

Kemerton Clippings

Issue 7

January 2011

Appeals for Help!

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

Help Required on Elms Project

RELIC - replanting elms in the countryside - was launched two years ago by KCT and Pershore College but sadly, due to lack of resources, we had to suspend work on it last year. Whilst the project was active, trust web master Jim Verrechia set up an Excel spreadsheet of project contacts including those who knew of possibly disease-resistant trees and potential buyers of future elm stock. Some elm trees were visited and, if approved, cuttings taken for the college to grow stock on from. These trees are big enough to be sold/planted and more will be grown if the need is there.

The Trust now needs a volunteer to update the spreadsheet, renew contact with interested parties, arrange for experts to visit potential trees and liaise with the plant nursery at Pershore College. You would be working with John Clarke and mostly from your own home, apart from occasional meetings.

After an initial handover period, the project would require perhaps 2 or 3 hours a week of time. If you think you could help and can commit to doing the work for the next year or two please contact John Clarke on 01386 725653 or kctoffice@btinternet.com.

Invertebrate Experts Make Open Day a Bug Success!

KCT's annual Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve Open Day was held on the gloriously sunny August Bank Holiday this year and, thanks to the generous assistance of two local experts, provided a fun and informative day out for all our visitors.

The day's theme was invertebrates; with guided walks from dragonfly expert Mike Averill and naturalist Harry Green. In addition to the guided walks, there were information stands, refreshments and a children's nature trail, and KCT governors, staff and volunteers were also on hand to answer visitor questions.

Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve is one of Worcestershire's top sites for dragonflies (with a total of 18 separate species recorded so far), and they were happy to live up to their reputation on the day with sightings of migrant and southern hawkers, common and ruddy darters and lots of damselflies. In addition, there were large numbers of common blue and brown argus butterflies and field and marsh grasshoppers.



Mating common darters on a teasel
KCT Open Day 2010



© David Aubury
Harry Green demonstrates the use of a bat detector to pick up crickets

It was lovely to see so many KCT Friends at the Open Day wanting to learn more about the insect life at the lake. The talks were extremely educational, with everyone learning something new. There was interest (and amusement!) when Harry produced a bat detector to listen for the sound of the recent invader Roesel's bush cricket, and the kids enjoyed getting up close with all the little creepy-crawlies.

Kemerton Lake glinting in the sunlight,
KCT Open Day 2010

Huge thanks must go to our two guest speakers and to all the KCT volunteers who helped out on the day to ensure it ran smoothly. It was a terrific day and, thanks to ticket and refreshment sales and a generous donation on the day, made a profit for the trust.



© Kate Aubury

Ark Site to Save Our Native Crayfish

KCT is taking part in a high-profile joint project with national invertebrate charity Buglife to help save our endangered native White-clawed Crayfish.

The native White-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* is threatened by the invasive alien North American Signal crayfish, a species which carries a deadly plague, and also outcompetes our native crayfish for food and space. 70% of the native crayfish population has been lost in the South West and nationally, the species is at risk of extinction.

Buglife has been working for some years to save the White-clawed crayfish from extinction by identifying sites around the country that are free from the North American Signal crayfish



John Clarke, KCT & Kate O'Neill, Buglife, release the first crayfish into the lake, Wednesday 24th November 2010

and relocating White-clawed crayfish to these so called 'Ark Sites'.

Here at KCT, our Chairman Adrian Darby & Conservation Advisor John Clarke have in the past offered the lake as a possible host site for crayfish when Natural England were considering similar work, but, due to lack of funding, the project never came to fruition. This time however, Buglife were very pleased to work in partnership with us to turn the lake into an Ark Site.

Tests were carried out throughout October and November to ensure the lake was free of the pest species, and, because the lake did not contain enough crayfish habitat, KCT volunteers worked tirelessly to make habitat in the form of faggots of wood (over 100 bundles!), which were placed in the lake. In addition, Huntsman Quarries (a KCT Corporate Sponsor) generously donated 80 tonnes of stone to be added to the lake bed to form extra habitat.

On Wednesday 24th & Thursday 25th November, Buglife, KCT and their partners moved the native crayfish from the donor



White-clawed crayfish in a bucket

site to the lake, with John Clarke the first to release one. 100 crayfish were released, with a further batch planned in the spring.

On completion of the crayfish release, John Clarke commented "We are pleased to welcome the White-clawed crayfish to our nature reserve, and proud to be part of the conservation of such a fantastic animal."

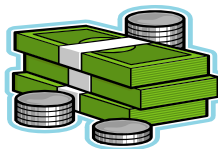
A huge thank you to the KCT volunteers who made this project possible, particularly Mike Walton, to Naturesave for their grant to assist with project costs and to Buglife and all their partners, including the Environment Agency .

Funding Update

Fundraising has been good during the second half of 2010.

Our Friends membership continues to grow and retention rates are high, which is terrific. We have received several very generous large donations from members, which has helped us buy tools and pay our warden.

We applied for three new grants in early 2010; two to the



lottery and one to Severn Waste's Welcome to Our Future Fund. We were successful with two (see page 3), and gained funds for work at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve including a new map, path way markers and signs, and funds for completion of the work at Beggarboys Wetland Reserve.

We also received a small grant from Naturesave to help with the Crayfish Project (see above).

In addition, we gained a new sponsor for our Woodland Shrubs & Wildflower Project - Mrs Sharon Priest.

Thank you to all who have supported us this year!

Lottery Funding for Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve!



LOTTERY FUNDED

In December, KCT received the good news that we had secured an Awards for All grant from the Big Lottery Fund.

The grant, totalling £2104.00, is for new signage and maps for Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve, as well as the design and printing of a new KCT information leaflet for use at events etc.

Improving the signage and designing a user-friendly map for the reserve (including the Arboretum) has been a priority for some time, so this funding will enable us to finally achieve our goal.



One of the new finger pointer signs

Work has already begun and the project will be completed within six months. Regular walkers at the reserve will spot the new signs and way markers as they go up in the coming months. The signs will include finger pointers at the entrances to the four public footpaths that lead to the reserve.

There will also be new way-markers that will highlight the paths and rides that are open to the public as you walk through the Arboretum, which will hopefully help to protect those areas of the reserve that are closed to the public from unlawful access.

To celebrate the project, we will be holding a free walk at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve on Monday 20th June at 7pm to show off the new map and signs, and hopefully also focus on the wonderful native orchids that

are in flower at the reserve in June (Bee, Southern Marsh, Pyramidal and Common Spotted Orchids).

We are extremely grateful to the Big Lottery Fund for supporting our work.



© Kate Aubury

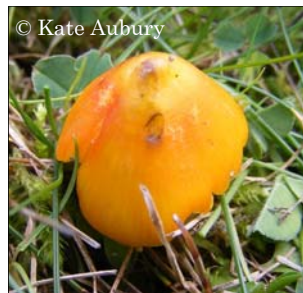
Southern Marsh Orchid
Dactylorhiza praetermissa
at Kemerton Lake

News in Brief

KCT has a new governor; we are pleased to welcome on board Dr Margaret Palmer M.B.E.

Dr. Margaret Palmer divides her time between her home near Peterborough and her nature reserve in New Zealand. In 1979 she joined the Nature Conservancy Council as a freshwater ecologist and later was Head of Species Branch in JNCC. She now runs a one-woman consultancy. She has served on Wildlife Trust and BSBI Committees and as a Trustee of Plantlife, the British Ecological Society and Buglife.

We look forward to working with Dr Palmer in 2011.



© Kate Aubury

Conical Waxcap *Hygrocybe conica*
September 2010

KCT has now joined the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) farming scheme in partnership with the Kemerton Estate. This scheme, administered by DEFRA and Natural England, pays farmers a premium for more environmentally-friendly farming practices. There is also money available for capital projects. KCT has secured funds

for three special projects over the next 3 years, including work at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve, Beggarboys Wetland Complex and The Bushes SSI on Bredon Hill. More details will be in future newsletters.

This autumn was an exceptional year for fungi due to the wet and mild weather conditions. KCT has now begun fungi recording on our reserves, focusing on Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve. Some of the most beautiful fungi include the waxcap family. These grassland fungi come in a range of bright, jewel-like colours, and several different species are found here at Kemerton including the golden Conical Waxcap shown in the photo.

Severn Waste Environmental Fund Supports Second Phase of Restoration of Beggarboys

We are delighted to announce we have been awarded a grant of £3000.00 from the Severn Waste Environmental Fund (SWEF) managed by charity Welcome to Our Future via ENTRUST to continue our major restoration project at Beggarboys Wetland Reserve.



© Kate Aubury
Volunteers working at Beggarboys as part of the project, June 2010

This project, which began in 2009 and was designed to restore the beautiful site, has already benefited from funding by SWEF for a feasibility study and repairs to the bund funded by the Cotswold Conservation Board through the Sustainable Development Fund.

Phase one of the restoration was successfully concluded in the spring, and this new grant funding will allow the Trust to complete the second phase of the repair work; cleaning and repairing the silt traps and emergency overflow to improve water flow to the lake. These repairs will, together with the earlier lake bund repair, improve the wetlands habitat



© Kate Aubury
Black-tailed Skimmer *Orthetrum cancellatum* at Beggarboys Wetland Complex June 2010

and better support the many plants and animals which use the reserve.

We are very grateful to SWEF for their continued support of this important project and look forward to completing phase 2. The final phase will be funded by a HLS special project.

KOW Apple Day 2010 and an Orchard Project Update

On 16th October 2010, KCT was invited to have a stand at Kemerton Orchard Workers' (KOW) annual Apple Day at Victoria Hall.

The day was, as ever, a big success for KOW, raising vital funds for their work managing Daffurns Orchard in Kemerton. The apple pressing proved as popular as ever, and there were lots of stalls showing the biodiversity of orchards including the Mistletoe Man, Bredon Hill Honey, Slipstreams Organics, and Gloucestershire Bat Group.

Our stand was primarily focussed on the work we have been doing for the past 2 years on the National Trust's Conserving and Restoring Traditional Orchards In England

This project, which included new planting in our orchards, biological surveys, restoration work on older trees, tree ID, and better mapping of our orchards, is being completed at the end of March 2011.

The project has been a great success and the funding we have received from Natural England's Countdown 2010 Biodiversity Action Fund through National Trust has enabled us to gather a lot of valuable biological data from the nine orchards we have under management, as well as plant new trees to ensure the continuation of old, heritage orchards.

Here at KCT, we believe that traditional orchards are an extremely important wildlife

habitat, supporting a huge and varied range of species; from bats to blackcap and lesser spotted woodpecker, from the rare noble chafer to the common toad, and we will continue to take care of the orchards we manage long after the project finishes.



© Kate Aubury
KCT volunteers prune apple trees in The Lillans orchard, April 2010

Work Party Update by Becky Reilly

Once a month a handful of volunteers get together and do a variety of tasks including cutting back hedges, planting trees and keeping the countryside around Kemerton tidy and encouraging wildlife.

I first got involved with the charity over 2 years ago for the Duke of Edinburgh award run by my school. I have always been passionate about nature and the wildlife around us and on hearing about Kemerton Conservation Trust I knew I would enjoy the chance to help the local community and get involved.

Since then I have loved

helping out and volunteering for KCT so much that I have continued to help out. Every month I look forward to experiencing new skills such as removing willow trees at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve or planting trees in the John Moore Reserve.

There is a real sense of achievement when you look back and can see all the work the group has managed to accomplish.

(Editor: KCT is happy to support young people who want to get involved in conservation. Rebecca is one of several volunteers under the age of 18



© Kate Aubury

Becky Reilly (right) poisoning willow at KLNLR, September 2010

who regularly join us, although due to Health & Safety and Child Protection laws, a parent has to accompany any under-16 who attends. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Kate Aubury by email at kate@aubury.co.uk.



© Kate Aubury

Mike Walton working hard on a volunteer work party June 2010

In this article, we would like to focus on work party volunteer Mike Walton.

Mike first joined KCT as a volunteer in March 2008, just 2 months after the launch of our volunteer work party scheme, and he has become part of a dedicated band of volunteers in the 3 years since then.

Mike was initially drawn to our volunteer scheme because he had recently moved to Kinsham, had taken early retirement and was looking for

a new interest. With Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve right on his doorstep, our monthly work parties proved a good fit.

Mike has been a hard-working regular since he first joined the group, but in 2009, he increased his involvement by joining our warden Alan Marsh mid-week as well. Mike now helps Alan for a minimum of several hours every week, and has proved a valuable assistant.

Mike has been involved with assisting on the Beggarboys Restoration project, the Orchard Project, and the recent Crayfish Introduction Project, as well as assisting our warden with the usual day-to-day reserves habitat management. This extra manpower helps the trust get a lot more done, and we are very grateful to Mike for his ongoing commitment.

Mike enjoys most aspects of the work, but has particularly liked being involved with the Orchard Project. He says that planting traditional variety apple trees is very satisfying because you can really see the results at the end of a hard day, and he knows that the trees will be there for all to enjoy for decades to come.

Mike has also found the recent Crayfish Introduction Project very interesting, involving as it did so many high level partners and experts. Mike not only assisted with making the faggots and preparing the habitat, but was also present when the native crayfish were introduced to the lake - an exciting moment for all involved!

KCT would like to thank Mike for his extremely valuable contribution to our reserves management.

Focus on a Friend: Mike Walton

Bat Survey Update - by Kate Aubury

I continued my programme of bat surveys in 2010, completing seven bat detector surveys. In addition, Worcestershire Bat Group help a trapping session in Aldwick Wood and local bat expert David Worley began an annual bat box check for KCT, with my assistance.

The seven bat detectors surveys included a re-survey of five areas surveyed in 2009, to



© Kate Aubury

A Brown Long-Eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, caught in Aldwick Wood July 2010

build on previous data, as well as surveys at two new sites (including our new flood meadow at Eckington). We were able to add a new record for Daubenton's bat at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve.

The trapping session was part of a county-wide Bechstein's Survey Project carried out by Worcestershire Bat Group using harp traps and lures (under license). Although we did not find the rare Bechstein's, we did catch 6 brown long-eared bats (4 male, 2 female), a female lactating noctule, a male Natterer's, a male whiskered/Brandt's and a female Daubenton's. This data is very valuable, as identification in the hand is far more accurate than detector surveys.

Finally, in November KCT was



Checking a bat box, Kemerton Court, Nov 2010

lucky enough to secure the assistance of David Worley (Gloucestershire Bat Group) to begin checking our bat boxes. We were unable to do this in previous years, as it requires a licensed bat handler.

With David in charge and me as willing assistant, we checked 12 of KCT's bat boxes and found a total of 5 bats in 3 boxes (2 common pipistrelle, 2 soprano pipistrelle and 1 pipistrelle sp.).

Bat Walk at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve

On 12th September we held a bat walk at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve in conjunction with Worcestershire Bat Group (WBG).

The walk was open to Friends of KCT and members of WBG, but only a few people turned up. However, we proceeded with the walk as the data gathered formed part of the 2010 survey schedule.

The weather was cool but clear and we set out just after sunset. Initially it was very quiet, with only a few common pipistrelle recorded in the woods. Then, as we walked around the lake, we heard and saw two Daubenton's bats feeding on the lake. It was a magical moment; the lake was

covered in a fine mist and the bats were crisscrossing over the water, skimming insects from the surface with their feet, disappearing into the mist to reappear a moment later. The moment was particularly special because it was our first definite record of Daubenton's at KLNLR.

Daubenton's bats are known as the water bat, because they are most commonly found around rivers and lakes. Here at KCT, we recorded them this year at Asham Meadow on the river Avon, at KLNLR and also in Aldwick wood, where we trapped a female (see above). Daubenton's bats are increasing in Worcestershire, and it's great to see them here at our lake.

During the bat walk we also

recorded soprano pipistrelle, Natterer's and brown long-eared.

Although turnout was low, we all enjoyed the walk and hopefully those who came learnt some more about these common but elusive mammals.



© Kate Aubury

Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*, caught in Aldwick Wood, July 2010

Overlooked Wildlife Habitats: Nettle - by John Clarke



© John Clarke

Small Tortoiseshell caterpillars
on nettle

Nettles thrive in enriched soil and so love gardens, hedge bottoms, old dung heaps and fire sites. Unmanaged they spread, shading out most other plants and also causing considerable pain and irritation to exposed skin! It is believed they have medicinal qualities and you can make a pleasant herbal tea from them but aside from that man has little use for these 'weeds' and so wages war with all means at his disposal.

Belonging to the same family as Elm and Hop the much-despised Nettle is however host to a very large and diverse range of wildlife. There are believed to be more than 30 species of insect which are entirely or almost entirely restricted to Nettle for breeding or feeding by adults. Another 70 species are known to use them regularly. These include **beetles, flies, plant bugs, hoppers, lacewings, crickets**, and of course **butterflies** and **moths**. Take the beautiful butterflies such as **Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral** and **Peacock**. We are encouraged to provide flowers in our gardens as nectar sources for the adults but the caterpillars (or larvae)

depend entirely on Nettles for food. It seems pointless to suggest that the decline in numbers of these lovely insects is entirely due to the lack of nectar and ignore the loss of breeding habitat as we wage war on Nettles.

Nettles also provide cover and safety for birds nesting amongst them. **Whitethroat, Blackcap** and **Willow Warbler** will all build their nests where the Nettles are growing up through other vegetation. The stinging hairs may well deter inquisitive (and sensitive!) noses. **Great Tits** have been observed taking caterpillars from Nettle to feed their young.

The first generation of some **Ladybirds** feed on nettle aphids before moving on to crops such as beans in nearby fields.

Older plants may grow rapidly between early May and late July, flowering in early June and seeding from July onwards. They will produce secondary growth in August/September but will produce vigorous re-growth if cut down. It is believed that the younger, lush growth is more attractive to breeding butterflies but too much mowing can destroy them.

How can we manage Nettle in our garden to provide this important wildlife habitat? It would be easy to suggest keeping a small patch out of sight and mind, behind the shed or garage, but I feel that a cooler and shady situation would not work well. If you do have room maybe you could leave a small patch in direct sunlight. To prevent the underground rhizomes from spreading try con-

taining the patch within boards sunk vertically to a depth of about a foot. I have done this successfully with Garden Mint. It can also be done by planting in a deep plastic container sunk to within a couple of inches of the top. If it works well why not try another? Nettles thrive in hedge bottoms and in woodlands so why not encourage them in some areas alongside rides and footpaths?

If you don't want them to spread by seeding, cut them back during flowering and the re-growth will be more attractive to many insects. I am sure that there will be at least one insect that feeds on the seeds but it is not always possible to cater for everything.

It is natural that we are more excited by bright and exciting insects such as butterflies but remember that while we are providing the food plant on which their very existence depends there will be many other, mostly unseen species of wildlife – all part of a complex food chain – that can benefit from your nettle patch.



© John Clarke

A Blackcap nest hidden within a
patch of nettles

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

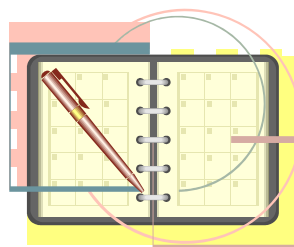


© Kate Aubury

Velvet Shank *Flammulina velutipes*
fungi at the Arboretum, September 2010

Save the Date!

- **Saturday 19th February** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Friday 25th February** - Slideshow Talk at Victoria Hall, Kemerton (7.30pm start)
- **Saturday 26th March** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 23rd April** - Annual Easter Egg Hunt (10-1, Kemerton Court—further details to follow)
- **Saturday 30th April** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Sunday 1st May** - KCT Stand at Tiddesley Wood Nature Reserve Open Day (10-5, nr Pershore)
- **Saturday 28th May** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Saturday 18 June** - Working party (10am start, location to be confirmed)
- **Monday 20th June** - Unveiling of new signs at KLNR with guided walk (7pm start, further details to follow)



KEMERTON COURT

TEWKESBURY

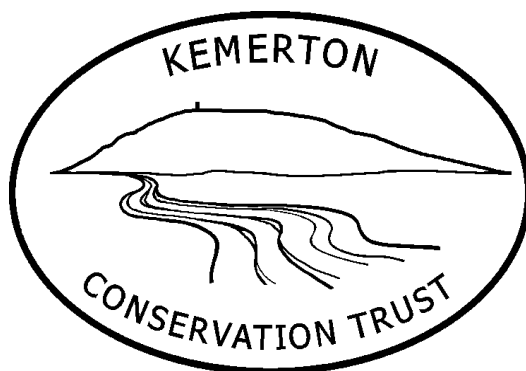
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