



THANET COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

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

Conservation and Education

Members Newsletter July 2017

Monkton Nature Reserve is open seven days a week from 10am – 5pm. Walk the nature trails and have a browse around our museum and second-hand bookshop. If the flag is flying we are open!

Wildlife Matters at Monkton



Our breeding pair of turtle doves

The hot weather is here and with it comes bursts of colour as the wildflowers spring up around the Reserve. Orchids are flowering in their hundreds, with over 600 being counted this year. We have a rare butterfly orchid and hundreds of man orchids flowering in the woodlands, alongside blankets of pink, white and purple southern marsh and common spotted orchids in the quarry. Our turtle doves are back and suspected to be breeding, and our baby kestrels have started fledging, causing a racket as they practise flying about the quarry, squawking to their parents as they go. Our friendly robin has fledged his nest of babies and is taking a break from his new celebrity status whilst him and his mate begin to start their second brood of the year.

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Volunteers have been carrying out bat and moth nights, and have started to capture hawk moths, as well as detecting what we believe to be brown-long eared bats. We have previously been advised that it is unlikely that bats roost in our bat cave due to flooding events, however it seems these bats are roosting within the ivy on the cliffs.

Kashmir, Environmental Education Officer

Bolstered Security

Many of you will recall that last February we suffered a break-in at the Reserve, resulting in the theft of some money and damage to windows, doors and cabinets.

The response from all our supporters was fantastic. We received donations from all quarters; young members, old members, local firms, a Justgiving page on Facebook (which achieved its target figure of £300 within 24hrs!) and Ramsgate Councillors. All these donations, and the messages of support, were gratefully received and we thank everyone again.



The monies received (unless expressly given for particular purposes) has now been put towards enhancing our security measures. Without revealing too many details, one improvement is a greater number of security cameras on the Reserve which can all be monitored remotely from off-site.

Due to everyone's generosity, including our astronomers Tim and Tom who, with help from Alex, gave their time to install the new system, we are now a much more secure facility.

Martin, Assistant Manager

Open Day Help Needed!

Our Open Day is being held this year on Sunday 6th August from 11 – 3pm. We are looking for volunteers to help serve refreshments, or to generally help with the event's running. We are also asking if anyone can kindly make us some cakes or savoury treats to sell, as well as any donations for our tombola. If you can assist us with any of these, please contact us.

Mains Power

On Monday April 24th this year Thanet Countryside Trust (TCT) achieved one of its main goals which will help to make Monkton Nature Reserve a self-sustaining concern: the Reserve was connected to the mains electrical power grid. This was a major project that had taken a number of years to reach fruition and which had been guided through the process by our volunteer and Chartered Engineer, Andrew.

The arrival of mains electricity was timely, as the batteries to the solar panels had already 'given up the ghost' and the generator seemed to be protesting more and more by getting louder, as each week passed.

But now...the sound in the main picnic area is of birds chirping. The lighting in the Field Study Centre is now brighter, we can boil a kettle without all our power draining away, and we have such a thing as a vacuum cleaner!

We would also mention that the electricity supplier we have chosen is *Ecotricity*, who generate all of their electricity from renewable sources. As an incidental benefit, they were also cheaper than the other supplies we looked at.

The installation of mains power is a huge advance for the Reserve. It will enable TCT to better serve the Reserves members and visitors, and enhance and develop the facilities at Monkton (see other articles in this Newsletter), in line with its aims of environmental conservation and education, to ensure its long-term viability for the future.

Martin, Assistant Manager

Thanet Coast Project

We have now started to affiliate with Thanet Coast Project, who are hosting a range of great events in the summer holidays. They can be found on the 'What's On' section on their website, or by following this link <http://nekmpa.org.uk/whats-on/2017-events-and-activities/>.

Some of their events include Summer Seashore Safaris, Great British Beach Clean and Cliffs, Caves and Castles walks. Please check out their website and book on nekmpa.org.uk.

Kashmir, Environmental Education Officer



Cappuccino? Americano?

Once finished, the new kitchen area in the extension will enhance our facilities, opening up possibilities allowing us to offer our members and visitors additional benefits.

Although any thoughts of a full-time cafe is probably a very long way off, we are intending to sell snacks (biscuits, crisps, etc), cold drinks and a variety of coffees and teas as an initial start-up. To that end, we have recently purchased two Tassimo coffee machines with a selection of drinks.

We are currently offering: **Kenco Americano Smooth**, **Kenco Cappuccino**, **L'Or Espresso Latte Macchiato Caramel**, **Cadbury Hot Chocolate** (at the time of writing, it is 27 degrees outside...um, no thanks!), and **Twinings English Breakfast Tea**. There will be additional varieties that we will be able to offer, including a decaffeinated coffee. Members will still be able to help themselves to coffee and tea from the kitchen, but the intention is to sell the speciality drinks for £1 per cup. This is the modest beginning of a new source of income for the Reserve. Any feedback from Members will be welcomed and appreciated.

Martin, Assistant Manager



Outdoors Learning

May through to July are our busiest periods for schools. This year so far, we have had 20 educational visits, ranging from home-education groups to youth groups, schools to birthday parties. We have 12 5* reviews so far!



'Excellent engaging activities.'

Hands-on for children - just what they need!

- St Nicholas-at-Wade primary



We were fortunate enough to be awarded a grant from Westgate's Co-Operative Local Community Fund. This money has been put aside specifically for educational visits for schools in the most deprived areas of Thanet. This will allow children from the poorest districts to experience nature, at no cost to their schools or families. There is a wealth of studies showing the correlation between outdoors learning and children's developmental, social and physical health. Yet 75% of children spend less time outside than prison inmates, with American children spending just 4-8 minutes outside a day, alongside 7.5 hours of screen time.

In spite of our reasonable charges, money can prevent schools from attending outdoors learning facilities, with the cost of transport often doubling the overall trip. By funding these trips ourselves, through Co-Op's grant money, we can allow a wider selection of our younger generations to experience nature and connect with the natural world.

Kashmir, Environmental Education Officer

Shopping List

1. Bathroom mirrors (preferably four matching)
2. Free plumbing labour
3. A shelving unit/bookshelf for storage
4. Tombola prizes

If you could spare any items from our shopping list, please pop down or give us a call at 01843 822666.

We are also looking for new museum exhibit donations. We are looking for British natural history items or fossils, e.g. small mounted skeletons, small taxidermy pieces, fossils, skulls, etc. If you have any items you think we may be interested in that you are happy to donate, please let us now.

Reception Refurbishment

If you have visited the Reserve recently, you will notice that amongst all our other building works and renovations, we have updated our entrance and reception area.

A brighter reception area utilises our storage space more effectively and we have created new displays using recycled materials. Upcycling old wooden crates and wooden cable drums, we have created displays that are much more customer-friendly, all for just the cost of the paint and some screws! We have also painted existing furniture to tie everything in with a colour scheme that matches our bee orchid logo.

We believe our gift-shop has been greatly improved with new stock items, yet still offers quality products at very reasonable prices (currently, our most expensive item is just £3.00).

Our porch has also been brightened with a coat (or rather six coats) of paint to hide the dark wood and we have tidied the area and created a simple set of displays, highlighting 4 species that you may spot at the Reserve when you visit.

Kashmir, Enviromental Education Officer



A Short Word from our Trustees

Thanet Countryside Trust has had an intensive 15 months developing the projects financed by our longterm benefactors the Allan Willett Foundation and also Kent County Council out of monies which developers are obliged to find for the community.

More recently we were nominated for the Co-Op Community Fund to enable us to develop an outreach programme among schools in deprived areas and have been invited on to a further Co-Op round where we hope to secure funds for working with disadvantaged people at the other end of the age spectrum: the underlying purpose is to accumulate a wealth of evidence to show how the Trust contributes to social and physical 'health and well-being' and therefore becomes a worthy recipient of the 'core funding' so necessary to keep us operating.

Of course we hope that the new facilities will attract more members, volunteers and visitors and thus expand on-site sales of books and merchandise generally - plus we are looking to fulfil our overall charitable objects and encourage a loose confederation of all the Isle's 'environmentalists' by utilizing our new resources. Our natural environment has never been so threatened.

An often hard-pressed year behind us with the prospects of the fruits of the investment appearing from now on.

Geoff, Trustee

Improved Facilities Gets Visitor's Approvals

New toilets, including those for the disabled and families, have recently been installed at the reserve and been met with approval from members and visitors alike. With baby changing facilities and better lighting due to our new mains electricity project, things are starting to look brighter at MNR.

In addition, we will have fully refurbished our Archaeology and Geology Museum by the end of July, with laminate flooring and brand new display cabinets that will enable both young and old to get a clear view of all of the interesting objects on show. This will be officially opened at our Open Day on Sunday August 6th by Kate Mc Corquordale on behalf of the Allan Willett Foundation who very kindly paid for the new museum set up and other improvements.

Following the recent burglary, we have also invested in a large container to improve the security of tools and equipment on the site.

The new extension at the back of the Field Study Centre, whilst not fully finished yet (we, especially, still need to lay the flooring), is already being put to good use. It has been used to accommodate visiting adult groups, and schoolchildren have used it as a classroom during trips to the Reserve. It has also been used for a couple of birthday parties.

The new kitchen area is not yet functional. It now has units installed, all generously donated and fitted by Cummins Power Generation, but we still need to plumb water in and get some appliances. It's taking shape nicely, though.

Since April's newsletter, the works to install an effective rainwater drainage system has been completed. This work was carried out to mitigate against the damaging floodwater runoff from the A253 which use to course into the Reserve during heavy downpours, gouging out channels in the driveway and flooding part of the disabled car park. Now, with a system of drainage channels and soakaways in place, these damaging floods should be a thing of the past.

Dave, Conservation Manager and Martin, Assistant Manager



Phew! I'm sure you'll agree that we've had a very busy few months. We hope that the next time you visit the Reserve, you are impressed with all our work, and if you are, please let us know! - Kashmir