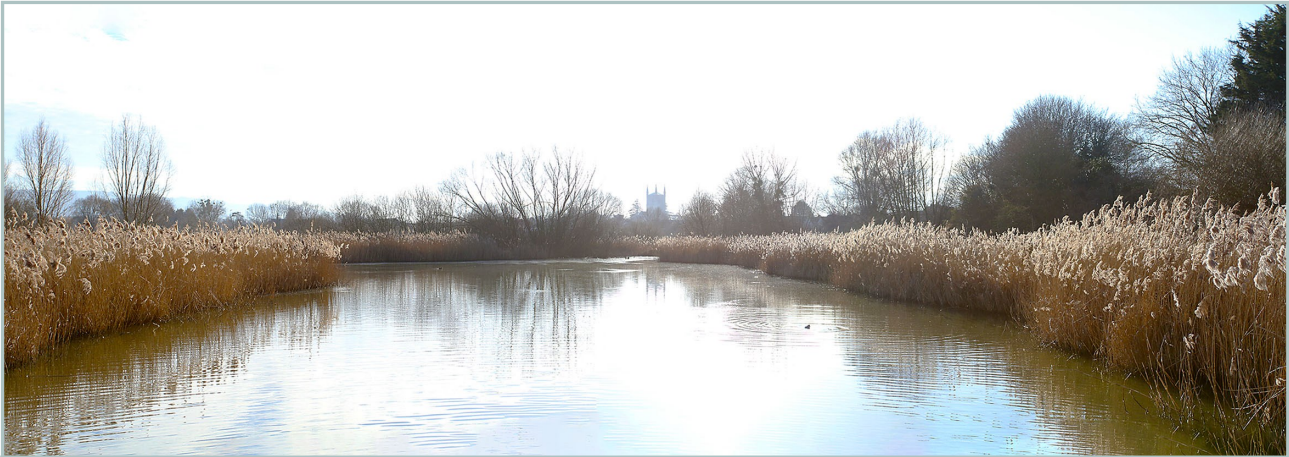




Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows



A sunny afternoon in early February. No duckweed for the moment!

Photo: Richard Stott

Newsletter No: 50

January 2023

Progress on the Wetland

We are in the quiet winter period for activity on Avon Meadows. The sheep were moved off before Christmas leaving the grass nicely eaten down. This serves to weaken the grass to give flowers a better chance to thrive.

Wychavon DC has issued tenders for outstanding contractors' works with a view to starting in early April.

The work will involve replacing the two footbridges (already removed) with culverts to provide a flat walking surface above and putting gravel in the muddy gateways among other things.

We welcome Andy Miller and Graham Avison as a new Committee members of the Friends of Avon Meadows.

Quite a lot of work is going on in the background, more of which will appear later issues of this Newsletter.

Those of you who have visited Avon Meadows recently may have noticed some small bronze sculptures. See p.2 for more information,

Cleaning up Avon Meadows

It is a sad reflection on modern society that some people think they have a right to scatter their litter everywhere.

We are planning a sociable morning of gentle litter picking on Avon Meadows in a few weeks time.

Please put this date in your diaries:

**Saturday, 4th March 2023, starting at 10:00am.**

We will meet on the field outside Cherry Orchard House. Please do come along to help keep our wonderful wetland clean and tidy!

We expect to work for a couple of hours provided the weather is not too awful! Please let Richard know (richarddestott@gmail.com) if you plan to attend so that we can look out for you.

Members Photographs



This excellent photograph of Cetti's Warbler was taken on Avon Meadows in the last couple of weeks. Care and patience are necessary to get a good photograph of this skulking species.

Photo: Lloyd Evans

Facebook Page

FoAM now has its own Facebook page! Unsurprisingly it has the name "Friends of Avon Meadows". There are other pages with similar names but this is the only one run by FoAM.

The page depends on all of us contributing so please do not hesitate to send in pictures or sightings. This is for all our members to communicate about our wonderful meadows.

## Meadows Arts Projects



The charming small bronze sculptures, 20 in all, have been dotted around Avon Meadows very recently. They were designed and created by young people from the Pershore Riverside Youth Centre. The sculptures were inspired by the hidden wildlife of the meadows and are artistic interpretations of what the artists observed. They were first carved in wax and then sent away to be cast in bronze using the 'lost wax' process which allows very accurate reproduction of the original wax models.



## Surveys and Sightings

### BIRDS

#### Weekly Bird Count

At this time of year the main species recorded are birds. The Thursday counts since the last Newsletter have averaged 41 species. The overall species count for 2022 was a rather modest 96 species. We have to go back to 2016 since we had a count as low as that. The reasons for this are not clear although weather doubtless played its part. It is too early to be overly concerned.

#### Review of 2022

At this stage it is not clear what impact the weather or reed burning had on our bird species count. Generally the number of birds recorded was OK, it was just the variety of species that was below average.

Some of the 'missing' species are rare on Avon Meadows but water birds were down probably because the scrape was dry for much of the year. Of the waterbirds listed last time, Gadwall, Golden Plover and Redshank did appear later on. None of the passerines listed were recorded during the year.

Other species that passed us by were Hobby, although seen in the area, and Great Black-backed Gull,

2023 has started off well and January has seen us recording 63 species already, the third best month on record.

#### Interesting or Unusual Species

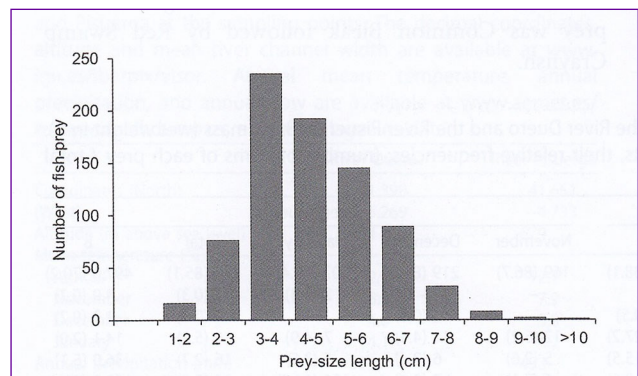
The first **Cattle Egret** for Avon Meadows flew over on 20 December. This is a species whose number has slowly been increasing in the UK in recent years. As their name implies, they are frequently found in the company of large ruminants (e.g. cattle). It is our 135<sup>th</sup> bird species.

The **Barn Owls** used one of our owl nest boxes to breed and bring up their young this year. They provided a dramatic site as they glided silently over the North Meadow in the evening hunting for food for their young. They were remarkably efficient at doing this, 5 voles were caught while we watched over a 30 minute period.

#### Avian Influenza

A young Mute Swan and a Canada Goose were found dead and partially eaten in the late autumn. In neither case is it certain how they met their end but bird 'flu is a possibility. Bird 'flu is still very much with us so be careful not to let your dog attempt to eat any dead birds and it can transfer to mammals. If you do find a large swan or duck dead and suspect it may have died from bird 'flu, it is a notifiable animal disease and you should report it to DEFRA using its hotline, 03000 200 301.

#### Kingfishers



A graph showing the lengths of fish eaten by Kingfishers.

**Kingfishers (continued)**

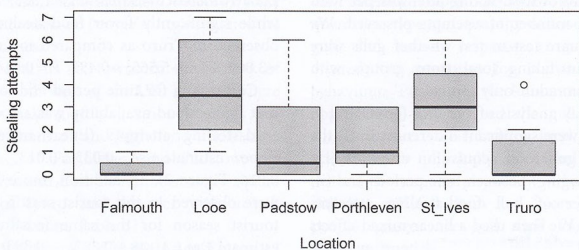
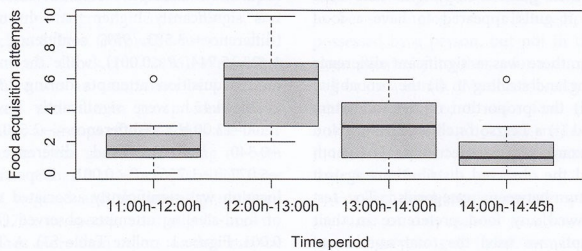
The graph was part of a recent research paper published by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) investigating what Common Kingfishers in Spain would eat as the native fish were replaced by fish from other places.

The answer was that they ate what was, there provided it was within the size range they could manage!

**Herring Gull food theft**

The graphs below are included for amusement. Another BTO study looked at Herring Gulls stealing tourists ice creams etc on the English south coast. The purpose was to see if the gulls selected favourite foods or took anything they could get. They took anything they could get!

The graphs below compared where and when they took food. As you can see from these graphs, it is a bad idea to eat your fish and chips outside between 12:00 and 2:00pm in Looe!!!



**MAMMALS**

Roe Deer continue to be reported on the meadows from time to time, as are Foxes.

A European Otter was seen on the river on 25 January which is especially good as they see off the Minks!

There has been an unconfirmed report of a large black cat on Avon Meadows seen at around 8:45am.

**MOTHS**

The Angle Shades is a moth that has been recorded on Avon Meadows from time to time.

A friend noticed something was eating her chrysanthemums but could not find the culprit. Moth caterpillars often feed at night so an investigating later with a torch revealed green caterpillars. A lot of moths have green caterpillars so it was not clear what species of caterpillar it was.

A caterpillar was taken and put in a container with breathing holes and chrysanthemums and a small pot of earth as many moth caterpillars bury themselves to pupate beneath the earth. A few weeks later this moth appeared so the caterpillar below is an Angle Shades moth caterpillar.



A wonderful image of a Water Rail taken on 7 February. It was one of two having a noisy argument. Water Rails are more often heard than seen as they normally inhabit the middle of reed beds. Their call is reminiscent of a squealing piglet!  
Photo: Lloyd Evans



This Bullfinch is an uncommon find on Avon Meadows. We seem to only discover one or two each year. This one turned up behind Cherry Orchard School on a sunny Thursday morning during the regular bird count.  
Photo: Jeff Steady ARPS

## 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!**

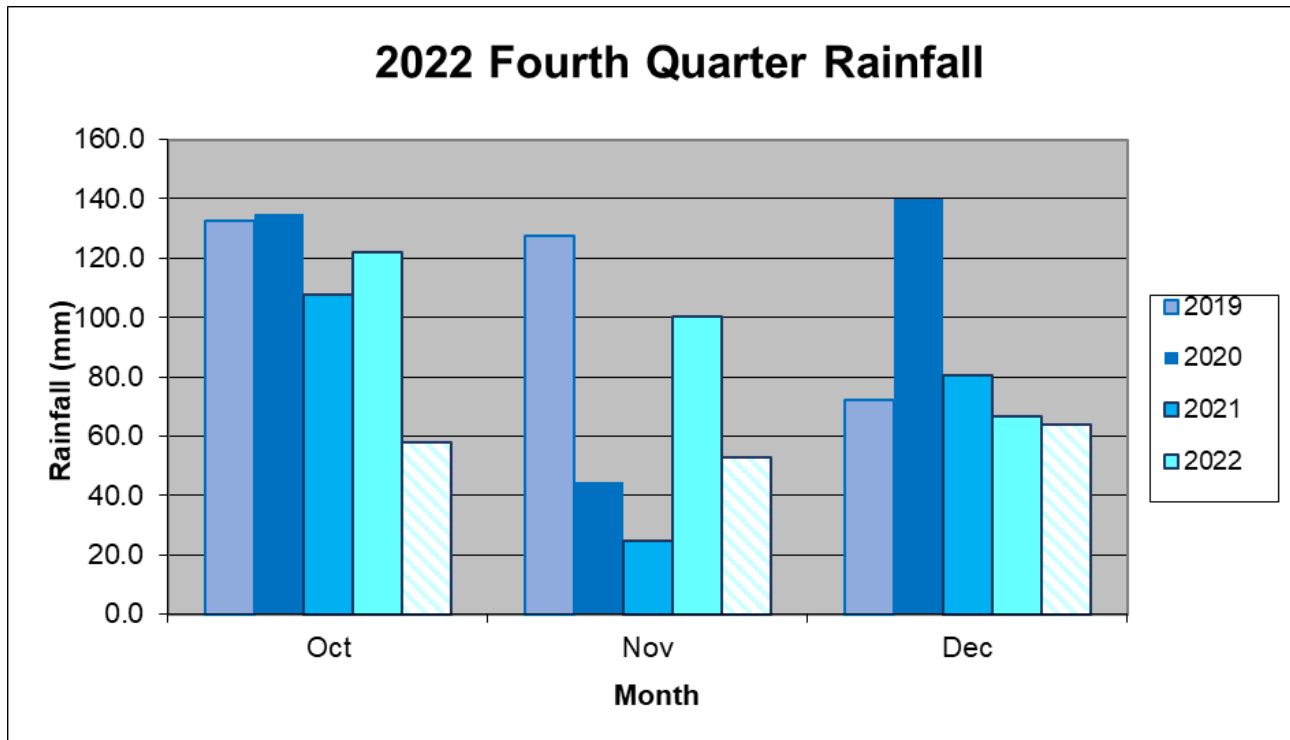
We are always on the lookout for new and interesting photographs to put in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of it. We are trying to increase the number of photographers who provide photographs for the Newsletter.

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



The scrape has had plenty of water since October although it is only recently the paths on Avon Meadows became muddy to walk on. January had close to the average rainfall for that month.

## 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/>.

**Facebook Page**

Friends of Avon Meadows

**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](mailto: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.