



# THANET COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

Registered charity No. 285972

Founded: 1971

Charitable Status: 1982

***Conservation and Education***

## Members Newsletter

### September 2018

Monkton Nature Reserve is open seven days a week from 10am – 5pm. From 1<sup>st</sup> November, we will close at 3pm, until 1st April.

Enjoy walking the nature trails and browse around our museum and second-hand bookshop and have a snack in our refreshment area.

## Wildlife Matters at Monkton

The summer has been particularly dry and hot with everything, including staff and volunteers, wilting under the heat.

In the last issue of the newsletter, we reported that the moorhens first brood of chicks had been predated by birds of prey needing to feed their own young, and that



only two had survived. We are pleased to say that their second brood is fairing much better. Five little balls of fluff with unfeasibly large feet are frequently seen padding their way back and forth between Dragonfly and Damselfly ponds, accompanied by one of the adults.

The kestrels, which we were keeping a constant eye on via the cliff-side camera, have also successfully fledged (presumably fortified by the diet of the unfortunate moorhen chicks!). And, whereas it is quite usual for three kestrel chicks to survive from a brood, four of the five chicks actually fledged this time.

We are continuing to feed the turtle doves as part of Operation Turtle Dove in cooperation with the RSPB, and the programme has produced very encouraging results. Turtle doves are often seen on the

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camera's which we leave out in the area we call No Man's Land. You may recall, the purpose of Operation Turtle Dove is to help these birds to reach a suitable breeding condition.

[View video of turtle dove feeding at the Reserve](#)



We are continuing to build up working databases of the fauna and flora we have at the Reserve. During one of the moth survey nights in July we had an unexpected visit from a very tame fox, who was most curious about what we were doing and wanted to join in. We suspected, though, that the fox's appreciation

of lepidoptera only extended to its interest in trying to catch and eat them!

*Martin—Assistant Manager*

*“Spending time with nature offers us all precious breathing space away from the stresses of modern life, it enables us to experience joy and wonder, to slow down and to appreciate the wildlife that lives side-by-side with us”*

- David Attenborough

## Summer Holiday Activities

We are pleased to say we have had a very busy summer holiday period with plenty of visitors enjoying the Reserve.

Every week day we held activities primarily aimed at our younger visitors. On Monday's, there was pond dipping, after which children capped off their experience with a free ice lolly. Tuesdays was arts and crafts day (which, after a bit of a slow start, suddenly took off and provided us with one of our busiest days of the whole summer) with children painting fossils and making clay hedgehogs. A museum Q&A day followed by a book swap day (when chil-



dren could bring one of their old books in and swap it for another) provided a little relaxed interlude in the middle of the week. Then, Friday saw Alex bringing in his beautiful birds of prey, including newcomer Odin, a young (but still impressively large!) raven. The children

loved having the birds perch on their arms, after first being kitted out with a heavy duty protective leather glove as safeguard against some impressive talons!

*Martin—Assistant Manager*

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## Heritage Open Day

On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September, Monkton Nature Reserve is taking part in the national Heritage Open Days Event.

Heritage Open Days is England's largest festival of history and culture. Every year in September, places across the country throw open their doors to celebrate their heritage, community and history. The dates for the full national event are 6-9<sup>th</sup> and 13-16<sup>th</sup> September. It is a chance to see hidden places and try out new experiences free.



These excavations later became Dragonfly Pond

The Reserve is taking part because of its industrial heritage as a former quarry. Quarrying dates back more than 200 years, with the first recorded excavation of chalk dating to 1799, and it is an example of how a 'brownfield' site can be returned to a natural state through sen-

sitive management. Our habitats, being chalk grassland and chalk woodland, would have been typical of a bygone untouched rural Kent countryside.

The Reserve will have free entrance on the day that we are participating in the event. As well as pond dipping, we will have birds of prey on display and the astronomers will be available to introduce people to the wonders of stargazing. We will be selling cream teas and we are hoping to have some arts and crafts stalls set up in the Willett Garden.

*Martin – Assistant Manager*

[If you want to find out more about Heritage Open Days, follow this link to the official website](#)

# Welcome To A New Trustee

We are sure all our members would like to join us in extending a warm welcome to Caroline Marais to the board of the Thanet Countryside Trust. Caroline has agreed to join us for a period of twelve months.

Her experience in the field of education and in bid writing will be most valuable.

Some of you may have seen her supervising the popular pond dipping sessions which we held every Monday over the school summer break.

Caroline's inclusion brings the number of Trustees' to six.

*Martin – Assistant Manager*

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Remember that you can keep up to date with all the latest happenings and any upcoming events at the Reserve via our website and social media pages. Follow the links below.



**Don't forget we have around 8-9000 second-hand books for sale at the Reserve.**

There are subjects for pretty much all tastes, and with most paperbacks priced at 75p and hardbacks at £1, you'll be sure to find a bargain. There is also a large children's book section with prices starting from 20p.

We also have a [dedicated Facebook page for the bookshop](#) where we draw peoples attention to a selection of books which have just recently come in.



MNR Bookshop

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**Thanet Community Lotto is a weekly online lottery created to support local causes in Thanet.**

Tickets are £1 per week, with 60% going to local good causes and prizes up to £25,000. If you designate Monkton Nature Reserve as your preferred charity, 50p of every £1 ticket you buy will come to us with 10p being distributed to other local good causes.

**One of our supporters recently won £2,000 in the draw!**

*Click on the poster to buy tickets in support of Monkton Nature Reserve.*



**Supporting our cause means the sun won't be the only warmth we feel this year**

- Help us to make a difference to our community – Support our good cause
- Tickets are just £1!
- We can do so much more with your support
- It's a WIN WIN for us both – you also get the chance to win up to £25,000 every week!

To start supporting visit:

**[www.thanetlotto.co.uk](http://www.thanetlotto.co.uk)**

and search for: **Monkton Nature**

Supporters must be 16 years of age or older.



## Summer Workshops

In late June, botanist and ecologist Dr. Lesley Mason held a five hour workshop entitled *Beginners Plant Identification*. The workshop had a particular focus on chalk grassland species. After a presentation in the Cabin, Lesley took the group out on to the Reserve for a practical session.

We had also intended to hold a workshop entitled *An Introduction to Bat Ecology and Conservation* in August. Presented by Hazel Ryan of the Kent Bat Group and Wildwood, the workshop would have taught participants about bat biology, species identification and surveying methods. In an addition to her usual course run at Wildwood, Hazel also intended to include an evening session to actually see bats flying in the Reserve. Unfortunately, the take up was not sufficient to make the workshop

viable for us and so we had to cancel it. (Ironically, after the decision to cancel had been taken, a number of people expressed a



late interest in attending the workshop.) Both Hazel and ourselves are, however, eager to have another attempt next year to hold a similar workshop, as the conditions at the Reserve are ideal.

*Martin—Assistant Manager*

# Stargazers & the HOYS-CAPS Project

Traditionally, the arrival of the Perseid meteor shower in August, heralds the start of the new observing season for the [Monkton Stargazers](#) after their three months' summer recess.

During this summer's recess the main observatory dome had some repairs carried out on it and also repainted by volunteers from Cummins Power Generation. Once again, our thanks goes to them for their generous input to the Reserve.

Although the first official public viewing evening of the season, on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> August, had overcast skies, it featured a very interesting talk by Dr Dirk Froebrich from University of Kent Centre for Astrophysics and Planetary Sciences. He was talking about the [HOYS-CAPS citizen science project](#), in which the Stargazers group are participating.



Click on the image above to view an animation of stars showing variations in luminosity over one month.

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HOYS stands for **Hot Outbursting Young Stars** and Dr Froebrich and his team, along with amateur and professional astronomers across the country and Europe (including our own

Monkton Stargazers) are recording areas of space within which new stars are forming. There are unusual patterns and occurrences in the formation of star, which takes 500,000 years to form.

By having as many people as possible recording areas of space where these stars are forming, astronomers can collate information on the progression of a stars formation in a much shorter time than would otherwise be possible. These outbursting events are very rare and only occur every 5-50 thousand years for a particular young star. As Dr Froebrich said, we cannot wait 500,000 years from the beginning to the end of a single stars formation. But, by collecting data on multiple stars at varying stages of the formation process over twenty years, astronomers hope to have enough data to understand them in more detail.

**[Find out more about the HOYS CAPS Project from Dr. Dirk Froebrich](#)**

If you wish to become more involved with the [Monkton Stargazers](#) group and attend some of the impromptu viewing sessions, just let a member of staff at the Reserve know and they will add you to the Stargazers list of members. Be sure to provide your email address, as this is required to enable you to be contacted at short notice.

*Martin—Assistant Manager*

*Peter—Volunteer*

**All our astronomy events are run entirely by volunteers. You can show your appreciation by making a donation when you attend. All proceeds go towards the Reserve.**

# Volunteering

Four months ago I took on the role of Volunteer Co-ordinator at the Reserve. I have met some amazing people who are dedicated to the upkeep and improvement of MNR and we currently have 48 active volunteers. As you all know the Reserve could not function without this support and we are constantly looking to increase our team.

Having spoken to the volunteer bureau and Ageless Thanet one of the major causes of depression is loneliness and isolation; do you know anyone who could benefit from the glorious surroundings of the Reserve? A couple of hours or more a week could make a huge difference both to their wellbeing and ours.

We have benefited from a group of young people volunteering over the summer and they will be going to University over the next couple of weeks, we will miss them and wish them all the very best. Don't forget us when you come home for the holidays!

This summer has been particularly successful with new members and daily takings in general. We have realised that having someone on reception at all times to greet visitor's works well as does a person in the Cabin. So although we welcome help both inside and out it's these particular areas that we are looking to cover now.

**VOLUNTEER THIS SUMMER**  
**MONKTON NATURE RESERVE**

*From Admin to Zoology, Monkton Nature Reserve is a great place to learn new skills and add to your CV*

AS SEEN ON BBC 9  
2018  
SPRINGWATCH

Monkton Nature Reserve is always looking for new volunteers and we are particularly keen for school leavers and students to join our team and develop their skill sets.

We have positions in the following areas:

Activity Leaders	Greeters
Café & Shop	Plant Sales
Fundraising	Bid Writing
Website Development	Admin
Social Media Marketing	Basic DIY
Team Leader	Publicity/Marketing
Maintenance & Cleaning	Conservation
Data Collection	Entomology
Ornithology	Geology
Gardening	Guides

Do you have a love of plants? There is definitely scope for improvement with our plant sales; they need regular maintenance and also identification of some of the donations.

The Heritage Open day on Saturday 15th September will be an excellent opportunity to visit and find out how you could become involved with the hidden oasis that is Monkton Nature Reserve.

*Sharon—Volunteer Co-ordinator*

If you interested in volunteering at the Reserve, you will need to fill in a Volunteer Application Form. You can either download a hard-copy to fill in and return to the Reserve, or fill in the on-line version. [Both versions can be found on the \*Volunteering Positions\* page on our website.](#)