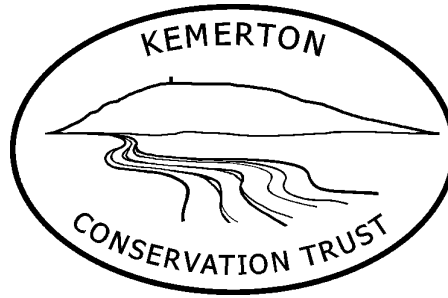


KEMERTON COURT
TEWKESBURY
GLOUCESTERSHIRE
GL20 7HY

Tel: 01386 725 254

www.kemerton.org

Registered Charity No. 702488



GOVERNORS:

A. M. G. DARBY, O.B.E. (Chairman)

M. G. DARBY

P. S. DOBLE

LORD HOWICK OF GLENDALE, V.M.H.

P. MARREN

DR. M. PALMER, M.B.E.

B. WESTWOOD

R. H. WORKMAN

Kemerton Conservation Trust

Report from Kate Aubury Support Coordinator

October 2014-October 2015

Overview

The last twelve months have been slightly different for me this year as my pregnancy has forced me to cut back on the amount of volunteer work I have carried out for the Trust, especially during the final few months from June-September. However, I have continued administering the Friends scheme, supervising the work parties until June, organising events, writing grant applications, updating the website, giving talks and leading walks and carrying out fungi surveys as in previous years. I also managed some bat work, although much less than normal as by summer 2015 my advanced pregnancy made field work impossible. In addition, I completed the Health & Safety review started last year and ensured that all our unsupervised volunteers (recorders etc.) received a copy of all relevant documentation and confirmed receipt. I also attended a Planning Appeal Public Enquiry and spoke on behalf of the Trust. Although I have carried out some of this in the half day assigned to Trust work as part of my administrative role with Kemerton Estate, the vast majority is done in my spare time and given the recent arrival of my baby, I am unlikely to be able to do as much in the next twelve months so will be looking to cut back in some areas. However, despite my pregnancy forcing me to cut back, a lot was still achieved in the last year and below is a more in-depth look at all the activities I was involved in.

Friends of KCT Scheme

The overall Friends scheme numbers have increased slightly in the last 12 months. We have 171 individual or joint members and 6 corporate sponsors (the figures were 166 and 7 respectively in 2013/14). The membership mix continues to consist of a higher proportion of donors than volunteers (114) than volunteers (57).

This year, we recruited a reasonable number of new members but lost quite a few existing members. We lost 17 members in the last 12 months (as against 11 members lost in 2013/14). Of these 14 were donors and 3 were volunteers (as against 7 donors and 4 volunteers last year). 1 of the volunteers was a younger member who has now gone to university, a trend we see every year as we do encourage teenagers to get involved.

The new donors were mostly recruited via our website after visiting KLNR – the membership forms are now available for download and have proved very useful. and most of the new volunteers are locals who have approached us interested in getting involved in the care of the reserves, including several youngsters doing D of E. These ones tend to come for a few months but it's a mutually beneficial arrangement.

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

The Facebook page was launched in January and is a more informal communication channel for members and the general public. I post photos of work parties, advertise upcoming events, highlight the diversity of the reserves with photos of flora and fauna throughout the year and write short pieces on any big news items. Although not used by many members it does allow us to potentially reach a larger audience of non-members so for the relatively small amount of admin it requires I think it is worth maintaining this page.

Volunteer Work Parties

The work parties continue to flourish and are invaluable in getting large scale habitat management jobs completed.

Turnout continues to be good, with an increase in average attendance from 9.5 per session last year to 10.1 this year. Although we lost a couple of volunteers – as happens every year - we gained 3 new regular adult volunteers and also 3 young volunteers who came for a few months as part of their D of E award work. I continue to advertise volunteering at all events. I supervised the work parties up to June this year with our warden John Threadingham kindly stepping in to supervise them from July to November to cover the final month of my pregnancy and the first few months of motherhood. I intend to return to supervise them again in January 2016.

The work parties have continued to prove useful in supporting the Trust's work. The majority of our work is habitat management on the reserves but we have also assisted with mistletoe reduction and orchard tree management as part of the WBRC funded Orchard Project which completed in March 2015. The volunteers also re-waterproofed both bird hides this summer, which is done every 5 years as part of their maintenance.

I estimate that from March 2014 to March 2015, the volunteer work party donated approximately 324 hours of work worth £2025.00 to the Trust. (This figure excludes my time).

I continue to keep H&S records for all work parties. We had no incidents to report in the period covered by this report.

Events

In November 2014 Adrian and I co-led a member-only fungi foray as the final event of the year. The weather was very wet and only one person attended, which was disappointing, but we pressed ahead anyway as I was able to carry out some useful recording at the same time.

I gave a talk on behalf of the Trust in January to Tewkesbury & Mitton Townswomen's Guild about Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve through the year which was well received and gained the Trust both more publicity and a small donation.

In April this year we held a slideshow evening at Kemerton village hall focussing on orchards, with talks given by WBRC's Rebecca Lashley about the Worcestershire Orchards project and by John Clarke about our work on orchards at Kemerton. The evening was well attended and feedback was very good.

In June, Adrian and I co-led another member-only walk around Upton Ham to show off our newly purchased land. A good number of Friends attended and we had a fun afternoon searching for wildflowers amongst the grasses. The reserve looked stunning in the sunshine and the singing skylarks were an unexpected bonus!

Also in June I hosted a visit at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust's South East Worcestershire Group, arranged by Harry Green who is a long-term Friend of KCT. The walk went very well and the visitors were impressed by our many orchids.

In August Adrian and Friend of KCT Mike Averill co-led a member-only walk at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve focussing on dragonflies and damselflies. Mike is the county recorder and has also been responsible for odonata recording at KLNR for many years so it was great to get him to come and share his expertise with our members. Attendance was good, the weather was great and the walk excellent, although we didn't see as many dragonflies as we had hoped. The highlight was a stunning hunting display over the lake by a Hobby. I had not initially planned to attend this walk as it was just after my due date but in the event I felt well enough to join Adrian and Mike with 4 day old Charlotte getting her first taste of the outdoors!

Our annual Open Day is due to be held on 11th October, and as agreed last year, has been simplified to decrease the burden on me. It has been very difficult organising it so soon after Charlotte's arrival but I have just about managed it and hopefully it will be a success. This year we have a reserve tour led by Adrian in the morning and a fungi foray led by our new Governor Peter Marren in the afternoon, which I hope will attract a good turnout.

Next week David, Charlotte and I will be attending the annual Kemerton Orchard Workers' Apple Day with an information stand. I intend to publicise the work the Trust has been doing in conjunction with the wider Worcestershire Orchards project, as well as all our general work.

All in all this year contained a packed and successful programme of events, despite my pregnancy limiting the amount I could organise. I intend to start planning next year's schedule before the end of the year.

Grant Applications

This year I have completed six grant applications, four of which have been successful and two of which are still pending a decision.

At the start of this year I applied to WBRC for a small grant towards orchard work in Lillans Orchard including new trees and some tools for the volunteers to carry out mistletoe reduction and pruning. This was successful and the work was carried out and the grant claimed by end of March.

In April I secured £500 towards orchard restoration work at Breddy Croft orchard in Eckington from a donor who prefers to remain anonymous. The work has not yet started – it will begin this winter and be completed by spring 2016.

As discussed at the last Governors Meeting, I began working on costs and design for a new hide at Kemerton Lake in the spring, including gathering three quotations for the hide itself and also costing up the extras such as the fencing and a new information board and in June/July I completed four grant applications totalling £25000, towards an actual project cost of just over £23000 (I have assumed I would not get all the funds I had applied for). If the project proceeds, the Trust is committed to paying £2500 of the project costs from our surplus. I have already received confirmation of funds from the Severn Waste Environment Fund (£8000 of a total £10000 requested) and the Garfield Weston Foundation (£3000 of a total £5000 requested) and we are currently waiting to hear back from two more funders – we should have an answer from both by the end of October. In addition, Matt has completed an application for a grant from Bredon Parish

Council's New Homes Bonus funds. I am confident we will raise the necessary money and if so, the new hide will be built in spring 2016.

In addition, we again received a generous unsolicited £500 grant from the Miss K.M Harbinson's Charitable Trust, which we intend to use towards volunteer tool and equipment costs.

Bat and Fungi Surveys

Because I was heavily pregnant through the summer of 2015 I was unable to carry out any bat field surveys. However, I did manage to complete further monitoring of the Lesser Horseshow Colony under NBMP.

I carried out a number of fungi surveys through autumn/winter 2014 and, with the addition of the microscope which was purchased late last year, increased the number of species accurately identified significantly. I need further practice with preparing specimens for the microscope but it has proved a very useful tool already. As in previous years, the majority of the surveying was done at Kemerton Lake Nature Reserve and Kemerton Woods but I did manage to visit Roundhill SSSI, Upstones Orchard and a few other sites too. Because of my pregnancy, I have not managed to do any fungi surveying so far in 2015 but I hope to manage a couple of surveys before the end of the year.

All records from my bat and fungi surveys are sent to John for adding to Recorder.

Website

David and I continue to maintain the website, updating the 'news and events' section as required. As mentioned above, we have had a number of new members download the membership forms directly from the website since they were added last year so that has proven a useful addition.

On the blog page, I added two entries late in 2014 but have not had the time to write any this year. I hope to be able to occasionally add to the page in due course but it is not currently a priority given my lack of time.

Health and Safety Update

Last year I carried out a review of the Trust's H&S documentation and, with input from Peter as the Governor responsible for H&S, updated both the main policy and many of the risk assessments and other associated documents. As part of this review it had been agreed that all unsupervised volunteers i.e. recorders needed to receive copies of relevant risk assessments and our new lone working policy to ensure they knew about all the hazards and who to contact in an emergency etc. Initially John was asked to send these documents out to all the unsupervised volunteers last summer because he is responsible for organising their visits. However, because he did not have the time and the matter had become urgent, it was agreed in the autumn that I would do it within my half day of assigned to Trust work as part of my administrative role with Kemerton Estate and this was completed by January 2015. All unsupervised volunteers received copies of relevant documentation and acknowledged receipt for our records. As and when new unsupervised volunteers come on board, we will send out this information before they start work to ensure they are able to volunteer safely.

A document outlining basic H&S risks for visitors to our reserves has also been added to the website.

Benshams Planning Appeal Public Enquiry

I represented Kemerton Conservation Trust at the proposed Benshams Development Planning Appeal Public Enquiry in December 2014. The Trust was opposing the development on ecological grounds, as it lies less than 500m from KLNR and would have negatively impacted on the site. The appeal was subsequently dismissed and the development refused, in part because of the ecological impact, so that was an excellent result for the Trust.

Conclusion

That concludes my roundup for the year – I would just like to thank Adrian, Matt and John for all their support this year. I would also like to thank David, who has continued to assist me at every event, attend every work party and accompany me on most of my surveys, as well as doing maintenance for the website. His support has been particularly invaluable to me this year because of my pregnancy and subsequent lack of time and I could not achieve half of what I do without his unstinting assistance.