

Kemerton Clippings

Issue 12

July 2013

Appeals for Help!

The Trust is looking for volunteer help in the following:

Event Helpers Needed

KLNR Annual Open Day is on Saturday 21st September. We are looking for helpers to assist with the admissions stand and refreshment stand and with general tasks on the day including set up and take down. If you are able to volunteer for an hour or two, your help would be appreciated! If you are interested, please contact KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury either by phone on 07765 334 776 or by emailing kate@aubury.co.uk.

Gardener Required for Wildflower Nursery:

Are you a keen gardener who could you spare an hour a week to help us grow rare wildflowers in the Trust's small nursery in Kemerton? The work involves harvesting seed, processing, sowing, hand weeding and hoeing. The piece of land is only about 20x12 feet and has strips where seed is planted each year. If you are interested and would like more details on the role please contact Pamela Clarke on 01386 725547 or email pmclarke12@btinternet.com.

The Trust is dependent upon the assistance it receives from its many volunteers to continue its important work in the local area, so please let us know if you can assist in any way.

Members invited to view completed partnership project at The Bushes SSSI

Our first member-only walk of the year was a guided tour of The Bushes SSSI on Bredon Hill. This privately owned land has no public access, so it was a rare opportunity for members to visit this unique site.

The Bushes SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) is located on Bredon Hill above Westmancote and forms part of the larger Bredon Hill SAC (Special Area of Conservation). The area is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of the dead wood habitat supporting the nationally rare Violet Click Beetle *Limoniscus violaceus*, limestone grassland supporting some rare flora, and the hawthorn and elder scrub, which is an important habitat for a range of nesting birds including summer migrants such as Chiff Chaff, Whitethroat and Blackcap.

The Trust recently assisted landowner Kemerton Estate with a special project designed to improve this important site and our member-only walk, which was planned to coincide with the hawthorn in bloom, was to showcase this unusual habitat and the work that had been done to improve it.

The walk was led by KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury and KCT Governor Matt Darby. After an unseasonably cold and wet spring, we were fortunate to be greeted with a lovely sunny day, but due to delays caused by the cold weather, the hawthorn was not yet in flower, and nor were many of the limestone flowers we hoped to see! Nevertheless, despite these setbacks, there was plenty to see and hear about on the walk.



© Kate Aubury
Male Redstart - one of the bird species we hope to attract to the site with this project



© David Aubury

The group en-route to The Bushes SSSI, led by KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury, May 2013

The Trust's main contribution to the project was in the form of volunteer labour to clear bramble and make new habitat. Several of the volunteers joined us on the walk, and it was great to be able to show them the difference in the site since the work was carried out over 12 months ago. Ultimately the project should lead to a more habitat-rich and diverse site, which will hopefully attract even more wildlife in the future.

Friends enjoy slideshow evening about interesting insects and beloved birds



One of the slides from the summer migrant talk

The first member event of the year was a talk at Victoria Hall in Kemerton in March, with guest speaker Harry Green focussing on the curious insects of Worcestershire and KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury talking about our amazing summer migrants.

Harry Green is a naturalist specialising in entomology. He

has been assisting KCT with recording insects for many years and, as one of a group of county recorders (experts in their chosen field who visit different sites to record the biodiversity), has a wealth of stories about the invertebrates of Worcestershire.

His talk contained some amusing anecdotes on both the lifecycles of these small critters and also on the difficulties of recording them and the lengths to which the unstoppable recorders will go to find these fascinating creatures.

One of these is the Land Caddis *Enoicyla pusilla* which, in its larval stage, builds a hard case made of sand grains and other material and is found amongst leaf litter in the summer. It is restricted to Worcestershire and adjoining counties in the UK.

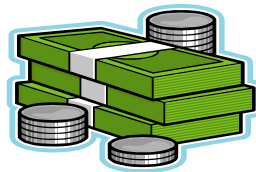
Kate's talk focussed on the songbirds that winter in Africa and then make the astonishing migration to the UK every year to spend their summer with us. They are the spring-bringers and we eagerly await their arrival every year.

Although attendance was fairly low, both talks were very well received by those who came and it was a lovely evening.



A male Land Caddis Fly
Enoicyla pusilla

Funding Update



Time and work pressures meant only 1 grant application was completed in the first half of 2013. This application was successful and work has already started on the small monitoring project (see page 6 for more details). The grant body has requested that their donation remain anonymous so all we are able to say is thank you.

In the last edition, we told you about a £500 donation we had unexpectedly received from the Miss K.M Harbinson Charitable Trust. Initially the governors were considering a small mammal project, but it was decided that we did not have the staff resources to run

the project at this time. In the end, some of the money was used to pay for training our Support Coordinator Kate Aubury to use Recorder, our biological records database. This had been identified as a priority because only our Conservation Advisor John Clarke could enter data or extract records and we needed a contingency for when John is on holiday or in case of illness.

The Recorder training has now been completed and we are planning to use the balance of this donation to have species lists designed for our larger

sites which will ultimately be on our website and available for visitors to use.

The Trust is benefiting from capital works projects at two of our sites as a result of the landowner Kemerton Estate's Higher Level Stewardship scheme. At Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve and Beggar Boys Wetland Complex (both leased sites), vital habitat management is being carried out under HLS. None of the work is costing the Trust a penny, although we have invested some volunteer time into the projects, which both last 3 years. More details of the project at KLNLR will be in the next edition.

Thank you to all who have supported us this year!

Eggciting times at Easter Egg Hunt!

On Saturday 30th March, we held our 5th annual Easter Egg Hunt at Kemerton Court. A record 70 kids took part in the search for eggcellent eggs hidden in the grounds, and with the sun shining down on us, a fun day was had by all.

The children got to run around in the great outdoors searching for elusive eggs and the adults had a chance to chat and admire the lovely gardens in the spring sunshine.



© Kate Aubury

Some of the Chocolate Prizes!

In addition to the egg hunt, there was a fun, informative nature trail for the older kids and we also ran an art competition to find the most creative Lesser Spotted Easter Bird picture that our competitors could dream up.

We had some fabulous entries and the judges had a very difficult time deciding on the winner but we eventually chose the picture shown here, which was drawn by Finlay Horrocks. We loved the use of colour and the punk rocker look! All the wonderful entries can be viewed on the 'News & Events' page of our website www.kemerton.org.

Our thanks go to the staff at Bredon Hancock's First School and Overbury First School for their help in publicising the event and ensuring a good turnout.

As always, a small profit was made for the Trust, but the main aim of this event is to reach a



The winning picture by Finlay Horrocks, age 7

younger audience, allowing children to play outside and learn about the natural world, hopefully leading to a lifelong connection to our wildlife and the countryside. It is so important to the future of conservation that we build a love of nature from a young age and train the wildlife warriors of tomorrow.

Thanks to all who attended and to all our helpers on the day without whom the event would not be possible.

News in Brief

In March, our Chairman Adrian Darby gave a talk about Kemerton Conservation Trust at the John Moore Museum in Tewkesbury. The talk was well attended and the Trust gained several new members as a result of Adrian's presentation! The Trust of course owns the John Moore Reserve here in Kemerton, which was set up in memory of the late John Moore using land donated by his widow, so we feel a strong affinity with the work of the John Moore Museum.

In May, we had an information stand at WWT's Tiddesley Wood Open Day as part of our outreach programme.



© Kate Aubury

KCT Stand at Tiddesley Wood Open Day, May 2013

It was a lovely spring day at this beautiful woodland reserve and over a thousand people attended the event. Support Coordinator Kate Aubury and her husband David were kept busy answering questions on the Trust's work and handing out leaflets and conservation advice. Attending events such as this helps to raise the Trust's profile in the area.

We are delighted to announce that the long awaited final section of woodland ride at KLNLR is now complete and open to Friends of KCT. This completes the loop which begins at the public footpath in the Arboretum, goes through the woodland and returns to the public footpath up at the edge of Firwood. We apologise for the time it has taken to finish this last section - there were delays in getting the felling licence and the work took longer than anticipated. However, you will now see a new stile and signposts highlighting the new route into the woodland. We hope it will prove to be another enjoyable walk to add to the various paths already open to Friends in the reserve.

Work Party Update by Anne Taylor

I've lived in the villages around Bredon Hill for about 20 years and always loved walking and cycling in the Area seeing the wildlife out and about.

My favourite moment was watching a barn owl out catching his supper near Sundial barn. It's also amazing what can turn up in your own back garden - we've had a range of wildlife varying from dragonflies to roe and muntjac deer (eating my roses!), a family of polecats passing through, a sparrow hawk chasing a poor sparrow and plenty of woodpeckers, blue jays, buzzards, partridges and pheasants.

Last year we moved to Kemerton so I thought it would be good to volunteer with Kemerton Conservation Trust. Since I've joined, we've carried out various work from dismantling an unsafe shed at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve to pruning fruit trees and removing tree guards in Lillans Orchard in Kemerton.

If you're thinking of joining too, then why not pop along...just a couple of hours a month is all that's requested. As well as having the enjoyment of working in these lovely areas, you have the benefit of using the Friends-only footpaths



© Anne Taylor

Roe deer in Anne's garden

around the lake and meeting other people from the local area. Hope to see you there next time!

If you are interested in volunteering with the Trust and want to know more please contact Kate Aubury at kate@aubury.co.uk or by phone on 07765 334 776.



© Neil Chance

Olivia with one of her own apple trees in the background

Olivia is a key member of Kemerton Orchard Workers (KOW), the volunteer group which manages Daffurns Orchard in Kemerton on behalf of the local community.

Although not originally from Kemerton (Olivia and husband Neil moved to the village in 1998), Olivia has thrown herself wholeheartedly into village life and is involved in lots of local activities including volunteering with Bredon Community Care, assisting with the Sailing Club and is Chair of RNL's Tewkesbury branch. However, it is her work looking after Daffurns Orchard that we want to focus on here.

Focus on a Friend: Olivia Chance

Daffurns Orchard was purchased by KCT in 2001 using funds raised through a public appeal. Olivia was initially involved as a donor, motivated by the idea of safeguarding this small but lovely orchard for the future. However, realising that the orchard would need ongoing maintenance, she subsequently applied for grant funding to buy equipment and train volunteers in orchard management.

As a result of this funding, the group was set up with other like-minded volunteers from the village and after training from John Edgeley at Pershore College, the orchard, which was a bit bedraggled at this point, was brought back to life.

Now, Daffurns Orchard is a nature reserve teeming with life; wildflowers grow in the grass (which is mowed and raked off every year by KOW), bees pollinate the apple trees from the hives on site and birds

and bats roost in the trees. It's a lovely tranquil spot to visit.

KOW has grown from strength to strength and is now locally renowned for their annual Apple Day every autumn, where produce from the orchard is sold to raise money for the reserve.

With a bit of assistance from KCT's conservation advisor and warden, KOW manage Daffurn's Orchard year round as a great community asset and for Olivia, that is one of the most important aspects of her involvement. She also enjoys the group's camaraderie and the sense of achievement she rightly feels.

At KCT we are very grateful to Olivia and all the members of KOW for their hard work and dedication in maintaining this beautiful orchard in the heart of Kemerton. Why not visit KOW's annual Apple Day on Saturday 19th October 1-5pm in Victoria Hall, Kemerton, to find out more.

Bat Box Scheme Expansion Update

In the last edition of Kemerton Clippings we announced that the Governors had decided to allocate £1000 from a recent bequest to expanding the bat box scheme on our reserves.

The plan was to erect up to 40 new bat boxes at KLNLR and Beggar Boys Wetland Complex, both of which had been chosen for their optimal bat habitat and because of the lack of natural roost sites.

24 pre-made bat boxes were purchased in February and were put up with the help of our work party volunteers. In addition, KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury also made 8 wooden boxes. In all, 4 different designs of bat box were chosen and put up - we hope different species will be attracted to different designs.

The Trust now has a total of 40 bat boxes erected on 7 sites (some of the new boxes are still to go up), with the majority at KLNLR and Beggar Boys.

In April Kate Aubury, with the assistance of bat worker David Worley, checked all bat boxes, including the newly installed ones. Sadly, not a single bat was found in any of the boxes, but it had been unseasonably cold and this may have affected bat activity. Fingers crossed for a better result in autumn.

On a more positive note, the Lesser Horseshoes were back in residence at the maternity roost in Kemerton by late April. As was the case last year, we carried out roost emergence counts through June and early July as part of the National Bat Monitoring Programme



© David Aubury

Support Coordinator Kate Aubury painting ID numbers on newly installed bat boxes, KLNLR, February 2013

(NBMP) and were pleased that numbers were only slightly lower than last year (peak count was 71). Given the wet summer last year and the very cold start to the year this year, we anticipate bat numbers will be down nationally but it's too early to know for sure.

We are planning a guided bat walk and talk for members on 7th August so why not join us for a wild night out!

Vandalism Issues at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve

Sadly, Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve has recently been the target of vandalism and anti-social behaviour, with damage done to both the bird hides and to signs and equipment on the reserve.

Those of you who visit regularly may have noticed problems with accessing the West Hide, which has a combination lock on it (added years ago to combat vandalism). This was because someone had damaged the lock on not 1 but 3 separate occasions, making it impossible to open. Our warden John Threadingham had to use bolt cutters to remove the broken locks each time, and subsequent replacements were also broken almost immediately, much to our frustration.

At the East Hide, which is not locked, the vandals broke several of the viewing windows and damaged the door. Elsewhere on the reserve signs were broken and Kemerton Estate's stump grinder was tampered with on site.

In addition to the vandalism, the same individuals also used the East Hide for parties and left litter everywhere. Of most concern was the fact they held a BBQ inside the hide, which could result in the building burning down.

The Trust would like to apologise to regular users of the hides who may have been unable to enter the West Hide or have found the East Hide in a filthy state. We are working

hard to repair any damage or clean up any mess as soon as its reported but have limited staff resources.

These incidents have been reported to the police and the local community team are working with us to resolve the problem. We have repaired a hole in the hedge near the East Hide, which may have been used for easy access and have erected CCTV cameras at both hides. We hope this will be temporary, but we need to stop the vandalism as we cannot afford the continual cost the damage is causing us. If you spot anything unusual on your visits to KLNLR, please report it to us by phoning KCT Support Coordinator Kate Aubury on 07765 334

Ash Bed Restoration Project

The Trust has recently received a grant of £500 towards a new restoration project on Bredon Hill. The funder has requested anonymity so we cannot thank them by name.

The Ash Bed is a small area of Ash coppice adjacent to Cherry Tree and Oathill Cottages in Upper Westmancote. It is at least 200 years old and was used to provide wood for tools and fires by the workers at the stone quarry opposite the cottages. It is therefore of historical importance as well as valued for its habitat.



Bluebells in flower

The Ash Bed is owned by Kemerton Estate but is left for wildlife and KCT has assisted in its management for many years. However, pressures of time and lack of funds has meant it has been neglected somewhat in recent times.

This restoration project is designed to carry out much needed coppicing and thinning of the woodland, which has become very overgrown. In addition, the Trust will be running a trial onsite to monitor the effect rabbits, deer and pheasants are having on the undergrowth.

The Ash Bed has native bluebells and various other woodland flora onsite, but overall the ground cover is very sparse. This could be because of the overgrown coppice not letting enough light in, or it could be because there are large numbers of rabbits, deer and pheasants in the vicinity, all of which graze on young shoots.



One of the new enclosures at The Ash Bed on Bredon Hill

The trial involves building 3 wire and post enclosures to protect against grazing, and marking out 3 identical areas that will not be protected. The 6 sites will be monitored for 12 months, with photographs used to record the amount of undergrowth at each stage and whether the enclosures allow more plants to flower and multiply. The results will be written up at the end of the project and the information will be used to assist with future management of this and other woodland sites.

Although only a small project, we hope this work will revitalise a lovely little site for many years.

Gardener Alert - Late Nesting Birds!

If you are considering doing some hedge or shrub trimming in the near future you may be surprised to learn that some birds are still breeding. In early July so far I have seen:

5th July – Dunnock eggs hatching – nest in a clipped Box hedge. I was about to cut the hedge but did a thorough search for nests first and found a nest with six eggs. They have since all hatched.

7th July – Spotted Flycatcher feeding young. These birds nest in ivy, climbing rose and clematis.

9th July – Blackbird repairing nest in climbing Hydrangea prior to laying what will be its third clutch of eggs in it this year! I have monitored the pair throughout the season and know that so far they have successfully reared at least five young.

Most people understand that birds breed in Spring but some species may continue well into July and early August. They need to do this as their young have a high mortality rate.

With so many species of bird in decline they need every chance to breed so we should take care not



Dunnock nest with three eggs

to add to their problems. It takes just a few minutes to carefully check a hedge or tree before the secateurs, saws and electric trimmers come out.

John Clarke
Conservation Advisor

Overlooked Wildlife Habitats: Bramble - by John Clarke

Previously I have written about the importance of **Ivy** for many insects, birds and other wildlife in particular declining populations of **Holly Blue** and **Brimstone** butterflies. I also wrote about **Nettle** and how some **100 species and groups of insect** are dependant – at least in part - on this stinging plant for breeding and feeding.

Now I want to talk about **Bramble**, seen by many as a prickly pest but, like Ivy and Nettle, it provides a vital link in the chains and mosaics of wildlife habitats. (The name 'Bramble' simplifies a complex situation as around 320 species and micro-species of Bramble are known to exist.)

The pretty pink or white flowers of Bramble occur in late July and August, attracting large numbers of insects to feed on their nectar. Bees (including Honeybees), Bumblebees, Hoverflies, Butterflies, Moths, Flies and Lacewings may rely heavily on bramble nectar and pollen at a time of year when many other flowers are no longer available. I've never forgotten a trip to the Wyre Forest some 30 years ago when around a woodland glade dozens of fritillary butterflies were dancing in the



© Kate Aubury

A Comma *Polygonia c-album* on Bramble, KLNR, September 2012



A Long Tailed Tit nest in bramble

dappled light and feeding on Bramble blossom. In all some **240 species of insects and mites** feed on Bramble, of which 32 rely exclusively on it as a food source - 12 have Red Data Book status. These facts alone should raise the importance of the plant as a wildlife habitat but sadly do not.

Bramble patches are also extremely important for nesting birds as their prickly stems and leaves can deter many predators. Early nesters such as Long-tailed Tit, Dunnock, Robin, Wren, Yellowhammer, Song Thrush and Blackbird find cover beneath foliage which has survived the winter, while later nesters such as small migrants will also seek out bramble patches in which to nest. Willow Warbler, Chiff Chaff, Blackcap and Whitethroat commonly nest in Bramble.

In late summer and autumn, blackberries, the fruit of the Bramble, provide food for a range of wildlife, especially birds. Blackbird, Song Thrush, Redwing, Fieldfare, Starling, Blackcap, Robin and small mammals (including Harvest Mouse, which may also nest there) all feed on the fruit, as do lots of insects. Many migratory species of warblers fatten up on the fruit before leaving for the winter.

Country tradition tells us that we should not pick blackberries after September 29th (Michaelmas) because the Devil has spat on them! To a degree this is correct. By then the fruit has become somewhat tasteless and squashy anyway but the spittle comes from Flesh Flies – a scavenger group of flies – which excrete saliva onto the fruit and then suck up the juice!

Bramble patches along woodland edge provide a windbreak and thus a warmer sub-climate within. They also protect young tree and shrub seedlings from grazing by deer.

So, if you have room for a small patch of Bramble in your garden or in a hedge consider what a variety of wildlife you will be benefitting. In woodland, parkland and orchard settings there is certainly room for some Bramble. Like Ivy and Nettle you do not have to plant Bramble, it just turns up. As with Ivy and Nettle I advocate a careful, considered approach to managing it. Much is made of managing hay meadows, ponds, woodlands, field margins and hedgerows for wildlife so why not these vital, smaller wildlife habitats? I doubt if anyone has ever written a paper or booklet about how to manage them best for wildlife.



© David Aubury

A Honey Bee on bramble, KLNR, July 2012

Kemerton Clippings July 2013

Edited by Kate Aubury

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



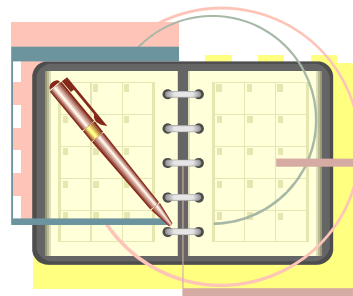
© Kate Aubury

Mating Common Blue Damselfly
Enallagma cyathigerum, Kemerton
Lake Nature Reserve, June 2013

Save the Date!

- **Saturday 27th July** - Working Party (10am start, Upstones Orchard)
- **Wednesday 7th August** - **Bat Walk & Talk, KLNR** (8.30pm start) - *booking essential*
- **Saturday 31st August**- Working party (10am start, Beggar Boys Wetland Complex)
- **Saturday 14th September** - Working party (10am start, KLNR)
- **Saturday 21st September** - **Annual Open Day, KLNR** (gates open 11am) - see 'News & Events' on website www.kemerton.org for full event details
- **Saturday 26th October** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 23rd November** - 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@aubury.co.uk or by phone on 07765 334 776.



KEMERTON COURT

TEWKESBURY

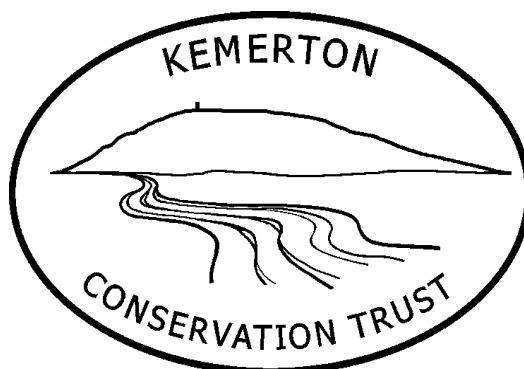
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