



THANET COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

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

Conservation and Education

Members Newsletter March 2018

Monkton Nature Reserve is open seven days a week from 10am – 3pm until April when we will be back to 5pm closing. 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



Winter is always a slow time for nature, especially when ice takes over and the sun barely warms the ground frost, but life has still been soldiering on. We have a pheasant who has taken up residence at the bird feeders, a beautiful breed called a Kansas Cross. In addition to the bright plumage of a regular pheasant, Bob sports a light grey patch on his head and back. Check out video footage of him on our Facebook page. Several times this winter, we have also had a pair of ravens seen

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sitting on the cliff tops, easily distinguished from other members of the crow family by their sheer size and harsh croaking and gurgling calls.

A single waxwing was spotted by a member in late January, a winter migrant to the UK. And just a few days later, a red admiral was photographed in the woodlands by volunteers. Upon looking at the butterfly sightings online, there had only been one recorded sighting before it this year!

Kashmir, Education Officer

Volunteering Roles

We have recently started looking for volunteers who can carry out specific job roles, predominately for inside the Field Studies Centre. These roles currently include greeters at Reception, café servers, shop maintenance, fundraisers and bid writers for grants. All of these roles are listed on a new section of our [website](#), alongside additional information and volunteer application forms.

Some of these roles can be carried out at home, whereas others require being at the Reserve.

If you would like to help us, you can volunteer as few or as many hours as you like. Download the [volunteer application online](#), or pick up a copy at the Reserve and come join our team!

Kashmir, Education Officer



The image features a green banner on the left with the text "We're powered by ecotricity 100% green electricity". To the right is a cartoon illustration of a person holding a green pinwheel, with several wind turbines in the background.

We're proud to be powered by Ecotricity, and even happier to be partnered with them!

If you switch to Britain's greenest energy company, then they will donate up to £50 to us!

Simply sign up using our link <https://www.ecotricity.co.uk/monktonnaturereserve> and turn your bills into mills!

FSC TLC!

Taking advantage of the quieter winter months, we've given parts of the aging Field Study Centre (FSC) a much needed face lift. In particular, the corridor leading to the rear door has had the walls and ceiling repainted and fresh new information posters have been put up. Even the wooden dinosaur skeleton, which we believe is that of an allosaurus, was carefully taken down and repainted, after first photographing all its joints to make sure we could put the pieces back together in their right place!



Other areas of wall are also now being used as information boards for various environmental concerns, such as the effects of plastics in the environment and how each of us can reduce our impact, and how to reduce water wastage. We are currently revamping the display area above the long mural in the natural history section.

Outside the centre, a small paved area has also been laid between the back door and the wheelchair ramp onto the Cabin veranda. So no muddy patch needs to be gingerly negotiated now after it has rained!

There are still many things to do to maintain the building, which was second-hand when it was officially opened at the Reserve back in 1986 by Jonathon Aitken, MP. Hopefully, one day, we'll be able to afford a brand new building, tastefully in keeping with the Reserve. But this is some way off.

Martin, Assistant Manager

Operation Turtle Dove

Turtle doves are the UK's fastest declining bird species and research suggests that the loss of suitable habitat on UK breeding grounds and the associated food shortage



is the most important factor driving their decline.

Operation Turtle Dove is a partnership of the *RSPB*, *Pensthorpe Conservation Trust*, *Fair to Nature* and *Natural England*, set up to save this species. Kent is the stronghold for turtle doves in the UK and Nicole Khan, RSPB Turtle Dove Conservation Advisor for Kent, upon

finding out that Monkton Nature Reserve have had nesting turtle doves, contacted the Reserve asking whether we would help with a supplementary feeding programme.

The idea behind the supplementary feed is to ensure the adult birds are able to get into good breeding condition. Research in the 1960s showed that turtle doves could have up to 4 broods. Recent evidence suggests that, as there is not the food source available to them in the wider countryside, they typically now only produce 1-2 broods.

Nicole says, this in itself is enough to explain the massive collapse in the UK population. It is hoped that, by getting the adults into good breeding condition when they first arrive back in the UK, they will be in a better condition to have more broods.

Thanet Countryside Trust is more than happy that Monkton Nature Reserve can play an active role in attempts to save this iconic species.

Martin, Assistant Manager

Education and Outreach

It is at this time of year where my job gets just a little bit hectic. School bookings start piling in and trying to find dates that work for teams of up to eight staff and volunteers, plus the teachers can make me want to pull my hair out! At the time of writing, I'm currently juggling nine separate schools, but ultimately, it's one of the most important things we do at the Reserve. School visits have increased year on year, and we had a 45% increase last year from 2016! We are always trying to expand our education services, and this year, we can offer schools a new talk which has been supported by Southern Water. Children can learn about the water cycle, with a walk on the Reserve looking at the chalk and Dragonfly pond which sits on the water table. Southern Water

kindly donated us boxes of resources and schools can receive free education packs, plus some water saving goodies for the children.

In addition to this, thanks to the generosity of the Co-Operative, our education grant was awarded again this year. The grant aims to invite children from Thanet's most deprived schools to experience nature, and this year we're holding a brand new set of activities that I am thoroughly excited for! The Co-Operative also invited staff to set up stalls in two of their stores to promote the nature reserve.

But is it worth it?

Well I asked one group of children how they rated their day at the nature reserve, and one girl responded 15 out of 10, so I think that answer speaks for itself!

Kashmir, Education Officer

Links with Local Groups

The Reserve has been playing host to local environmental groups who have used the new facilities built last year to hold meetings. Both the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and the Thanet Beekeepers have all held a number of local branch meetings already this year at the Reserve.

If you know of any local groups who would like to hold meetings in a quiet venue, then please recommend us to them. The new *Cabin* building looks out across the Reserve and a projector and screen would be available as well as Wi-Fi access, all for a reasonable price.



Martin, Assistant Manager

History of the Reserve

We are in the process of drawing together as much information as we can with regards to the history of Monkton Nature Reserve. We want to make the information available on the website and also use it as a basis for a display in the Field Study Centre.



Some written material by former warden Ron Stilwell, along with photographs, has been unearthed recently and Ron has additionally been passing on his invaluable knowledge and insight of the Reserve's past to allow us to reconstruct a detailed story. But we would be more than happy if any of our members or volunteers also came forward with their own memories and knowledge of the Reserve so that we can include their contribution as well.

There is clearly a fascinating history attached to the Reserve, where quarrying is recorded back to 1799, and we want to ensure it is recorded as fully as possible.

Martin, Assistant Manager

Thank you as always to all our volunteers, members and visitors for their support, whether giving their time to help at the Reserve, taking out memberships or just telling new visitors about us!

2018 is looking to be a very busy year for us, and we are ever appreciative of the support from our wider community.

Kashmir, Education Officer

