

Kemerton Clippings

Issue 5

January 2010

Appeals for Help!

The Trust is looking for volunteer help in the following areas:

Reptile and Amphibian Surveyors: Do you have an interest in our native reptiles and amphibians? Would you like to help with the surveying and recording of reptiles and amphibians on KCT reserves? If you answered yes to these questions, then you may be the person we are looking for! No experience is required, just enthusiasm and commitment. Training will be given. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact John Clarke by email on kctoffice@btinternet.com.

Bat Roost Information: Our new bats surveys have begun. We are very interested in trying to locate as many bat roosts as possible in Bredon, Kemerton, Kinsham & Westmancote. If you have any anecdotal evidence of a bat roost in your house or outbuildings, we would love to know. We may be able to do emergence surveys in the summer to identify the species and number. Please contact our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury on 07765 334 776 or via email 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.

Kemerton Orchard Day Provides Fundraising Windfall for Trust!

Hundreds of people attended Kemerton Orchard Day on Saturday 17th October 2009 to take part in a celebration of orchards, their produce and their wildlife.

The day, organised in partnership by Kemerton Conservation Trust (KCT) and Kemerton Orchard Workers (KOW) included guided orchard walks, apple pressing, orchard produce, exhibitions by local artists Toff Milway and Beth Phillip, stalls by local producers Walcot Nurseries, Minchews Real Cyder and Perry, Slipstream Organics and Bredon Hill Honey, educational exhibitions on orchards and more.



KOW committee member Neil Chance presses apples for visitors

On the day the weather held and attendance was high, surpassing all expectation, with everyone enjoying a lovely day celebrating the bounty of our local orchards. Over £2,000 was raised through walks, sale of produce, donations, the raffle and the silent auction (our thanks to the many local businesses who generously donated raffle prizes) and these funds will help both groups to continue our valuable orchard restoration work.

KCT currently has 9 orchards under management, including Daffurn's Orchard in the heart of Kemerton, which is managed by local community group KOW. Orchards are a vital part of the landscape and traditionally, Worcestershire had a high concentration of orchards, particularly in the Vale of Evesham and Pershore. However, more than 60% of traditional orchards in England have vanished since the 1950s.

Here at Kemerton we have worked hard to restore our heritage orchards, replanting with old English varieties traditionally grown in the local area. We have apples, pears and plums in our orchards and they attract a variety of local wildlife, especially in autumn, when other food sources are scarcer.



John Clarke leads a walk through Lillans Orchard

Our Orchard Day was made possible with grant funding from the National Trust's **Conserving and Restoring Traditional Orchards in England** project, which is also funding a major restoration and monitoring project at Kemerton (see edition 4 of the newsletter). Our thanks go to them and to all the volunteers from KCT and KOW who worked so hard to plan and run the day. Special thanks go to KCT Conservation Advisor John Clarke for all his hard work.

New Flood Meadow added to KCT Portfolio

We are delighted to announce the purchase of another flood meadow thanks to the generosity of Natural England, who funded 75% of the purchase through a grant from the ALSF (Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund). We received a grant of £14,625 to purchase a parcel of flood meadow totalling 6½ acres on the Avon riverbank by Eckington Bridge.

Asham Meadow is an example of a riverside meadow still managed under the old “Lammas Meadow” system, whereby the meadow is shut up for hay in early spring, cropped in 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



Governors Matthew Darby & Lord Howick on the Avon riverbank, Asham Meadow, November 2009

spring/early summer, dominated by the lovely maroon flowered greater burnet in June. It also provides nesting habitat for curlews, snipe, redshank and skylarks.

Such 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 United Kingdom. It is vital that the few remaining examples such as Asham Meadow are preserved and protected. KCT is therefore very grateful to Natural England for allowing us to purchase this valuable wildlife habitat to manage for future generations.

Asham Meadow is managed as common land and there is a footpath running right across it, so locals can enjoy the site. In time, we hope to purchase more strips within the meadow and we plan to continue to manage our strip in the traditional method.

The flood meadows KCT own and manage are not only important wildlife sites, but they are economically viable for us to buy, as we earn income from the hay and grazing, which soon provides



Chairman Adrian Darby & Governor Carl Nicholson walking on Asham Meadow, November 2009

a return on the initial investment and allows for their long-term management.

As part of the purchase, we are planning on holding a member-only event at Asham Meadow in early Summer when the wildflowers will be at their peak. Further details including dates will follow in due course.



Seed head of Fine leaved Water Dropwort *Oenanthe silaifolia*,

Funding Update

It has been a very good year for fundraising within the Trust. The Friends scheme continues to grow and our supporters remain extremely generous. Events such as the Orchard Day also raised valuable funds for our work. We have recently gained two more corporate sponsors; Bredon Forest School and Cotteswold Dairy Ltd, both of whom contributed to the salary costs for our warden



post. Bredon Forest School has also generously donated to our new Woodlands & Wildflower Project (see page 6 for details).

In addition, since July we have submitted three more grant applications. We have been successful with two grants (the purchase of Asham Meadow

and the funding from the CCB—details on page 3) and been rejected by one, which we are in the process of fine tuning and re-submitting.

More fundraising will be required in 2010, and we will continue to apply for grant funding as well.

Thank you to all who have supported us this year!

Beggarboys Wetland Restoration Project Receives Funding Boost



Supported by the
Cotswolds Conservation Board's
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FUND

A long awaited restoration project at Beggarboys Reserve is finally commencing thanks to the generous support of the Cotswold Conservation Board (CCB), who is funding 75% of the work through its Sustainable Development Fund.

Beggarboys Wetland Reserve is a lovely wildlife site located on Bredon Hill. Containing a small lake, marsh area and woodland it is one of KCT's most diverse



© Kate Aubury
Beggarboys Reserve nr Westmancote

wildlife reserves, with our best insect records, as well as bats and water birds. It does not have any public access to protect the wildlife.

For many years, the lake has had a slow leak, which has affected water levels in the summer and has had a negative impact on the water creatures which are found on the reserve. We have been planning a major repair for some time but lacked the funds to begin. Now, having secured funding from the CCB, we have begun the work this winter, and will complete the project by the end of March.

Whilst we have hired a contractor to do much of the repair work, KCT volunteers

will be helping with habitat management at the site.

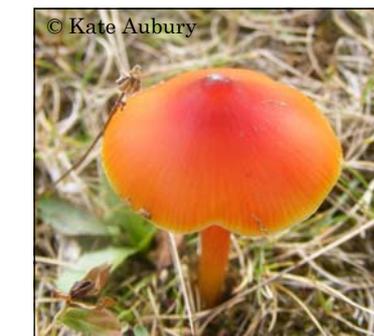
We are planning a member-only event at the site in March to show you the completed project and to allow you a chance to see this lovely reserve. More details will follow closer to the time.

We are very grateful to the CCB for generously assisting with this project and making the repair possible.

News in Brief

It was a particularly good year for fungus thanks to a lot of rain! Those of you who ventured to the lake and arboretum in the autumn will have seen the thousands of fungi that carpeted many of the rides and covered the fallen logs. A truly splendid reminder of the rich micro-habitat found on dead wood and in leaf litter! Fungus is just one of the reasons we leave piles of logs and brash to rot down in the Arboretum; they also provide a fabulous habitat for insects, some nesting birds and amphibians and reptiles.

Down at the lake reserve, the ride from the public footpath to the Eastern Hide is now open all year round, as promised in July. Now is a



© Kate Aubury
Blackening Wax Cap,
Hygrocybe nigrescens
Kemerton Lake 2009

great time to visit the lake and view some of the migrant species which arrive every autumn to overwinter on the lake (teal, pochard, widgeon, lapwing, snipe etc). Sometimes, we even see something a little more rare and exotic (see pg 6 for more details!).

In addition to the extension of opening times on the main path to the Eastern Hide, the new section of path from the Eastern Hide to the public footpath from Kemerton is now open to Friends of KCT only. This allows Friends to follow a circular walk around the lake and arboretum.

This new path is open from 1st June to 28th February annually, but is closed from 1st March to 30th May to protect the nesting birds during peak breeding season. As with all our permissive paths, dogs are not allowed and we appreciate your cooperation on this to protect the wildlife found on our reserves.

Estate-wide Bat Surveys: Update

This summer and autumn I begun conducting bat surveys on five sites around the estate.

Whilst we had some ad-hoc bat records from previous wardens recorded in the 1980s and 90s, we did not have a basic survey of key areas to establish a baseline of bat species. Bats make up nearly a quarter of all UK mammals and are considered indicator species, so we felt that more information was needed. Following a training course from the BCT and some practical field work with Worcestershire Bat Group (WBG), I began surveying sites in June 2009.

The sites chosen were those where we had recently erected bat boxes. These were; Aldwick Wood, Beggarboys Reserve, Kemerton Court, Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve and Squitter Brook. These sites all contained a range of habitats that bats either roost in or forage in and they covered a large geographical area, so it was hoped we would gain a good insight into the current bat population.

With the help of experienced surveyors from WBG and some enthusiastic volunteers from KCT, I surveyed each site twice (except Squitter Brook, which was only surveyed once). We used a range of bat detectors.



Surveying bats at Beggarboys Reserve with WBG, 2009

The surveys were all conducted in the evening, beginning at sunset and continuing for at least one hour (some species do not emerge until well after sunset). Where possible, I was joined by at least one other surveyor, but on some occasions I surveyed only accompanied by an assistant to log records, which (given my inexperience) means some results cannot be absolutely verified. Nevertheless, the surveys have given us a really good initial idea of the bat species found in our area.

All bat calls were recorded on a basic survey sheet as we walked the routes and where possible, an identification made. Some bats (particularly those from the myotis family) are very difficult to identify from bat call alone, so in some cases a definitive identification could not be made, but as many were identified as possible. Several sites proved extremely diverse; at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve we made over 50 separate records of bats on the first survey!

In the end, we definitively identified the following species over the 5 sites; Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Noctule, Brown Long-eared, Natterer's, Barbestelle, Lesser Horseshoe and Whiskered/Brandts. In addition, it is likely we also found Daubenton's and possible Leisler's.

Of the above, the most exciting was our record of a Barbastelle at Beggarboys Reserve, as these are relatively rare. Recording the Lesser Horseshoe was also exciting, as they have an incredibly unique echolocation, which sounds quite astonishing on a bat detector!



Bat box on tree, Squitter Brook

Once my full report is completed within the next few weeks, all these records will be logged on KCT's database Recorder, and the records will also be submitted to the Worcestershire Biological Records Centre to assist with county-wide records.

We also checked all the bat boxes from the ground (I am not yet licensed for handling bats), but sadly none appeared to have been used by bats (some had birds in them!)

Our bats are currently hibernating, allowing me time to type my report, but in the late spring I plan to begin more surveys across the estate. I hope to survey some of our orchards this year, as they could be a great forage area for bats. I also hope to do some emergence surveys at a couple of known local bat roosts, and also repeat the surveys of the 5 sites to compare data.

My grateful thanks go to Worcestershire Bat Group for all their help, especially David Lee, Membership Secretary, who kindly accompanied me on most of the surveys; KCT volunteer Pete Allen; and my husband David, who acted as my assistant when necessary. I would also like to thank Natural England, who funded my training and paid for the bat detector through a grant from the ALSF.

Work party update by Emily Day

Dad and I joined the KCT Volunteers in August and in retrospect I can't think why I didn't join earlier. I've lived in Bredon all my life, I regularly enjoy walking by Kemerton Lake and I have an active interest in environmental conservation. I graduated from the University of Durham this summer and during my three years there completed about 300 hours of UK conservation volunteer work. Additionally I spent five months, spread over my two summer holidays, helping to build and maintain hiking trails in Iceland's National Parks.

I volunteer with the Malvern Hills Conservators too, but I like the fact that I can walk to KCT events and so have less

environmental impact. I particularly enjoyed November's task, planting trees at the John Moore Reserve. I frequently take part in more destructive conservation tasks, and whilst these are often the most fun and of course produce valuable results, it is very satisfying to be engaged in a more constructive activity occasionally! We also had a really good time at the Orchard Day, and would like to thank all those who put so much effort into organising the event.

I've really enjoyed beginning to volunteer locally and to meet some new faces. During the summer I was struggling to find employment and it was helpful to get out of the house, get some exercise and do



Volunteers Emily, Shaun Armitage and David Mann planting trees in John Moore Reserve, November 2009

something positive. Volunteering also looks great on my CV and employers have been really keen to talk about this when I attend interviews.

I have recently commenced employment with a local Environmental Consultancy, but have no plans to lessen my volunteer commitments with KCT!

Focus on a Friend: Roy Cox

In this article, we would like to focus on our nest box project and the work done by long-time KCT Friend, Roy Cox.

Roy has been working with the Trust on KCT's nest box project for over 20 years now! He got involved in the late 80s, when the Trust employed a full-time warden, Craig Stenson and has continued to help ever since.

Having always had an interest in birds and making bird boxes, Roy helped Craig to set up a nest box scheme in Aldwick Wood, The Bushes and Beggarboys. He made the bird boxes for the scheme himself, constructing various sizes and styles to encourage a range of birds.

Over the years, Roy has continued to help with the nest box scheme, working with our various wardens and, in latter years, our conservation advisor John Clarke.

Roy checks the nest boxes every winter at the three sites, cleaning them and repairing any that were damaged in the previous season. He also notes which boxes were used and, where possible, what species used them. From his many years' experience, Roy has found that open-front boxes are not as successful in woodland as boxes with entrance holes, so he now makes only these styles.

In addition to his assistance with our nest boxes, Roy is also



Roy Cox (on left) planting trees in John Moore Reserve with George Day, November 2009

a regular at our monthly work parties.

Roy's invaluable and unstinting help has enabled the Trust to maintain our nest boxes even when our staffing levels dropped. Both John Clarke and all the team would like to thank Roy for volunteering his time for so long and enabling this project to continue.

New Woodland Shrubs & Wildflower Project Begins

Native woodlands usually consist of three layers - the tree canopy, the shrub layer and the ground flora. Many of the planted woodlands at Kemerton do not contain many, if any, shrubs or ground flora, particularly wildflowers.

In the early noughties some trials were set up by John Clarke to see if the Trust could encourage wildflowers to grow in established woodland and the nursery project has in the past produced native shrubs from local seed or cuttings to plant out.

More recently the reduction in the Trust resources has led to the winding down of this important work. In order to continue the research, John has now set up the Woodland Shrubs & Wildflower Project

and is seeking sponsorship from local firms and groups. The hope is to have five sponsors each contributing £200 per year for five years.

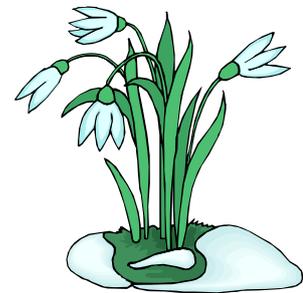
Cotswold Agricultural Merchants was the first to generously offer their help and they have been followed by **Bredon Forest School** - the Trust is extremely grateful to them. John is also in discussion with another company.

The project has started this winter. Following preparatory work, native shrubs including hazel, spindle and guelder rose, have been planted in the John Moore Reserve. Bird nest boxes in the reserve are to be repaired and increased in number and if the opportunity arises we may put up bat boxes. In addition, shrubs will be planted

around the new glade which is to be used as a reception area at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve.

During the five year period of the project, we hope to extend this work to many other woodland plantations around the estate.

If you feel that your business or organisation would like to support this project please contact John Clarke by email on kctoffice@btinternet.com.



On 22nd November, KCT assisted Vale Wildlife Rescue in releasing a Great Northern Diver onto Kemerton Lake.

The bird had been found by a member of the public and brought to Vale Wildlife at Beckford, where it was identified as a juvenile Great Northern Diver with the help of Fergus Henderson, a warden with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust.

These birds migrate to the UK in winter from Iceland and are

Great Northern Diver Release

mostly found in coastal areas, although they do occasionally venture inland to lakes and reservoirs. They do not normally come as far inland as Worcestershire, so we presume it got blown off-course by the stormy weather around that week.

Having checked the bird over at their hospital, Vale Wildlife Rescue needed a suitable site to release the bird, and Kemerton Lake was suggested. We were happy to give permission and so I met Caroline and Martin from Vale Wildlife, Fergus Henderson and some local bird enthusiasts at the lake to release the bird.

It was an extremely wet and windy day, but we all thought it worth getting soaked for, as the bird was simply stunning and it's haunting call when on the lake

was wonderful to hear. After release, the bird was soon diving in the lake, so we left it with fingers crossed that it would flourish. Sadly, the bird did not make it and was found dead a few days later. The cause of death was unknown. It's tragic that the bird did not survive, but I know we gave it the best possible chance to succeed, and I was privileged to meet it.



The Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer* on the lake after release

Governors Board Meeting 2009

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 and Kate Aubury, who both report on their activities from the year.

2009 was another good year for the Trust. We were successful in gaining several grants, and we are very pleased with the purchase of the land at Upton Ham and the land at Asham Meadow. However, these purchases have used up a lot of funds in the short-term, so financing for our general costs is tight.

We obtained funding for our

warden for 2009 and part of 2010, but looking forward, will need to source more to keep the position. We also need funds for some of the research and monitoring projects we do, which we have had to curtail in recent years.

The Orchard Project is going extremely well, but is taking up a lot staff time. However it is a valuable opportunity to expand our previous orchard work and therefore is time well spent. We have funding for this project into 2011, so work continues. The Orchard Day was a big success and helped publicise this project and KCT's wider work.

The 'Friends of KCT' scheme continues to expand and volunteer numbers have risen,

which is excellent.

Looking to the year ahead, our priorities are to complete the repair of Beggarboys, find more funds for our warden Alan, build on the Woodland Shrubs & Wildflowers Project and obtain more grant funding. There is also work to be done at the arboretum on the paths.

At the board meeting, we received and accepted the resignation of Professor David Macdonald, who felt that pressures of commitments elsewhere meant he could not give the Trust enough time. The Trust would like to thank Professor Macdonald for serving as a trustee for many years. We are looking to appoint another trustee in the near future and will keep you updated.

Bird Watching Member-only Event

Our first event of the year is on Saturday 23rd January at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve.

We will be holding a bird watching event at the hides, with Chairman Adrian Darby and Governor Carl Nicholson (retired RSPB Regional Officer) on hand to help you identify the birds, give you tips on bird watching and answer any questions you might have on the species found at the lake and elsewhere on the estate.

This is a member-only event, and due to the restricted size of the hides, needs to be booked in advance. We will be holding 30 minute sessions from 11am to 1pm and from 2pm to 4pm with

a maximum of five people during each slot. If you are interested in attending, please contact Kate Aubury on 07765 334 776 or by email on kate@aubury.co.uk.

You will need binoculars and sensible shoes and clothing are advised, as it will be quite cold in the hides.

We hope that there will be a variety of ducks, geese and other waterfowl for you to see, but obviously the weather may affect the numbers and no guarantees can be made! However, normally in January we might hope to see widgeon, teal, pochard, gadwell, coot,

mallard, snipe, tufted duck, mute swans, canada geese, little grebe and numerous gulls.

This is a great opportunity to learn more about our birds and improve your identification skills, so we hope you will join us!



Male Tufted Duck
Aythya fuligula

Kemerton Clippings January 2010

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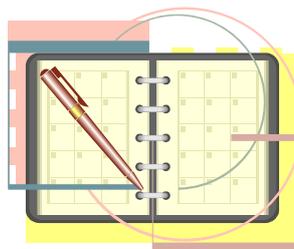
**For more information on the work
of KCT please visit our website:**
www.kemerton.org



Kemerton Lake in the snow, January 2010

Save the Date!

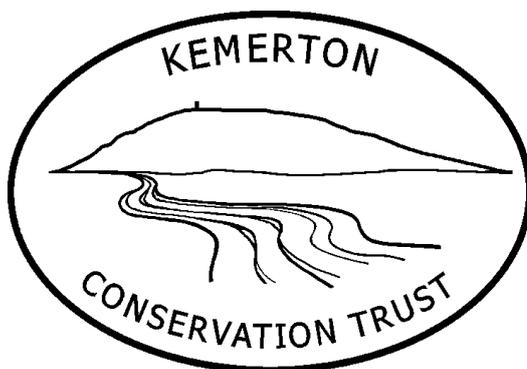
- **Saturday 16th January** - Working Party
(10am start, Beggarboys Reserve)
- **Saturday 23rd January** - **Bird Watching
Event** at Kemerton Lake (see pg 7 for details)
- **Saturday 20th February** - Working party (10am
start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 21st March** - Member-only Event at
Beggarboys 2-4pm (more details to follow)
- **Saturday 27th March** - Working party (10am
start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 3rd April** - **Easter Egg Hunt** (more
details to follow)
- **Saturday 24th April** - Working party (10am
start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 29th May** - Working party (10am start,
location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 19th June** - Working party (10am
start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 24th July** - Working party (10am
start, location to be confirmed)



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M. G. DARBY

P. S. DOBLE

LORD HOWICK OF GLENDALE

C. F. NICHOLSON

R. H. WORKMAN