



## Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows



Autumn weather has arrived so cool and windy today — 2 November 2022.

Photo: Richard Stott

Newsletter No: 49

October 2022

### Progress on the Wetland

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, Ken Pomfret is moving away from the area. We are extremely grateful that he plans to continue to lead work parties until the time he actually leaves the area!

The work party team has done Sterling work clearing the scrape which is a regular early autumn task. We now only need it to fill up! Recent heavy rain during October has served to leave some puddles so there is hope!

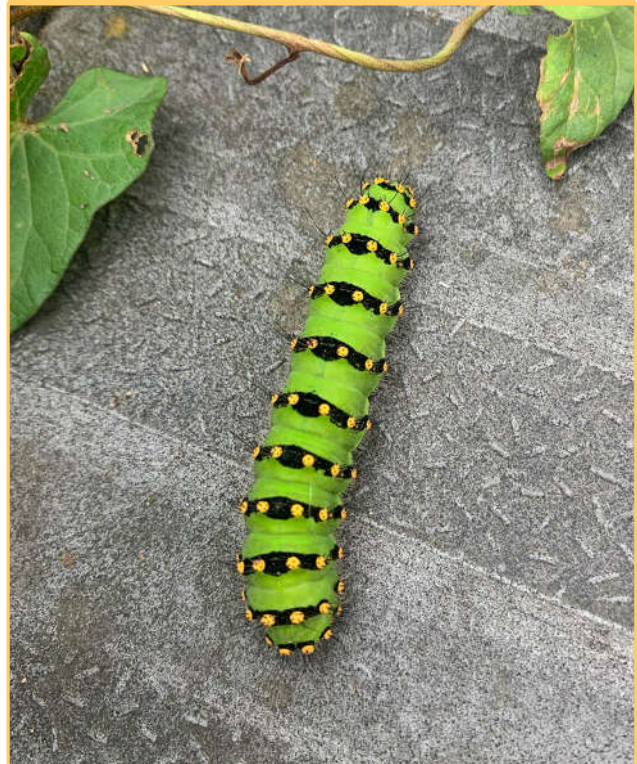
The timing of a Members' Forum has been put back until the spring of 2023. This is to allow us to ensure sufficient ground work has been prepared to make the forum both interesting and useful.

There has been almost no contractors' work carried out since COVID and there is quite a list of things to be done. The work is being coordinated by Wychavon engineering department but our appointed contractors seem to be very busy. This work is not forgotten, it just seems to take a frustratingly long time to happen.

### VOLUNTEERS

We are always looking for volunteers to help make Avon Meadows a better experience for everyone. Regular readers will understand that there are many things that contribute to achieve this. Work parties are just one form of activity, monitoring various forms of wildlife is another. Another example is that we do not have a presence on social media simply because there is nobody to act as moderator. We are always willing to consider projects you might like to lead too. Please so get in touch via the website and together we can make something happen!

### Member's Photographs



This magnificent creature is an Emperor Moth caterpillar photographed on 3 August. This is only the second record for this species, the previous one being an adult moth in May 2012. Amazingly another caterpillar was reported 3 days later!

Photo: Liz Etheridge



Ken and Gwen Pomfret were presented with one of Jeff Steady's lovely photographs of Avon Meadows as a reminder of our beautiful wetland which they both helped to form. The presentation was made by the Committee and work party friends. We wish them every good wish for the future. *Photo: Richard Stott*

## Surveys and Sightings

### BIRDS

#### Weekly Bird Count

It has been an unusual year for birds in that the variety of birds is down on previous years by about 10 species. Our common, resident species have done well but it is the less usual ones that are missing. For some the cause is quite obvious, the dry weather meant that the scrape dried out early and is only just showing signs of water returning now, at the end of October. This meant that waterfowl such as Shelduck\* and Gadwall\* did not appear and neither did wading birds\* including Golden Plover\*, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Greenshank and Redshank. As for passerines, those missing so far include Whinchat, Wheatear, Grasshopper Warbler, Lesser Redpoll\* and Yellowhammer\*.

(\* Could possibly occur before the end of this year.)

We recorded an early Stonechat on 11 August, a new early arrival for us. Other winter visitors are arriving later than usual so no Fieldfares or Meadow Pipits so far. Redwings have arrived in number and there have been up to 4 Wigeon on the main pool. A Merlin flew on 20 October, the first for 2022 as did 2 Common Snipe on the same day. The snipe did not stop as everything was so dry.

#### Interesting or Unusual Species

A Tawny Owl has been heard every month of the year this year leading to the belief that we have a resident pair on Avon Meadows. Two Barn Owls were recorded hunting along the river in mid-October.

#### Avian Influenza

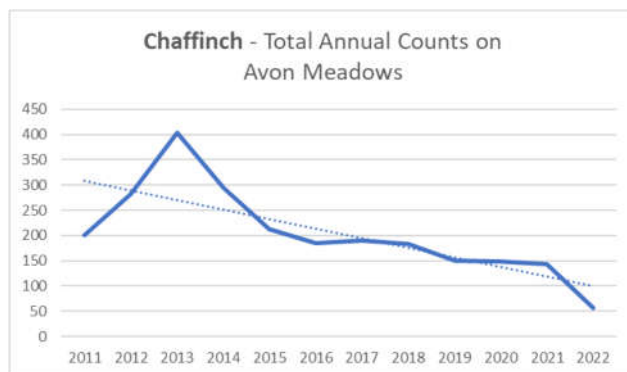
There have been a few reports of "bird 'flu" in the county but so far we seem to have got off lightly. The main early

impact has been felt in seabird breeding colonies around our coast where huge concentrations of bird gather. Latest information from the RSPB is that 90% of breeding Northern Gannets in Scotland failed to produce surviving young.

More recently poultry breeders half taken a huge hit from this disease and are having to take extreme measures to prevent the disease from spreading. The means keeping farmed birds away from wild birds.

#### Other Virus's

Yet another new virus has hit our shores, the Usutu virus, which is carried by mosquitoes and was first detected here in London in 2020. It is more widespread in continental Europe and has caused mass mortalities of Blackbirds for example. It can effect a wide variety of birds and mammals too.



Finch trichomonosis has affected the Greenfinch population since 2005 and it was Greenfinches that were most affected up until 2015/16. Now it seems the turn of Chaffinches to suffer and certainly our Chaffinch population as reduced by two thirds since 2015. (See graph above). Both species are

**Other Virus's (continued)**

now quite scarce on Avon Meadows. A number of other species have felt the effects; Goldfinches, Bullfinches and House Sparrows, although the effect has only been slight on these populations so far.

The general advice if you find a dead bird is do not touch it (or let your pet touch it). If you suspect bird 'flu caused the bird to die report it to [www.gardenwildlifehealth.com](http://www.gardenwildlifehealth.com).

**Free Bird Migration App**

[www.migrationatlas.org](http://www.migrationatlas.org)

A new website has recently been announced which shows in graphical form the mass of data collected on European bird migration. Unlike atlas books that have been published to date, this site is continuously updated as new data becomes available. Be warned! It is quite a sophisticated site so will take a little time and patience to get the best out of it. It has been developed by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) with European funding and covers data for 300 migratory species.

**Butterflies**

Overall 2022 has seen the number of butterflies reduce although most species have been recorded at least once. The only species missing this year has been Small Copper.

There was one interesting record for a Small Heath, a species more usually found in dry heathland habitats. The only other time it has been recorded on Avon Meadows was during a long, hot, dry spell in 2011.

**Dragonflies**

Conversely, dragonflies have had an average year with a total of just 12 species being recorded (maximum 18 in 2014). There were new early records for Banded Demoiselle and Scarce Chaser. Two nice photographs of dragonflies give us a nice reminder of summer.



**A White-legged Damselfly on Avon Meadows. Look carefully for the white fronts to the legs which give this species its common name.** *Photo: Roger Mason*

**Moths**

Moths never disappoint, 4 new species to Avon Meadows were recorded this year lifting our total moth count to 402 species. 130 species were recorded during the year which is close to the average. The new species (additional to those mentioned in Newsletter No.48) is a micro moth, *Bryotropha domestica*, not a photogenic species!



**This Brown China-mark came into the trap on 30 August. The only other time we have recorded it on Avon Meadows was on 30 August 2013!** *Photo: Richard Stott*

**Meadow Arts Project**

We have 10 or 15 small bronzes being cast, made from clay sculptures that the young people from the Riverside Centre made of wildlife from the meadows and they will be mounted put on display around the reserve. There will be more about this project in future issues of the Newsletter.



**A Black-tailed Skimmer.** *Photo: Roger Mason*

**Planet Patrol**

This is a new organisation whose aim is to clean up the planet! A big ask. It may be worth keeping an eye on. We have missed this autumn's water watch but there is always the next one. The video on the link below gives an idea of what they are about.

<https://planetpatrol.co/autumn-water-watch/>

## How you can help us

**Work Parties** - Contact Richard Stott if you are able to help at [KenPomfret@btinternet.com](mailto: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!

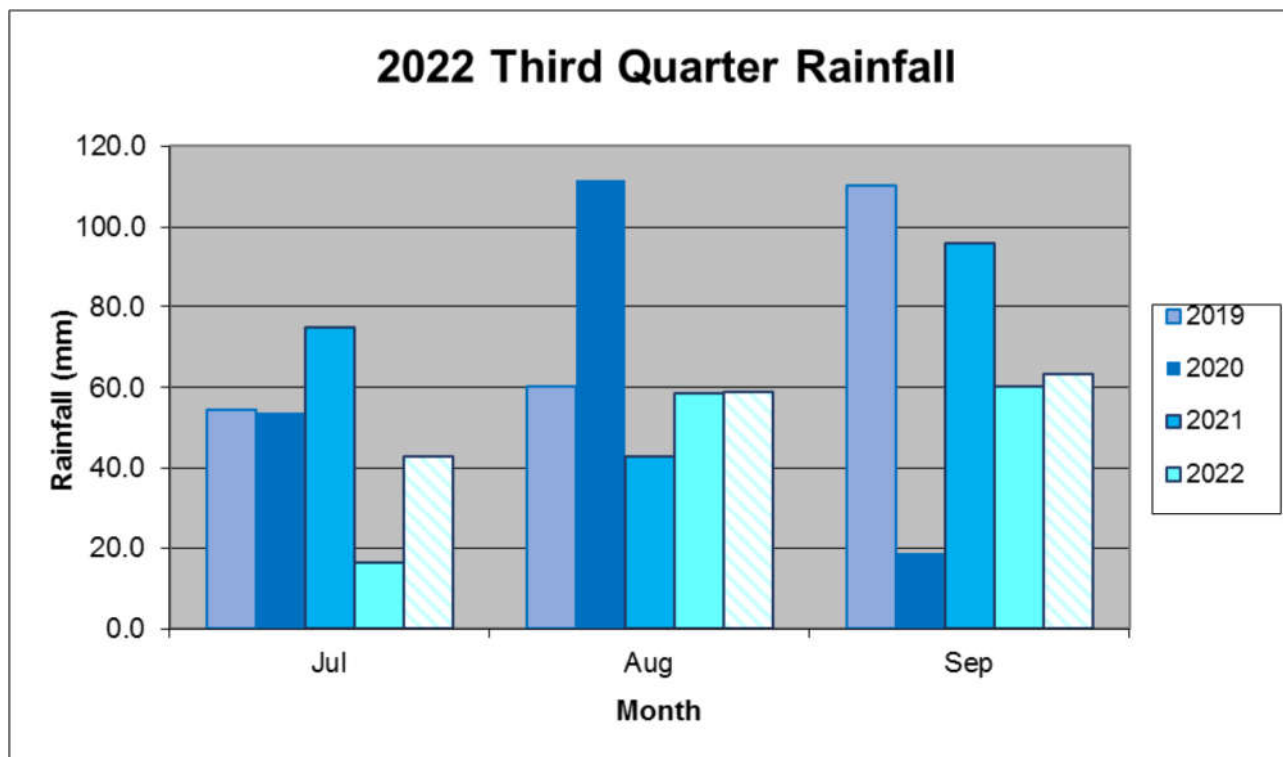
We are always on the lookout for new and interesting photographs to put in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of it. We are trying to increase the number of photographers who provide photographs for the Newsletter.

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](mailto:richarddestott@gmail.com)

## Water Levels



October has seen over double the average rainfall but it was only on 22 October there was any perceptible water on the scrape at all. The result had been that water loving creatures (birds and insects) have been in short supply.

## Administration

### Officers of the CIO Committee

Chairman - Richard Stott [richarddestott@gmail.com](mailto:richarddestott@gmail.com)

Treasurer - Bob Gillmor [avon.meadows@btinternet.com](mailto:avon.meadows@btinternet.com)

Secretary - Val Wood [val@wood20.plus.com](mailto:val@wood20.plus.com)

Work Parties - TBA

### 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](mailto: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.): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ POSTCODE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

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

I am happy to receive information from The Friends of Avon Meadows:

by e-mail [ ] please tick ✓ by post [ ] please tick ✓

We will never pass your details to any third party organisations.

OR: Please do not contact me [ ] if you tick this box we will delete you from our records.

