

The Shingle Issue



Autumn 2008
Newsletter of the Dungeness National Nature Reserve

No 9

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.

Rare birds appear at Dungeness – as station backs challenge

AS part of the BTO Business Bird Challenge 2008, British Energy has entered all its landholdings at Dungeness into the national competition.

With the help of the Romney Marsh Countryside Project and Dungeness Bird Observatory as well as the staff

at the 'B' station all bird species have been recorded which land or feed on its ground. British Energy is also sponsoring the BTO Business Bird Challenge in 2008.

Dungeness has had a busy time with many rare birds appearing, but, as in previous years, it's been a poor one for common summer migrants passing through the Point. There has been a number of rarities within the British Energy landholdings including a singing Little Bunting, a Common Rosefinch, a Red Breasted Flycatcher and a Rough Legged Buzzard which landed on the shingle by the power station to name a few.

However, one of the more photogenic birds which was perched on the wires outside the observatory was a stunning bee eater. This bird is mainly found in the Mediterranean region, but found Dungeness to its liking in early June.

It spent a late afternoon and early evening catching bumble bees around the perimeter fence of the power station before flying off in the evening.

If you see any bird species around the power station which you think might be interesting or notable, please do not hesitate to contact Owen Leyshon, 01797 367934 or owenleyshon@rmcp.co.uk



*Pictured: The bee eater at Dungeness, more often seen in the Mediterranean.
(David Walker, Dungeness Bird Observatory).*

Here is your chance to support our successful litter warden

THE success of the part time litter warden at Dungeness continues.

In 2007, 568 bags of rubbish were removed by the litter warden on top of the rubbish collected by the Romney Marsh Countryside Project, both power stations and a number of residents as well.

In the first six months of 2008, a total of 285 bags of rubbish have been collected around the Point and placed next to the bins for removal by Shepway Council.

This successful partnership

managed by the Romney Marsh Countryside Project is only possible with sponsorship from the majority of Dungeness businesses and organisations.

However, there are still a few local businesses not signed up and we invite them to join this strong and successful project to reduce the level of rubbish from the growing pressure of visitors to the area.

Any issues concerning rubbish on the Dungeness NNR, please do not hesitate to contact Owen Leyshon on 01797 367934 or owenleyshon@rmcp.co.uk



Picture A

Test your knowledge – name these eggs

OVER the course of the year, we get a range of enquiries and photos sent to us asking to identify creatures or 'things' which have been washed up on the beaches from Littlestone down to Dungeness.

So as a quick tester, here are three different piles of eggs you can find this summer and autumn along the beach – can you identify them? Answers at the bottom of the page.



Picture B



Picture C

Answers Picture A Squid eggs, Picture B Cuttlefish eggs Picture C Whelk eggs.

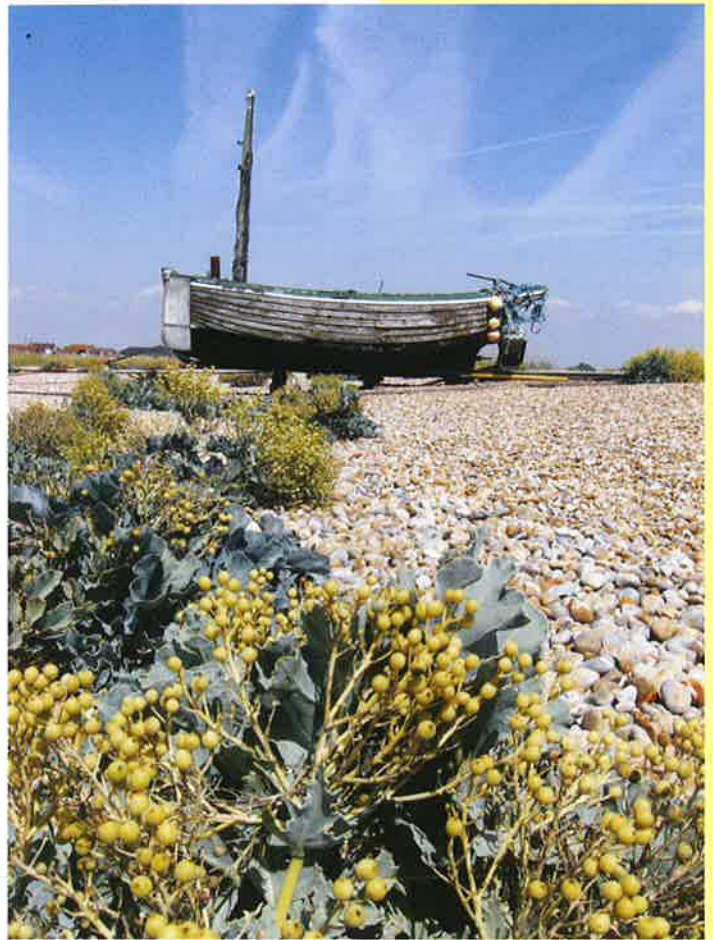
High winds scorch nature reserve

EVEN though weather in the early part of summer was poor – often changeable and rainfall probably above average – Dungeness has looked brown and parched almost from the start.

A slight paradox, as you might expect plants to be greener owing to the greater rainfall.

However, the reason for this is down to the windy weather...regardless of the rain. If it is windy, the plants suffer badly and are scorched. The woody plants have the leaves edged brown, the conifer *Viper's bugloss*.

needles brown and shrivel and the long grass turns golden. This is because of the moisture being lost through the stomata in the leaves due to the strong winds – called evapotranspiration. Either way, hot settled weather or unseasonal windy weather, Dungeness always goes 'crispy and brown' each summer and it is down to a few garden escapes like the Red



Valerian, Buddleia or Purple Toadflax to keep some exotic colour during the late summer months.



Make a date for half term Feed The Birds Day

KIDS do you like to feed the birds through the colder months? Why not come along to our Feed the Birds day at October half term? On **Saturday 25 October** the bird cafe will open its doors to budding cooks from **11am to 3pm**. We will be searching through the bird food

recipe books to create tasty morsels for our feathered friends to enjoy.

Past creations have included popcorn and honey strings and bird seed cakes. Be prepared to get messy, wear your old clothes and join in. Our experts will be on hand with advice on buying food and feeders which are available in the shop throughout the day.



And another date for the diary

THE RMCP will be holding a beachclean at Dungeness Point on **Sunday 21**

September. Please meet at the red and white barrier just beyond the black Dungeness Old Lighthouse at **11am**.

The data collated from this beachclean will be sent as part of the National Beachwatch organised by the Marine Conservation Society (MCS) www.mcsuk.org.uk For more information, please contact Owen Leyshon, Romney Marsh Countryside Project on 01797 367934 or owenleyshon@rmcp.co.uk or look on the website www.rmcp.co.uk

Reed Bunting thrives on RSPB reserve

AS its name implies, the Reed Bunting inhabits reedbeds and other wetland habitats, as well as drier sites such as overgrown ditches and hedgerows. The species is found throughout Britain and Ireland, although it is scarcer in the uplands and the far north and west.

Its numbers have declined in recent years. In Britain, BTO census results show a relatively high population level from the late 1960s to the mid 1970s, followed by a decrease of more than 50% to a new, more stable lower level during the early 1980s.

The Waterways Bird Survey, in particular, showed a steep decline from 1974 to 1983, but little change in numbers since then. The



Reed Bunting.

species also decreased in range by around 12% between the two breeding atlas periods (1968-72 and 1988-91).

As a result of these population changes, the Reed Bunting is included in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and has its own

Priority Species Action Plan.

The decline of the Reed Bunting has occurred at the same time as decreases in the numbers and/or range of a suite of other farmland birds, many of which share its diet of cereal, grass and wildflower seeds, and also feed their young on insects. It is therefore likely that its decline may be largely due to: changes in agricultural practice, particularly the increased use of pesticides and fertilisers;

The switch from spring-sown to autumn-sown crops and the consequent loss of winter stubble fields; the more intensive use of grassland; the general reduction in habitat diversity on farmland due to the loss of mixed farming and increased specialisation; a loss in both the

quantity and quality of wetland habitats.

On the RSPB reserve at Dungeness, the increase in the extent and variety of wetland, reedbed and grassland habitats, the sympathetic management of these habitats and the removal of encroaching willow and scrub, have all enabled the Reed Bunting to increase its numbers, with an estimated 124 breeding pairs surveyed this year. The 2000 – 2004 breeding five-year mean was 103 pairs. Many other species are also benefiting from this work, including Reed Warblers (335 pairs), Bearded Tits (8 pairs) and Cetti's Warblers (50 pairs).

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 or www.dungeness-nnr.co.uk

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

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 Jo Dear Tel 01233 811216

Email jo.dear@naturalengland.org.uk

Kent Police (Lydd police station)

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

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