolabraria*, Kemerton Wood, May 2023

On 20th May moth trapping experts Gavin Peplow and Oliver Wadsworth again joined KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury for a moth trapping session at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve and Kemerton Wood. Previous trapping in June 2020 had resulted in a very high catch with 154 different species recorded but this year reports were coming

in from all over England that moth numbers were extremely low in early spring. The reasons why were not fully known but the drought in July 2022 was one likely cause, whilst the extremely wet March was probably also a factor.

Hoping for a good night but aware the odds were against us, we set up several traps in the grassland and woodland, to attract different species. Although the weather was dry and warm during the day, temperatures dropped fast after dark fell, which meant fewer moths on the wing. The traps in the more exposed grassland had far fewer than the traps in the sheltered woodland. Final tallies are not yet in but its likely we had fewer than 50 species.

Some of the highlights included two species of Hawk-moth (Eyed and Lime Hawk-moth), the eye-catching Scorched Wing (see photo on left), colourful Green Carpet (see photo below), Light Emerald and Brimstone, and the very furry Pale Tussock.

Huge thanks as always to Gavin and Oliver for giving us their time and expertise.



© Kate Aubury

Green Carpet *Colostygia pectinataria*, Kemerton Wood, May 2023

Kemerton Clippings July 2023

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

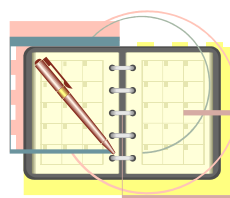


Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata*, KLNLR, April 2023

Save the Date!

- **Saturday 5th August** - Working party (10am start, KLNLR)
- **Saturday 2nd September** - Working party (10am start, Daffurn's Orchard)
- **Saturday 9th September** - **Guided Bat Walk, KLNLR** (8pm start) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Sunday 1st October**—**Bird Ringing Demo & Talk, KLNLR** (8.30am start) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 7th October** - Working party (10am start, Beggar Boys)
- **Saturday 14th October** - **Kemerton Apple Day, Victoria Hall (2-5pm)** - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 4th November** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 19th November** - **Member-only Fungus Foray, Kemerton Wood** (10am start) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 2nd 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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