



# THANET COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

Registered charity No. 285972    1971 – Founded    1982 – Charitable Status

## *Conservation and Education*

### Members' newsletter

June 2014

**Monkton Nature Reserve is open seven days a week from 10 am to 5 pm in summer. So bring a picnic and make it a whole day out for all the family: stroll around the nature trails, explore our new children's dinosaur hunt, and have a browse around our museum and second-hand bookshop. If the flag is flying we are open!**

#### **News from the reserve**

Over the winter a large area of the lower part of the reserve remained flooded, with no footpath access around the back of the main pond until mid-June. The bat cave was also largely under water for quite some time. However, water levels have gradually been subsiding and we have been waiting with bated breath to see how this has affected the wildlife.

On a positive note, waterfowl took advantage of our new 'lake' and were seen more frequently during the spring, with some breeding this year. A pair of mallards produced a brood of ducklings (see below) and a moorhen with five chicks are currently paddling around the edges of the water. Other visitors included a little egret; a little grebe that hung around from April to early June; and a green sandpiper that took advantage of the soft ground after the water receded to look for some tasty morsels of food. We have yet to discover how the floodwaters may have affected the newts that hibernate in the vegetation between the main pond and the cliff face, but the upper pond has a large population of newts which could be a good source for repopulating the lower pond.



Monkton Nature Reserve, Canterbury Road, Monkton, nr Ramsgate, Kent, CT12 4LH

[www.monkton-reserve.org](http://www.monkton-reserve.org)

e-mail: [contact@monkton-reserve.org](mailto:contact@monkton-reserve.org)

phone: 01843 822666

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Supported by Boys and Maughan Solicitors

Supported by Neville Weston Chartered Certified Accountants

However, there have been several down sides. An area around the pond that had a good population of Southern marsh orchids last year was under water during the whole winter and spring, and it seems none has survived here. In spots where the flooding lasted a shorter time, Southern marsh orchids have appeared but seem to have suffered, both in number and by being quite stunted (see picture below). Luckily many of the man orchids and the bee orchids were not flooded and the bee orchids are just coming into flower now (early June). Some alder trees, that were planted recently close to the pond, have also died – despite being trees that are able to withstand wet conditions, these had not had time to develop good root systems and were mostly completely underwater for the whole winter.



Southern marsh orchid

In our last newsletter we reported that we had several large cliff-falls as a result of the wet winter. This has had a surprising knock-on effect. Jackdaws that nest on the cliff-face lost some of their usual nesting spots and had to move elsewhere. Unfortunately some jackdaws have muscled-in to the area where our kestrels have bred for several years, and driven them off this patch. We haven't yet seen the kestrels breeding elsewhere on the reserve; however, we know that some sparrowhawks are breeding nearby, so keep your eyes peeled when you next visit the reserve and you may see the adults hunting in the woodland.

It's not all doom and gloom though – our willow sculptures were completely underwater for most of the winter and are only just emerging, with some nice results. The flower and dinosaur have sprung vigorously into leaf and our snake at Snake Pass has needed a serious haircut already! Do come along and see for yourselves.

# Acol Country Fair

In support of Monkton Nature Reserve

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2014**  
**Acol Village Green, Acol, nr Birchington**

*Saturday's events currently include:*

**Dog Agility Display**  
**Birds of Prey on Display**  
*Entry from 10 am*

*Sunday's events currently include:*

**The Acol Dog Show**  
**Gun Dog Show**  
*Entry from 9 am and show judging commences at 10 am*

Both days will include a variety of displays and stalls, a display of fine artwork for auction, a prize raffle, and refreshments on sale.

**Further details of attractions will be advertised in the near future.**

## **Dog Show Classes (£1 entry per class):**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Best puppy (12 months and under)     | 17. Cutest dog or bitch                             |
| 2. Best yearling                        | 18. Prettiest bitch                                 |
| 3. Best veteran (over 7)                | 19. Most handsome dog                               |
| 4. Best crossbreed                      | 20. Best pair of rear ends                          |
| 5. Best rescue/re-home                  | 21. Cutest couple                                   |
| 6. Best small dog/bitch                 | 22. Best trick                                      |
| 7. Best large dog/bitch                 | 23. Fastest sausage eater                           |
| 8. Wettest nose                         | 24. Best sit and stay                               |
| 9. Best foot forward (best pedicure)    | 25. Sweetest dog or bitch                           |
| 10. Waggiest tail                       | 26. Best fancy dress summer                         |
| 11. Best dressed lead or collar         | 27. Dog most like owner                             |
| 12. Most appealing eyes                 | 28. Best resident dog of Acol                       |
| 13. Best short-haired coat dog or bitch | 29. Best dog or bitch                               |
| 14. Best long-haired coat dog or bitch  | 30. Mystery class                                   |
| 15. Best of brace                       | 31. Judges choice                                   |
| 16. Best of odd brace                   | 32. Dog or bitch judge would most like to take home |
|   | 33. Best of show and reserve                        |

**Please note:** stalls are available free of charge for either day, for those who wish to raise additional funds for the Thanet Countryside Trust or another registered charity.

## New bird hide for the reserve

Over the last couple of months a lot of hard work has gone into erecting a new bird hide. The hide was a former garden shed, kindly donated by a member. Our dedicated team of volunteers on a Thursday, Peter and Sue Hurst, Martin Sheppard and Ron Bodiam, have put in many hours to re-create it as a second hide on the reserve. They set to work taking it apart, getting it up to the top of the reserve, laying a good base and putting it back together again. They gave it a new roof and replaced the glass with pvc windows.



The new hide is situated near the entrance of the upper woodland, with the main windows looking out over the cliff and down into the reserve. It's a great spot to see all our birdlife, especially larger, high-flying birds such as crows, jackdaws, kestrels, sparrowhawks and buzzards. It has recently been finished off with lino flooring, two benches, two pairs of binoculars and identification sheets on the walls. Come down and see for yourself!

Sam Richardson

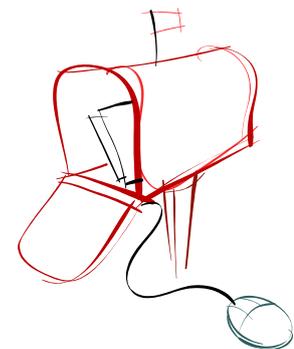
## Communications

Are you computer literate? Are you on-line? Do you have an e-mail address?

We like to keep our costs down and do our bit for the environment by sending out these newsletters by e-mail. If you received this newsletter as a paper copy, then it is likely that we do not have an e-mail address for you in our membership records.

If you have an e-mail address, it would be extremely helpful if you could forward it to us at [contact@monkton-reserve.org](mailto:contact@monkton-reserve.org). We will then be able to send you this newsletter and updates about our activities at no extra cost.

Many thanks for your help!



Andrew Ogden  
Fundraising, Education & Marketing Officer

## Open day

On Sunday 25th May approximately 400 people descended on Monkton Nature Reserve for the annual Open Day. We were very pleased to receive this number of visitors, especially at a time of year when a number of local attractions are competing for attention. If you were amongst those visitors, then many thanks for coming along.

We were blessed with fine weather and sunny intervals, which was remarkable because the days either side saw heavy rain. The attractions included the birds of prey from Falconry Southeast, solar astronomy provided by F1 Telescopes, live music in the "Living Classroom" from three very different ensembles, and a variety of stalls. All of our usual activities were also available, including the very popular pond-dipping, the new children's Monkton Dinosaur Trail, and guided walks around the reserve.



The event was formally opened by the new leader of Thanet District Council, Councillor Iris Johnston. She was very enthusiastic about the reserve, both for its appearance on the day and for what we are trying to achieve in the longer term. This includes greater use by local schools to support their teaching on the natural world, and including the reserve within Thanet's "tourism package".



Peter Hirst from Falconry Southeast, Cllr Iris Johnston and a snowy owl



If you missed the Open Day then we have a number of further events planned for the year through which you can offer your support. These include the Acol Country Fair on 5th and 6th July, and the Cream Teas afternoon on Sunday 13th July. Further details of these are included in this newsletter.

Or of course, just come and visit the reserve! We are open seven days a week, and you can be sure of a warm welcome.

Andrew Ogden  
Fundraising, Education & Marketing Officer



## **Birchington Horticultural Society**

Tony Harman and I were welcomed by the Birchington Horticultural Society at their monthly get-together on Wednesday 14th May. Tony gave a fascinating talk on the flora and fauna of the reserve, complete with a slide show and many interesting stories. I also gave some information on the history of the reserve and our current projects and goals. I'd like to extend a huge thanks to Dave Barton for asking us to come and for being so accommodating and of course to everyone who attended on the night and gave us such a warm reception.

Sam Richardson

# Cream Tea

*in support of the Thanet Countryside Trust*

**Sunday 13th July 2014, 2–5 pm**

**The Slate Barn, Seamark Road, Brooksend, Birchington CT7 0JL**



Let us serve you a traditional cream tea in the peaceful and beautiful garden of the Reverend Doctor Hugh Bird and his wife Ann, on Sunday 13th July 2014, 2–5pm.

Enjoy a walk around the garden and try your luck at our raffle, or simply sit and enjoy your cream tea in the peace and calm of the countryside.

**This fundraising event is being held for  
Monkton Nature Reserve  
at £5 a ticket per person.**

Tickets are available in advance from Monkton Nature Reserve, Canterbury Road, Monkton, CT12 4LH. Telephone: 01843 822666.

## The Monkton Stargazers

The Monkton Stargazers have enjoyed some excellent viewing sessions and talks at the Observatory. We have seen Jupiter gradually set in the west, while Mars and Saturn have been prominent in the south. We put on a special planet-hunting evening which was attended by several families.



Agata showing us models of asteroids

Chris Daniel gave a very interesting talk on astrophotography, explaining how we can get started with basic equipment. Agata Makiela gave a fascinating talk on the asteroids between Mars and Jupiter. More talks are planned on the life cycle of stars, and Mars and Jupiter.

The telescope in the Observatory has also had a refit with an extra drive belt to make its operation smoother and more accurate.

On **Friday 11th** and **Saturday 12th October** we will be celebrating World Space Week. In conjunction with the Hilderstone Radio Club, we will be showcasing satellites. F1 Telescopes will be on hand to demonstrate their range of telescopes and to answer your questions on how to get the best out of your telescope.

We are continuing our public viewing sessions on the fourth Friday of the month (except August), namely **27th June, 25th July, 26th September, 24th October** and **28th November**. All begin at 7.30 pm and as numbers are limited, please ring the reserve on 01843 822666 or call in to book your place. We will also have our open afternoons on the second Saturday in the month (except August), i.e. **12th July, 13th September, 11th October** and **8th November**.



Using special glasses to view the Sun

John Hislop

## It's good to talk

To raise funds for Monkton Nature Reserve we are proposing to hold a series of talks on subjects of interest throughout the year. This will be an extension of the talks already held by the Monkton Stargazers on astronomy and related subjects.

We are still formulating a plan for this, but we have a provisional list of wide-ranging subjects such as fuchsias, Ancient Egypt, travels in Australia and New Zealand, travels in South America, fracking, and Thanet's beaches, as well as the more usual topics including natural history, local history, archaeology with artefacts, and conservation.

We are proposing to hold these talks not only at Monkton Nature Reserve but also, if we can arrange it, at a number of other more accessible venues in Thanet. Perhaps you can help with this venture?

- Would you be willing to give a talk (for up to an hour) on a pet subject?
- Do you have a talk already prepared that you wouldn't mind presenting?
- Do you know of a venue in Thanet that we could use, preferably for free, or at very low cost?
- Are you interested in such events, and what sort of subjects would you like to see covered?

Your reply will be really appreciated: please e-mail us at [contact@monkton-reserve.org](mailto:contact@monkton-reserve.org); write to us at Monkton Nature Reserve, Canterbury Road, Monkton, CT12 4LH; or phone us on 01843 822666.



Andrew Ogden  
Fundraising, Education & Marketing Officer



Remember, you can find out what's happening around the reserve on Facebook:

**Monkton Nature Reserve Official Site.**

You'll find many more of our photos on there, too.



Keep up-to-date with what's happening at the reserve via Twitter!  
<https://twitter.com/monktonreserve>

## Annual General Meeting 2014

To ensure that you keep the date free in your diary, this is advance notice that the Annual General Meeting of the Thanet Countryside Trust will be held on **Saturday 19th July**, starting at **10.30 am**. This will be held at the reserve in the Field Study Centre.

Once the formal business has been concluded, Tony Harman will be providing an update on conservation and reserve matters. The Trustees and staff will be available to answer any of your questions. Refreshments will be available free of charge (although a small donation is always welcome).



- **Good quality tree signs**, with names of trees/species. Alternatively, some sponsorship for tree signs would be much appreciated.
- **A solid wood door** to replace one at the Observatory. We might be able to collect.
- **Timber**. Pieces of wood of all sizes and types (in good usable condition) are useful so please bring along any surplus that you have.
- **Plants** for our plant stall. Our plant sales over the last two years have helped to raise more funds so we hope to increase our plant sales this year.
- **Paint, garden and household tools** are all needed.
- **LED light bulbs**. With our solar power electricity supply, these help to conserve power.
- **Clean hardcore and fill** for the extension to the disabled car parking area. Needs to be delivered to the Field Study Centre either on a trailer or in bags. No huge slabs, and no soil please.
- **Items for a raffle, to auction or a tombola** for the Acol Country Fair weekend on the 5th and 6th July.
- **Display cabinets** for showing off artefacts, fossils, specimens and possibly some of the better books that we have. We may be able to collect these.

Please contact us at the reserve if you may be able to help.