

# THANET COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

Registered charity No: 285972

1971 – Founded

1982 – Charitable status

## Members' Newsletter

September 2012

**Monkton Nature Reserve is open seven days a week from 10am to 4pm throughout the summer. As from 1<sup>st</sup> November our opening hours will be from 10am to 3pm, seven days a week. As well as the nature trails, picnic area, free museum and the second-hand bookshop (book donations welcome), on Saturdays you can enjoy family pond-dipping all day and take a look at our observatory between 1-3pm. If the flag is flying we are open! For more information contact us on 01843 822666, email: [contact@monkton-reserve.org](mailto:contact@monkton-reserve.org) or visit our website [www.monkton-reserve.org](http://www.monkton-reserve.org).**

### News from the reserve

With such changeable weather the wildlife at the reserve has had mixed fortunes this year. A warm March prompted the declaration of a drought across south-east England, which was followed by the wettest April ever and one of the wettest - and dullest - summers on record! However, it's not all bad news, for the orchids did really well this year, with a great show during June and July of marsh orchids, fragrant orchids and the distinctive bee, lizard and man orchids. It wasn't so good for the butterflies, as their numbers seemed to be down this year, but lucky visitors during warm sunny periods were able to spot marbled whites and green hairstreaks. Dragonflies and damselflies didn't seem to mind the weather, and most warm days saw them patrolling the ponds and nearby areas.

Much to our surprise, in June keen-eyed visitors spotted a sparrowhawk nesting in the crook of a tree in the woodland. Sure enough, after a few weeks two chicks could be seen peeking out of the nest when the female had flown off to find food (see below). Evidence from around the reserve suggests that the parents were taking small birds to feed them, and there must have been a good supply near to hand for both chicks fledged and could be heard calling from the trees. This is great news, for this is the first time in some years that sparrowhawks have nested in the reserve and successfully raised chicks. Studies elsewhere have shown that their presence has little impact on songbird populations, so we're very happy they've done well this year.

Thanks to Ron Bodiam for the use of his photograph.



## Seeing the wood for the trees...

Over the last few months work has been taking place in the woodland to create a ride (an open strip of land within a wood). After discussions between the management committee and trustee Tony Harman, we agreed that the woodland canopy was too dense and preventing light getting to the floor. This means that we don't get the diverse array of flora that we could have there.

We decided that the first step towards opening up the canopy was to clear a strip of trees nearest to the fence that backs onto the main road. This will improve the growth of the hedge in front of the fence, which had been struggling to develop under the shadow of the surrounding trees. We want the hedge to thicken rather than just grow upwards. This will create a natural sound barrier to the noise of the road, and will increase the security around the perimeter of the reserve. A nice thick hawthorn hedge is an effective deterrent and cheaper than barbed wire!



Work began a few months ago with myself and Tony Harman felling the trees and a strong, dedicated body of volunteers helping to clear the cuttings. Sam J, Les, George and Jim Winter all lent a helping hand and Dave Edgar and I have continued the work up to its near-completion. In the meantime, the reserve's 'Thursday team' have been putting a lot of hard work into bringing down the height of the hedge.

Soon we will be getting a new batch of trees and planting will begin to fill out the gaps in the hedgerow. Over the next few years we hope to see a thick, full hedge develop and a lot more positive improvements to the woodland flora as well.

Sam Richardson

## **The Little Railway Farm Shop at Wingham**

Earlier this year I visited this tea room and met Colin and Kate Morwell-Neave, the enthusiastic new owners. As they had some spare room at the time I suggested that they might like to try selling some of the spare books that we have from the reserve. They agreed, and we took them surplus stands, shelving and plenty of books. We share the money raised equally, and as a result of this joint venture we have so far received £172, over only five months.

The Farm Shop is on the main road through Wingham (Sandwich/Canterbury route) at the Canterbury end of the village. The 4-acre site is open seven days a week and sells fresh bread, meats, delicatessen items, flowers and plants as well as providing a café area where you can have home-made soup and a roll, huge fruit scones, big breakfasts and great coffee.

They also sell items for customers in the centre on a commission basis, so take along any small knick-knacks, nice pieces of china, glassware, old toys, or any curios that might sell there and discuss it with them. A Car Boot sale is held there every Saturday morning (weather permitting). There are also some animals on site now, including goats, guinea pigs and chickens, so take the children or grandchildren along to see them.

The great news is that Colin has agreed to give **our members** a 10% discount off all food and drinks bought and consumed in their café. So, to enjoy their food (their English breakfasts are huge!) at even better prices, just show your current Thanet Countryside Trust membership card to their staff. Please do not ask for the discount without your card.

We look forward to a long and prosperous book-selling venture with them.

John McPherson

## **News from the rock face**

The recent change in the levels of the Thanet beaches have revealed the remains of an old, dressed stone slipway at Whiteness Gap. Its age is unknown, but this is a quality construction and is thought to be the site of the original Charles II 'Kings'gate.

If anyone has photographs of coastal Thanet pre-1970s – the earlier the better – we would be interested. We have accessed on the internet some photos from the 1920s and, with additions, may be able to construct a display at Monkton Nature Reserve of coastal erosion through the ages.

On a similar subject, the clear-out and tidy-up of our geological collection at Monkton has produced some income via the sale of fossils. If anyone has, or knows of, any unwanted fossils or collections, we would be glad of them to either update or improve the Monkton display or produce fossil bags for sale. Obviously if there are rare specimens, Monkton Nature Reserve will keep them for new/future displays. All donations gratefully received!

Kim & Alasdair Bruce

## Cream Teas, sunshine and a stroll!



The sun came out nicely for the Cream Teas and Open Garden event at Slate Barn Farm on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August. The day was arranged to raise funds for a pond liner and was very kindly hosted by Anne and Dr Hugh Bird in their lovely gardens. Lots of visitors enjoyed the weather and a stroll, and of course the cream teas were in great demand.

Ros Facey, trustee of the reserve, who organised the event, said “I would like to thank all those that came along for their support, especially those from the local churches and all the volunteers for their hard work that helped make the day run smoothly. A big thanks to Anne and Dr Bird, not only for the use of their gardens and welcoming us on the day, but also for donating plants both today and to Monkton Nature Reserve over the summer months. The total amount raised was £535.91, including takings from the raffle and plant sales.”

Ros Facey

**Update from Dave Edgar, reserve manager:** At last, we’ve had the digger in to clear the area for the new pond. Many thanks to Bob from Sarre for the use of the digger – we did so well on the day that we were able to do some work on the outdoor classroom area too. The generous donations of old carpets have now been laid over the pond area and will protect the liner from any stones underneath. With the money raised from the Cream Teas event we will soon be in a position to buy the pond liner. Once the pond is established we will use this area for pond-dipping rather than the top pond, so that we can leave the area in front of the bird hide in peace.

## Raise money for Monkton Nature Reserve when you shop online!

Did you know you can shop online and raise funds for Monkton Nature Reserve at the same time, without costing you a penny?

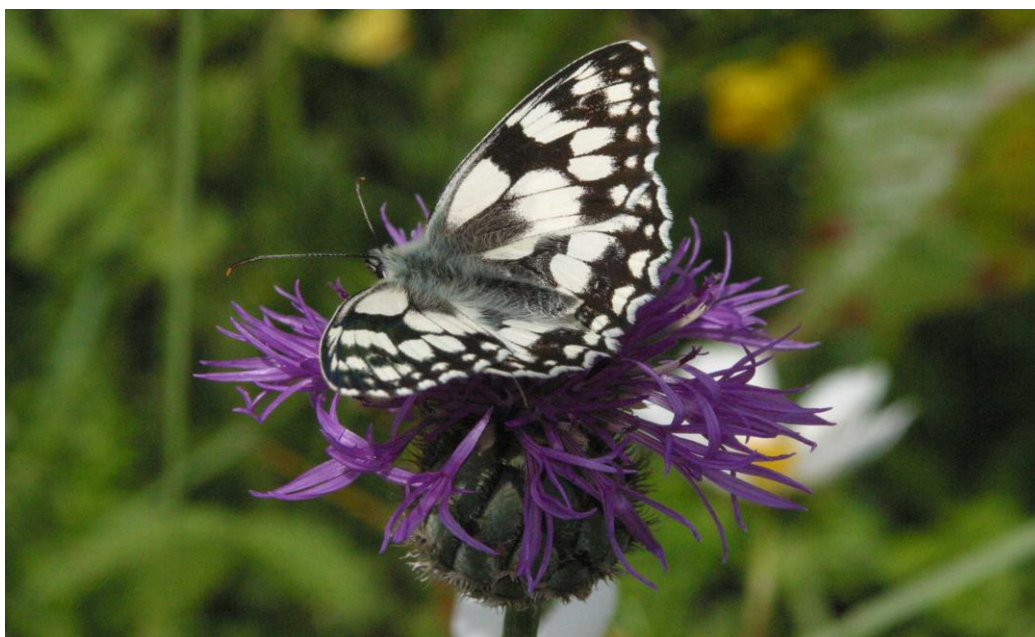
Easyfundraising works with thousands of well-known retailers, including Argos, NEXT, M&S, John Lewis, Debenhams, HMV, Vodafone, DELL, Interflora and Comet. These retailers love supporting good causes and will donate a percentage of your spend to the reserve when you shop with them through the Easyfundraising site. For example, spend £50 with Boden and you'll raise £1.25. Insure your car with the RAC and they'll donate up to £30. Take out a new mobile contract with Vodafone and it could raise up to £45.

All you have to do is register on the Easyfundraising website:

[www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/monktonreserve](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/monktonreserve)

and tell them which cause you want to support – MONKTON NATURE RESERVE. When you've registered, you're ready to shop and raise money. Simply click on the retailer you want and shop as you would normally. When you make a purchase, they will send you an email telling you how much you've raised and pass the donation to the reserve. It won't cost you any extra - you pay exactly the same price as you would if you visited each retailer's website directly.

What's more, Easyfundraising works with retailers to find voucher codes and discounts, so you can save money on your shopping too. And with their 'Find & Remind' tool, they can tell you when you start to shop with an Easyfundraising retailer, no matter where you are on the web. This means the reserve will never miss out on a donation from retailers. So, register today, shop with your favourite stores and raise money for us at the same time!



A marbled white butterfly seen on the reserve. Picture: Sam Richardson

## Stop press: planning day

On Sunday October 7<sup>th</sup> 10.30-4.00pm, we are holding a strategic planning day at the field centre. A working lunch will be provided. We hope to cover the following:

- Sort out our archives
- Review the reference library
- Review the fossil room and displays
- Start work on a business plan
- Agree priority order for fund-raising

We would really welcome members and volunteers to come along for the whole day or part of it. Please let Dave, John or Sam know at the reserve so we can get lunch numbers sorted.

## Items wanted

Many thanks to those of you that have donated items in recent months, these have been invaluable in keeping the work of the reserve going and in raising funds. We would still be grateful for any of the following:

- Spare or unwanted plants for sale on our plant stall
- Second-hand books for the bookshop
- Green or brown fence stain
- The loan of an industrial floor cleaner (even if only for one day!)

### Saturday specials

This summer the family pond-dipping was very busy, with children fascinated by the pond skaters, dragonfly larvae and myriad of other beasties that they found. We were also lucky to have Danny Dyer with us on Saturday afternoons. Danny opened the observatory to visitors and was on hand to answer questions on the telescope, astronomy and astronomical photography. Both the pond-dipping and the observatory were so successful that we are continuing with both on Saturdays. There is a charge of £2 per family for the pond but the visit to the Observatory (1-3pm only) is included in the reserve entrance fee. Danny is especially interested to hear your ideas for observatory events in the future. So get the whole family along on Saturdays!

### Guided walks

Remember we are now offering guided walks to groups. This will consist of a leisurely walk around the reserve looking at the flora, butterflies or bird life and discussing some of the reserve's history. The normal entry charges apply: adults £3, children £1, families £6 and concessions for pensioners, etc £2. There will be an extra cost of £15-£20 in total to cover the cost of a guide and administration, but your group will have full use of the facilities, including tea and coffee-making at the field centre. If this is something you might be interested in, call Dave or Sam at the reserve on 01843 822666 to find out more.