

# Kemerton Clippings

Issue 6

July 2010

## Appeals for Help!

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

### Gardener required

Are you a gardener who could you spare a few hours a year to help our Conservation Advisor John Clarke grow rare wild flowers in the Trust's small nursery? The work involves harvesting seed, processing, sowing, hand-weeding and hoeing. The piece of land by John's house is only about 20x12 feet and has permanent strips where seed is planted each year. If you can help please contact the Trust office on 01386 725653 or email [kctoffice@btinternet.com](mailto:kctoffice@btinternet.com)



### Event Helpers Needed

The KCT Open Day is on 30th August. We will require help with the refreshment stand, car parking and also the admissions stand. If you are able to volunteer for an hour or so on the day, your help would be much appreciated! If you are interested, please contact Support Coordinator Kate Aubury either on 07765 334 776 or by emailing [kate@aubury.co.uk](mailto: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.**

## Beggarboys Wetland Restoration Project is Successfully Completed

Following receipt of funding from Cotswold Conservation Board through its Sustainable Development Fund, a vital repair of the lake at Beggarboys Wetland Reserve was completed in March this year. Local contractor R J Styles, together with KCT Warden Alan Marsh, successfully identified the source of a long-term leak in the lake bund and repaired it using blue clay. Water levels at the lake showed an immediate rise following rain, so we are thrilled with the result.



© Alan Marsh

The contractor repairing the bund Beggarboys March 2010



© Alan Marsh  
KCT Support Coordinator Kate & volunteers Emily Day & David Aubury hard at work!

In addition to the repair of the leak, the project included vital habitat management in the reserve and surrounding woodland, including clearing overgrown and silted streams, coppicing and dead-hedge laying. Some of the work was carried out by the Gloucestershire Vale Conservation Volunteers, but the vast majority was undertaken by our loyal and dedicated band of work party volunteers. The timeline for completion of the project was extremely tight, with project work commencing in December and ending in March, fitted in around some extreme weather conditions.

As a result, one work party was undertaken with snow on the ground - so a big thank you to all those who turned out that cold day!

Following project completion we celebrated with a member-only walk at the reserve, which does not have public access, so it was a unique opportunity for our Friends to see this beautiful site. Held at the end of March and led by our Chairman Adrian, the main highlights of the walk were the mating toads, willow in flower and the singing birds. We hope those who came enjoyed seeing the reserve and learning about the work we had been doing.



© Kate Aubury

Viewing the repair work on our walk, Beggarboys Reserve, 21st March 2010

This year we will be continuing work at Beggarboys, repairing the monk weir and silt traps and maintaining our habitat management. Beggarboys is a very valuable wildlife site and we wish to maintain it in peak condition.

## An Evening to Celebrate Asham Meadow

To celebrate the successful purchase of two strips of Asham Meadow near Eckington, KCT held a free public slideshow and talk event at Eckington Hall on 12th March.

Following a short welcome from KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury, our Chairman Adrian Darby discoursed knowledgeably on the history, ecology and traditional management of Lammas Meadows, a rare type of flood meadow with a unique management system and associated flora and fauna.

Lammas Meadows are rich in flora because they are not cut for hay until July, which is after the peak flowering time for many meadow flowers such as meadow cranesbill, meadowsweet and greater burnet, thus allowing the

plants to set seed and return the following year. However, there are now very few of these once common meadows left in the country due to modern farming methods, so KCT believe it is vital to preserve those that remain. Asham Meadow is a Lammas Meadow, hence our interest in it.

Adrian's talk included details of other flood meadows where KCT own land, including Upton Ham and Twyning Ham (also a Lammas Meadow).

After a short refreshment break, attendees were then treated to an interesting and enthusiastic talk from Mike Smart, regional representative of the British Trust For Ornithology, who talked about the importance of flood meadows for the waders that breed in them; curlew, redshank and snipe, as well as other ground nesting birds. Mike has been monitoring bird populations in the Severn and Avon area for BTO for many years, and has seen the downward trend affecting almost all wading birds. Tradition Lammas Meadows are very important for maintaining breeding wader populations because the late hay cut allows



Speaker Mike Smart in action

these birds time to successfully breed young in the long grass.

The event was very well attended, with the hall packed to capacity. It was a great opportunity for both Friends of KCT and local residents of Eckington and Birlingham to learn more about the ecological importance of flood meadows and also the Trust's plans for our new land.

Our grateful thanks go to Mike Smart for donating his time and expertise to our event, and to Natural England, who funded 75% of the purchase at Asham and also funded this event through a grant from the ALSF (Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund), allowing us to hold it free of charge.



The new map now erected on our sections of Asham Meadow

## Funding Update

Fundraising has been slower for the first half of 2010. Our Friends continue to support us and we have gained some new members. In addition, the Easter Egg Hunt raised a small sum of money for the Trust.

Due to pressures of work, KCT staff were not able to submit any grant applications during the period, but we are in the process of applying for three



new grants now; two to the lottery and one to Severn Waste's Welcome to Our Future Fund. We will not know if we are successful for a couple of months, but hope to gain funds for more work at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve including a new map, path way markers and signs, more tools and

equipment for our volunteer work parties, and funds for completion of the work at Beggarboys Wetland Reserve.

In addition, we gained a new corporate sponsor, Stanway Screens, who is generously supporting our Woodland Shrubs & Wildflower Project.

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

## Asham Meadow's Wet and Windy Wildflower Walk!

In addition to the slideshow talk held in March, KCT also held a wildflower walk at Asham Meadow in June, when the meadow flowers are at their peak, to show our supporters the new land we have bought.

The walk, held in the evening, was led by KCT Chairman Adrian, with Governor Matt Darby and Support Coordinator Kate Aubury also on hand to answer questions.



Club-tailed Dragonfly  
*Gompus vulgatissimus*

Despite very windy and grey conditions, we had a high turnout of 45 people, and spent an enjoyable 1½ roaming the meadow looking for interesting flora and fauna.

Due to the recent wet summers, the meadow is not in good condition, so we were somewhat disappointed on the flora front - buttercup, cow parsley and sedge forming the majority of plants, with the highlight being the rare narrow-leaved water dropwort (shown).



However, thanks to the expertise of locally renowned naturalist Harry Green, a Friend of KCT, we more than made up for the scarce flora with the wealth of invertebrate



Adrian leads the walk across Asham Meadow, June 2010

life on offer, including a lovely club-tailed dragonfly, caterpillars and ladybirds.

In addition, we were lucky to see and hear singing skylark over the meadow, as well as breeding curlew and redshank calling and displaying as we walked, a beautiful sight.

We finished with strawberries and elderflower by the Avon, a lovely end to the walk.

Our grateful thanks to Natural England, who funded this event through a grant from the ALSF.

## News in Brief

Governor Professor David Macdonald announced his resignation from our board earlier this year. Pressures of work at Oxford meant that he felt he could no longer give KCT the time required. We are of course sad to see him go but thank him for all his work over the years. We will be looking to recruit a new governor to the board when a suitable replacement has been identified.

Invertebrate charity Buglife has begun work at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve researching its possible suitability as an Ark site for native crayfish. Crayfish traps have been set in the lake to check for any sign of non-native signal



Vandalised Screen at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve, July 2010

crayfish as a first step in the process.

Whilst Buglife's experts were at the lake, they discovered an otter spraint and remains of an otter meal, the first evidence we have that otters use the lake. An otter appears to have laid up in one of our log piles!

Unfortunately, some of you may have noticed that the viewing screen on the public footpath has been vandalised and is now damaged beyond repair.

We are occasionally a target for this sort of malicious vandalism, and it is very frustrating, as we do not always have the funds to repair the damaged items.

If, when you are out and about at the lake, you notice any vandalism or see anything unusual, please do let us know either by emailing us on [kctoffice@btinternet.com](mailto:kctoffice@btinternet.com) or by phoning the number on the back of this newsletter. Sadly there is very little we can do to prevent petty vandalism.



## Eggcellent Easter Egg Fun!

The KCT Annual Easter Egg Hunt was another terrific success this year, with an even higher turnout of eggcited youngsters and lovely, sunny weather to accompany the event!



© Kate Aubury

Laura Knight, 9, with her Easter egg basket

The egg hunt was held on Saturday 3rd April and we had a record 61 children take part, making a profit of £77.00 for the Trust and leading to over 600 mini eggs being handed out!

The kids spent several happy hours rambling around the lovely gardens of Kemerton Court finding craftily hidden Easter eggs, as well as taking part in a fun nature trail and a basket design competition. Two of the best designs can be seen featured in the photos - well done to Laura and Jake!

For the kids, it was a chance to eat lots of chocolate, for the adults, it was an opportunity to catch up on some gossip



© Kate Aubury

Jake Daley, 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ , with his Easter egg basket

with friends in a beautiful setting, as the kids ran off steam, so everyone was happy.



## Fowl Play at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve

Our first member-only event of 2010 was a bird watching event at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve on Saturday 23rd January with KCT Governor Carl Nicholson.

Having worked for the RSPB for decades, Carl is an expert at identifying birds, and lent his knowledge to the event, helping attendees identify the water-fowl on the lake.



Male Pochard *Aythya farina*

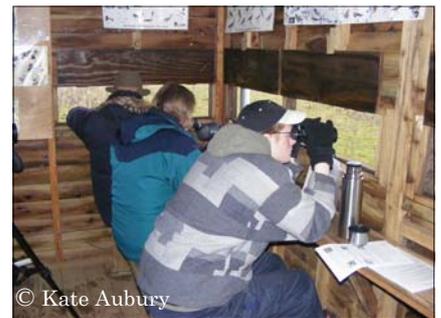


Due to the exceptional snowfall and frozen conditions at the lake just before the event, the number of over-wintering birds on the lake were unfortunately down. Nevertheless, we had a good selection of pochard, widgeon, gadwall and tufted ducks and one heron.

Carl & Adrian both brought high powered telescopes, which allowed us to view the birds more clearly from the hide, and for those who came, it was a fun and informative session.

As well as the water birds, we also saw a flock of gold finches feeding on the teasels out by the scrapes, hanging upside down on the tall stems!

Our thanks to Carl for driving all the way from Banbury to help at the event - we all learnt something new to improve our identification skills.



© Kate Aubury

KCT Friends hone their duck identifying skills at the hide

## KCT Chairman Honoured with Wildlife Award

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust (WWT) awarded our chairman Adrian Darby with their prestigious annual 'Worcestershire Wildlife Medal' at their AGM in May in recognition for his dedicated and wide-ranging services in wildlife in the county and beyond.

Adrian has already received an OBE for his dedicated work in conservation at a national level, particularly for his services whilst Chairman of both RSPB and Plantlife. This award from WWT reflects the work Adrian continues to do at the county level, including his role as

Heritage Champion at Wychavon District Council, his work here at KCT, his involvement in the creation of the new wetlands at Pershore, his financial support of several major WWT projects in recent years and his new position as Chairman of Worcestershire Biodiversity Partnership.

Linda Butler, Chair of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust Council, said "The work that Adrian has undertaken over many years on behalf of our natural environment and wildlife has been fantastic. His work, support and campaigning at local, regional and national levels has really

made a difference to the biodiversity of our countryside."



Adrian Darby receives his medal from Linda Butler, Chair of Worcestershire Wildlife Trust



A glow worm on Bredon Hill

In this article, we would like to focus on our glow worm surveys and the work done by long-time KCT Friend, Sue Chandler.

Sue first became aware of glow worms when she went on a guided walk along the old railway line in Tewkesbury five years ago and saw lots of glow worms. Following this walk Sue went searching for them on Bredon Hill and was thrilled to find some! Shortly afterwards, Sue met KCT Conservation Advisor John Clarke on a guided walk near Westmancote and when he said he did not know

## Focus on a Friend: Sue Chandler

about the glow worms on the hill, but would be interested in any information Sue could give him, her patrolling days began!

Sue uses a detailed map of her 'area' and marks on it the locations of glow worms sighted, together with any other observations including weather. She patrols the same area each year, and in 2007 did so from mid-June until October. It is interesting to note that the highest numbers recorded have been a week later each year, so it will be interesting to see what happens this year.

The patrol takes about 1½ hours, as although the distance is not great, it is necessary to walk quite slowly, and peer into the undergrowth, as they like being at the bottom of grass stalks in deep undergrowth, and thus can be easily hidden.

Sue says that once a glow worm is spotted there is no mistaking it for anything else. They are really fluorescent and can be seen from many yards away.

The only downside to Sue's work is waiting until it is dark enough to go out - at this time of year not before 10pm - but she says it is really quite magical to be out in the dark, and without exception everyone she has taken out says the same. On her night-time jaunts Sue has seen badgers, and heard owls, and during the patrol the stars become brighter and more plentiful, and now and then a shooting star whizzes off.

KCT would like to thank Sue for her dedicated survey work, which has led to a better understanding of glow worm populations on Bredon Hill.

## 'Beetle Wigwams' a Success Story - by John Clarke

On your walks through our woodlands you may have noticed the strange sight of a large number of cut poles propped around a tree and tied into place. These are 'Beetle Wigwams' that have been built by our volunteers. Standing dead timber is important as habitat for a range of wildlife – from fungi and insects to birds. In young plantations there is no dead wood habitat and so, as

we carry out thinning operations, some cut timber is used to build 'wigwams' whilst other wood is stacked on the ground as 'beetle lodges'. The brushwood is stacked to provide dense cover for birds and insects. KCT relies on our volunteers to do most of this work and I daresay that sometimes they must wonder if all this ever works. Well, the answer is a resounding "Yes"!

Now we also have proof that birds as well as insects and fungi use the wigwams. I have found Robins nesting in them but this year Kemerton Estate forester John Threadingham discovered Treecreeper nesting in one. Treecreepers need crevices rather than holes in dead wood and so if it wasn't for the wigwams they would have nowhere to nest in a young plantation.



© John Clarke

KCT Beetle Wigwam

I have been monitoring these artificial habitats and in the past couple of years have found newts and toads sheltering in the beetle lodges, which are gradually being recycled naturally by fungi and insects. Nettles and elder grow up through the brushwood and this dense cover has been used as nest sites by Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler.



© Jeremy King

A family of treecreepers

## Re'poplar'ating the Countryside!

New Friend of KCT Charles Ellis of Ellis Nurseries has been assisting Conservation Advisor John Clarke with growing black poplar cuttings.

Native black poplar is one of Britain's rarest trees - with only an estimated 2500 mature specimens remaining - and no longer reproduces naturally (only 400 females survive scattered across the countryside). Taking cuttings is the only way to ensure its continued survival in Britain, with identified mature trees used to take the cuttings.

Black poplar was once grown for timber, as it was light but tough and also fire-resistant. Prior to 1850 it was used in buildings, carts, ships and

matches. However, faster growing hybrid poplars were imported in the 18th and 19th centuries and native black poplar fell out of favour. Now, the true native black poplar is a rare sight, although many hybridised poplars can be found in the countryside.

Several large projects are now underway across the country to secure the future of this native tree, but here at Kemerton, the Trust has been cultivating cuttings for over 10 years.

The cuttings that Charles has kindly assisted with were taken from a nursery tree planted at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve, which was itself grown from cuttings taken from a mature tree located at Lower Lode near Tewkesbury.

KCT is growing the cuttings both for planting on our own reserves and also to make available to Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and other interested parties. The trees favour wet conditions and are found in flood meadows, wet ditches and by rivers.

A native black poplar  
*Populus nigra* ssp. *betulifolia*

## Overlooked Wildlife Habitats: Ivy - by John Clarke



Honey  
Bee on  
Ivy

Ivy can be a menace! It clambers up walls and fences, scrambles up trees – in fact it will use almost anything taller than itself to gain a leg-up in life. We hack at it, bash it, dig it and poison it – often at great physical and economic cost – after all, it is a nuisance, and an enemy of the builder and gardener. So, does it have any use at all? Well yes, a great deal - for lots of our wildlife.

This fact was brought home to me last autumn as I walked past a wall in Kemerton. I heard what I thought was a distant droning noise and identified it as the sound of farm machinery about half a mile away. But then I realised that the sound was more 'animal' than 'mechanical' and so I searched around for the source. In fact it was right next to me. The sound was coming from the wall – or rather from the Ivy covering much of it. I could smell its flowers – a strong, almost sickly scent. In the afternoon sunlight the flowers were alive with insects feeding on the last nectar source of the year and building up their reserves for the winter.

The most numerous were **Honey Bees** – hundreds of them collecting food to take back to the hive. (The demise of the Honey Bee has been heavily publicised over the past couple of years). There were dozens of **Hoverflies**, a couple of dozen **Butterflies** and hundreds of other flying insects that I could not identify and wasps of at least two species. Butterflies

included **Painted Lady, Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral** and **Small White**. I fetched my camera and spent some time taking pictures of the insects busy feeding up for the winter. I realised then that if it were not for this evergreen menace many insects would be unable to find enough food and next year's generation might well be threatened.

What else do we know about Ivy as a wildlife habitat? It provides safe overwintering for thousands of insects including adult **Beetles, Butterflies, Ladybirds** and overwintering **eggs and larvae**. Many overwintering birds roost in it in winter, sheltered from frosts and predators and some feed on its berries. In the past I have found **Robin, Wren, Dunnock, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Blackcap, Spotted Flycatcher, Greenfinch and Bullfinch** nests in the spring. All need good cover in which to hide their nests from predators and dense Ivy is perfect. Natural England describes Ivy as an important source of nectar at a crucial time of year and other organisations describe it as the most important plant you can have in a wildlife garden.

I thought I would try to find what other wildlife relies on ivy. The **Holly Blue** butterfly, a small, beautiful, steely-blue butterfly is dependant on Ivy for its second brood of young each year – the first eggs are laid on Holly. Having two completely different food plants for its two broods is unique to the Holly Blue. The beautiful, yellow **Brimstone** butterfly – one of the first to emerge - hibernates as an adult in ivy. It is believed that the strong veining on its

wings helps it to blend in with the ivy leaves, helping to protect it from predators.

So, how can we ensure that our wildlife can still rely on this important plant while avoiding our house being smothered by it? It is possible to manage ivy in much the same way that we used to manage hedgerows and coppice woodland – that is by controlling it on rotation. If you have ivy in your garden, allow it to grow a little way up trees or walls before cutting it back. Try to ensure that you don't cut back everything in one year – in other words rotate the process so that you always have a good supply of mature Ivy. I'm not sure that Ivy on the ground, which does not flower, has the same value for wildlife as the climbing stage. However, it does provide protection for certain plants and insects. So, as with many aspects of wildlife habitat management, moderation and planning are important elements. Naturally growing, multi-purpose Ivy is better than all of the man-made 'insect tube' things, wildflower patches and nest-boxes that you can squeeze into your garden (although they have their place). We just need to learn how to live with it.



© John Clarke

Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*  
feeding on Ivy

## Kemerton Clippings July 2010

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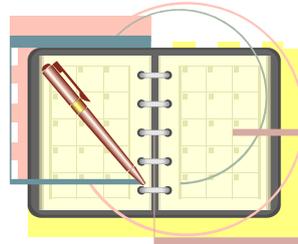
For more information on the work of KCT please visit our website:  
[www.kemerton.org](http://www.kemerton.org)



Common Toads in Amplexus, Beggarboys Wetland Reserve, March 2010

## Save the Date!

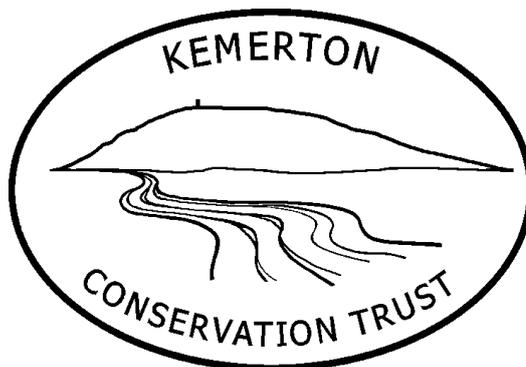
- **Saturday 21st August - Working Party**  
(10am start, Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve)
- **Monday 30th August - Open Day at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve** (gates open at 11am, walks at 11.30am, 12am, 2pm & 2.30pm, free entry for 'Friends of KCT')
- **Sunday 12th September - Bat Walk at Kemerton Lake with Worcestershire Bat Group** (8.30pm start, bat detectors provided, £1 fee per person, booking essential - please call Kate Aubury on 07765 334 776 or email [kate@aubury.co.uk](mailto:kate@aubury.co.uk))
- **Saturday 25th September - Working party** (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 16th October - KOW Apple Day at Kemerton Village Hall**
- **Saturday 30th October - 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