

The Shingle Issue



Winter 2006/2007
Newsletter of the Dungeness National Nature Reserve

No 4

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.

Survey tells us more about why people visit Dungeness

STUDENT Alex Fowler conducted surveys on Dungeness Point to gauge the opinions and views of visitors to the area during the summer.

Visitors were asked a number of questions in the car park at the Railway Cafe and by the boardwalk near to the New Lighthouse. We know that roughly around 620,000 visitors come to Dungeness Point each year – information revealed from data collated from a series of car counters put down on the Dungeness Estate road at

different times of the year, plus visitor counts and business information.

Although we accept numbers of visitors will continue to rise, we wanted to know more about why they visited, where they came from and their views of the area.

There were no real surprises, but here are a few facts gathered from this short study of 234 completed questionnaire forms.

Around 90,000 people travel to Dungeness on the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway each year.

In our questionnaires, 41% of the people who were asked said it was their first visit to Dungeness.

A total of 82% of people visiting Dungeness loved it and 50% did not want any major changes to alter the landscape.

From the questionnaires, 26% of people came to Dungeness because of the train, while 7% came for the food, 5% because of the fishing, 4% to see Derek Jarman's cottage and 4% to go birdwatching for example.

The increasing media interest in the area resulted in 4% of the people coming to Dungeness because they saw it on TV or in a magazine.

Please remember this is a snap shot of behaviour and opinion of summer visitors to Dungeness. For more information, please contact Owen Leyshon, Dungeness Shingle and Wetland Officer 01797 367934 or owenleyshon@rmcp.co.uk



Young wildlife explorer group starts



THE RSPB Dungeness branch of the Wildlife Explorers group had its inaugural meeting in September when 15 young naturalists aged between 8 and 13 years old met at the Dungeness Visitor and Education Centre on the RSPB reserve.

With the aid of Albi the Albatross, a full size model of an albatross, the youngsters learnt about the plight of the world's albatrosses and what action they could take to help save them from extinction.

During the two-hour session, the children played games and quizzes and worked on art and craft all with an albatross theme.

For more details about the Wex group and when they meet contact Heather Chantler at the RSPB reserve on 01797 322666.

Some of the youngsters who joined the first Explorers group.

Alien plants are being monitored

In the early part of the summer across Dungeness National Nature Reserve the landscape is a blaze of colour with a variety of flowers from the white flowered sea kale with its tough crinkly leaves, to blue vipers bugloss, the grey leaves of the yellow horned poppy to the yellow flowered broom bushes.

There are an increasing number of garden plants established on the nature reserve. Some have the potential to out-compete British species, and may also be a poor source of food for the insects that live on the beach.

Consequently we have recently completed baseline monitoring of non-native plant abundance to identify species which are likely to be a problem. The intention is to control them and monitor the abundance of the remainder.

A plant which is causing concern is the yellow flowered silver ragwort with its distinctive grey leaves which comes from the Mediterranean and is increasing in numbers along Coast Drive, Lydd-on-sea. Other plants being monitored include red valerian, snow in summer, purple toadflax and the buddleia.

For more information, please contact Romney Marsh Countryside Project on 01797 367934 or Natural England on 01233 811212.



Red valerian is among the plants monitored at Dungeness.

Your chance to comment on green panels

ACROSS Dungeness National Nature Reserve a series of green oak interpretation frames have been installed in summer 2006.

Some of the interpretation panels will be slotted in for a short period of time and the Romney Marsh Countryside Project welcomes comments on the content. The final interpretation will be finished by early spring 2007. An example of the panel is shown here.

For more information or to comment on the panels, please contact Owen on 01797 367934 or owenleishon@rmcp.co.uk



LITTER WARDEN SETS TO WORK TO LIFT A TONNE OF RUBBISH

A part time litter warden was appointed on Dungeness Point from mid summer 2006.

This initiative has been possible only by the support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Shepway District Council, Natural England (formerly English Nature), Dungeness Estate,

Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway, Dungeness Old Lighthouse, Dungeness Angling Association, plus Peter Marlow and Fiona Naylor who are Dungeness residents.

From mid July in five months, the litter warden has collected 274 bags (or roughly a tonne and a half) of rubbish from the car park, laybys and the tideline on Dungeness



A broken folding chair languishes on the beach before collection.

and these have been removed as part of the litter bin service by Shepway District Council.

Guided walks across Dungeness



Sea Kale at Dungeness.

THE Romney Marsh Countryside Project and the RSPB have organised a number of guided walks across the Dungeness National Nature Reserve in the second half of the winter.

This is an opportunity for residents and visitors to enjoy the rich variety of wildlife found on Dungeness even on the cold days of the winter!

These walks are part of a programme of events, so please look on the websites to find out more about what is happening across the Dungeness National Nature Reserve or phone for a free leaflet or pick one up at local businesses.

Try the RMCP website www.rmcp.co.uk and the RSPB website www.rspb.org.uk

Less litter says beach survey

AS a result of the National Beachwatch Survey on Sunday 17th September 2006 a total of 834 items (or 17 bin bags) of rubbish were collected and removed from a section of beach in front of the power station.

The Romney Marsh Countryside Project have been monitoring the

levels of rubbish on Dungeness for the last 11 years and the level of rubbish in 2006 is 66% down compared to the same section of beach at the same time, last year (2005). For more information, please contact Owen Leyshon, Dungeness Shingle and Wetland Officer 01797 367934.

Power station helps out

BOTH British Nuclear Group and British Energy conducted three beachcleans in front of the power stations between March and August 2006 to assist the two

beachcleans by Romney Marsh Countryside Project. In all, 199 bags, or just over a tonne of rubbish, were removed during these beachcleans.



Insects enjoy bumper summer



Red Admiral at Dungeness. Photo - David Waller, DBO

ONE of the noticeable events of the summer and autumn was the vast arrival of various types of insects to Dungeness from the continent.

There were many reports of Hummingbird Hawk moths



Hummingbird hawkmoth. Photo - David Waller, DBO

visiting gardens to feed on the flowers during the warm days this summer. These day flying moths which are grey with orangey end to the abdomen hover over flowers and feed like hummingbirds with their long proboscis.

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

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 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

The autumn produced impressive arrivals of the Red Admiral butterfly which was still on the wing into the late autumn. These butterflies in recent years are beginning to successfully hibernate and survive our British winters, look out for them this spring.

Clouded Yellow butterflies also made it to our shores in good numbers. These large butterflies with a deep ochre yellow colour, with black edges to the wings arrives in Britain only if the weather conditions are right.

To view some of the various insects which arrived on Dungeness during the summer and autumn visit the Dungeness Bird Observatory website www.dungenessbirdobs@tiny-online.com

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