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Friends of A Rocha - Christians in Conservation
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MONKS ELEIGH WET MEADOWS THE QUIET PLACE at MONKS ELEIGH (affiliated with The Quiet Garden Trust)

Short Nature Trail and Reflections



God's works are so great, worth a lifetime of study -
endless enjoyment!
The Message - Psalm 111.

Welcome to this small nature reserve! Keith and Maureen Morris first opened it occasionally for visitors in 2005 for what Keith called "creation therapy" - to learn about wild life and/or get away from the hustle and bustle of life and relax.

In March 2007 they were very interested and encouraged to hear that Eden-Rose Coppice was being created in Sudbury to offer free sanctuary to people living with cancer and other critical illness. For information about this see the website: www.withnature.org In November 2007 Keith became ill with cancer and certainly appreciated the value of a quiet place before his illness and during chemotherapy treatment, which was sadly unsuccessful. Knowing the vision of the founder of Eden-Rose Coppice Trust, Rob Brooks, was the establishment of other sites with the same aim, Keith and Maureen considered the possibility of this reserve helping to fulfil that vision.

Maureen does not have the knowledge that Keith had about wildlife, particularly dragonflies but, in partnership with Monks Eleigh Chapel, she would like to support the aim of Eden-Rose Coppice "to turn unwanted woodland or meadows into conservation areas which have a positive effect on lives stressed by critical illness". People affected by critical illness are welcome to come and enjoy the peace and tranquillity of this place by arrangement, whether they share our Christian faith or not. The Chapel which is about 10 minutes walk from here, is available by arrangement as a base for group retreats/quiet days, to enjoy the local walks and all that the lovely village of Monks Eleigh has to offer.

Jesus said "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" Mark 6:31

As you make your way back you pass the big pond again where you might like to sit on the other bench and see it from a different aspect. If dragonflies are flying back and forth you will have a better view from this position - their extraordinary flight amazes scientists and continues to be studied. Remember, it is only possible because their wings have absorbed the rays of the sun; if you spend some time each day to focus on God's love it will affect how you think about yourself and other people. It will help you to be more positive and you may be surprised at what you can do in situations you have been finding very difficult.

We hope you leave here with a sense of peace and of wonder about the beauty of creation. If in the future you feel like another dose of "creation therapy" you are welcome to come again. Contact details are below.

Jesus said "The peace I give isn't like the peace the world gives. So do not be troubled or afraid." John 14:27 (NLT)

The verses quoted are from the Bible - The Message
& New Living Translation(NLT)
Drawings by Angela Banks and Rita Campling,

To find out more about The Quiet Garden Trust visit
www.quietgarden.org or contact:

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If you continue on the path there is a choice. You can take the path to the left that continues in the open or the one through the Blackthorn bushes with low hanging branches. On the one through the bushes you will need to stoop down some of the time and most of the light is blocked out but if you keep going you will soon be able to look around and up to the sky again.

Most of us go through times when it feels like being in a dark tunnel. We usually feel we are victims of circumstances that we would certainly not have chosen. In the middle of this short "tunnel" the end can be seen but in difficult times of inner pain, like bereavement and serious illness, people often can't see the way ahead at all. Circumstances beyond our control make us feel numb, cut off from everybody, totally isolated and God seems far away. Sometimes we may not intend to prevent God getting through to us but we do so by not being open to Him and allowing all sorts of things to block Him out.



Having faith in God in dark times enables us to carry on with real hope for the future and not give up in despair. As we put our trust in God His strength sustains us in our weakness. If we keep ourselves open to Him, remembering that even if we can't see or feel Him He *is* still there for us, His presence will become real again sooner or later. If we feel numb we need to make ourselves available to God to allow Him to "thaw" us. He will then be with us in our pain and pour the healing balm of His love on our wounds.

"My God, you light up my darkness" Psalm 18:28 (NLT)

The springs that abound here create a haven for wildlife and there is a leaflet outlining the natural history, but this leaflet offers a few spiritual reflections on the trail. You may be inspired with other thoughts yourself as you sit and take in the sights and sounds of the wildlife so take your time and enjoy! Many people have been blessed by the wonderful "creation therapy" God has provided here. May this be your experience too.

As you go down the path past the vegetable plot on your left you will notice some trees that have fallen down on your right. The trees on this land are not rooted very deeply because the water table is so high, which means they don't have to work hard to find water. Consequently, due to their "laziness" they are vulnerable in strong winds and topple over.



Similarly for us, an "ill wind" can blow into our lives and knock us down, but it is possible to be firmly rooted and held secure. God offers us all His love and forgiveness and if we put the roots of our lives into them, although we will feel storm-tossed, we will know we are secure. All our faults and failings (and we all have them!) can then be put behind us because Jesus Christ, God's Son, dealt with them when He died on the cross and rose again. We can know this by reading the Bible, which is like a collection of love letters. They are not like love letters we write but are based on God's love for the whole of creation and His plan for its healing and restoration.

"May your roots go down into the soil of God's marvellous love. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high and how deep His love really is." Ephesians 3:17 (NLT)

As you continue down the path there is an area on your left beyond a small pond that is cut in a particular way to allow plants to come through that otherwise would not have the chance to do so. Butterflies and insects are then able to benefit from the wild flowers that make a lovely splash of colour for us to enjoy.

The way the land has been managed since the 1980s has encouraged many birds, dragonflies and butterflies to come and breed. Previously it was dry and full of stinging nettles. To encourage the wildlife to come back and feel at home, the right habitat needed to be created. This was achieved by allowing a blocked drainage ditch to overflow into the meadow, which made it easy to create fresh pools. The land became wet, the flora changed and it wasn't long before wetland birds, dragonflies and butterflies were attracted to the new conditions. Most wildlife also benefits from the lush conditions created by the springs that keep the ponds topped up.

This illustrates what can happen to us spiritually if God's "springs of living water" are given a chance to flow into our lives. We can draw inner strength from the new spiritual life which enriches every aspect of our lives. Perhaps you are wondering how we can help this to happen? First we need to give God space and have open ears and eyes to hear what He wants to say or show us. He is always waiting for opportunities to make us aware of His presence but so often He doesn't get a look-in. He doesn't barge into our lives uninvited but when we make ourselves available to Him, He starts to make His presence real to us.

"Draw close to God and He will draw close to you" James 4:8 (NLT)



THE POND

This is the biggest pond on the reserve and it is ideal for the Emperor Dragonfly because it likes to fly back and forth, patrolling for insects to catch. For it to have a clear flyway a lot of the rampant Branched Bur-reed and Greater Pond Sedge that would fill the pond and choke it needs to be pulled out regularly. Other dragonflies enjoy

the pond too and some particularly like sitting on water lily leaves while others prefer the sticks placed at the sides, which kingfishers also appreciate! On a sunny Summer day many dragonflies can be seen flying in tandem or "D" formation and then egg laying in the vegetation in the water. If there is no sun for several days these beautiful creatures are in great danger as their wings are like solar panels, relying on the sun for much of their energy. If they haven't got the energy to fly they can't find food and consequently die.

Most of us feel better for seeing sunshine but fortunately we don't rely on it for life like dragonflies. We do need the "sunshine" of God's love though, to give us spiritual life. If we expose ourselves to the rays of His love and let them penetrate our lives, we find we have strength beyond our own to cope with very difficult situations. So, whether the sun is shining or not, as you sit and enjoy the peaceful scene, those invisible rays are here, and also everywhere else, for you to absorb.

"Those who wait on the Lord will find new strength." Isaiah 40:31(NLT)