

**Kemerton Conservation Trust**

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Registered Charity No. 702488

**GOVERNORS**

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MATTHEW DARBY

PETER DOBLE

PETER MARREN

ROGER UMPSELBY

ROSEMARY WINNALL, MBE

ROGER WORKMAN

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**Kemerton Conservation Trust – Report to Governors****April 2023 – March 2024****Pamela Clarke – Conservation Advisor****Overview**

Another very busy year on all fronts with continuing works at KLNR including scrub/bramble management and ongoing care of woodland and orchard trees across the estate.

**Back from the Brink: Red hemp-nettle *galeopsis angustifolia***

Adrian and I continue with searches for this plant introduction at Oathill. (See **Roger Maskew** below). We hope to hear that the funding sought by Plantlife for collating the data for the project will come through. Elizabeth Cooke (Plantlife) continues to keep us informed.

**Recorder**

With the closing of the Portacabin Trust Office at the end of 2023, the system of inputting records into Recorder is being set up by Matthew using DWService which enables remote access to systems with a standard web browser. Work is planned for June 2024 with a visit by Simon Wood (Worcestershire Biological Records Centre) when he is able to ensure smooth transfer to this new system and to enable me to enter data for KCT sites.

**West Midland Ringing Group**

Fergus Henderson and his small group continued to ring at KLNR adding to our knowledge of birds using the site – ringed birds included:

30<sup>th</sup> April 5 Sedge Warbler and 1 Reed Warbler

7<sup>th</sup> May 1 Cuckoo and 7 Whitethroat

6<sup>th</sup> August 45 Reed Warbler, 12 Sedge Warbler and 5 Willow Warbler

16<sup>th</sup> /17<sup>th</sup> September 42 Blackcap, 10 Meadow Pipit, 1 Kingfisher, 1 Kestrel, 1 Hobby and 1 Firecrest – a total of 104 new birds ringed.

13<sup>th</sup> January 10 Common Snipe, 2 Jack Snipe, 5 Reed Bunting and 1 Goldcrest

Thus far Fergus has not expressed an interest in ringing at other sites on the farm. They continue to check the 11 Marsh Tit boxes in The Bushes and Aldwick Wood and the Beech Plantation for which the Trust is grateful.

**Volunteers****Butterfly Conservation - Neil Thompson**

In May 2023 Adrian and I met with Neil and we introduced him to Bredons Norton Banks above the Bushes walking the area and looking at the important calcareous grassland patches there. He is now recording at the Banks and the Top Bank and making passing visits to The Bushes as time

allows, he is also recording species at Asham Meadow. He produced a report of his butterfly recording in 2023 which comprises his methodology, comments on habitat and its management as well as details of species found. For the hill areas he comments on potential species which he is particularly interested in including Wall Brown, Purple Hairstreak, White-letter Hairstreak and Silver-washed Fritillary. For Asham Meadow he commented on lower-than-expected species diversity which he believes is in part down to the meadow being inundated most winter and its impact on the survival rate of butterfly overwintering stages. He passes on his records to Worcestershire Wildlife Trust for entering onto their Recorder database. The Trust is very grateful to Neil for his expertise and time in recording for us.

**George Day** continues to monitor butterflies and bees for the Trust in May through to the end of July along the 4 transects; Carrant Brook Fields, Kemerton Lake, Bredon Hill and Manor Farm. He comments that he never sees Green Hairstreak along any of the transects but does see them by the settling ponds or alongside the scrapes.

**Juliet Vines** continues to undertake the monthly BTO Wetland Bird Surveys (WeBS) and these records plus those of Rob Prudden give very good coverage of waders and duck using the site.

### **Glow-worms**

Glow-worms have been recorded by KCT using a prescribed route since 2007 and on July 16<sup>th</sup> a group of 13 Friends of KCT joined us for a dusk walk on the hill. I gave a short talk and with 3 volunteers we then followed the regular route of the transect - taking in the Sunken Track/Upper Westmancote Track and then joining the track at the top of Tueswell Hill, to Pad Barn and back along Oathill Track to the start.

The group were rewarded with 29 glowing females and very excitingly one attendee found and photographed a mating pair – a first for these surveys.

A repeat walk is planned for mid-July 2024.

### **Collins**

Adrian and I continue to monitor changes here following the scarifying of an area in April 2022 and spreading of Night-flowering Catchfly *Silene noctiflora*, Cornflower *Centaurea cyanus*, and Prickly, Long and Rough Poppy *Papaver argemone*, *dubium* and *hybridum*.

### **Roger Maskew** – visiting Botanical County Recorder

Roger made 2 visits in late June/early July looking at Oat Hill, Pad Piece and Tueswell Hill – he found good numbers of *Lithospermum arvense*, *Kickxia spuria*, and *Valerianella dentata* but his ‘best find’ was 7 plants of *Galeopsis angustifolia* along the north edge of the lower field by the footpath. He comments that to his knowledge this is the first county record since 1992 (see Worcs. Flora).

Roger also looked at orchid populations at KLNK finding similar numbers of *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* and *D.x grandis* as on his previous visit. We hope he will make another visit this year.

### **Spotted Flycatcher Project**

A poor year for the birds.

3<sup>rd</sup> May first bird sighted in Overbury.

5<sup>th</sup> May Kemerton – 2 unsuccessful attempts (1<sup>st</sup> clutch succumbed to weather, 2<sup>nd</sup> clutch ? predation) – birds then moved to neighbour and finally bred successfully. 1 other pair successful in Kemerton. 2 or 3 pairs successful in Overbury/Beckford.

With so few birds rearing young, the future of this charismatic bird is extremely worrying. The Bredon Hill area has historically been a hot spot for them. I will be looking at how they are faring elsewhere in England and the project here will continue. Like other aerial insectivores - such as the Swift and House Martin - the Spotted Flycatcher is now on the Red List of birds of Conservation Concern.

### **KLNR Bird records of note:**

#### **2023**

Cetti's warbler heard throughout the year esp around Wader Lagoon east end of lake.

29<sup>th</sup> March first Swallow + 15 Sand Martins over the lake.

13<sup>th</sup> April – 2 pairs Oystercatcher, 7 Gadwall, 10 Tufted – 2 pairs passage Pochards + lone male. 2 House Martins and 6 Sand Martins.

29<sup>th</sup> April – 4 Gadwall – lone male Pochard. Late spring records 4 Common Snipe and 2 Jack Snipe. C. 20 singing Reed Warbler.

30<sup>th</sup> April first swifts – 2 5 Sedge Warbler and 1 Reed Warbler.

7<sup>th</sup> May – Cuckoo.

11<sup>th</sup> May - Single pair Great Crested Grebe, 1 pair Oystercatcher. Goose numbers - 18 Greylag and 23 Canadas.

15<sup>th</sup> May – 2 Hobby, 1 Grasshopper warbler and Nightjar flushed (by ringers)

17<sup>th</sup> May - pair Common Tern

3<sup>rd</sup> July- pair Common sandpiper on tern raft (video)

7<sup>th</sup> July - 2 breeding pairs of Little Grebe. 1 male Tufted (numbers of this sp. have dropped dramatically throughout the UK). C. 24 singing Reed Warbler. Hobby hawking over lake.

5<sup>th</sup> August- good nos. of waterfowl 125 Mallard. Hobby hawking. Still plenty Reed Warbler.

9<sup>th</sup> August - Bar-headed Goose.

10<sup>th</sup> August - 1 Great White Egret.

26<sup>th</sup> August – adult + juv Hobby hawking. Male Peregrine. Flock 79 breeding Lapwing on the islands. 1 Little Egret.

17<sup>th</sup> September – Wintering wildfowl starting to arrive incl. 7 Shoveler, 4 Wigeon, 68 Coot. 10 Swallow + several House and Sand Martin. Several Chiffchaff feeding in reedbed. Hobby hunting. Late juv Sedge Warbler still on marsh area. Red Kite quartering site.

2<sup>nd</sup> October - 18 Lapwing, 2 Little Egret, Kingfisher, pair of Stonechat marsh area.

20<sup>th</sup> October - Juv Marsh Harrier flushed from Wader Lagoon.

30<sup>th</sup> October - Juv Marsh Harrier (photographed).

6<sup>th</sup> November – after summer absence – Otter active hence water birds concentrated on small central area.

13<sup>th</sup> November – Otter again. 67 Common and 4 Jack Snipe.

17<sup>th</sup> November - 1 Marsh Harrier over reed beds/lake meadow. Red Kite taking Swan Mussel.

27<sup>th</sup> November - 25 Lapwings, 88 Teal, 52 Wigeon, 1 male Tufted.

12<sup>th</sup> December – 116 Common and 19 Jack Snipe and again on 31st. Kingfisher.

#### **2024**

17<sup>th</sup> January - Red Crested Pochard Drake.

3<sup>rd</sup> February - Pair Oystercatcher mating (first Brimstone).

23<sup>rd</sup> February - 61 Common and 14 Jack Snipe. 2 Water Rail. Barn Owl flew length of central bund in full daylight.

(10+ dead Toads along the bund between wader lagoon and lake + 30 large clumps of Frogspawn at west end of marsh).

24<sup>th</sup> February - Juv Marsh Harrier hunting over scrapes.

5<sup>th</sup> March - Juv Marsh Harrier over lake meadow.