



THANET COUNTRYSIDE TRUST

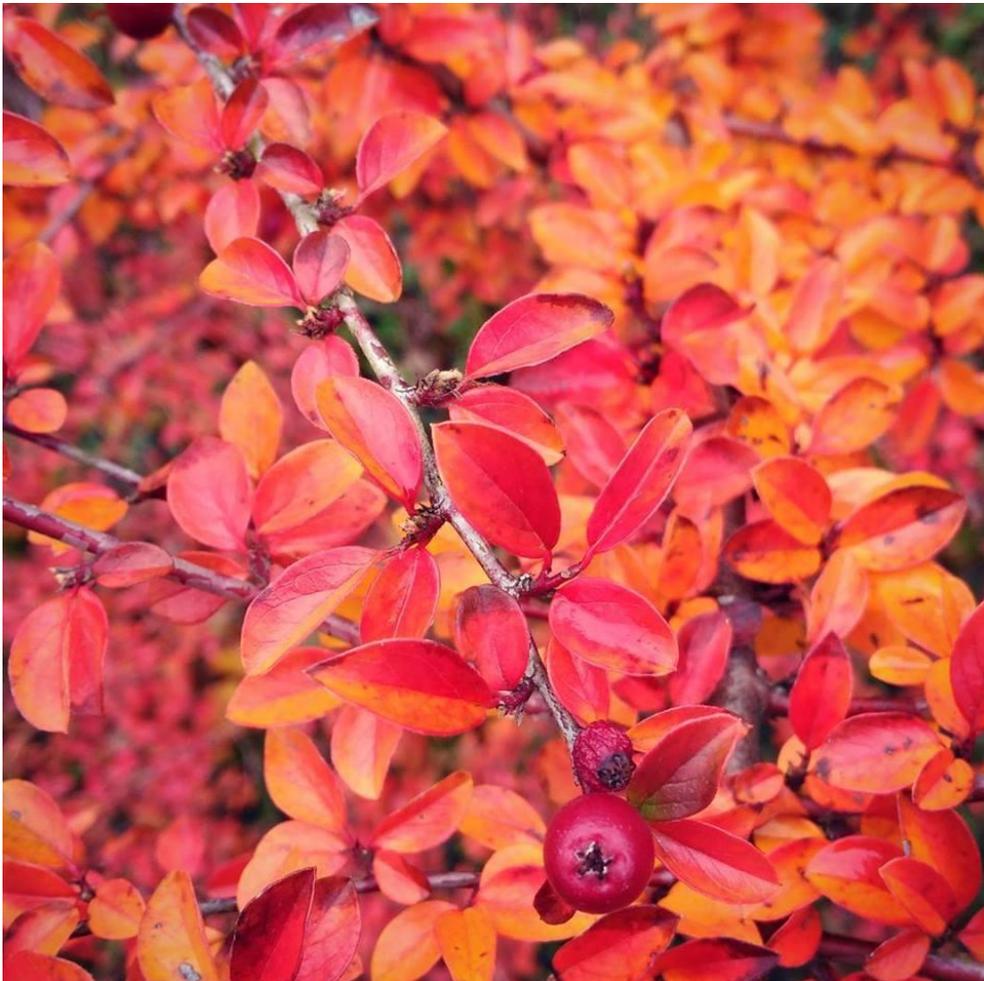
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Conservation and Education

Members Newsletter December 2017

Monkton Nature Reserve is open seven days a week from 10am – 3pm until April when we will return 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



What a beautiful burst of colour we've had this autumn! The cold weather front has brought in winter visitors such as fieldfares and redwings. Darters were still being spotted well into November, showing how warm this autumn has really been. A pair of ravens were spotted twice over the Reserve in November, a very unusual visitor to the

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area. This was then confirmed when four ravens were spotted flying over Dane Valley Woods on one of their task days!

Our smallest birds, tiny goldcrests have been flitting around the Field Study Centre, picking out the insects on the skeletal tree branches.

We've had a couple of sightings of the barn owls (including a feather dust print where an owl flew into one of our windows!). It is this time of year when the smaller creatures like voles and shrews make themselves more apparent, because finding food becomes a priority over hiding from predators.

Although it is hard to motivate ourselves to brace the cold at this time of year, we always encourage you to come down to the Reserve to experience the frosty mornings and crispy leaves.

Kashmir, Education Officer

Monkton Nature Reserve Bookshop

Many of you will know that our second-hand bookshop is a significant source of income for the Reserve. In fact, it is the second largest source of income for us! With around 9,000 books, often priced at either 75p or £1, you can see why it's so popular!

For this reason, we are keen to promote the Bookshop to even more people and we have set up its own [Facebook page](#). By liking the page, you will get updates on new or special books that have recently come in, or you can message our volunteers to see if we have certain genres, authors or topics in stock for you.

Kashmir, Education Officer



Conservation Work

This winter we are having a more intense approach to our conservation tasks, trying to reclaim grassland areas that have started to get encroached by shrubs such as brambles and hawthorns. Work carried out has include the clearance of new areas and the removal of saplings, shrubs and even trees in some grassland areas, namely sycamore.

Brambles and hawthorns in particular are ferocious plants and can quickly dominate an area, outcompeting the more unique and sensitive plants that can be found on grasslands such as orchids. Whilst shrubland is still an important habitat, it is far less biodiverse than chalk grassland and harbours common species. Chalk grassland is a unique and rare habitat, with the United Kingdom having lost 80% of the habitat since 1945, with Kent having a shocking 0.6% of its chalk grassland remaining. With this in mind, Monkton Nature Reserve becomes an important asset in Kent.

Managing a grassland can be time intensive, requiring at least one, if not two clearances a year, plus two thorough rakes to remove the arisings which put extra nutrients into the soil (which encourage common weedy plants that push out the more sensitive plants). But we are hoping that this work keeps our grasslands in their best condition for everybody to appreciate.



Kashmir, Education Officer

Partnership with Ecotricity

Monkton Nature Reserve are proud users of Ecotricity, Britain's leading green energy supplier. Ecotricity is run completely on renewable sources, meaning we are caring for the future, not just of the Reserve, but the global environment. Conventional electricity is responsible for 30% of Britain's carbon emissions and is the biggest single source of carbon released in Britain, therefore is an important action we can take.

But Ecotricity go beyond this – energy, transport and food make up 80% of Britain's carbon footprint and Ecotricity understands the role that energy plays in all three of these. They started the first national network of car charging stations (all from renewable energy of course), and have radical concepts for wind powered farms that are in progress. They also use their profits towards building new green energy sources in Britain, in their 'bills for mills' project.

On top of all this, Ecotricity proudly boasts one of the best customer service of all energy companies in the UK, with the lowest number of complaints out of all energy companies in Britain.

The exciting news is that Ecotricity are supporting Monkton Nature Reserve and donating up to £50 for each new customer that switches to them, and then a further £25 each year that you remain with them. Simply [click here](#) to sign up and help protect Monkton Nature Reserve and the planet.

Kashmir, Education Officer

We are proud to use Ecotricity,
Britain's greenest energy supplier

**£50* donated to
Monkton Nature
Reserve when you
switch to Ecotricity**

www.ecotricity.co.uk/for-your-home?partner=mnr.1
*£25 for energy supply, £25 for gas supply

ecotricity



**MONKTON
NATURE RESERVE**



A Letter from the Trustees

It has indeed been a 'game-changing' year involving much perspiration on the part of The Team – especially our recent Treasurer Andrew who has had the demanding job of keeping his eye on all the Allan Willett Foundation legacy projects plus the Cabin that Kent County Council (KCC) provided. It was because of the hospitality the Reserve has afforded to the Walmer Disability Group over several years that we have this fantastic new facility as a base for an 'Eco Hub' and can now start to mount a regular programme Study Days and develop ourselves for the general environmental education of the Isle (and beyond).

Thanet District Council (TDC) are currently devising a Heritage Strategy and you will be pleased to learn that 'nature' is at the forefront of the consultants' thinking: not only the Margate Coastal Park which is ripe for extension to Plum Pudding and Pegwell but also inland walks which would necessarily feature the Reserve. There are numbers of 'active elderly' walking groups out there – and it is hoped that investing in keeping these groups active will improve their mental and physical wellbeing.

Which is where the TCT strategy is becoming focussed: we have to demonstrate our 'social utility' to all those potential funding sources in order to cover our operating costs. To this end we have been very well supported this year by the Westgate CoOp who have provided monies to enable our Education Officer to reach out to schools 'on the margin' concentrating on particularly disadvantaged areas (and all of Thanet is 'Priority' as we well know) and special educational needs like St Anthony's. Kashmir has been doing a brilliant job in cultivating primary schools with the aid of materials from the Field Studies Centre and the Damselfly Pond (an Allan Willett legacy). We are now looking at ways to engage the wolf cubs and brownies and other non-school groups and hopes to develop the Sensory Garden as an 'offer' to the less mobile and elderly.

Fundraising is becoming an ever more intensive activity. Most grantmakers require 'projects' so any initiatives that members may have are very welcome. TDC is not quite as rich as it was (!) and has had with great regret to suspend its present support for core running costs. In place of this lost funding, TDC has set up the Thanet Community Lotto, which will go some of the way in replacing the lost funds. One lives in hope that TDC will recognise the growing part we play in the overall 'community' and 'tourism' offer and rethink their deployment of resources. Your support for the Lotto (and Westgate's CoOp votes) help to demonstrate the value placed on TCT by the community to all potential financiers.

So there it is, we are changing gear for a steeper hill: 27% of Thanet is already built upon and it looks as if there is an intention to keep Blue Circle in business and concrete over another 27%. Poor old Ashford only has 5% 'built' but Tunbridge Wells is slightly better off with 7% and Canterbury with 9%. We have 1% of land use classed as 'natural' and Canterbury 16%: that 1% may be the Reserve so we'd better hang on

to it to pass on to future generations or they will only have YouTube. But obviously you all know it's precious.

Geoff, Trustee

Events and Workshops

In our last newsletter we wrote of our plans to host new series of events and workshops throughout the year and our first events went exceedingly well. Our Corn



Dolly Workshop was so popular it sold out, so we organised a second just a week later and that sold out too! Participants had an enjoyable afternoon and we are currently discussing with the course leader Carol, to hold a more advanced workshop in 2018.

Here is Nicki Felix's fantastic corn dollies that she shared on Facebook, if you have any of photos of your own dollies, please do share them on our [page!](#)

The first Tony Harman Lecture was also highly enjoyed by all who attended. We had over 20 participants attending Clive Nuttman's talk, including many from the Harman family, and a wonderful afternoon was had by all. We will be running these talks each year on various Natural History topics, so if you are interested in holding a talk, or indeed any form of workshop, please [get in touch](#) with us.

We have had a change of date on our Amphibian Ecology Course which will now be held on 10th March. This informative course is being held by Mike Phillips from Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group and it acts as the training for anyone wanting to join the [Great Crested Newt Monitoring Scheme](#). The course has hands-on experience with surveying the newts in our ponds, and having been on it myself, it is thoroughly enjoyable and an amazing opportunity to learn more about our protected newts. The course costs £18 and can be booked through [Eventbrite](#).

Finally, we have some exciting courses in the pipeline for 2018, including bat ecology and chalk grassland plants, so please keep your eyes out for further news!

Kashmir, Education Officer

Membership Changes

As we mentioned in our last newsletter, we've changed how our memberships run this year. You'll be grateful to know that memberships now last an entire year from when you take them out. This means no more confusing prices in October and November and if you renew in the summer, you'll still get your full year. Of course, we are still more than happy to accept cheques sent in the post in January (a membership form will be attached with this newsletter).

By the new year, we hope to have our PayPal card readers at Reception and PayPal subscription buttons on our website fully functioning. This has been a slower process than we intended due to legal documentations required by PayPal. But again, we hope this increases our flexibility and makes it easier for you to renew your memberships with us.

After keeping our membership prices the same for the past few years, this year we have increased our prices. The new prices for memberships are as follows:

Single: £15.00

Joint: £20.00

Family: £20.00

For concessions, deduct £1 for each qualifying adult

Thanet Community Lotto



You can now support the work of the Thanet Countryside Trust at Monkton Nature Reserve by buying tickets in a new weekly online lottery set up specifically to support good causes in Thanet. Called the Thanet Community Lotto, 50p of every £1 ticket will go to Monkton Nature Reserve, if it is nominated as the purchaser's preferred good cause. A further 10p will go towards other local good causes in Thanet and 20p will go towards prizes.

If you wish to indulge in a little flutter, you can follow the link <https://www.thanetlotto.co.uk/support/monkton-nature-reserve> which will take you straight to the Monkton Nature Reserve Lotto page to buy your ticket(s).

Thank you for your support, and good luck in the draw(s)!

Martin, Assistant Manager

A 'Thank You' to our Volunteers

I'm sure our members would wish to join us in giving a very big thank you to all our volunteers who have given their valuable time to help keep the Reserve functioning this past year.

Our volunteers have helped with a huge variety of tasks: from overseeing major projects such as the switchover to mains electricity, the construction of the new function room and the setting out of our refurbished museum; providing educational presentations to visiting schools; maintaining our much lauded secondhand bookshop; carrying out essential conservation work; hosting wildlife spotting evenings at the Reserve; holding year round astronomy events; general admin work; and the less glamorous, but nevertheless essential, task of keeping the Field Study Centre clean and tidy.



The variety of tasks highlights how multifaceted work at the Reserve can be, so if any member have skills or experience in a subject that they feel could be of benefit to the Reserve, even if they can only be offered for a limited period of time, please feel free to get in touch. We are always looking to improve our operations.

As Monkton Nature Reserve continues its growth as a community resource, the generosity of its volunteers will play an increasingly important role.

Merry Christmas to all our volunteers and members and a Happy New Year!

Martin, Assistant Manager