Kemerton Conservation Trust
Kemerton Court
Kemerton
Tewkesbury
Gloucestershire
GL20 7HY

www.kemerton.org

Registered Charity No. 702488

GOVERNORS
JONATHAN CHENEVIX-TRENCH
ADRIAN DARBY, OBE
MATTHEW DARBY (Chairman)
PETER DOBLE
ROGER UMPELBY
ROSEMARY WINNALL, MBE

EMERITUS GOVERNORS
PETER MARREN

Supporting Bird Ringing at KLNR Project Report March 2026

Project Background

Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve (KLNR) is Kemerton Conservation Trust's flagship reserve. It is a 46.5 acre (18.8 ha) wetland complex created out of a former gravel working, situated between the villages of Bredon, Westmancote, Kemerton and Kinsham. The reserve is a designated Local Wildlife Site, and has a diverse range of habitats including a 16 acre (6.5 ha) lake, pools, seasonal wet scrapes, reed beds, grassland, and land specially cultivated for arable plants. The reserve is surrounded by 111 acres (45 acres) of native woodland and arboretum which are not part of the reserve, but which make an important contribution to the habitat mosaic.

Birds are an important group on the reserve, and part of the Trust's work involved monitoring and recording bird species using the reserve. Much of this monitoring work is carried out by volunteers. In 2022, a volunteer BTO licensed team from West Midlands Bird Ringing Group (WMBRG) led by Fergus Henderson, began carrying out regular ringing at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve. The data they capture (which includes species, sex, age where possible, and some biometrics) has helped us understand how resident and migratory birds use the site at different times of the year, has highlighted key corridors through the site, and has also shown us how resident and migratory birds use other wetlands in the local landscape in conjunction with Kemerton Lake (a similar ringing project by another team from WMBRG has been running on a site at Overbury Estate simultaneously).

The bird ringing team are all volunteers, who not only donate their time and expertise for free to carry out the ringing but have also paid for all their own tools and all the rings used at the site prior to this project (over 1000 rings). With the scheme continuing in 2025, KCT wanted to raise funds to purchase more bird rings for the team to use as a contribution to their important work. We needed rings in a range of sizes (denoted by letters of the alphabet) to use on a wider range of birds e.g. Chiffchaff need an AA ring whilst Blackbirds need a C ring. All rings would be registered to Fergus Henderson through the BTO as lead on this scheme but would be used by all members of his team including the trainees.

The Trust therefore applied to the Gordon Gray Trust for a grant to purchase bird rings for our ringing group. We successfully applied for £275.00, which covered 100% of the total project cost. The project began in June 2025 and was completed in December 2025.

Project Aims

The main aim of the project was to support our volunteer bird ringers with the purchase of 1000 rings in 4 different sizes for use at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve in 2025. This would

allow the ringing team to continue their work and gather more data on birds at the site, which is submitted to the national database held by the BTO, as well as shared with KCT. The data from 2025 would build on previous years' data, allowing us to continue to map trends in bird populations locally and build on our understanding of how resident and migratory birds use the site at different times of the year.

Additionally, the project would allow trainee ringers to gain more experience as they work towards getting their ringing licence.

Overview of Works

Project works commenced in July after receipt of the grant, and the final works were completed in December 2025 (see Appendix A – Project Photo Montage).

Bird ringing had started earlier in 2025 prior to the project, but ringing activity is paused through breeding season to avoid disturbing nesting birds or disrupting feeding of young.

In July, Fergus Henderson purchased 300 A rings and 200 AA rings ready for autumn migration.

In August an evening session was held on 2nd August (total of 43 birds ringed, 5 species), and morning sessions were held on 10th August (total of 86 birds ringed, 8 retraps, 14 species) and 17th August (total of 82 birds ringed, 5 retraps, 16 species). (See Appendix B – List of Species Ringed). *Note: a retrap is a bird previously ringed by the team at the same site, a control is a bird already ringed from a different location. Information about controls can be provided by BTO and can reveal interesting information on the movement of birds through the wider landscape.*

In September an evening session was held on 6th September (76 birds ringed, 2 species), and morning sessions were held on 7th September (total of 130 birds ringed, 3 retraps and 1 control, 11 species), 14th September (total of 83 birds ringed, 7 retraps, 13 species), 21st September (total of 61 birds ringed, 2 retraps, 13 species) and 28th September (total of 98 birds ringed, 5 retraps, 17 species).

As part of the session on 14th September we held a public ringing demo, with members of KCT and Trustees from The Gordon Gray Trust joining us to learn more about ringing and see birds in the hand. During the event we ringed 4 Cetti's Warbler. Two were adult retraps from earlier in the season, so our resident birds, and 2 were juveniles. This data confirmed that our resident Cetti's had successfully bred during the summer, information that can only be confirmed through ringing, as once the young have left the nest, it is impossible to age them from a distance using binoculars.

In October evening sessions were held on 11th October (46 birds ringed, 7 retraps, 7 species), 18th October (52 birds ringed, 2 retraps, 1 control, 8 species) and 25th October (2 birds ringed) and morning sessions were held on 12th October (67 birds ringed, 2 retraps and 1 control, 13 species) and 26th October (52 birds ringed, 4 retraps, 1 control, 10 species).

In November Fergus Henderson purchased the rest of the rings. A decision was made to buy more A rings instead of the planned B rings, as those were what were needed most. Some C rings were purchased too. (Permission was sought and given by our funders for this change to the budget allocation).

In November morning sessions were held on 2nd November (17 birds ringed, 7 species), 9th November (66 birds ringed, 7 retraps and 2 controls, 14 species) and 16th November (26 birds ringed, 8 species).

In December evening sessions were held on 13th December (26 birds ringed, 1 retrap, 1 control, 9 species) and 21st December (6 birds ringed, 4 species).

Project Results

Our project was completed on time and on budget. Most of the 1000 rings purchased have already been used on site, with the remaining rings to be used for spring migration in 2026 when the ringing team plan to return to the site.

From August to December 2025, a total of 1050 birds were ringed of 37 species (see Appendix B – List of Species Ringed). 12 ringers – including trainees – took part, with trainees continuing to hone their ringing skills. All data has been submitted to the BTO national ringing database, as well as input on KCT's own biological recording database.

The most ringed species in Autumn 2025 was Blackcap, with an amazing 213 birds caught and processed as they migrated south. Included in the number was a control from France. Large numbers of migrating Redpoll (190), Chiffchaff (112) and Swallow (108) were also caught and ringed, with the data confirming KLNR as an essential migration corridor for birds as they move through the landscape. Previous years' ringing had highlighted the importance of a line of scrub running north south through the middle of the reserve, so our scrub management has been tweaked to ensure that corridor is maintained as essential habitat.

Of interest was a control Blue Tit which was caught on 9th November, which had been ringed in Redditch in September. Blue Tits tend to be quite sedentary birds, staying close to where they hatched as chicks during winter, with research showing most birds do not move more than 20km from their hatching site, so our bird being 31km south of Redditch makes it an outlier.

The Future

The ringing team intends to continue ringing at Kemerton Lake in 2026, with a few rings from the project still to be used.

The data gathered – along with previous years' data - will be used by KCT to help inform habitat management at Kemerton Lake now and in the future.

The ring number, biometrics and location information for each bird ringed are available from BTO should any of our birds be retrapped elsewhere or a ring retrieved following a bird's death. All the ringing data contributes to BTO's important work on understanding bird populations, demographics and survival rates, which in turn supports conservation work both in the UK and further afield.

Acknowledgements

Kemerton Conservation Trust would like to thank the Gordon Gray Trust for generously supporting this project and making it possible.

We would also like to thank all those who assisted in the delivery of the project, particularly Bird Ringing Supervisors Fergus Henderson and Jessica Stuart-Smith and their hardworking ringing team including Claire Dovey, Emma Hughes, Ishia Turk, Katie Appleby, Molly McCann, Leigh Yeates, David Kelly, Nicola Marples, Charlotte Currie and Adam Wright.

Appendix A Project Photo Montage

Photos copyright Kate Aubury

Reed habitat at KLNR—used by breeding birds such as Reed Bunting, Sedge Warbler and Reed Warbler

Bramble & scrub at KLNR—used by breeding birds such as Linnett, but also a key corridor for migrating birds

A mist net set up in reedbed at KLNR, August 2025

Jess, Molly, Leigh & Katie ringing birds, August 2025

Trainer Fergus showing Molly how to age a Blackcap, August 2025

Common Whitethroat in the hand, August 2025

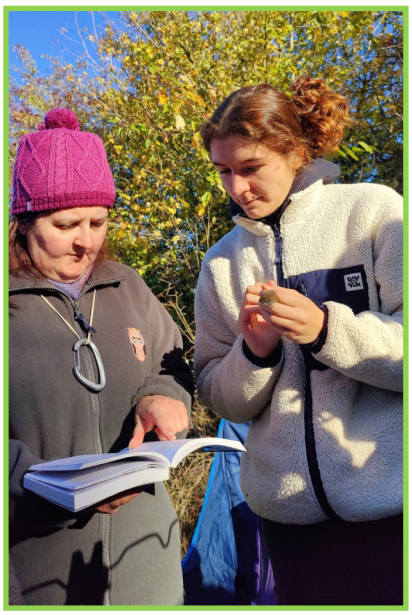
Ringer Dave checking age on a male Blackcap, August 2025

Juvenile Robin in the hand, August 2025

Ringer Ischia processing a Blackcap at the ringing demo, September 2025

Attendees watching ringers in action at the ringing demo, September 2025

Male & female Blackcap in the hand, September 2025



Ringers Leigh & Molly checking age characteristics for Cetti's Warbler, October 2025

Pied Wagtail in the hand, November 2025

Ringer Emma ringing a Green-finch, November 2025

Treecreeper in the hand, December 2025

Ringer Jess with birds waiting for processing, December 2025

Appendix B - List of Species Ringed

Species	**Total Ringed** (included retraps and controls)
Blackbird	4
Blackcap	213
Blue Tit	88
Cetti's Warbler	8
Chaffinch	2
Chiffchaff	112
Dunnock	8
Garden Warbler	3
Goldcrest	19
Goldfinch	2
Great Tit	13
Greenfinch	9
Grey Wagtail	1
Kingfisher	2
Lesser Redpoll	1
Lesser Whitethroat	5
Linnet	30
Long-tailed Tit	25
Meadow Pipit	9
Pied Wagtail	7
Redpoll	190
Redwing	5
Reed Bunting	41
Reed Warbler	43
Robin	17
Sand Martin	1
Sedge Warbler	21
Siskin	1
Song Thrush	6
Sparrowhawk	1
Starling	1
Stonechat	3
Swallow	108
Treecreeper	1
Whitethroat	19
Willow Warbler	17
Wren	14
Total Birds Ringed	**1050**
Total Number of Species	**37**