

Monkton Nature Reserve Newsletter February 2024



Access and opening hours

We are still experiencing flooding at the lowest point of the reserve by Dragonfly Pond and the main track to the Observatory workings remains a quagmire! Hence, footpath access is restricted and for February we will not be charging entrance fees

- bring your friends along to see the reserve and find out about our plans for 2024.

- Opening hours will revert to 10-4pm from 1st March, when visitor charges will also apply.

In half-term week, as well as our usual days, we will be open on Friday 16th February

Half-term week

Our half-term activity sessions for children and families have been very popular – there are not many spaces left!

The following events still have some spaces and can be booked via the web site: -

Thursday 15th February, 1pm - Art and Apple Bird Feeders

Friday 16th February, 1pm – Fox Tales

<https://monkton-reserve.org/events/education@monkton-reserve.org> for any queries

Start to the year

Remarkably, despite the mixed weather, we have enjoyed a brilliant start to the year with visitor number up 125% versus 2023!

In February, we will commence installation of the new geodesic dome on the repurposed Thanet Observatory site and an exciting project to create an 'outdoor extension' to the Cabin Café

– we are working towards a spring target for completion of this work.

We are grateful for the support of Cummins and local KCC councillors Derek Crow-Brown and Linda Wright.

monktonreserve



Monkton Nature Reserve Newsletter February 2024



Hedging

New habitat has been created during January.

The planned work to provide 100 metres of hedgerow was completed over the course of the month by volunteers and the guidance from a team from the Kent Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP). (Facebook: kentishstourCP) Hedgerows have been used for over 1,000 years to separate packages of land between farmers/landowners. More than 100,000 miles of hedgerow have disappeared from our landscape, mainly due to the intensification of agriculture.

In the process, valuable habitat for plants and animals was lost; hedgerows provide shelter, food and nesting opportunities for numerous species

- bumblebees use hedgerows as 'motorways', routes to
- find their way to sources of pollen and nectar in wild flower patches.

We thank Martin Thomas of KSCP and his team of volunteers for their work, together with our warden and conservation team.



Nature notes

The first signs of spring are appearing with some Snowdrops in bud and even insects being seen – a 7-spot ladybird was seen as the cold spell was replaced by warmer weather.

An exciting record was a Woodcock seen on 20th January; this is only the third record for Monkton Nature Reserve and the first since 2014. Once fairly common in woodland in winter months, these birds are probably more overlooked than absent; they are superbly camouflaged against leaf litter and do not 'flush' until almost trodden on. However, numbers have declined in southern England over the past 50 years; our bird was most likely a migrant from further east or north, driven here by cold conditions. The bird seemed exhausted and disoriented and was captured by hand before being safely released.



monktonreserve

