

Kemerton Conservation Trust

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Registered Charity No. 702488

**GOVERNORS**

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PETER MARREN

Dr MARGARET PALMER, MBE

BRETT WESTWOOD

ROGER WORKMAN

Kemerton Conservation Trust

Report to the Governors

John Clarke and Pamela Clarke

October 2017 to October 2018

Summary

This has been an exciting year with so much happening including particularly the continuing work of the Carrant Catchment Area Restoration Project (CCARP). The project was initiated by JC and (owing to ill health) has been taken over by FWAG who have since signed up farmers from further up the valley.

Elsewhere – we are now in the 36th year of working with Adrian on what was then his revolutionary idea of integrating Farming and Wildlife.

During this year JC spent almost six months in hospital and is now struggling with mobility. This has curtailed a great deal of work that we might otherwise have carried out.

CCARP (Carrant Catchment Area Restoration Project)

It is hugely rewarding to know that our dream of working at landscape scale has been realised.

FWAG South West has taken over the work of enlisting as many farmers as possible along the valley, has been very successful on the Worcestershire side and has made a start on the Gloucestershire side – there appear to be many more farms in that catchment. Feed-back from the few farmers that John enlisted suggests that there is a great deal of enthusiasm for the project.

CCARP has issued an annual report in which it notes that 26 farmers have so far joined the project and 15 organisations are currently working with FWAG towards linking other initiatives in the catchment. It also lists role, advice and surveys offered via the facilitation fund and achievements to date. The report deserves a wider audience and it is hoped that a way will be found to disseminate the information

Anniversary

Although this anniversary is not of special significance, nevertheless it is worth pointing out that we have been working with Adrian for 36 years on a project begun (in those days) as a revolutionary

idea – to integrate Farming and Wildlife on a modern farm. Many of the agri-environmental schemes and measures may well have stemmed from projects like his.

Labour

KCT relies heavily on conservation volunteers. Kate's group of volunteers work for one morning a month while Kemerton Orchard Workers manage Daffurns Orchard. We also have the part-time help of John Threadingham, who despite poor health, has achieved a great deal. Nest-boxes continue to be managed. Inevitably, given their importance to the Trust's core purposes, most of the available labour is focussed on Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve and Beggarboys. However, we need to find a source of funding that would pay for labour to carry out work elsewhere.

George Day

While on the subject of volunteers – we feel a special mention should be made of George Day. For many years he has contributed a considerable number of hours to KCT – especially during the period when we were restoring/planting nine orchards. Since 2012 he has carried out an annual survey of butterflies on the farm (walking each of the four transects three times each year) and will continue to do so. This year George has been rewarded on other visits by recording a new species for Kemerton. – the Purple Hairstreak.

Tree and Shrub Project

This year saw the end of the project after some 25 years. During that time several thousand trees and shrubs have been grown and most planted out in Kemerton woods. In the latter years we focussed on Holly and Box, which will act as understorey.

RELIC

These days 'Restoring Elms in the Countryside' is based at Pershore College – or Avonbank Nursery, which still produces and sells young trees from a number of 'Nurse Trees' held there. All originated here at Kemerton. To date we have not heard of any young trees from RELIC which have succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease.

Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve

The lake is always popular with birdwatchers and we keep the records sent in by visitors. We get more records from there than anywhere else.

From some of these records we deduce that Hobby bred nearby as a pair were often seen during the breeding season and later a juvenile bird appeared with the pair.

We assume that the Environment Agency's monitoring of Crayfish, which were introduced into the lake some years ago, will continue.

2018 has seen a prolonged drought. Should we discuss if there are any possible implications and if so, what we might do?

Beggarboys

This wetland site is still probably the richest wildlife site on the farm acre for acre. It needs regular maintenance to ensure that it does not progress to a muddy area colonised by scrub. This year a roboflail was used to clear brambles and scrub from the east banks, and from the middle of the wet meadow. The bund along the west side has cleared by KCT and GVCV volunteers. The cut material

will be raked off by the volunteers in the autumn to prevent it acting as a mulch – thus encouraging the growth of coarser vegetation. The Mining Bee bank has been colonised by vegetation and needs clearing, although we accept that this may be difficult now that Buglife has advised against using Roundup on bee banks.

Daffurns Orchard

Local support for this small community orchard is still strong. Work parties turn out to clear the ‘hay’ after cutting, to reduce the amount of mistletoe and other management work such as pruning. KOW (Kemerton Orchard Workers), which manages the orchard also organises an annual Apple Day. This year it will be held on Saturday 13th October.

Other Orchards

It would be useful if the Trust could carry out a survey to check guards, damaged or diseased trees and the current situation regarding mistletoe and report on what work is required.

Bird Surveys

Pamela continued with annual bird surveys at sites across the farm. Good numbers of Whitethroat noted this year, a drop in Skylark in some sites - probably crop related.

Recorder

Pamela continues to put in all records onto Recorder. Since the new Trust PC was installed this summer it requires Simon Wood from the Worcestershire Trust to come and add records which did not get transferred over at the time. He is coming this autumn to do this and at the same time has kindly agreed to help with some aspects of the database.