

Kemerton Conservation Trust

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Registered Charity No. 702488

**GOVERNORS**

ADRIAN DARBY, OBE (Chairman)

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PETER MARREN

ROSEMARY WINNALL, MBE

ROGER UMPSELBY

ROGER WORKMAN

Annual Report from Kate Aubury, Support Coordinator

April 2023-March 2024

Overview

In the last 12 months I have been busy administering the Friends scheme, writing and issuing the newsletter and dealing with general queries, updating Facebook and the website, organising events, completing grant applications, assisting with Trust H&S administration and supervising the monthly work parties. I have also continued to assist in habitat management decisions and project management, including managing two grant funded projects at Daffurn's Orchard. I assist Governor Matt Darby with organising the weekly warden work and liaising with contractors carrying out ad-hoc habitat management. Thankfully less time has been spent this year on vandalism and anti-social behaviour, although sadly the Trust was targeted by thieves on two occasions. I also organised and took part in one moth trap survey over the summer months, carried out several fungi surveys in the autumn, and have been doing ad-hoc monitoring as I carry out regular site visits.

Friends of KCT Scheme

The overall Friends scheme numbers have continued to increase in the last 12 months. We have 355 individual or joint members and 6 corporate sponsors (the figures were 330 and 6 respectively in 2022/23). The membership mix continues to consist of a higher proportion of donors (297) than volunteers (58).

Over the last year, we gained plenty of new members, but we also lost 31 existing members (as against 34 members lost in 2022/23). Of these 23 were donors and 8 were volunteers (as against 28 donors, 5 volunteers and 1 corporate donor last year).

All members continue to receive the bi-annual newsletter, which is very well received and an important part of our communications with the Friends.

I continue to update the Facebook page, which is a more informal communication channel for members and the public. I post photos of work parties, advertise upcoming events, update on projects, highlight the diversity of the reserves with photos of flora and fauna throughout the year and write short pieces on any big news items. I try to ensure it is updated at least twice a month (often more frequently) and posts generally reach 350-500 people. Many visitors and locals have also used Messenger, the Facebook messaging app, to send queries and requests, notify us of problems on sites or make complaints. I try to deal with all of these promptly.

Volunteer Work Parties

Work parties were held as normal this year, with no sessions cancelled.

Turnout has decreased significantly from 8.64 per session last year to 6.58 per session this year. I have recently recruited several new volunteers and we also combine with KOW volunteers for work parties at Daffurn's Orchard but more are needed.

The work parties have continued to prove essential in supporting the Trust's work. The majority of our work is general habitat management on the reserves or in the orchards but we also helped in the delivery of the Natural Networks Aquatic Habitat project at KLNR and the Welcoming Visitors & Supporting Volunteers Project at Daffurn's Orchard. We also visited Upham Meadow for the second time to carry out essential Ragwort pulling on our parcels, allowing the Trust to avoid using sprays on these floristically important areas. This has now become an annual visit, helping us to meet our management responsibilities at that site.

I estimate that from April 2023 to March 2024, the volunteer work party donated approximately 201 hours of work worth £1256.25 to the Trust. (This figure excludes John's and my time). This is a decrease on the previous year, due to the lower attendance figures.

I continue to keep H&S records for all work parties. There was one minor incident to report in the year.

Events

We had a varied programme of events including our Annual Open Day at KLNR.

We held a member-only Curlew Walk at Upham Meadow in April to celebrate our new land purchase. The walk, which was fully booked, included talks by Adrian Darby, Mike Smart & Juliet Bailey, and feedback was excellent. Representatives from several of the funders attended too.

We held our KLNR Open Day in June. It was well attended with two walks; the first led by Gary & Nicky Farmer and I focussed on grasshoppers and crickets, and the second led by Adrian and Matt focussed on the orchids. It made a small profit, and we recruited some new members on the day.

In early July we held a Glow Worm Walk on Bredon Hill for the first time. Numbers were kept low to prevent too much disturbance; the walk was led by Pamela Clarke and her volunteers and was a resounding success with 29 glowing females spotted. As there was a large waiting list, we are holding a repeat event this July.

In late July I represented KCT at Tewkesbury Goes Wild, a month-long nature festive involving different activities every day. With the help of my enthusiastic daughter, I supervised a nature painting session for young children at Tewkesbury Nature Reserve. The festive was very popular and is back this year, again I am representing the Trust by leading two children's bug hunts.

We held a member-only Bat Walk at KLNR in September, which was led by local bat worker Jula Simms, with assistance from Kate Aubury. The walk was fully booked. Bat numbers were lower than we would have hoped on the night, however, everyone seemed to have a good time regardless.

On 1st October the ringers from West Midlands Bird Ringing Group held a demo for members, which booked out and proved extremely popular. Attendees loved getting up close with the birds and learning more about ringing.

Our first Kemerton Apple Day since KCT took over managing Daffurn's Orchard went really well, with a fantastic team of volunteers – Charlie Taylor, Andrew Millington and Tom Martin -

organising the event on our behalf, assisted by me. Turnout was great and the event raised over £800 for Daffurn's Orchard, which was a brilliant result.

I hosted a visit from Evesham U3A in early November, taking them on a fungus foray in Kemerton Wood. The group made a donation for my time, and everyone seemed to enjoy the visit.

I led a member-only fungus foray in Kemerton Wood in November, which was well attended and received excellent feedback, with a wide range of fungi found on the day, including our first Earthtongue record.

In January I organised a pruning workshop for members of Kemerton Orchard Workers and KCT volunteers at COCO's orchard in Conderton, in partnership with COCO volunteers. The workshop was grant funded by Worcestershire County Council and orchard expert Wade Muggleton led the workshop. It was a practical, hands-on session and all who attended felt it was very useful.

Finally, in March this year Mike Smart and I gave talks about Lammas Meadows (me) and Curlew of the Severn and Avon Vales (Mike) at Twyning Village Hall as the final part of our Upham Meadow Purchase Project. The event was free and open to the public and was well attended by both members and locals from Twyning. Representatives from several of the funders attended too. Several attendees joined the Trust following the talk.

Grant Applications

In April 2023 I applied for a grant for a small orchard project to Magic Little Grants, which was unsuccessful. I reapplied for the same project to the Dent-Brocklehurst Family Charitable Trust in July and secured a grant of £300 for the Welcoming Visitors & Supporting Volunteers Project at Daffurn's Orchard. Work began in October 2023 and the project will complete in April 2024.

In August I secured a grant of £683.38 from Welcome to our Future for a Bioblitz at Daffurn's Orchard. Work began in September 2023 and the project will complete in May 2023.

In addition to these two grant applications, I worked on costing up a major access project at KLNR & Lake Walk, which is a joint project with Kemerton Estate Partnership, with a grant application submitted to Farming in the Protected Landscape in February 2024. The panel will meet and make their decision in May 2024.

Finally, I have been working on a new eDNA and Pipe Project at KLNR for submission to the Natural Networks Programme. The initial stage of the application has now been completed and we have been invited to complete the stage two application.

In July, we asked members to nominate us for the Benefact Group Movement for Good Awards, and we were thrilled to learn we were one of 10 winners, receiving a prize of £5000 to go to our conservation work. Having considered various options for the money, we have now decided to split it and use £2500 towards our share of the KLNR & Lake Walk Access Project, and £2500 towards our share of the KLNR eDNA and Pipe Project, both of which we hope to begin in 2024.

In addition, we again received a generous unsolicited grant of £200 from the Miss K.M Harbinson's Charitable Trust, which was used to cover survey equipment for a water quality monitoring project at Carrant Brook.

Much of the grant application work has been completed in donated work time from Kemerton Estate Partnership, as with so many other tasks on my plate I simply could not complete the extra administration in my own time.

Daffurn's Orchard and KOW

In April 2023, the Kemerton Orchard Workers Committee stepped down after more than 20 years dedicated volunteering, and management of Daffurn's Orchard and the KOW volunteer group was passed over to KCT. I have been responsible for managing the site and administering the group since then.

We have held two work parties on site in the last 12 months, applied for and begun two grant funded projects (see Grant Applications), held a very successful Apple Day and organised a fully funded Orchard Pruning Workshop (see Events), and have increased the orchard's profile in the village through regular posts on Facebook and the village WhatsApp. All funds raised by or for the orchard is kept separate in our accounts, as was agreed with the departing committee. As part of the administration, a separate short report and financial statement has been prepared for members of KOW.

Bat and Fungi Surveys

After a long gap due to Covid, we resumed bat box checks in April 2023. I was assisted on the day by ecologists from CSA Environmental, a local company who has offered their help to the Trust recently. Due to logistics, we were only able to check bat boxes in May Wood and Fir Wood (3 sections in all) and sadly no bats were found. Some of the boxes need repair or replacement but I have not had the time to sort it yet. We did not carry out a check in October as planned due to lack of time on my side. I also carried out NBMP roost monitoring and the results were submitted to both the national scheme and to Pamela to enter into Recorder.

I carried out several fungi surveys in autumn/winter at KLNR and May Wood, The Plock, Near Park and Far Park, as well as collecting additional fungi records when out and about. I also took part in the Autumn Mycoblitz, gathering samples for free DNA analysis as part of this Europe-wide iNaturalist project. We have not yet had the results back.

I organised a moth trapping event at May Wood in May with the kind assistance of experienced moth trappers Gavin Peplow and Oliver Wadsworth. The weather was rather cold so numbers were lower than on a previous visit but included some new records for the site. More sessions are planned in the future. We are very fortunate to have received assistance from experienced moth trappers who can identify the moths for us as they are a challenging group to study.

I continue to collect ad-hoc records whilst out on site carrying out project management or site surveys etc.

All records are sent to Pamela for adding to Recorder.

Website

David and I continue to maintain the website, updating the 'news and events' section as required and any other changes such as updating governor information.

Health & Safety

I continue to assist with ensuring our H&S documentation is up to date.

Vandalism at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve

This year has seen only minor vandalism issues, mostly signage damage and littering at KLNR and in the woods.

I continue to keep the local Community Policing Team in the loop and during the summer months they patrol occasionally through the reserve.

The Trust has unfortunately been targeted on two separate occasions this year by thieves, the first time our toolshed was broken into, but nothing taken as they were looking for power tools, the second time a shed at Kemerton Estate Farmyard was broken into and our trailer was taken, along with a number of other items belonging to the farm. We have made a claim on our insurance but are still waiting for the payout. A new trailer has been ordered as it is a vital piece of kit. We will need to look at where to safely store it once it arrives, as there has been a spate of shed/outbuilding thefts in the area recently.

Conclusion

That concludes my roundup for the year – I would just like to thank Adrian, Matt, Pamela and John for all their support this year. I would also like to thank my husband David, who has again helped with maintenance of the website and acts as my IT support.