

Isle of Wight Council parks and countryside section

Wight summer walks

and countryside events April to September 2009



Explore the Island's countryside and coast with local experts as your guides

Activities for everyone!

Discover the Island the easy way...



...in this programme of outdoor events. We have local experts sharing their knowledge and special understanding of natural and local history, conservation and the rural economy, on guided activities for Islanders and visitors of all ages. We also celebrate the achievements of Charles Darwin (1809-1882), the British scientist who laid the foundations of the theory of evolution and transformed the way we think about the natural world.

It's a chance to brush up on your local knowledge, and explore countryside and coast during friendly outings in the company of fellow walkers. The Isle of Wight Council's parks and countryside section has brought this programme together, and is grateful to all this season's contributors. If you have any queries regarding this leaflet, please contact us on (01983) 823893.

Cover Picture:

Bee orchid (Picture: Tina Williamson).

The bee orchid, known locally as 'bee flower' is actually fairly widespread. It tends to prefer chalk downland, but if you're lucky enough it can sometimes be found emerging from garden lawns if the soil has lime present.

Before setting off

For many activities, there's no need to book - just turn up on the day at the stated time. **Activities which require a reservation or confirmation beforehand are indicated.** Please note that the end time given is only approximate. Where there is a charge for an event, this is stated; otherwise the event is free.

Footpaths and bridleways may be muddy in places, so always be prepared. Good strong shoes or boots and, possibly, wellies and a waterproof would be sensible. Organisers have indicated, as far as possible, those events that are strenuous or pose difficulties en route.

No walk or activity in the programme will be cancelled before it's due to start. Whatever the weather, the leader will be at the start of the walk, but may decide to vary the route or, in extreme weather, may cancel there and then.

Please take your litter home with you. Dogs, where permitted, must be on a lead. Please avoid obstruction or damage to verges if you travel by car to the starting point and park considerately. Thank you.

Disclaimer

Whilst every care has been taken in compiling this information, no responsibility can be accepted for any change that may subsequently occur. Those attending any of the events in this programme do so at their own risk.

March 2009

April

Tuesday 7 **Wildlife Warriors** 10am - 1pm

Access work at Fort Victoria Country Park. See box for details. **Leader** Countryside rangers **Tel** 823893 **Meet** Fort Victoria Country Park Ranger Base GR 339 898

Wednesday 8 **Wildzone: Brickmaking and salt pan nature trail** 1pm

See box for details. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Friday 10 **Ventnor GeoWalk** morning

Explore the geology, landscape, fossils, wildlife, rockpools and building stones of Ventnor. See Dinosaur Isle box for details. **Leader** Dinosaur Isle **Tel** 404344

Saturday 11 **Alverstone Mead and red squirrels** 9.30 - 11.30am

A walk across fields and woods to the Alverstone hide to see red squirrels. Booking advised. **Leader** Jessie Booth **Tel** 740662 **Meet** Alverstone Village Hall GR 578 857 **Cost** £2 to the Red Squirrel Trust

Wednesday 15 **Tiny Wildzone – Easter lambs and eggs** 12.45pm

See Tiny Wildzone box for details. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Thursday 16 **Return to Merstone** 10am

A six mile circular walk around Merstone. **Leader** Howard Duffus **Tel** 761252 **Meet** Chequers Inn, Rookley GR 511 830

Thursday 16 **Watch the birdie!** 11am

See Wildzone box for details. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Sunday 19 **Wight Lore: The Hamstead walk** 10.45am

Explore the delights of Cranmore and Hamstead. Hunt the big cat, discover the site of the Island's first railway and remains of the house built by John Nash. 5.5 miles/ about three hours. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636 **Meet** Public car park, Horse and Groom, Ningwood **Cost** Optional donation to Gift to Nature

Naturewatch: April

Bluebells

Carpets of spring bluebells are a special feature of the British countryside. Look out for them on countryside walks in April and May such as **Return to Merstone** on **16 April**.



Kestrel

Look out for the distinctive silhouette of a kestrel hovering over the landscape looking for mice and voles. You stand a chance of seeing a kestrel on many walks including **West Wight views** on **19 April**.



Picture: Mike Cotterell

Sunday 19 **West Wight Views** 10am – 4pm

A circular eight mile walk from East Afton to Tapnell, Yarmouth and back for a picnic lunch. **Leader** Charlie Davison **Tel** 756788 **Meet** Freshwater cliffs car park GR 350 851

Sunday 19 **Springtime at Osborne** 2pm

View the colours of the spring bedding on the terraces as the garden wakes up from its winter hibernation. Booking advisable. **Leader** English Heritage **Tel** 200022 **Meet** Osborne reception **Cost** £3.50 per person in addition to the normal admission price incl. EH members. **2009 Admission Prices** House and Grounds: Adult £10.20, Concession £8.70, Child £5.10, Family £25.50. Grounds Only: Adult £8.40, Concession £7.20, Child £4.20, Family £21.00

Thursday 23 **Botany and battery at Bouldnor Forest** 10.30am-12.30pm

A walk to look at the flora, fauna and archaeology of this historic part of the north coast of the Island. Part of the West Wight Landscape Partnership initiative. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult (max. 3 children per adult). Wear wellies, waterproofs and old clothes. No dogs please. Booking desirable. **Leader** Richard Grogan **Tel** 529199 **Meet** Follow track from main road to Forest parking site near SOL training site. (Entrance off Yarmouth Road, Newport) GR 378 896 **Cost** Donations welcome

May

Monday 4 **Tiny Wildzone: Bluebells and ponies** 12.45pm

See Tiny Wildzone box for details. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Wednesday 6 **Guided wildlife walk** 10am

A walk around a conservation site on a military training area. Early sightings of green winged orchids may be possible with bluebells and other wildlife. Mostly on paths, but stout footwear/wellies needed. Limited wheelchair access. No dogs please. **Leader** Range officer **Tel** 523503 **Meet** Jersey Camp, Locks Green, Porchfield GR 443 907 **Cost** Donation to our conservation fund

Saturday 9 **Spring dawn chorus at Sandown Wetlands** 5am

A chance to marvel at the spring dawn chorus on a short walk along the cycletrack at Sandown and Alverstone. **Leader** Ian Boyd **Tel** 298098 **Meet** at the Southern Water building, Longwood Lane – just beyond the entrance to the golf club GR 588 850 **Cost** Donation Gift to Nature

Saturday 9 **Ventnor wild food walk 1** 10.30am - 1.30pm

Explore Ventnor's quirky landscape and find out about edible and useful plants. Circular walk about six miles. Booking essential. **Leader** Rowan Adams **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Ventnor Botanic Garden reference library GR 547 768 **Cost** Donation to Agroforestry Research Trust



Saturday 9 May – Riverfest is a fun day for all the family and held at Newport Quay to celebrate the town's rivers, their important habitats, wildlife, industry and heritage. Activities include guided walks, storytelling, Eco-challenger, drop-in art sessions provided by Quay Arts, live music. There will also be displays and information from the Environment Agency, the Footprint Trust, Island 2000, Newport Rivers Group, Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust among others.

Saturday 9 **Riverfest: Medina in May** 11am - 12.30pm

A walk along the east bank of the Medina to see birds, butterflies and other estuary life. **Leader** Ian Boyd **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Newport Town Quay propeller.

Saturday 9 **Riverfest: Minibeast safari** 2pm

Bring the whole family to join us exploring the wild habitats and far flung corners of Newport Cemetery. We'll sweep the hedges and long grasses for bugs and minibeasts and discover bugs and beasts living near the river. **Leader** Ian Boyd **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Newport Cemetery quayside entrance

Saturday 9 **Isle of Wight Walking Festival launch, Newport Quay** 6pm



Witness a bare-foot fire walk across hot coals, a lantern procession by local school children and enjoy the family entertainment and live music – all this and more can be enjoyed at the festival launch on Newport Quay. This family-fun event is free.

Sunday 10 **Walks from rails: Reclamation** 10.30am

A walk through the history of Brading Haven's reclamation from the sea, visiting the old sea wall, former branch railway and the mysterious Centurion's Copse. Six mile/six hours circular route. Bring a picnic. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636 **Meet** Brading rail station **Cost** Optional donation to Gift to Nature

Sunday 10 **Brading Marshes wildlife walk** 11am

Join a walk to look for migrant birds, dragonflies and butterflies on the RSPB reserve. About 2.5 hours. Stout footwear and suitable clothing required. Sorry, no dogs. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681 **Meet** Brading rail station GR 609 868 **Cost** Adults £6, RSPB members £3, children half price

Sunday 10 **Discover Culver Downs** 2 - 4.30pm

A circular walk exploring local history and heritage celebrating National Mills Weekend. Moderately strenuous with some stiles and a short but steep slope. About three miles. Dogs welcome on leads. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Bembridge Windmill GR 639 874 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Sunday 10 **Spring at Osborne** 2pm

A gentle stroll through the pleasure grounds and walled garden highlighting the stunning bedding on the terraces. Booking essential. **Leader** English Heritage **Tel** 200022 **Meet** Osborne reception **Cost** See 19 April for details

Sunday 10 **Troll trail family quest** 2 - 4pm

Collect your question sheet at Merstone Station and follow the cycle track at your own pace (walk or cycle) answering the devilishly difficult clues (well not really!), then return to the station. **Leader** Sam Buck **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Merstone Old Station GR 526 845 **Cost** Donation to Gift to Nature

The Wildlife



Please telephone 823893 for further details or email countryside@iow.gov.uk

Join the Wildlife Warriors to help manage and improve the Isle of Wight Council's local nature reserves. Tasks are usually arranged for the first Tuesday of every month, at various sites but please check details. All tools and training are provided; you need to wear stout footwear and suitable clothing for working outdoors.

Sunday 10 **Woodland and farm walk** 5 - 7pm

A gentle walk through woods and farmland to learn about red squirrels, other wildlife and land management courtesy of Mr and Mrs Cleaver of Newnham Farm. **Leader** Helen Butler, Mr and Mrs Cleaver **Tel** 611003 **Meet** Newnham Farm, Newnham Road, Binstead GR 566 915 **Cost** £2 to Wight Squirrel Project

Monday 11 **St. Catherine's Point spring bird watch** 8 - 10.30am

Join our bird expert in search of warblers and other birds which pass through this beautiful area during their spring migration. Bring binoculars. About 2km. Some stiles, steep slopes and uneven ground. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Top of the Lighthouse Road, Niton GR 501 757 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

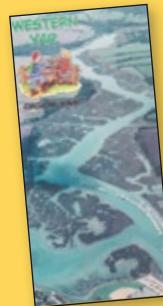
If you would like to get out and explore the Island further, why not try one of these self-guided trails?

Medina Estuary

The Medina Estuary has a rich maritime heritage, a wealth of natural habitats and a vibrant mix of recreation, transport and industry. The circular walk is approximately nine miles/14km and encompasses all aspects of the estuary's fascinating character as it follows beautiful elevated and waterside footpaths, the tree lined cycleway and crosses the estuary on the floating bridge.



Western Yar Estuary



The Western Yar Estuary is a beautiful and tranquil estuary with a wealth of wildlife and heritage. The circular walk is approximately 3.8 miles/6.1km which includes the flat tree lined bridgeway beside the water and views across the stunning landscape from footpaths across farm land.

Visit www.iwight.com/estuaries to download both trail leaflets. Hard copies can be obtained from Island TIC's, Yarmouth Harbour office and Cowes Harbour office.

The Isle of Wight Estuaries Project encourages the integrated and sustainable use of the Island's estuaries through partnership and develops understanding of estuarine features and processes. The partnership is supported and funded by Cowes Harbour Commission, Environment Agency, Isle of Wight Council, Natural England and Yarmouth Harbour Commissioners.

Histree Trails

Explore the wonderful snaking boughs of the Dragon Tree, cascading canopy of the Umbrella Tree, venerable Bound Oaks, gnarled old Yews and even a mysterious tree with a ghostly past. Take a tour of some of the Island's finest and most historic trees. Find out how the trees relate to their landscape, how they came to be there, their traditional uses and heritage.

The eight trails vary in length and difficulty from short town trails taking in the street and park trees of the Parks & Parasols Trail, a circular rural route through ancient woodland on the Legends & Landscapes Trail to the more challenging Kings & Dragons Trail which journeys from the heart of the Island to its south-west coast.

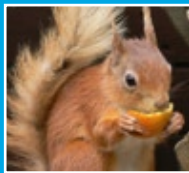
You can pick up copies of the Histree Trails from Public Libraries, TIC's and Help Centres or visit www.histreetrail.com/trails to download the Histree Trail leaflets.



Naturewatch: May

Red squirrel

The red squirrel is one of our special Island animals having disappeared from most of England and Wales. They are shy creatures but you stand a chance of seeing one on **special guided walks during May**.



Picture: Barry Angel

Wild garlic

Known locally as 'ramsons', is found in woods on the chalk. It creates a spectacular white carpet of flowers and a pungent smell as the plants die down. Look for them on country walks in May such as **Striding out in Shorwell on 18 May**.



Monday 11 **The wildlife and geology of Freshwater Bay** 5 - 7pm

A leisurely stroll looking at cliff plants, rockpools and more. A chance to appreciate the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Less than 1km. Sorry, no dogs.

Leader National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Freshwater Cliffs National Trust car park (nr golf club) GR 351 857 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Tuesday 12 **Walks from rails: Ashy races** 10am

A cross-country ramble to Ashy rail station, then along the long-abandoned chalkpit branch line skirting Ashy's former racecourse, returning via the Downs. Bring a picnic. About six miles/four hours. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636 **Meet** Ryde St. John's railway station **Cost** Optional donation to Gift to Nature

Tuesday 12 **Over the Undercliff** 10am

A circular walk to look at the wildlife of the Undercliff including Wight Nature Fund's reserve of Pelham Woods and the Wildlife Trust's nature reserve at St. Lawrence Field. Stout shoes required. **Leader** Richard Grogan **Tel** 529199 **Meet** Old Rare Breeds Park at St. Lawrence village GR 540 768 **Cost** Donations are welcomed

Tuesday 12 **Mottistone Common: 6,000 years of history** 6 - 8pm

Discover how features in the landscape tell us about the people that once lived here back to the Neolithic times. Some moderately steep paths, one flight of steps. 3km. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Mottistone Manor car park GR 405 838 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Wednesday 13 **Shalfleet: wildlife and history** 10.30am - 1pm

There have been some exciting discoveries in the Shalfleet area. Explore some of the lesser known parts of this area and find out about who once lived here. Gentle gradients and muddy if wet. About 2 km. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Shalfleet Parish Council car park, Shalfleet Quay Road GR 414 896 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Wednesday 13 **Insectivorous Plants at Bohemia** 10.30am

See the amazing insectivorous plants of Bohemia Bog and learn about Darwin's work in this subject. Booking essential. **Leader** Ian Boyd **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Chequers Inn car park, Rookley GR 511 830 **Cost** Donation to Gift to Nature



Wednesday 13 **Brading butterfly walk** 10.30am - 1pm

A walk through Brading up onto the down to look at butterflies and their management on this lovely chalk grassland site. Stout walking shoes required. **Leader** Richard Grogan **Tel** 529199 **Meet** Brading railway station (parking limited) GR 609 868 **Cost** Donations are welcome

Wednesday 13 **Ventnor wild food walk 2** 10.30am - 3.30pm

Explore Ventnor's quirky landscape and find out about edible and useful plants. About 9 miles. Booking essential. **Leader** Rowan Adams **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Ventnor Botanic Garden reference library GR 547 768 **Cost** Donation to Gift to Nature

Wednesday 13 **Walks from rails: Lake Common** 6pm

An undemanding evening ramble from Sandown through the countryside behind the coastal conurbation, via Lake Common and Black Pan. Train back from Shanklin. About 2.5 miles/three hours. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636 **Meet** Sandown rail station **Cost** Return rail fare and optional donation to Gift to Nature

Thursday 14 **Acorns to ancients** 10.30am - 1pm

A circular walk which explores the wildlife value and heritage of the ancient trees within this historic landscape. Route includes some steep slopes and stiles. Stout shoes required. **Leader** Tina Williamson **Tel** 823893 **Meet** Brading Bull Ring GR 606 871

Thursday 14 **Evening beach and woodland walk at Osborne** 5.30pm

A leisurely walk through the woodland to enjoy the private beach at Osborne. Booking essential. **Leader** English Heritage **Tel** 200022 **Meet** Osborne reception **Cost** See 19 April for details

Thursday 14 **Spring on the Downs** 7.30 - 9.30pm

An evening walk around the Wildlife Trust's chalk grassland reserve to look at the fascinating wildlife, and history of this prominent local landscape. Sorry, no dogs. **Leader** Chris Archbold **Tel** 529199 **Meet** Park in Arreton village opposite the White Lion pub GR 533 867 **Cost** Donations appreciated

Friday 15 **St. Catherine's Down circular hike** 10.30am - 3.30pm

Join the wardens for a 7km walk exploring the paths over ridge top and down in secluded leafy dells. Learn about the fascinating wildlife, history and landscape along the way. Bring a packed lunch. Dogs welcome on short leads. Some steep hills and steps, eight stiles and muddy if wet. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Blackgang Chine car park GR 490 767 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Friday 15 **Stepping stones** 10.30am - 3.30pm

A walk in the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, enjoying the Island's finest landscapes. A challenging walk, suitable for fit walkers with some experience. Steep gradients and stiles. Dogs on leads welcome. Bring a packed lunch. Booking essential. **Leader** Carrie McDowell **Tel** 823855 **Meet** Brighstone Village car park GR 428827 **Cost** Voluntary donation to Gift to Nature

DINOSAUR ISLE



Walks to look at geology and fossils, led by Dinosaur Isle staff, take place during school holidays at various coastal sites.

They last for up to two hours depending on tide and weather. For details see www.dinosaurisle.com/events.aspx

Booking essential. **Tel** 404344 **Cost** Adults £4, Children (ages 3-15) £2.40, Family (2+2) £13, Concession (pensioner/ student) £3.60



DARWIN200

Charles Darwin

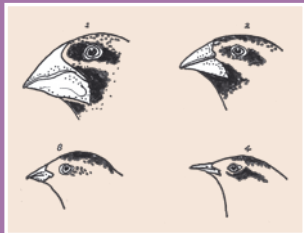
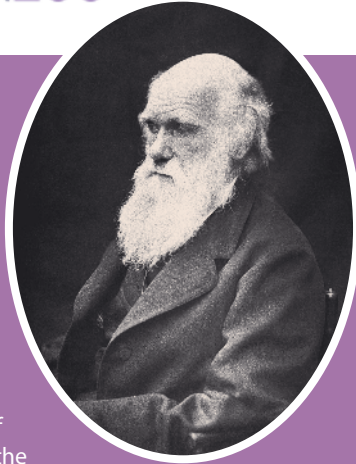
2009 is the year we celebrate the achievements of Charles Darwin (1809-1882), the British scientist who laid the foundations of the theory of evolution and transformed the way we think about the natural world.

The Island played a significant role in Darwin's life and his momentous work, 'Origin of Species'. He paid three visits to the Island to escape from the pressures of life at Down House in Kent. 1858 was one such year of crises. An outbreak of scarlet fever was spreading through the village and he lost his baby son to the disease. Moreover, he was under immense pressure to publish his theories of evolution. The whole family retired to Sandown and Darwin made a start on his great work whilst staying at the Kings Head Hotel.

Much later, in 1868, when he had become a renowned and controversial figure, Darwin stayed at Freshwater. The Island had become a fashionable place amongst the cream of Victorian society after Queen Victoria taking up residence at Osborne House and Darwin found it difficult to avoid unwanted attention. Nevertheless, at this time he did sit for photographer Julia Margaret Cameron at Dimbola Lodge, Freshwater and this portrait is one of the most famous photographs taken of Darwin.

You can view one of Darwin's original letters relating to his research on display at the Museum of Island History, Guildhall, Newport from June-September tel: 823847 for details. An admission fee is charged.

For details of other Darwin events around the country visit www.darwin200.org.



Darwin's studies of finches on the Galapagos Islands, which led him to develop his theory of evolution

Saturday 16 **The Origin in Sandown Bay 1** 9am - 12.30pm



Walk between the hotel and the villa Charles Darwin stayed in when he started writing the 'Origin of Species'. About five miles. Booking essential. **Leader** Rowan Adams **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Outside the seaside entrance to Ocean Hotel, Esplanade, Sandown GR 600 841 **Cost** £3 donation to Gift to Nature

Saturday 16 **Osborne beach walk** 10am

A leisurely walk through the woodland to enjoy the private beach at Osborne. Booking essential. **Leader** English Heritage **Tel** 200022 **Meet** Osborne reception **Cost** See 19 April for details

Saturday 16 **Great bug hunt – pond dipping and sweep netting at Birchmore Farm** 10.30am

Follow the Troll Trail to Birchmore Pond to search for creepy crawlies in the pond and the grass. **Leader** Ian Boyd **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Merstone Station GR 526 845 **Cost** Donation to Gift to Nature

Saturday 16 **Woods and squirrels** 9.30am - 12.30pm

Walk to a private garden to watch red squirrels, then back via the woods. Booking advised, numbers limited. **Leader** Jessie Booth **Tel** 740662 **Meet** Newtown Old Town Hall car park GR 423 906 **Cost** £2 to the Red Squirrel Trust

Sunday 17 **Newtown nightingale and bird song walk** 5 - 7am

Get up early and be rewarded by the enchanting sounds of Newtown Estuary just after dawn, with the possibility of a nightingale. Bring binoculars and a flask of coffee and we will provide biscuits. Sorry no dogs. 2km no steep slopes, muddy if wet. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Old Town Hall, National Trust car park GR 423 906 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Sunday 17 **The Origin in Sandown Bay 2** 10am - 1pm



Walk from the villa Charles Darwin stayed in when he started writing the 'Origin of Species'. About 4 miles. Booking essential. **Leader** Rowan Adams **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Outside the entrance of The Waterfront Inn at Norfolk House, Esplanade, Shanklin GR 585 813 **Cost** Donation requested to Friends of Ventnor Botanic Garden

Sunday 17 **Walks from rails: The Medina Way** 10am

A riverside walk on the Medina's west bank, tracing the route of the Island's first passenger railway between Newport and Cowes, with route variations on the two legs of the walk. About eight miles/four hours. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636 **Meet** Newport bus station **Cost** Optional donation to Gift to Nature

Sunday 17 **Red squirrel safari quest** 2pm

Answer the clues as you follow the Red Squirrel Safari, look out for the Island's famous red squirrels bounding along the tree tops as you go. **Leader** Sam Buck **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Parkhurst Forest car park, off Forest Rd GR 479 899 **Cost** Donation to Gift to Nature

Monday 18 **Striding out in Shorwell** 10.30am

A walk in the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty enjoying the Island's finest landscapes, and points of historical interest. Suitable for keen walkers and anyone who is reasonably active. Dogs on leads welcome. Bring a packed lunch. Booking essential. **Leader** Carrie McDowell **Tel** 823855 **Meet** Car Park, Russell Road, Shorwell GR 457 825 **Cost** Voluntary donation to Gift to Nature

Monday 18 **Wildlife on Tennyson Down** 2 - 4.30pm

Join the warden looking for cliff top wildlife such as early gentian, ravens, peregrine falcons and Dartford warblers. three miles, moderately strenuous with a short, but steep descent. Sorry no dogs. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** High Down chalk pit GR 325 855 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Monday 18 **Walks from rails: Ferry to ferry** 6pm

Coastal stroll between the ferries at Ryde Pier Head and Fishbourne via old Binstead and Quarr. Do it both ways on foot or as part of a round ferry trip from/to Portsmouth. About six miles/three hours. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636 **Meet** Ryde Pier Head station **Cost** Optional donation to Gift to Nature

Tuesday 19 **The history of Mottistone Common** 10.30am - 12.30pm

Discover how people shaped the landscape over the centuries. Some moderately steep paths, one flight of steps. 3km. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Mottistone Manor car park GR 405 838 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Tuesday 19 **Heathland haven** 10.30am - 1pm

A walk through the countryside at Cranmore and the Wildlife Trust's reserve at Ningwood Common to look at wildlife such as small pearl bordered fritillary butterflies and nightingales, five stiles, wear wellies. No dogs please.

Leader Chris Archbold **Tel** 529199 **Meet** Ningwood Recycling Centre GR 401 892 **Cost** Donations welcome

Tuesday 19 **Evening beach and woodland walk at Osborne** 5.30pm

A leisurely walk through the woodland to enjoy the private beach at Osborne. Booking essential. **Leader** English Heritage **Tel** 200022 **Meet** Osborne reception **Cost** See 19 April for details

Wednesday 20 **Discover Culver Downs** 2 - 4:30pm

Circular walk exploring local history and heritage. Moderately strenuous with a short but steep slope. Dogs welcome on leads. About three miles. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** At Bembridge Windmill GR 639 874 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Wednesday 20 **Borthwood trail** 2 - 4pm

An amble through hidden countryside, along forgotten byways, disused railways and across an airport runway! One way walk to Shanklin station. Booking advised.

Leader Martin Gibson **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Sandown Rail Station GR 594 844 **Cost** Donation to Gift to Nature

Thursday 21 **Ashey amble** 10.30am

A walk over chalk downland and through the Wildlife Trust's reserve of Eaglehead and Bloodstone Copses. **Leader** Richard Grogan **Tel** 529199 **Meet** Large lay-by at the foot of Ashey Down GR 575 874 **Cost** Donations greatly appreciated

Thursday 21 **Ventnor lizard walk** 10.30am

A varied and undulating walk around Ventnor, looking at some great wall lizard spotting places. About 1.5 hours. **Leader** Sam Buck **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Ventnor Botanic Garden by visitor centre steps GR 546 769 **Cost** Donation to Gift to Nature

Thursday 21 **Chalk, sand and clay** 2 - 7pm

Explore two rivers: the Lukely Brook over chalk, and the Medina over sand. Clay under both will make this walk muddy! About nine miles. Booking advised.

Leader Rowan Adams **Tel** 298098 **Meet** By propeller on corner of Sea Street and The Quay, Newport GR 500 893 **Cost** Donation to Gift to Nature

The Isle of Wight Ramblers

welcome visitors to any of their walks. Membership is not necessary and further information can be found on their website www.iowramblers.com/walks



WILDZONE FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES

Wildzone is a fun-packed programme of activities for five to 13 year olds introducing them to wildlife and nature. Activities last two hours and children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Sorry no dogs. All activities must be booked in advance by telephoning the National Trust on (01983) 741020. The activities are very popular so please let us know in advance if you have to cancel so that we can offer the place to someone on the waiting list.

Discovery pack activities cost £5 per pack (one pack per family). Other activities cost £2.50 per child aged five and over. No charge for supervising adults.

Wed 8 April **Brickmaking and salt pan nature trail** 1pm

Making clay bricks like the past residents of the area and look for wildlife.

Thurs 16 April **Watch the birdie!** 11am

Learn about the birds breeding and feeding around Newtown estuary. Use the solar powered telescope if the weather's good, and draw the birds we see. All equipment provided. Bring wellies.

Sun 14 June **Make a mud monster** 11am

Use natural materials and clay to make a monster, then explore the reserve to understand the habitats from the monster's viewpoint. Bring a packed lunch.

Fri 24 July **The butterfly forest - Newtown** 12 noon

Discovery packs provided to search for insects and butterflies. Bring a packed lunch.

Wed 29 July **Newtown bonekickers story walk** 1.30pm

Meet the beasts from the fossil cabinet and the present day, where both mythical and real animals live in the woods.

Mon 3 and Thurs 6 August **Rock pool rambles - St. Helen's** 2pm

Join the warden to play beach games and explore the shore.

Mon 17 August **Smugglers poems and salty stories** 1pm

Stories old and new, some made-up and some true! Come on a walk and learn a yarn at Newtown Harbour.

Wed 19 August **Bat zap - Mottistone** 7pm

Try bat detectors with the National Trust and Isle of Wight Bat Hospital. Bring a torch.

Wed 26 August **Red squirrel and dormouse stories - Borthwood** 1pm

Learn how to make a journey stick and record your wildlife wanderings.

Friday 28 August **Tennyson Down bug hunt: Be a wildlife detective!** 1.15pm

Discovery packs provided.

NEW! TINY WILDZONE NATURE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN AGE SEVEN AND UNDER

All children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Sorry no dogs. £2.50 per child aged three to seven. Under threes free. Booking essential. Call National Trust (01983) 741020

Wed 15 April **Easter lambs and eggs** 12.45pm

Meet the sheep and see if the gulls have laid eggs at Newtown. Make an Easter lamb with real wool from a sheep to take home.

Mon 4 May **Bluebells and ponies - Ventnor** 12.45pm

It's that time of year when it is sheer joy to be out on the downs with the wildlife. About an hour.

Darwin and orchids



DARWIN200

Darwin was fascinated by the beautiful and intricate flowers of orchids, which he observed in the countryside surrounding his home at Down House, Kent. He decided that there was a very close relationship between a specific orchid and its pollinating insect. His book 'The Fertilisation of Orchids', published in 1862, gives details of orchid flower structures and the corresponding features of their pollinators. The development of these relationships is called co-evolution.

The bee orchid intrigued Darwin because it did not seem to fit the pattern. It had the most elaborate flowers and yet didn't attract pollinating insects, instead, the flowers seemed to be able to pollinate themselves. Darwin corresponded with botanists around the country to see if this pattern was repeated elsewhere. One of his contacts was Alexander More who lived at Bembridge on Island. He had spent many hours observing bee orchids, looking for pollinating insects.

As he didn't find any, he agreed with Darwin that these orchids were all self-pollinated.

It has since been discovered that bee orchids growing near the Mediterranean are indeed insect-pollinated - by the *Eucera* bee. The appearance of the flower is significant, but the flower also produces chemicals, the same kind used in insect courtship. The orchid is a 'deception flower' - there is no advantage to the visiting insect as it does not find a mate but it's a great benefit to the flower with pollen being transferred to the next plant!

Bee orchids have extended their range northwards over thousands of years but the *Eucera* bee has not moved with them - probably temperatures are still too cold. However this plant, like others in northern Europe, has the ability to self-pollinate if it is not visited by an insect.

Orchids on the Isle of Wight

We are lucky enough on the Island to have up to 20 types of orchid. Different ones can be seen flowering from spring right through to the autumn. Many of the orchids found here are fairly common in the right spots but they can be tricky to find.

Orchids tend to like certain types of soil, and have a habit of flowering briefly, and irregularly; some years they may not appear at all or be very scarce.

The common spotted orchid is usually the easiest to locate, see if you can find it along roadside verges, or woodland clearings and meadows.

The bee orchid known locally as 'bee flower' which fascinated Darwin is fairly widespread. It prefers chalk downland, but it can sometimes be found growing in garden lawns if the soil has lime present.

Autumn lady's-tresses is a small, late flowering orchid (August and September) seen on the downs and another than can sometimes be found in garden lawns.

If you have orchids in your lawn, take care to mow around them, they should never be cut or picked.

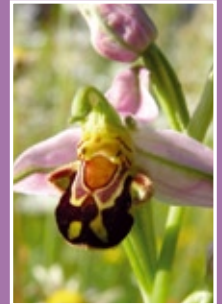
The marsh orchid likes wet, boggy areas around the coast and inland and the pyramidal orchid, which has been voted the county flower of the Isle of Wight can be found on the downs in late June and July.

The most frequent species of orchid found on the Isle of Wight:

- **Early purple orchid** 'kettlecases' in local Island dialect, Late April/May.
- **Green-winged orchid** 'giddygander' in local Island dialect, Late April/May.
- **Common spotted orchid** Late May/June (pictured top).
- **Southern marsh orchid** May/June (pictured second from bottom).
- **Common twayblade** May/June.
- **Bee orchid** 'bee flower' in local Island dialect June (pictured second from top).
- **Pyramidal orchid** June/July (pictured bottom).
- **Autumn lady's-tresses orchid** August/September.

Some other scarcer species you might find, in you are fortunate:

- **Broad-leaved helleborine** July/August.
- **Marsh helleborine** July.
- **Greater butterfly orchid** May/June.
- **Bird's-nest orchid** June.
- **Frog orchid** Late June/July.



Thursday 21 **Geocaching taster session** 2.30pm

An introduction to the popular outdoor game of geocaching. Use hi-tech equipment to hunt for treasure! No previous experience necessary, equipment provided, suitable for all ages. Booking essential, phone to book a place.
Leader Matthew Chatfield **Tel** 823893 **Meet** Car park, Appley Park, Ryde GR 625 923

Thursday 21 **St. Mary's Churchyard, Brading** 7pm

An evening walk to St. Mary's Churchyard to see the flora and fauna there.
Leader Dr Colin Pope **Tel** 823893 **Meet** Brading Town Trust car park GR 607 875
Cost Donation to St. Mary's Church

Friday 22 **A Secret Flora** 10.30am



A walk from Havenstreet to a secluded botanical jewel including ancient woodland and flower-rich meadows. Booking essential. Stout shoes required. **Leader** Richard Grogan **Tel** 529199 **Meet** To be advised on booking **Cost** Donations welcomed

Friday 22 **Walks from rails: Coastal Ryde** 6pm

A gentle evening stroll on the flat to Seaview and back. Follows the historically-rich coastline and returns via the route of the old horse tramway. About 4.5 miles/three hours. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636 **Meet** Ryde Esplanade rail station
Cost Optional donation to Gift to Nature

Saturday 23 **Walks from Rails: Beyond the buffers** 9.45am

A ramble along the former rail line to Wroxall, then cross-country to Sandown via Appuldurcombe, Sandford and Newchurch. Train ride back to Shanklin. Bring a picnic. About 8.5 miles/seven hours. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636
Meet Shanklin rail station **Cost** Train fare; optional donation to Gift to Nature

Saturday 23 **Brading Marshes wildlife walk** 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

Saturday 23 **Osborne beach walk** 2pm

A leisurely walk through the woodland to enjoy the private beach at Osborne. Booking essential. **Leader** English Heritage **Tel** 200022 **Meet** Osborne reception
Cost See 19 April for details

Saturday 23 **Rockpool magic** 4.30pm

A hunt for amazing sea life at low tide in the pools and foreshore of Bembridge Ledges. **Leader** Ian Boyd **Tel** 298098 **Meet** Lane End car park beside Bembridge Lifeboat Station GR 656 879 **Cost** Donation to Gift to Nature

Sunday 24 **Yar River relay** 9am

Source to sea along the eastern River Yar. Do the entire 19 miles or just one four to five mile sections. Call beforehand for shorter section start times. Booking essential. **Leader** Island 2000 Trust staff **Tel** 298098 **Meet** in front of the White Lion pub, Niton GR 507 767 **Cost** Donation to Gift to Nature

Sunday 24 **Farming for wildlife** 10.30am

A family friendly walk around Wight Conservation's wildlife farming project and the history of the Wroxall Horseshoe. Stout footwear required 2.5/three hours.
Leader Wight Conservation **Tel** 760773 **Meet** Wroxall Cross Farm GR 557 793

Monday 25 **Limerstone and Yafford** 1.15pm

A circular six mile walk around Limerstone and Yafford. **Leader** Rio Bellgore-Gullit **Tel** 07800 528626 **Meet** Brighstone car park GR 427 827

Wednesday 27 **Medina Valley cycle safari** 10am

A gentle cycle up the Medina Valley viewing wildlife and landscape, then stopping at Medina Valley Centre for refreshments and birdwatching. Five mile return journey, children under 16 to be accompanied by a responsible adult; cycle helmets must be worn. Booking essential - only ten places. **Leader** Nick Webb **Tel** 823893 **Meet** Cowes to Newport cycle track, Arctic Road, Cowes GR 498 947

Thursday 28 **A stroll in the park** 6 - 7pm

A red squirrel walk/talk for wheelchair users and those who cannot walk far. Some short slopes. Booking essential. **Leader** Helen Butler **Tel** 822437 **Meet** Park Road car park, Cowes GR 493 960 **Cost** Donation to Independent Arts welcome

Sunday 31 **Brading Marshes wildlife walk** 11am

See May 10 for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

June

Friday 5 **Family nature walk** 8 - 9pm

An evening event for families to explore the wildlife of Parkhurst Forest. Games and children's activities included. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Wear wellies or stout footwear. No dogs please. Booking required. **Leader** Kathy Grogan **Tel** 529199 **Meet** Main Parkhurst Forest car park off Forest Road GR 480 900 **Cost** Donations welcome

Sunday 7 **Brading Marshes wildlife walk** 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

Sunday 7 **Wild flowers at Osborne** 2pm

A wander through the meadows, rides and walks taking in the Estate's flora and fauna. Booking advised. **Leader** English Heritage **Tel** 200022 **Meet** Osborne reception **Cost** See 19 April for details

Monday 8 **A botanical amble on Mottistone Down** 2 - 4pm

Join the warden on Mottistone Down and learn to identify chalk grassland flowers and grasses. Moderate slopes with a short, steep ascent. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Jubilee car park GR 420 846 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Thursday 11 **Brighstone Forest safari** 10:30am - 1pm

A walk to look at the wildlife and management of this prominent wildlife haven. Part of the West Wight Landscape Partnership initiative. Children must be accompanied by a responsible adult. Wear wellies or stout footwear. No dogs please. Booking required. **Leader** Richard Grogan **Tel** 529199 **Meet** Jubilee car park, Mottistone/Brighstone GR 420 845 **Cost** Donations welcome

Saturday 13 **Wight Lore: The Needles walk** 10.30am

Climb to the Island's western most point and hear colourful tales of The Needles. Explore the Island's military past and see its long-abandoned rocket-testing site/exhibition. A taxing, but spectacular 5.5 mile walk. Bring a picnic. Duration four/five hours. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636 **Meet** Totland War Memorial, The Broadway
Cost Optional donation to Gift to Nature



The Green Gym is in operation every Wednesday. It offers a way of becoming healthier by taking part in conservation activities. More details can be obtained by calling the Green Gym on 866459 or 822282 or visiting www.footprint-trust.co.uk/greengym.htm

Naturewatch: June

Bee orchid

The spectacular intricate flowers of bee orchids intrigued Charles Darwin and influenced his theories of evolution. Those with sharp eyes stand a chance of spotting them on the downs in June. You may find some on the walk **A botanical amble on Mottistone Down** on **8 June**.



Glanville fritillary

This is the Island's special butterfly, found nowhere else in Britain. It flies in May and early June on the cliffs along the south coast. You may see a few late individuals on the walk **Discover St. Lawrence** on **14 June**.



Saturday 13 Downs and woodland walk 5pm

A walk up over the downs to look at views, plus red squirrel and other wildlife habitats. Some stiles and hills. Booking essential. **Leader** Helen Butler, Mr and Mrs Gurney-Champion **Tel** 611003 **Meet** Standen House, Blackwater Road GR 506 872 **Cost** £2 to the Red Squirrel Trust

Sunday 14 Discover St. Lawrence 10am

Walk through Charles Wood, looking at local flora, down to Binnel Bay to see landscape features such as St. Catherine's lighthouse and Spindler's Folly. Then coastal walk to Woody Bay pointing out maritime flora, Glanville fritillaries and historical features. **Leader** Dave Trevan **Tel** 853927 **Meet** Hejira, Hunts Rd St. Lawrence **Cost** Donations to local projects

Sunday 14 Wildzone: Make a mud monster 11am - 1pm

See Wildzone box for details. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Saturday 20 Brading Marshes wildlife walk 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

Saturday 20 Discovery workshop: Newtown wildflowers and grasses 1pm - 3:30pm

Learn the basics of wildflower and grasses identification and hear the stories behind the plants on a wander through fields that usually have limited access. Equipment provided. Bring your own field guide if you wish. Suitable for adults, students and older children. Pre-paid booking essential. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** To be advised on booking **Cost** £5 per person to include cost of equipment

Wednesday 24 A lot of rubbish Time to be advised on booking

An unusual walk around the entire Lynnbottom site to look at what happens to some of the Island's waste. Booking essential. Sturdy shoes required. **Leader** Lynn Clarke **Tel** 821234 **Meet** to be advised on booking **Cost** Donation to Gift to Nature

Sunday 28 Brading Marshes wildlife walk 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

Biodiversity on the Isle of Wight

What is biodiversity?

Biodiversity is wildlife - the variety of life and its processes. This includes animals, plants, humans and all living things; the differences between them, the communities where they live, the ecosystems that they belong to and the ecological and ever changing and adapting evolutionary processes that keep them functioning.

Why is wildlife important?

Understanding biodiversity is in our self-interest as it affects us all. Biological variety provides us with life-sustaining systems such as clean air, healthy oceans, fresh water and fertile soil, without which we would not be able to survive.

Why is the wildlife of the Isle of Wight special?

The Isle of Wight is like a miniature version of south-east England and has its fair share of the habitats characteristic of the region. In fact, it is unusually rich in species and habitats compared to similar areas on the mainland. Our chalk grassland of the downs, the maritime cliffs and slopes of the coasts, and the estuaries are all important on a national and international scale.

Because we are an Island, there are fewer introduced species such as grey squirrels, deer or mink. There are also stable populations of native animals which have become rare on the mainland, such as red squirrels, dormice, bats and water voles. The mild climate and maritime location provide a foothold for species such as the Glanville fritillary butterfly, on the northern edge of their European range.



The Glanville fritillary is a special butterfly found nowhere else in Britain. This butterfly spends most of its life as a black, spiny caterpillar, living in family groups in silken webs or nests. When alarmed, a feeding group of Glanville fritillary caterpillars will jerk their heads in unison, probably to distract their enemies. The orange patterned butterfly lives only a few weeks.

Where can I find out more?

Explore www.wildonwight.co.uk to learn more about the Island's biodiversity.

The original Isle of Wight Council FREE Health Walks!



Come along to a regular health walk and walk your way to health! All walks are lead by trained volunteer walk leaders. All short walks are fairly level and you can walk at your own pace. For more information on any of these walks please contact Louise Gray on 814283.

Cowes

Mondays at 10.30am. **Meet** Northwood House car park off Ward Avenue, Cowes.

West Wight

Mondays at 2pm – Beginners/Improvers **Meet** foyer of West Wight Sports Centre, Freshwater.

Wednesdays at 10am - Advanced, three hours. **Meet** Brookside Health Centre, Freshwater.

Parkhurst Forest

Last Monday of the month at 10.30am. **Meet** Parkhurst Forest car park, off Forest Road, Newport.

Brighstone

Fortnightly on Tuesdays at 1.30pm. **Meet** Brighstone Library. **Tel** Lynn 740150

Haylands

Last Tuesday of the month at 10.30am – Intermediate. **Meet** United Reform Church, Upton and Corbett Road junction, Haylands.

Ryde

Every Tuesday at 10.30am. **Meet** Ryde Esplanade outside LA Bowl.

Sandown

Fortnightly on Tuesdays at 10am. **Meet** Sandown Library, High Street, Sandown. **Tel** Mandie/Robert 402748.

Shorwell

First Tuesday of the month at 10.15am – Intermediate/Advanced three hours, some inclines, ask before walk. **Meet** Shorwell Shute, opp. Dell Path Centre.

East Cowes

Wednesdays at 10am –short walk. **Meet** The Pavilion, East Cowes.

Lake

Thursdays at 10.15am. **Walk 1:** Beginners/Improvers. **Tel** Sylvia 401630.

Walk 2: Intermediate/Advanced. **Tel** Louise Gray 814283. **Meet** bench on Lake Common.

Wootton

Thursdays at 2.15pm. **Meet** Wootton Community Centre, Brannon Way.

Newport

Every Friday at 10.30am. **Meet** outside Downside Middle School, Furrilongs, Pan Estate, Newport.

FREE Nordic Walking Training Sessions

Taking place at various venues throughout the Island. Walking with poles, burns 20 per cent more calories and uses 90 per cent of muscles. Free loan equipment available. For dates and venues of the next sessions and to book your place **Tel** Louise 814283.

July

Thursday 9 **Colours and contrasts** 2pm

A tour of the walled garden looking at flowers for cutting and the impressive Victorian glasshouse displays. Booking advised. **Leader** English Heritage **Tel** 200022 **Meet** Osborne reception **Cost** See 19 April for details

Saturday 11 **Alverstone Mead nature reserve bug hunt** 10am - 12.30pm

Join our bug hunt looking for insects with the help of an expert. We'll also be looking out for birds, interesting flowers and red squirrels. Some equipment provided. Young children to be accompanied by an adult. **Leader** John Ralph **Tel** 400199 **Meet** Alverstone Village, cycleway entrance by the bridge. Please park considerably **Cost** Donations to Wight Nature Fund

Saturday 11 **Wight Lore: The Shanklin woodland walk** 10.30am

A stroll through the recently created ancient woodland link west of Shanklin exploring historically rich but still developing copse-land. About two miles /1.5 hours. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636 **Meet** Woodland link entrance, Westhill Rd Shanklin (next to Hungerberry Copse) **Cost** Optional donation to Gift to Nature

Sunday 12 **Brading Marshes wildlife walk** 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

Sunday 12 **Osborne's bedding bonanza** 2pm

Enjoy the terraces and walled garden as they come into full bloom. Booking advised. **Leader** English Heritage **Tel** 200022 **Meet** Osborne reception **Cost** See 19 April for details

Tuesday 14 **Bouldnor Forest at twilight** 7 - 9pm

Explore the twilight world of Bouldnor Forest. Look out for red squirrels, bats and other creatures in the gloaming. Wear wellies or walking boots and waterproof jacket. Binoculars useful. No dogs please. **Leader** Richard Grogan **Tel** 529199 **Meet** Follow track from main road to forest parking site near SOL training site (entrance off Yarmouth Road, Newport) GR 378 896 **Cost** Donations welcome

Saturday 18 **Brading Marshes wildlife walk** 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

Naturewatch: July

Speckled bush cricket

Bush crickets are well camouflaged in the vegetation, but several sorts can be heard calling and are particularly noticeable on summer evening walks such as **Bouldnor Forest at Twilight** on 14 July.



Picture: Mike Cotterell

Shelduck

This is a very distinctively marked goose-like duck. It can be found all around the coast and nests in burrows. You may spot some at Brading Marshes on the **Brading Marshes Wildlife Walk** on 26 July.



Wednesday 22 **Discovery workshop: Star gazing session - the night sky** 9.45 -11pm

Gaze at stars, planets and moons with telescopes. Bring your own camp stool if you wish. Weather dependent – phone on day to check. Suitable for adults, students and older children. Booking essential. **Leader** National Trust in association with the Robert Hooke Society **Tel** 741020 **Meet** To be advised on booking **Cost** £5 per person including equipment

Friday 24 **Wildzone: The butterfly forest** 12 noon

See Wildzone box for details. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Sunday 26 **Brading Marshes wildlife walk** 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

Wednesday 29 **Wildzone: Newtown bonekickers story walk** 1.30pm - 3.30pm

See Wildzone box for details. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Thursday 30 **Fort Victoria foray** 10.30am - 4.30pm

Coast and countryside themed event. Fun for all the family in the woods and on the beach. **Leader** Richard Temple **Tel** 823893 **Venue** Fort Victoria Country Park

Thursday 30 **A Life in Poems by Ruth Padel** 7 - 9pm



Poet Ruth Padel Charles Darwin's great, great granddaughter will give a poetry reading from her book 'Darwin: A Life in Poems' in Dinosaur Isle, surrounded by fossil evidence for Darwin's Theory of Evolution by Natural Selection. **Leader** Isle of Wight Zoo, Isle of Wight Writers' Circle and Poetry Society **Tel** 403883 for details or visit www.isleofwightzoo.com

August

Saturday 1 **Wight Lore: The St. Lawrence walk** 10am

Enjoy the contrasts and superb views of a historically interesting circular route along a rugged section of coastal path followed by a climb up Week Down via the village and diminutive church of St. Lawrence. Duration 4.5 miles/three to four hours. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636 **Meet** Car park, Botanic Gardens, Ventnor **Cost** Optional donation to Gift to Nature.

Monday 3 **Wildzone: Rockpool rambles - St. Helen's** 2 - 4pm

See Wildzone box for details **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Tuesday 4 **Wildlife Warriors** 10am - 1pm

Stream clearance at Batts Copse, Shanklin to improve the habitat for wildlife. See **Wildlife Warriors** box for details. **Leader** Countryside rangers **Tel** 823893 **Meet** outside the scout hut near Batts Copse GR 576 815

Thursday 6 **Wildzone: Rockpool rambles - St. Helen's** 2 - 4pm

See Wildzone box for details. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Friday 7 **Butterflies on Culver Down** 2 - 3.30pm

An easy stroll looking for butterflies. If sunny the chalkhill blues can be spectacular. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Culver Battery car park at the end of Culver Down GR 636 856 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Sunday 9 **Brading Marshes wildlife walk** 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681



Half of the Isle of Wight is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), in recognition of the national importance of the special qualities of its land and seascapes.

The present day beauty of the Island's landscapes is the legacy of an ongoing and complex relationship between the natural environment and the human activity of its inhabitants.

The AONB landscape varies from high chalk downs to low clay plains, quiet estuaries to dramatic landslips of the Undercliff. The richness of wildlife is a direct reflection of this diversity of landscapes. The Island is home to many rare plant and animal species which are often localised on the mainland, but are widespread and common in the Island countryside, including: black and white chequered marbled white butterflies; red squirrels in the woods; water voles in the streams; skylarks singing in the sky; and great green bush crickets calling from hedges and field banks.

The survival of this rich biodiversity is dependent upon the high levels of nature conservation protection afforded to a great deal of the AONB but also, and at least equally important, to the management of the land in a traditional and sympathetic manner.

Image: Luccombe Down courtesy of John Brownscombe



Sunday 9 **Colours and contrasts** 2pm

A tour of the walled garden looking at flowers for cutting and the impressive Victorian glasshouse displays. Booking advised. **Leader** English Heritage **Tel** 200022 **Meet** Osborne reception **Cost** See April 19 for details

Monday 10 – Monday 31 **Darwin today** daily



A special exhibition to celebrate the life and work of Charles Darwin. Visitor centre open 10am to 6pm daily. **Venue** Ventnor Botanic Gardens **Tel** 855397

Wednesday 12 **Discovery workshop: Newtown night wildlife** 10:30pm

Wander through Newtown's meadows at dusk to spot bats, owls and moths. Bring sturdy footwear and a torch. Weather dependent – phone on day to check. Suitable for adults, students and older children Booking essential. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** To be advised on booking **Cost** £5 per person incl. equipment

Friday 14 **Rockpool rummage** 10am - 12noon



Explore the rocky shore of Bembridge Ledges with Wildlife Trust staff. Part of Marine Week, drawing attention to marine issues and highlighting our Living Seas. All welcome, children must be accompanied by an adult. Bring a hat, drinking water, sun screen and a net if you have one. Old shoes, sandals or wellies will protect your feet but will get wet!

Leader Kathy Grogan **Tel** 529199 **Meet** Bembridge Lifeboat Station. Rockpooling 200m along the beach east of the Lifeboat Station. GR 658 880 **Cost** Donations welcomed; car park charges apply

Friday 14 **Shalfleet summer butterfly walk** 11am - 1pm

Walk near the farmland and conservation headlands at Newtown estuary to spot some of the colourful meadow butterflies of the area. Gentle slopes, no stiles. 2km. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Shalfleet Parish Council car park, Shalfleet Quay Road GR 414 896 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Monday 17 - Friday 21 **Natural Selection** 10am - 4pm



Summer school lead by Tim Johnson. Through careful observation of the Island's natural history, participants will develop a diverse and experimental response to themes of evolution, biodiversity and voyages of discovery using variety of creative techniques. Booking essential.

Leader Tim Johnson, Quay Arts **Tel** 822490 **Venue** Based at Jubilee Stores, Newport Harbour, two days will be spent on field trips to Isle of Wight Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (own/ shared transport is required) **Cost** £175

Naturewatch: August

Chalkhill Blue

This is a very characteristic downland butterfly, sometimes present in large numbers in late summer. Look for them on the guided walk **Butterflies on Culver Down** on 7 August.



Bell heather

On the Island, heather is a plant of lowland heath and is quite local. One of the best places to see a showy display is on Luccombe Down. You can see two types of heather on the walk **Heather blossom on Luccombe Down** on 23 August.



Monday 17 **Wildzone: Smugglers poems and salty stories** 1pm

See Wildzone box for details. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Wednesday 19 **Wildzone: Bat zap – Mottistone** 7pm

See Wildzone box for details. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Saturday 22 **Brading Marshes wildlife walk** 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

Sunday 23 **Heather Blossom on Luccombe Down** 2 - 4.30pm

A steady stroll around Luccombe Down when the heather should be giving a spectacular show. Dogs welcome on short leads. 3.5km steep hill up and down, moderately strenuous with kissing gates. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020 **Meet** Smugglers Haven car park GR 580 789 **Cost** £2.50 incl. NT members

Tuesday 25 **Family fun on Arreton Down** 2pm - 4pm



An afternoon of family activities on this lovely Wildlife Trust reserve. **Leader** Chris Archbold **Tel** 529199 **Meet** Park at the chalk pit entrance opposite Burnt House Lane GR 534 873 **Cost** Donations appreciated

Wednesday 26 **Wildzone: Red squirrel and dormouse stories – Borthwood** 1pm

See Wildzone box for details. **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Friday 28 **Wildzone: Tennyson Down bug hunt - be a wildlife detective!** 1.15pm

See Wildzone box for details **Leader** National Trust **Tel** 741020

Sunday 30 **Brading Marshes wildlife walk** 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

September

Tuesday 1 **Wildlife Warriors** 10am - 1pm

Woodland management work at Mill Copse, Yarmouth on behalf of Wight Nature Fund. See box for details. **Leader** Countryside rangers **Tel** 823893 **Meet** at the entrance to Mill Copse GR 358 890

Saturday 5 **Wight Lore: The Newtown walk** 10am

Follow the trail of the Island's Pied Piper, re-live the dramatic demise of Franchville, visit the tiniest town hall and hear the exploits of Ferguson's Gang. A 4.5 mile/2.5 hour ramble. **Leader** Adrian Searle **Tel** 615636 **Meet** Public car park near New Inn, Shalfleet **Cost** Charity walk – donations in aid of Lucie Blackman Trust

Sunday 6 **Brading Marshes wildlife walk** 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

Friday 11 **Estuary Birds** 10am - 12noon



Discover the diversity and ecology of the wide variety of wintering wildfowl and waders on the Island's smallest estuary. **Leader** Chris Archbold **Tel** 529199 **Meet** and park at the Yarmouth IWC public car park GR 355895 **Cost** Donations appreciated

Sunday 13 **It's all Flowers and Fruit** 2pm

Stroll through the pleasure grounds taking in the walled garden and its fruit display, and the beautiful bedding on the terraces. Booking advised. **Leader** English Heritage **Tel** 200022 **Meet** Osborne reception **Cost** 19 April for details



Other biodiversity birthdays this year...



One hundred years have passed since 'The Natural History of the Isle of Wight' by Frank Morey was published. This was the first time that an attempt was made to document all the known plants and animals living on the Island.

Ten years later, the Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeology Society formed which celebrates its 90th birthday this year and this is being marked with special events during September 2009!

You can learn about Newport's Changing Wildlife on a walk led by a local expert or visit the exhibition documenting 100 years of Natural History in the Isle of Wight. See September listings for details or visit www.iwnhas.org to find out more.



Also, the Isle of Wight Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership celebrates its 10th year.

The partnership works together to maintain, restore and where possible, re-create the important habitats we have on the Island and look after the species which live in them.

Look out for our publication later this year which will mark the achievements of the Partnership and celebrate the changing biodiversity of the Island. Find out more at www.wildonwight.co.uk

Naturewatch: September

Sea lavender

This is perhaps our showiest saltmarsh flower when in full bloom in late summer. Look for it on the Yar estuary walk on **11 September**.



Wasp spider

This distinctive spider is like no other. It is a creature which has spread northwards from the continent, responding to warming weather patterns. Look for the striking female spider in rough grassland during autumn and perhaps on the walk **Newport's changing wildlife** on **26 September**.



Thursday 17 Mill Copse management walk 10am - 12noon

A walk to look at the management of Mill Copse in the hands of Wight Nature Fund. Some uneven ground, stout shoes recommended. **Leader** Bob Edney **Tel** 823893 **Meet** River Road car park, Yarmouth GR 354 895 **Cost** Donations to Wight Nature Fund appreciated

Saturday 19 Isle of Wight Cycling Festival launch 11am



A free cycle show at Seaclose Park with cycling displays, activities and entertainment for the whole family. Including the crazy Sink or Swim challenge and Team Extreme BMX shows. **Leader** Isle of Wight Council events team **Tel** 823070 **Meet** Seaclose Park, Newport **Cost** Donations welcome.

A full listing of rides and events is available on the website www.sunseaaandcycling.com or from Tourist Information Centres.

Tuesday 22 - 100 years of natural history **October 1 in the Isle of Wight** daily

The Isle of Wight Natural History and Archaeological Society celebrates 100 years of Frank Morey's 'Guide to the Natural History of the Isle of Wight' and 90 years of the organisation with an Exhibition. Open 10am - 4pm Mon-Sat and 1pm - 4pm Sun. **Leader** IW Natural History and Archaeological Society **Tel** 612677 **Venue** Minster Church, Sts. Thomas's Square, Newport

Saturday 26 Brading Marshes wildlife walk 11am

See 10 May for details of meeting and cost. **Leader** RSPB **Tel** 873681

Saturday 26 Newport's changing wildlife afternoon

A circular walk from the heart of Newport, taking in a variety of habitats to observe the wildlife in and around the town. Sturdy footwear for some uneven tracks. Approx three miles. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Sorry, no dogs. Numbers limited, booking essential. **Leader** Keith Marston **Tel** 527857 evenings only **Meet** To be advised on booking

Get out and about: check out the latest countryside walks at www.iwight.com/walks

Wight summer walks and countryside events 2009 is available on request as an audiotape, in large print or Braille. For further details, please contact the parks and countryside section on (01983) 823893

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