

## Fruitful Apple Day Raises Funds for Orchard



© Kate Aubury

Apple Day Co-Organiser Andrew Millington scratting apples, Victoria Hall, October 2023

Kemerton Apple Day was held on Saturday 14th October at Victoria Hall, Kemerton. Organised by an enthusiastic new team, led by residents Charlie Taylor, Tom Martin and Andrew Millington, it was very successful and raised a brilliant £800 for Daffurn's Orchard.

The apple pressing was, as always, extremely popular, with attendees bringing their own apples for pressing or purchasing juice made from Daffurn's Orchard apples. All the kids enjoyed having a go at scratting the apples and turning the screw on the apple press and watching the golden juice run out - the local wasps were also quite keen on the juice!

In the hall, KOW stalwarts Steve and Anna Fletcher were selling their lovely cards, all featuring photos of the local landscape, flora and fauna, there were arts and crafts for the children to enjoy, and of course, lots of delicious cakes baked by volunteers from the village, which were extremely popular with the attendees.

KCT had an information stand about our work, particularly focussed on our orchards, and we signed up some new members and potential volunteers on the day, whilst also chatting to locals about our exciting plans for Daffurn's Orchard (see page 3 for more details

about two upcoming projects).

Charlie organised a raffle, with prizes generously donated by local businesses and individuals including a meal for 2 from The Crown, a voucher for Kemerton Coffee House, a pottery throwing lesson from Auriol Herford, a hamper, bottles of wine and more. The draw took place at the end of the event, with a lucky few taking home their prizes.

With the help of a number of village residents, Charlie had also pulled together a lovely display of historical photos and memories of Betty Daffurn, who owned the orchard up to her death in 2000, and ensured its safeguarding as a community nature reserve by offering the Trust the option to buy it after her death. Many residents still remember Betty and her family, who owned the orchard for over 100 years, and enjoyed reminiscing about her.

Our grateful thanks to all who helped out to make the Apple Day a success, including our organisers Charlie, Tom and Andrew, the many volunteers who helped pick apples, set up the hall, sell refreshments, man the arts and crafts activities and press the juice, the generous raffle donors, and the fantastic cake bakers. We could not have done it without you!



© Kate Aubury

Apple Day Co-Organiser Charlie Taylor (left) with volunteers and delicious cakes, Victoria Hall, October 2023

## KCT Governors' Annual Board Meeting 2023



© Kate Aubury

Governors inspecting the Typha spread in Beggarboys Wetland wet meadow, August 2023

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

Pamela and Kate reported on highlights from 2022/23 such as successful fundraising for the purchase of additional land at Upham Meadow SSSI, securing a new Natural Networks grant for KLNR, and the opening of the John Clarke Walk, as well as survey results and the first annual report on bird ringing at KLNR from WMBRG.

Kate also briefed the Governors on the news of our Movement for Good prize and various possible project ideas were discussed, with the Governors requesting more in-depth research and costings before they make the final decision.

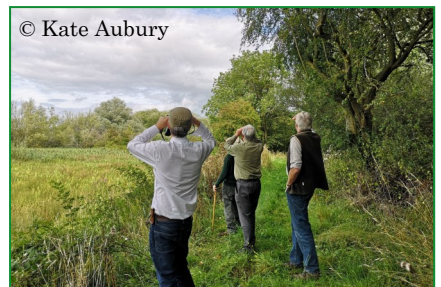
Daffurn's Orchard returning to KCT's management following the retirement of KOW's committee was also discussed in-depth.

After reviewing the past year, the governors identified their priorities for 2023/24; fundraising for eDNA surveys at KLNR to monitor White-clawed Crayfish and fish species, fundraising for a new project at KLNR and the surrounding woodland to improve visitor experience whilst protecting sensitive areas, and applying for grants to update signage at Daffurn's Orchard and improve visitor numbers and encourage more young families to use the community orchard.

After the meeting the Governors visited Beggarboys Wetland to see the groundworks that had been carried out over autumn

and winter 2022/23 to complete a circular path around the lake suitable for our off-road UTV and mower (to assist in management of the site) and discuss the Typha spread in the wet meadow and possible actions to tackle it. They also visited Oat Hill Track to see the bench and interpretation board for our new John Clarke Walk and look at some rare arable wildflowers that were in bloom.

The 2022/23 Chairman's Report, Annual Accounts, Conservation Advisor's Report Support Co-ordinator's Report are all available to read on our website now in the 'News & Events' section.



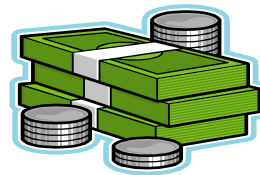
© Kate Aubury

Governors bird-watching at Beggarboys Wetland, August 2023

## Funding Update

In the second half of 2023 we submitted a grant application for Daffurn's Orchard to the Dent-Brocklehurst Family Charitable Trust, which was successful. We also heard that our Welcome to our Future grant application for the orchard had been successful too. More details on both can be found on page 3.

In July we asked members to nominate us for the Benefact



Group Movement for Good Awards, which many of you kindly did. In August we were thrilled to learn we had been one of 10 winners, receiving a prize of £5000 to go to our conservation work. Since then we have been working behind the scenes on researching possible projects and we hope to announce our plans for the

funds very soon. We want to make sure we use this bonus windfall wisely.

Long-term local supporter Bredon Forest School donated another £1200 to the Trust in the second half of 2023, funds which go towards volunteer tools and materials etc. We are very grateful for their generous support.

**Thank you to all who have supported us this year!**

## Funding Secured for Two Fantastic New Projects at Daffurn's Orchard



Daffurn's Orchard in spring, March 2023

We are delighted to announce that two planned projects at Daffurn's Orchard have successfully secured grant funding and work has already begun. Both projects aim to increase community involvement in this beautiful orchard nature reserve.

Our 'Welcoming Visitors and Supporting Volunteers Project' has received £300 from The Dent-Brocklehurst Family Charitable Trust, and works began in autumn 2023. The project includes new gate signage, a new information poster about the orchard, its history and wildlife, a nature

trail for young children, the creation of a new circular path up through the orchard, and the purchase of incinerator bins to assist our orchard volunteers in managing the site. The project also includes updating our web page about the orchard, and using social media (particularly the village WhatsApp) to raise the orchard's profile. As we go to print the web page update, circular path and nature trail are not yet complete but all other works are done. The web page update, new path and nature trail will be completed by April. We hope the additional access and the nature trail will encourage more young families in the village to visit this lovely little nature reserve.

Our 'Daffurn's Orchard Bioblitz April 2024 Project' has received £684 from Welcome to Our Future to hold a bioblitz in Daffurn's Orchard on Saturday 27th April. The bioblitz will run from 10am-2pm and will involve experts and members of the

public surveying the orchard for flora and fauna, focussing on wildflowers, birds, lichen, fungi, bees, and butterflies. There will be kids activities including face painting, opportunities to learn more about our wildlife, and equipment available to help with ID. In the evening, there will be a bat survey and moth trapping survey from 8pm-midnight.

We are grateful to the funders for supporting these projects and hope village residents and visitors from further afield will enjoy getting involved and learning more about the site.



Apple Blossom in Daffurn's Orchard, May 2012

## News in Brief

For many years the woodland surrounding Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve has been known as Kemerton Wood. In 2023, the landowner Kemerton Estate made the decision to rename it May Wood. New signage has gone up on the vehicle access gates and it will be referred to as May Wood in all future documentation.

Autumn 2023 saw otters make a welcome return to Kemerton Lake, with regular sightings of a pair delighting visitors. Local



Wood Blewit *Lepista nuda*, May Wood, November 2023

naturalist Robin Lewis has started a project to try and identify how many different otter are using the lake (using photographs of muzzles) and we look forward to hearing more about that in due course. We

think that our visitors are a female with her juvenile cub(s), as this fits with the activity seen and time of year, but data may show otherwise.

In early November Support Coordinator Kate Aubury led a group from Evesham U3A on a guided fungus foray in May Wood. The weather was good and there was plenty to see, including a fairy ring of Wood Blewits and lots of Rosy Bonnets, so it was a lovely morning. The group gave KCT a generous donation as a thank you for the walk.

## Getting Up Close & Personal with our Birds Ringers



© Kate Aubury

Ringer Jess showing attendees a Reed Bunting, KLNLR, September 2023

On 30th September a small group of members joined our volunteer bird ringers from West Midlands Bird Ringing Group for a fantastic demo.

During the event, attendees got to watch the ringers in action, get up close looks at many different bird species, and even - for a lucky few - got the chance to release some of

the ringed birds after they had been processed.

The ringers, led by Fergus Henderson & Jess Stuart-Smith, spent time explaining the purpose of ringing, demonstrating how the birds are processed, showing tips on how they sex and age different birds (this varies from species to species but can include variations in feather or eye colour, shape of tail or wing feathers, patterns on feathers, moult stage etc. ) and teaching attendees the ringers grip.

The morning's session totalled 105 new birds ringed, with 5 retraps (already ringed birds), including a large number of Meadow Pipit, Blackcap, Chiff-

chaff, Redpoll. Reed Bunting, Cetti's Warbler and more.

Our huge thanks to the ringing team for allowing our members to join them and watch them work. Everyone who attended had a brilliant time and loved getting to see the birds in the hand. We hope to run another session in autumn 2024 so watch this space!



© Kate Aubury

Ringers Jess & Katie sexing & ageing a Cetti's Warbler, KLNLR, Sept 2023

## Woodland Foray Focuses on Fascinating Fungi



© Kate Aubury

Attendees photographing a Rosy Bonnet, May Wood, November 2023

On 19th November KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury led a group of members on a fungus foray in May Wood and Fir Wood.

Conditions had been mild and wet so there was plenty of fabulous fungi to see, ranging from small bonnets through to large bracket fungi, from colourful jelly fungi (like the Yellow Stagshorn pictured opposite) to hard, black Cramp Balls, and plenty more besides!

The walk focussed on woodland fungi, as the grasslands had a particularly poor season this year due to drier weather through early autumn. Fungi surveying has become more complicated in recent years, as the changing weather patterns make it harder to predict when fungi will appear - even 10 years ago mid-November would probably have been too cold for cap and gill fungi but nowadays the season tends to start and end later.

During the walk Kate showed the attendees different types of fungi, discussed the habitats and lifestyles of various species, and gave tips on what to look for when attempting to identify fungi in the field. Everyone enjoyed sniffing some of the smellier examples! It's a challenging field, with over

15,000 species in the UK (including moulds and yeasts), but the variety is part of the fascination.

The walk ended on calcareous grassland near the Settlement Ponds, where Kate showed attendees a newly discovered patch of Earthtongues, the first that Kate has found on our sites in over 10 years of surveys. There's always something new to spot when out hunting fungi!



© Kate Aubury

Yellow Stagshorn *Calocera viscosa*, Fir Wood, November 2023

## Glow-worms Glimmer on Nighttime Walk - by Conservation Advisor Pamela Clarke



Mating glow worms, Bredon Hill,  
July 2023

Following my article on glow-worms in edition 30 (July 2022), this is by way of a follow-up of the glow-worm walk for Members held on 16th July 2023.

13 of us met at 9:15pm at the top of Westmancote; sundown was to be 9:20pm though in fact it was still pretty light. I gave a short talk on glow-worms which inevitably sparked questions such as 'how many snails does a glow-worm larvae ingest in a day?' I had no answer to that and despite research which unearthed fascinating, if gruesome, detail of their feeding habits, this particular query remains unanswered!

After more hanging around as light levels fell (typical of glow-worm monitoring), at 10 pm, when we could no longer distinguish colour, the group was finally able to set off. Due to a knee injury, I regretfully had to retire, but three of our wonderful volunteers led members on the trail.

Following the prescribed circular route - up the rough track from the road end and taking the right-hand fork at the top along the track bordered by high-sided butterfly-rich banks (variously known as the Sunken/Saxon Way/Upper Westmancote Track), at the top they then headed right through the gap. From there down the narrow footpath between a fence and wall, joining the track at the top of the field (Tueswell Hill) to meet the footpath heading down Pad Barn Track, then turning right along Oat Hill Track and back to the start of the walk.

The group were rewarded with

29 glowing females and very excitingly one of the group - Kate Ive - found and photographed a mating pair (see photo) - a first for these surveys!

You can see clearly he is slim, with strap-shaped wings, and she very different; a larger, worm-like (flightless) creature. Their function performed, they will both die within days, leaving fertilised eggs (between 50 and 100), which take about 35 days to hatch. During this time a glow can be seen within the eggs as the light organ develops. The larval stage comprises up to two summers before the emergence of adults ready to mate - this adult stage is short-lived and is all about reproduction, and thus the life cycle begins again.

We plan a repeat walk for Members this coming July (see Save the Date on page 8).

*John Tyler's Glow-worms (1994) is a useful reference for this fascinating beetle.*

## Bat Walk at KLNR

On 9th September ecologists Jula Humphries and Andrew Tillson-Willis led a member-only bat walk around Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve, assisted by KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury.

Weather conditions were good and the walk started well with a fly past by a Noctule, loud and clear on the bat detectors the group were using. We then had quite a wait before we

heard feeding activity from Common and Soprano Pipstrelles over the reedbeds on the north edge of the lake. It was nice to hear a Water Rail in the reeds too.

The walk continued through the surrounding woodland, where more bats were heard, including a possible Brown Long-eared, but overall bat numbers were lower than expected. Nonetheless our

attendees enjoyed using bat detectors to listen in to these normally unheard insectivores as they hunted midges and moths in the night, and learning more about these flying mammals and their lifecycles as we walked around the reserve.

Our thanks to Jula and Andrew for giving up their time to lead the bat walk and to Worcestershire Bat Group for lending us some extra bat detectors.

## Work Party Update by Nick Russon

I moved to Kemerton 6 years ago, having lived near Bredon Hill for most of my life. Living in Kemerton and having access to fabulous countryside, quite literally on the doorstep, has increased my appreciation of the area of outstanding natural beauty in which we live and has introduced me to the work of Kemerton Conservation Trust (KCT) of which I've been a volunteer for 3 years.

Volunteers play a vital role in helping KCT maintain their reserves. As a volunteer, you are invited to attend a work party one Saturday morning each month at different locations in the local area. The work is physical but is as strenuous as you wish to make it.

In January we were working at Kemerton Lake, which is my favourite reserve. The day was bright and sunny and we immediately spotted at least 20 Common Snipe hiding in the Scrapes, Mute Swans on the lake, and saw a handful of people visiting the hides. We collected and removed from the lake edge invading young saplings felled by contractors. It was hard physical work which took all morning but left me with a real sense of achievement and made me proud to be a volunteer.

I have little knowledge of flora and fauna but I enjoy learning from the other volunteers, the community spirit and working towards a shared goal. Why not give it a try ....



Nick helping rake wood chipping, JMNR, March 2022

*If you are interested in joining our volunteer work party group and would like to attend a trial session, please contact our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury on [kate@kemerton.com](mailto:kate@kemerton.com).*

## Focus on a Friend: Gary Farmer

A naturalist from a young age (as a young boy he would chat to the woodlice in his garden), Gary's special interest in Orthoptera (grasshoppers and crickets) was first piqued as a child when watching his cousin Trevor catching them. Later in life, Gary returned to them when Worcestershire naturalist John Meiklejohn, an early mentor, encouraged him to take on the Orthoptera County Recorder role and tackle a gap in the county's biological records. Despite some work by Fred Fincher in the 1970s there were woefully few records of grasshoppers or crickets for Worcestershire so Gary set about rectifying that.

Gary submitted his first round-up to Worcestershire Record in 1999 and in 2018,

after many years hard work surveying sites and verifying records, he wrote a county atlas of the order.

In 2020, KCT contacted Gary to confirm an ID on a Lesser Marsh Grasshopper and shortly afterwards Gary came at our invitation to survey at Beggarboys Wetland, along with his wife Nicki. They produced a fantastic list of species (Gary is also obsessed with weevils and is very knowledgeable on many other insects) and they have been KCT Friends ever since.

Gary's day job as Manager of Vale Landscape Trust <https://valetrust.weebly.com/> keeps him very busy and as they celebrate 25 years in 2024, they are focussed on



Gary sweep netting at our Open Day, KLNR, June 2023

increasing their own site records. Gary also hopes to find new species (he recently discovered a new to the UK species of woodlouse!)

The Trust is very grateful for Gary's time and expertise and we look forward to learning more about our Orthoptera in the future with his help.

## Spotlight On: Spring Butterflies

As winter gives way to spring, butterflies start to appear on our reserves. Some, like Brimstone and Peacock, have spent the winter hibernating as adults in sheltered spots (including garages and garden sheds), others, like Orange-tip & Holly Blue, are newly emerged from their chrysalises. Look out for Brimstones flying along woodland rides and over the grassland at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve, Orange-tips on the Cuckooflower at Upton Ham SSSI, Holly Blue in your own garden on Holly, and Peacocks on beds of nettles or warming themselves on farm tracks.

Butterflies are more visible on sunny, still days. Knowing each butterfly's habitat and behaviour will help you find them more easily. Speckled Wood males like to perch in pools of sunlight on woodland rides, rising to chasing off any intruder to the territory before returning to the same perch. Brimstones wander far and wide, searching for the Buckthorn and Alder Buckthorn their caterpillars need. Orange-tips are more frequently seen in wetland areas, as their preferred host plant Cuckooflower is a damp loving plant of flood meadows, ditches and riverbanks. Holly Blue is a regular visitor to gardens, so keep an eye out for these tiny blue butterflies in your own backyard.

Getting close to butterflies can take some patience, as they are easily disturbed. An early start can allow you to find them before they have warmed up enough to fly. If they are feeding, approach slowly and do not allow your shadow to fall on them, or sit still and wait for them to come to you. Your patience will be well rewarded!

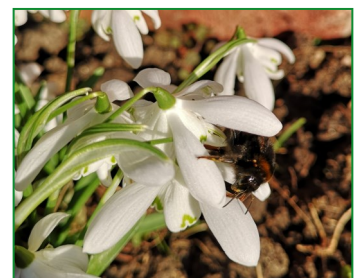


## Gardening for Wildlife

This is a new 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 head into spring, here's a few ideas to kickstart a wildlife-filled year in your garden!

1. Queen bumblebees emerge early in spring to a time referred to as 'the hunger gap' due to the lack of nectar sources. Planting spring flowering bulbs like daffodils and crocuses, shrubs such as Skimmia or Viburnum, or if you have more space, even trees such as Cherry or Magnolia, will not only look great but provide essential food for bumblebees to start their colonies. Try crocuses in window boxes or pots by the door if you have no garden.
2. Birds are looking for nesting sites in early spring, so now's the perfect time to erect a bird box or two if you have suitable trees or a northerly, easterly or south-easterly house wall. Boxes should be erected 2-5m high, have a clear flight path, be some distance from any feeders and (unless a social species such as House Sparrow) away from other nest boxes.



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## Kemerton Clippings January 2024

Edited by Kate Aubury  
Contact email: [kate@kemerton.com](mailto:kate@kemerton.com)

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For more information on the work of KCT please visit our website: [www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org)



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Gatekeeper *Pyronia tithonus* on Purple Loosestrife *Lythrum salicaria*  
KLNLR, July 2023

## Save the Date!

- **Saturday 6th January** - Working party (10am start, KLNLR)
- **Saturday 3rd February** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 2nd March** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Monday 4th March** - **Illustrated Talks on Lammas Meadows & Breeding Curlew, Twyning Village Hall** (7.30pm start) - see 'News & Events' on website [www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org) for full event details
- **Saturday 6th April** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 27th April** - **Daffurn's Orchard Bioblitz** (10am start) - see 'News & Events' on website [www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org) for full event details
- **Saturday 4th May**—Working Party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Wednesday 1st May**—**Member-only Dawn Chorus May Wood (5.30am start)** - see 'News & Events' on website [www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org) for full event details
- **Saturday 8th June**- Working party (10am start, KLNLR)
- **Saturday 15th June** - **KLNLR Open Day** (Gates open at 1pm, walks at 1.30pm & 2pm) - see 'News & Events' on website [www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org) for full event details
- **W/c 15th July** (exact date tbc) - **Member-only Glow Worm Walk, Bredon Hill** (9.15pm start) - see 'News & Events' on website [www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org) for full event details

For details on any of the above events, please contact KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury by email [kate@kemerton.com](mailto:kate@kemerton.com) or by phone on 07765 334 776.

### Kemerton Conservation Trust

Kemerton Court  
Kemerton  
Tewkesbury  
Gloucestershire  
GL20 7HY

Tel: 01386 725 254

[www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org)

Registered Charity No. 702488



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