



Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows



The main pool at low level with duckweed! — 29 July 2022.

Photo: Richard Stott

Newsletter No: 48

July 2022

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM was held on Wednesday, 20th of July. Two of our Trustees, Val Wood and Tim Hutton, who were up for re-election were duly re-elected by the members present. The present Trustee Board comprises: Jim Burgin, Sue Comely, Bob Gillmor (Treasurer), Tim Hutton (Membership), Richard Stott (Chairman), Charles Tucker and Val Wood (Secretary).

The minutes, Chairman's Report and Treasurer's Report will be circulated once approved by the Committee. Note that formal approval of the minutes will take place at the next AGM.

We do have capacity for additional Trustees so if anyone is interested please contact the Chairman.

The AGM was followed by an excellent presentation by Jeff Steady of some of his photographs taken on Avon Meadows.

Ken Pomfret

"It would be wrong of me to let this moment pass without giving huge thanks to our Vice Chairman and Project Coordinator, Ken Pomfret, and his work party volunteers who cut reeds and keep the paths trim among many other things.

This year, I would like to give particular thanks to Ken for his considerable effort in organising the work parties ever since we started, and also keeping work parties going throughout pandemic. Additionally, he has masterminded most of the construction projects we have carried out over the last 12 years. During this time, he became a Floodplain Meadows Ambassador and has been a driving force behind the wildflower re-introduction programme. As if this was not enough, he carries out countless maintenance tasks both

Member's Photographs



The Mallards are becoming bolder and starting to complain!

Photo: Jeff Steady ARPS

Congratulations to Jeff on recently being awarded his Associateship of the Royal Photographic Society.

Keeping machinery going and fixing all the little things that break or go wrong about the place. Sadly, Ken and Gwen are to move away from the area shortly to live near their daughter and in so doing will leave a huge gap both on the Committee of Avon Meadows and among the many friends they have made during their time here. It is true to say that Avon Meadows would look very different without Ken's drive and determination to get things done. All that is left for me to do now is to hope their move goes smoothly and their new life is all they hope it to be." (Extract from the Chairman's Report to the 2022 AGM)

It's nearly annual subscription time!

Just a reminder that annual subscriptions become due in September. Many thanks to those who have already paid in advance, as well as our Life Members (now totalling 40!) and those who pay by annual Standing Order (which is a very convenient method all round!).

Despite the challenging times, it has been heartening to have continued to increase our subscribing member base over the past 2 years. Full details on how to pay are in the subscription form attached to this newsletter.

Feel free to e-mail me on timhutton28@gmail.com if you want more information on subscribing options.

Members' Forum

Plans are now being put in place to hold a Members' Forum this autumn to which you are all invited. Time and place will be notified in good time.

Its purpose will be to help guide a way forward for the Friends of Avon Meadows. We need more volunteers to help with our work, how can we do this? Are we doing something wrong now? The success of this forum will depend on you and the contributions you make.

Surveys and Sightings

BIRDS

Weekly Bird Count

The average count over the last quarter has dropped again a little to just 39 species per week. All our breeding species have arrived but less usual birds passing through have been largely absent. The number of species logged this year remains stubbornly at 88, not awful but very much average. Last year at this time, for example, we had seen 98 species.

The scrape dried out during April which meant most of the waterbirds that drop in, did not. We did find a Green Sandpiper, a Little Ringed Plover stopped briefly and a Little Egret stayed for several days but that was it.

Cuckoos were very active during the breeding season, the last of those on Avon Meadows left on 26 June. Interestingly, one was heard in early morning on 29 July, making it a new late record for the species. These late individuals are birds that have bred much further north and pass through Avon Meadows on their way to their wintering grounds in West Africa.

Swift numbers have been holding up, just 15% down on the average of the last 11 years with more recording weeks to come. However all the hirundine (Swallow, House Martin and Sand Martin) counts are down by over 80% so far with no obvious explanation.

Interesting or Unusual Species

Rain in May did for the Peregrine's nest on the Abbey although these falcons are still seen in the area.

On a more positive note, a pair of Barn Owls nested in one of our nest boxes and could be seen hunting over the North Meadow in the late evening. It was good at hunting too;

watched for half an hour, it made 5 sorties and each time came back with a mouse or vole. Although young owls have not been seen it is safe to assume that they did successfully rear young. This is our 54th breeding bird species.

The same can be said for 'our' Tawny Owls, which have been heard calling every month this year, recently in the vicinity of a nest box. These birds are very secretive but we hold out hopes that they successfully produced young too.

Another surprising record was the reappearance of a single Turtle Dove for the second year in a row. It was bullied by resident Collared Doves and eventually moved on after a week or so.

Red Kites have become a more regular sight over the meadows in recent months, it is a delight to watch these elegant, handsome birds in flight.

Breeding Species

A mixed result here. As was mentioned last time, the Mute Swans and Canada Goose nests failed through predation.

The ups and downs of the bird counts referred to so far are all natural events from what can be seen. However, the arson attacks are of course the result of human stupidity.

"As anticipated the reeds grew back vigorously as their regrowth relies on rhizomes lying 50 centimetres or so below the surface which were not affected by the flames. However, we do not know what effect the fires had on ground nesting birds such as Moorhens and Water Rails as, at the time of the fires, they would have started nesting. There appears to be a much more marked decline in nesting Sedge and Reed Warblers both of which build their nests in the previous year's reeds. In preparing this report I checked the records from last year and comparing the year so far with the year to this time in 2021 I was shocked to discover that there has been a 32% decrease in records of these warblers. So, while everything is superficially fine, in reality this is not the case." (extract from the Chairman's Report to the 2022 AGM).

On a positive front, Common Whitethroats, Blackcaps, Cetti's Warblers and Linnets all seem to have done well as have House Sparrows and Starlings!

Long term records can be very revealing.



One of the better news stories, a young Blackcap, a species which has done well on Avon Meadows this summer.

Photo: Jeff Steady ARPS

Butterflies

Butterfly numbers have picked up after a slow start with the grassland species, Meadow Brown and Ringlet emerging in good numbers. One or two Painted Ladies have been recorded too. No Marbled Whites or Small Coppers so far.

Dragonflies

As with butterflies, dragonflies were slow off the mark. The first transect count however produced an excellent 121 insects of 8 species so they do show when the weather is right. Banded Demoiselle and Scarce Chaser both posted new early emergence dates.

Flowers

The wild flower reintroduction efforts of recent years are beginning so show results. Neither of the species below were present before reintroduction started.

This year there was a good expanse of Yellow-rattle beside the riverside path showing that it is becoming established in spite of mild winters. (The seeds need to experience frost to germinate.)

Common Knapweed is also becoming established. A recent count indicated 124 plants in South Meadow, 17 plants in Middle Meadow and 5 plants in North Meadow, roughly double last year's count.

Perhaps the most exciting and surprising addition to the wildflower list this year was our first orchid, a single Pyramidal Orchid found in the South Meadow. Nobody understands how it came to be there, perhaps it has been there for years lying dormant and conditions in mid-2022 were just right for it, so it flowered.



Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*)
 Photo: Richard Stott

Moths

Moths have done rather better than other species groups have so far this year. There have been 3 moth nights this so far which have produced 115 species of which 3 were new to Avon Meadows. This brings our total moth count to date to 401 species!

The new species were; Slender Pug, September Thorn and Dusky Sallow.



Dusky Sallow recorded on 26 July 2022. Its caterpillars feed on the seeds of tall grasses and it is regarded as uncommon in the West Midlands. Photo: Richard Stott

The September Thorn is regarded as Near Threatened in the United Kingdom although common in the West Midlands.

The Slender Pug is a tiny moth which is tricky to identify and therefore probably overlooked although common in the West Midlands.



Not all moths are unattractive! This Short-cloaked Moth was also recorded on 26 July 2022 but has only been recorded once before on Avon Meadows in 2011. Its caterpillars feed on hawthorn and blackthorn and is regarded as common in the West Midlands. Photo: Richard Stott

How you can help us

Work Parties - Contact Ken Pomfret if you are able to help at KenPomfret@btinternet.com.

Newsletter Circulation - Know anyone who would like one? Let Richard have their name and eMail address.

This is an important way of expanding our membership!

PLEASE NOTE!

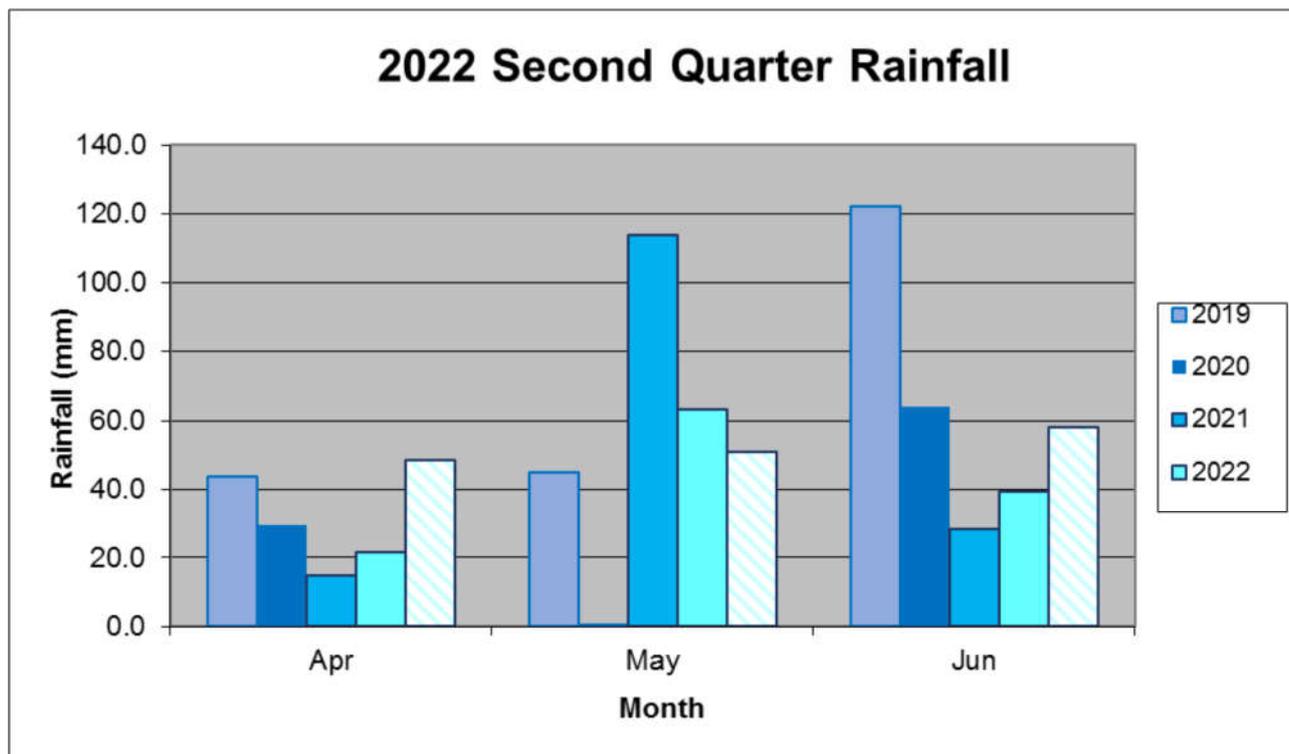
We are always on the lookout for new and interesting photographs to put in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of it. We are trying to increase the number of photographers who provide photographs for the Newsletter.

We need the original, unedited, picture file, that it is taken on Avon Meadows and it must be in focus.

Send the date, time and approximate location of the image.

Contact: richarddestott@gmail.com

Water Levels



With the exception of February and May, this year's rainfall has been well below average. The effect of this lack of rain has been exaggerated by drying winds and recent exceptionally high temperatures.

Administration

Officers of the CIO Committee

Chairman - Richard Stott richarddestott@gmail.com

Treasurer - Bob Gillmor avon.meadows@btinternet.com

Secretary - Val Wood val@wood20.plus.com

Work Parties - Ken Pomfret KenPomfret@btinternet.com

Website

<http://www.avonmeadows.org.uk/>.

Contacts

If you would like any more information about volunteering contact either an officer of the Committee directly by eMail or by telephone to:

Ms Liz Etheridge, Wychavon District Council.
 Tel: 01386 565366
 eMail: liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk



Pershore's Community Wetland and Local Nature Reserve
www.avonmeadows.org.uk

Membership Application/Renewal

If you wish to join or renew by online banking, please use the following details:

Sort code 77-68-78 (TSB Bank), Account number 01118468 and QUOTE YOUR SURNAME AS THE PAYMENT REFERENCE. Then please e-mail timhutton28@gmail.com with the details requested below. If you would like to set up a standing order (we prefer this), please use the same details and again let us know by e-mail. We cannot currently handle direct debits.

If you wish to join or renew by cheque, please print and complete this form and send it together with your cheque, payable to The Friends of Avon Meadows to:

Mr. T.C. Hutton, 15 Green Close, Childswickham, Broadway WR12 7JJ

Family subscription £10 per annum [] Individual subscription £5 per annum []
Life Membership subscription a single payment of £50 []

FULL NAME: _____ TITLE (Mr, Mrs, Ms etc.): _____

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Charity Governance/Fundraising standards and Data Protection (including GDPR)

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