

The Shingle Issue

Spring 2007

Newsletter of the Dungeness National Nature Reserve



No 5

THE SHINGLE ISSUE

WELCOME to the *Shingle Issue*, the newsletter for the Dungeness National Nature Reserve.

Read on to find out more about some of the exciting projects from Dungeness to Greatstone.

We still need your help – please dispose of your rubbish correctly and safely

Rubbish removal helps keep nature reserve clean

NATURAL England (formerly English Nature) purchased land in 1997 adjacent to Greatstone Primary School and also along the back of the houses of Leonard Road, Taylor Road and Coast Drive to Kerton Road. They then put this land into the Dungeness National Nature Reserve (NNR) in 1998 for the enjoyment of future generations.

In this ten year period, Natural England in partnership with the Romney Marsh Countryside Project have cleared litter, starting with low grade asbestos and are now moving

to the final stages of litter removal from difficult places to access. We hope residents will see the difference.

From sections of land on Dungeness Point and at the back of Leonard Road, Greatstone, concrete and brick rubble has been removed by Kent County Council in partnership with Shepway District Council (Landscape Services). More than 25 tonnes of rubble was removed in March 2007. This work has been supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Natural England.

The aim is to remove all the eyesore rubbish, including garden rubbish, and then tackle homeowners who choose to continue flytipping on the National Nature Reserve, whether it is garden or inert material, in the future.

The aim is to help and maintain these important parcels of land for future generations.

It is about improving the quality of life for residents and protecting the wildlife on this land. We ask every resident to dispose of their rubbish whether it is refuse, garden or building through appropriate and correct means.

For more information, please contact Owen Leyshon, Dungeness Shingle and Wetland Officer, Romney Marsh Countryside Project 01797 367934 owenleyshon@rmcp.co.uk



Birdwatching walks will unravel mysteries of birdsong

ONE of the great pleasures of a visit to Dungeness in the spring is listening to the symphony of birdcalls and songs.

To experience this in full surround sound one has only to stand amid the gorse, brambles and reeds and listen as the newly arrived migrants stake their claims to the best territories in the hope of attracting a mate. Every bush seems to have a whitethroat calling from its top branch, every reed bed a sedge or reed warbler in full song.

But how do you tell a reed warbler from a sedge warbler, a whitethroat from a blackcap when



Sedge warbler in song.

you are so often unable to see the bird? So many of their songs sound

very much like another. Now, help is at hand.

Book on to one of the RSPB's Birdwatching for Beginners or Spring Arrivals guided walks in April and May and our team of experts will be able to help sort out the mysteries of bird song as well as showing you some of the exciting birds to be found on the reserve in spring.

For more details visit the RSPB website www.rspb.org.uk or call the Dungeness RSPB Visitor and Education Centre on 01797 320588

for more details.

Airport, rubbish and dogs among issues raised in consultation

IN the last Shingle Issue newsletter we asked residents to send back their views on the Dungeness National Nature Reserve and factors which they would like to see tackled to improve the quality of life for residents living adjacent or on the reserve.

We list some of the main concerns from residents:

- Lydd Airport expansion proposals (23% of forms)
- Levels of rubbish on Greatstone Beach (19% of forms)
- Dog fouling (16% of forms)

A smaller percentage of residents (3% or less)

wanted a better balance of management of people on Dungeness by charging all visitors to the Point, banning film crews, providing more boardwalks and preventing quad bikes and 4x4 vehicles from driving on the shingle.

Also the lack of dog bins, a range of safety issues, including cars speeding, uneven road surfaces and the light railway were also raised as concerns.

Thanks to all residents who returned the short questionnaire in the early spring. For more information, please contact Owen Leyshon, Dungeness Shingle and Wetland Officer 01797 367934 or owenleyshon@rmcp.co.uk.





Interpreting in a new way to offer greater clarity

A big thank you for all your comments made on the interpretation panels which have been put up in a number of places from Dungeness Point, to the RSPB reserve, to Lade car park over the last few months.

Changes have been made to the interpretation and it is hoped the new panels and the information on the Dungeness National Nature Reserve summarises the main points and helps visitors understand the area.

The interpretation has been supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund through Natural England.

For more information, please contact Owen Leyshon, Dungeness Shingle and Wetland Officer, Romney Marsh Countryside Project 01797 367934 owenleyshon@rmcp.co.uk

Mirror walks are most popular of all

AMONG the most popular guided walks led by the Romney Marsh Countryside Project over the last 10 years have been those to the Sound Mirrors, organised in partnership with Dr Richard Scarth, author of two books about them.

The Sound Mirrors, Concrete Dishes or Listening Ears were built in the 1920s and 1930s to detect enemy aircraft as part of an early warning system for Britain. All three designs of mirrors are at this site, the only place in Britain, and the structures are also a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The

Warden's clean sweep

AROUND Christmas and during the first two months of this year, the part time litter warden for Dungeness collected a total of 115 bags of rubbish – approximately a half a tonne – mainly plastic bottles and bags, newspapers and drinks cans from a range of sites on Dungeness Point, particularly around the parking areas and the tideline.

More details from Owen Leyshon on 01797 367934.

mirrors are situated on an island at the back of the gravel pit at Lade which is private and only accessible on these guided walks.

We will be leading three walks to the Sound Mirrors during the summer.

They are all on Sundays, so please meet at Lade Car Park on Coast Drive opposite Taylor Road at 2pm on

22 July, 19 August or 9 September.

These guided walks are free and you do not need to book, but be prepared to join a big group for the afternoon.

For more details, please contact Owen Leyshon, Dungeness Shingle and Wetland Officer on 01797 367934 or owenleyshon@rmcp.co.uk or look on the website www.rmcp.co.uk

A large group gathers in the shadow of one of the sound mirrors.



Marsh creatures spring into early action



Slow Worm.

WITH the mild and wet winter we have just experienced, much of our spring wildlife has emerged early from hibernation. From the bumble bees and butterflies which have been on the wing in February, the amphibians and reptiles have also stirred early this year.

Toads, regionally, are not doing very well and have



Common Toad.

declined across Dungeness over the last 25 years. They prefer large gravel pits, ditches or ponds to breed in and tend to avoid the small garden ponds, although toads are frequent visitors to gardens during the summer months.

Toads have bred in the Long Pits (near to the power station) and around the Sound Mirrors.

Slow Worms are another species which have suffered from a marked decline and one of the better places to find them is in your own garden. The faithful compost heap and old metal sheets in the long grass are two places to look for the slow worm.

For more information or if you wish to report any toad or slow worm sighting, please call Owen Leyshon, on 01797 367934 or owenleyshon@rmcp.co.uk

For up to date information on recent wildlife sightings on Dungeness, visit the Dungeness Bird Observatory website at www.dungenessbirdobs.org.uk

How to get in touch with us

Romney Marsh Countryside Project

For day to day issues on the National Nature Reserve from Dungeness to Greatstone, reports of 4x4 vehicles, motorbikes on the shingle, information relating to the HLF bid, volunteering, and film crews, please contact Owen Leyshon. Tel 01797 367934
Email owenleyshon@rmcp.co.uk
Website www.rmcp.co.uk

Bob Gomes, RSPB Site Manager

Tel 01797 320588

Email bob.gomes@rspb.org.uk

Website www.rspb.org.uk

The contact for the educational groups is Heather Chantler, Lifelong Learning Officer 01797 320588 or 01797 322666.

Natural England

For activities on the Site of Special Scientific Interest which require consent from Natural England please contact Brian Banks Tel 01233 811212
Email brian.banks@naturalengland.org.uk

Kent Police (Lydd police station)

For reports of vehicles driving over the shingle. Tel 01233 611055

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

General reports of 4x4 vehicles driving across the shingle on the RSPB reserve including end of Dengemarsh Road, information relating to HLF projects, volunteering on the RSPB reserve and educational group visits please contact

The Shingle Issue is produced with the support of:



Supported by

The National Lottery
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Heritage
Lottery Fund



Supported through Defra's
Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund



The Romney Marsh Countryside Project is managed by the White Cliffs Countryside Project with funding from Shepway District Council, Natural England, Environment Agency, the Heritage Lottery Fund, British Nuclear Group and British Energy.