

Kemerton Conservation Trust

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KCT – Report to Governors April 2020 – March 2021

Pamela Clarke, May 2021

Overview

Despite a year chequered with various Covid restrictions a good amount of valuable work was able to continue and new projects were taken on.

Glow-worms

In November 2020 I contacted Craig Macadam, Conservation Director, Buglife, to ask if our Glow-worm data would be useful to them and Buglife were keen to have it. I duly sent him our transect maps, notes etc. and all recorded data since 2008 and they have now digitised it all. We hope it will be useful to their studies.

Sally King – a Kemerton resident – again passed on sightings - from July to the beginning of August in Upper Kemerton. The un-strimmed verges attract glow-worms: unfortunately some continue to be cut though some residents have requested their property's verge be exempt with some success.

The first transect in mid-July at Westmancote saw 40 glowing – this was a high number (the highest was in 2007 with 45) - a week later only 11 were seen and by the beginning of August just 4.

Moth trapping records:

Kate will mention these surveys but of note on 31st July 2020 on Oathill track, Westmancote - 161 Moth species were recorded with individuals numbering 450.

Invertebrate surveys

Gary and Nicki Farmer visited Beggar Boys (Wet Meadow) and also the Settlement Ponds at Kemerton Lake on 31.8.20 and had a highly productive recording session. (GW is the County Recorder for grasshoppers and crickets and records a large number of other invertebrates). They hope to visit at different times this year.

On the matter of Kemerton records I checked with Simon Wood at Worcester Biological Records Centre (WBRC) and with both Gavin Peplow and Gary Farmer and all their records are submitted direct to WBRC so I have spoken to AD who is happy that there is no need for me to enter duplicate records.

Nest-boxes

I checked the Little Owl boxes in Lillans and The Plock. The former was again successful in attracting a pair but in The Plock the box again had squirrels. (I plan a sustained attempt to deter them this autumn and winter).

I emailed Richard Coghlan in January 2021 and he again offered to check the boxes in The Bushes.

Back from the Brink

Red Hemp-nettle *Galeopsis angustifolia*

Alison Mitchell, who at the time was 'Colour in the Margins' Monitoring and Advisory Officer, contacted us about the Reintroduction of *Galeopsis angustifolia* Red hemp-nettle (a Critically Endangered species) as part of the Back from the Brink - Colour in the Margins project. 7,000 seeds were sown in a 70m x 1m plot in the northern margin of Oat Hill – the area chosen is already under Conservation Headland management for arable plants with a number of rare and threatened plants present on these Cotswolds Brash soils. (The seeds were produced by Kew Millennium Seed bank in 2018 by propagation from seed collected at Cleeve Common, Cheltenham). AMGD and PMC, supervised and assisted by Alison, sowed the seeds on 5th October 2020. The herb is a spring germinating annual spring, flowering from July to October: the area will be monitored during this period in 2021 and successive years but it is not expected that the seed will germinate in the first or second year (its hard seed coat can take a long time to break down).

Rugged Oil Beetle *Meloe rugosus*

In October 2020 AMGD and PMC attended a zoomed Rugged Oil Beetle ID and Survey Workshop held by Jennifer Gilbert of Butterfly Conservation. This Nationally Scarce Oil Beetle is common in established sites in the Cotswolds and is most active in the autumn and winter. It is nocturnal and in late October/November AMGD and PMC searched suitable habitat (south facing slopes) at the KLNLR and again with Ray Thomas (our new volunteer) at Quarry Field. We found several beetles but disappointingly not the target one: we will try again. (The beetle is found at other local sites viz. Prestbury Hill, Cleeve Common, Rodborough Common and Juniper Hill.)

Noble Chafer *Gnorimus nobilis*

In January 2021 Deborah Harvey (Lecturer in Ecology and Conservation at Royal Holloway University, London) contacted me seeking our support for a monitoring scheme for the Noble Chafer (previously funded by The People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES). We have agreed to be involved and following discussion with AMGD it was decided that Upstones Orchard would be best suited having damson trees of a good age. So this spring we will be sent full instructions and I will set traps and lures in June and will check them once every other day.

(The Noble Chafer is a rare and beautiful metallic-green beetle that can be found in traditional orchards. It is on the wing over summer, feeding on umbellifers. The larvae live in the decaying wood of old fruit trees. Mainly found in Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, but it is also recorded in the New Forest, Oxfordshire and Kent.)

Otter

Tom (Gill and Roger Workman's grandson) saw an otter on 2 occasions 23rd and 24th May 2020 – in the river by Dock Lane, Bredon.

Gavin Peplow reported one at KLNLR 6th September 2020.

1 dead otter was found in October 2020 by Kinsham Lane - a road casualty.

Daffurn's Orchard

The only thing of note during this period is that regrettably Barland, the veteran pear, came down in strong winds in the winter. Subsequently the dead material etc. was cleared and the area made safe. Olivia Chance reports recently that at least 3 apple trees in the top end of the orchard are dying ? cause - she will keep us informed.

Skylark Surveys

21 sites across the estate were monitored for breeding skylark – all had a least 1 pair with 8 sites having 2 pairs.

Yellowhammer

Breeding pairs were located across the estate but appear to be down in numbers with birds absent from some traditional sites. (on April 19th a flock of 24 were seen feeding on the southern edge of Westmancote Piece.)

Lapwing

Several visits were made to check on a pair at Gravel Hole: they bred successfully. A pair was seen in Pig Croft but probably moved to the onion field the other side of the road where subsequently 3 birds were seen.

Willow Warbler

Numbers continue to be down with few records.

Avon River meadows

6 visits were made from April onwards to The Runnings, Eleven Acre and Boathouse Meadows. A Curlew was seen and heard in May in The Runnings but moved on. 2 pairs of Lapwings bred on land south/adjacent to Eleven Acre Meadow.

The Sling

Kestrel appeared to be breeding in a mature willow in the hedgeline. Greater Burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* was doing well in the usual area and was photographed.

Val's Orchard

A Barn Owl was hunting regularly during the winter –it disappeared in March – probably due to various works in the vicinity.

Beggar Boys

The site continues to be rich in a variety of wildlife. Scarce Chaser *Libellula fulva* photographed on 29th and 31st May – also seen by KA (confirmed by Mike Averill). 3 Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera* spikes photographed by the outlet but none on the former Bee Orchid bank which has become overgrown and dominated by Tor Grass. 8 spikes of Southern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* recorded.

Collin's

Arable plant list was added to by AD and PMC. This area in the north-east corner of the KLNR is set aside for the cultivation of rare arable plants

Butterfly Monitoring

George Day continues his transect monitoring – Bredon Hill, Carrant Brook, Manor Farm and Kemerton Lake with all data entered onto the Recorder database.

Polytunnel/Tree stock

The remaining trees have now been planted out – some in the Walled Garden temporarily.

KLNR

The Water's Edge Hide was locked to the General Public in line with covid restrictions. 6 keys were cut for use by staff and 2 regular visitors who contribute bird and photographic records. Hand sanitiser was provided and PMC kept a record of bookings to avoid breaching regulations.

Birds records of note:

Male Cuckoo 20th April

Marsh Harrier 25th April - hunting lagoon area

2 Great White Egret 10th and 11th June and single 14th.

5 Little Egret 4th August - moving through

Oystercatcher 2 pairs bred – 1 pair reared 3 juveniles, second pair reared 1.

Little Ringed Plover on central island 4th and 16th May

Up to 20 pairs Reed Warblers, 10 pairs Sedge Warblers, 12 pairs Reed Bunting

1 Cetti's Warbler seen briefly 10th November and 2 churring quietly on several occasions lagoon north-east corner of site (4th December)

2 pairs Pochard bred but ducklings did not survive

1 Tree Pipit 31st August

Autumn/Winter peak totals -

Coot 239 29th October

Widgeon 550 12th February

Teal 62 February

Pair eclipse Pintail October

Common Snipe 87 29th December

Jack Snipe 12 26th November

Canada Goose 234 September

Greylag 210 November

25th January 2021 first returning Oystercatcher – 3 by 19th February – 2 prs by 5th March