



The main pool taken on 20 April 2023.

Photo: Richard Stott

# NEWSLETTER

## Contents

- From the Chairman ..... 1
- Members' Photographs..... 1
- Progress on the Wetland..... 1-2
- Science Section ..... 2-3
- Surveys & Sightings ..... 3-5
  - Birds ..... 3-4
  - Butterflies ..... 4
  - Mammals ..... 4-5
- Water Levels ..... 5
- Notices ..... 5
- Membership Application/Renewal ... 6

### From the Chairman

This Newsletter starts off on a sad note. One of our founder members, Frank Round, died in February after a long and debilitating illness. Frank was a proud Black Country man and would lapse into dialect from time to time to confuse us Worcestershire types. He added a practical touch to Committee meetings and was a stalwart of our work parties, willingly taking on the hardest tasks. He will be much missed and our sympathy goes to his family.

This month sees the first of our new look Newsletters. The plan is to make make a change after 50 issues, to make it attractive and readable. I hope you like it! It will remain as a quarterly publication as at present with colour schemes representing the seasons. We will continue to use plenty of your photographs taken on Avon Meadows so please do send them in. Mostly birds this time but we can only show what we get sent!

### Members' Photographs

**Male Reed Bunting.** Photo Craig Wright.

This excellent photograph was taken in early April on Avon Meadows and shows the bird eating seeds from a reed head (*Phragmites australis*) to built up its strength for the spring. They are a familiar sight in and around the reed beds during the spring and summer. Female Reed Buntings are designed for camouflage on the nest and look rather like sparrows!



### Progress on the Wetland

Most unfortunately, the recent wet weather has delayed the work contractors were due to start in March on Avon Meadows. Added to this costs have doubled in recent months so that additional funding must be found. This work includes replacing unsafe bridges beside the





The scrape taken on 20 April 2023.

Photo: Richard Stott

## Contact Details

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

**Website**

www.avonmeadows.org.uk

**Facebook**

friendsofauonmeadows

## Progress on the Wetland (continued)

river, putting gravel in muddy gateways beside the river and repairing the boardwalk.

A few weeks ago, volunteers cut back a lot of scrub in an area where Marsh-marigolds are known to grow. This work has two benefits, it encourages the Marsh-marigold to flourish and it also allows people walking by on the boardwalk to enjoy the flowers. They flower quite early in the year and are in flower now.

More recently, a group of volunteers battled their way through the wet reed beds to inspect the Sand Martin bank beside the main pool. Unfortunately the timing followed the wettest March since 1981 when two and a half times the average rainfall descended! They discovered that high winds had removed the roof and this will have to be re-fitted and more securely fixed when it is a bit drier.

## Science Section

This section was informally introduced in the previous Newsletter with graphs about gulls stealing food at coastal resorts and what kingfishers ate. Appropriate items will be included in this section when relevant to species or situations that occur on Avon Meadows. The idea is to provide useful and accessible information for our members. Unusually, we have 3 new websites to introduce in this issue.

### PLANT ATLAS

The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) has recently published an atlas of the

overwhelming majority of plants and ferns in Britain and Ireland. This work is published in two volumes which cost £94.99!

DO NOT WORRY! The complete work and more is available for free on the website which is excellent. Sign in to [www.plantatlas2020.org](http://www.plantatlas2020.org) then click the 'Atlas' tab at the top of the page. Where it says "Search for a taxon" box at the top of this new page start typing in the name of the plant you want to check, a drop-down menu of plant names will appear and select the one you want; a distribution map will appear. Then experiment



Marsh-marigolds in early April.

Photo: Richard Stott





↑ Mute Swan at nest (5 eggs)

Val Wood



↑ Blackcap (male)

Lloyd Evans



↑ Blue Tit

Craig Wright



↑ A crystal clear shot of one of our resident Common Buzzards over Avon Meadows.

Photo: Steve McLaren

## Science Section (continued)

with the options available. For example if you click the top box and select 'Tetrad Frequency' the dots on the map will change to show the number of records in each map square and give a good idea of where the plant is common and where it is scarce.

(NOTE: A tetrad is a map square measuring 2 Km by 2 Km).

### BIRD FACTS

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) has just launched a new interactive website which brings together data accumulated over 90 years of monitoring. This is a wonderful resource covering the majority of bird species that have ever visited the British Isles. You can find it at [www.bto.org/birdfacts](http://www.bto.org/birdfacts). Information on particular species may be found by typing the name into the search box.

For example, if you type Cetti's Warbler you will see that the UK population of this species began to rapidly increase from 2013 which was the year one was first found on Avon Meadows.

### WEST MIDLANDS MOTH ATLAS

The West Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation has created a web-based atlas for all moths so far recorded in the West Midlands. The basic atlas can be accessed on [www.westmidlandsmoths.co.uk](http://www.westmidlandsmoths.co.uk). (More detailed information is available by subscribing £20 per year and becoming a "Golden Cinnabar" member). The opening page has a box at the top right to type in the name of the moth you are checking on, suggestions are made as you type and you just click on the name you are searching.



↑ Cetti's Warbler Craig Wright

It is surprising how different the same species looks in different lighting. Note that both photographs are taken using natural light only.

↓ Cetti's Warbler Lloyd Evans



## Surveys and Sightings

### BIRDS

#### STOP PRESS!!!

On 4 May, an injured **Mute Swan** was found on the main pool. It was rescued and taken to the Vale Wildlife Hospital where it was found to have been shot in the head with a BB air gun! We are pleased to report that the bird is responding well. More news in the next Newsletter.

#### Thursday Bird Count:

An enthusiastic band of bird watchers turn out in all weathers on Thursday mornings helping to

bring our total species count to date this year to 89 which puts 2023 a little above average for the year. The average weekly species count over the period since the last Newsletter has been 40 species.

Our winter visitors have left to go north to their breeding grounds. The last **Fieldfare** 7 February, **Meadow Pipit** 12 March, **Stonechat** was seen on 20 February and **Redwing** 16 March.

On 16 Feb two **Great Black-backed Gulls** flew over, last seen on 11 March 2021. A **Redpoll** turned up on 19 Feb last seen on 1 October 2021 and a pair of





↑ **Common Greenshank** taken on the scrape on 28 April. This is the first sighting on Avon Meadows since 8 May 2019.

*Photo: Jeff Steady ARPS*

The Chiffchaff is a common summer bird and a small number of them spend the winter on Avon Meadows too.

*Photo: Steve McLaren*

## Surveys & Sightings (continued)

**Siskins** were discovered in the carpark on 2 March, these were last seen on 3 February 2022.

Occasionally we see big numbers of birds flying over Avon Meadows. For example on 9 February a flock of about 1200 **Lapwing** flew by and on the same day a flock 150 **Golden Plover** flew over.

Wading birds have been scarce in recent years but helped by the amount of water in the scrape this winter we have recorded a **Green Sandpiper** on 13 April and a **Common Sandpiper** and a **Little Ringed Plover** on 4 May.

Summer species arrived apace in the last week of April. The first **Cuckoo** was heard on 23 April, always a cheerful sign of spring.

There have been **Blackcaps** and **Chiffchaffs** present for much of the winter but their numbers have been boosted by arrivals from the south, here for the summer. Summer specialists have also arrived led by a **Willow Warbler** on 1 April soon followed by **Reed**, **Sedge** and **Garden Warblers**, **Common** and **Lesser Whitethroats** and several **Common Grasshopper Warblers**. The latter bred on

Avon Meadows two years ago and we are crossing our fingers that they may again this year.

**Cetti's Warblers** are holding up to 7 territories and **Water Rails** are heard from the middle of the reed beds from time to time.

May 6th saw the West Midlands All-day event where bird watchers across the region try to see as many species as possible in one day. One of our experienced observers managed to log 52 species over the day which is very creditable score.

Among our resident breeding species, a **Tawny Owl** has been heard on the meadows each month this year and a **Barn Owl** has been seen from time to time over the North Meadow. A little away from Avon Meadows, there is a pair of **Peregrine Falcons** on Pershore Abbey making use of their handsome new platform.

### Unusual or Interesting Birds:

On 11 April a **Little Egret** was seen on the scrape at 9h30 in the morning, the first one this year. More astonishingly, on 26 April no less than 9 **Goosanders** were seen on the river

near Piddle Brook. Usually we only get brief views of single **Goosanders** flying over. The **Greenshank** photographed at the head of this page was an exciting find on 28 April adding to our wader count. It was quite cooperative and stayed around for most of the day allowing a number of people to see and photograph it.

### **BUTTERFLIES**

A **Peacock** on 19 February was a new early record. In spite of the changeable weather butterflies have begun to appear, those having been recorded to date are **Brimstone**, Small **White**, **Orange-tip**, **Holly Blue**, Small **Tortoiseshell**, **Comma** and **Speckled Wood**. They are all a little later than in previous years.

### **FLOWERS**

**Ladies Smock** and **Marsh-marigolds** (Kingcups) were both first seen about a week later than last year. The meadows are beginning to fill with **Creeping Buttercups** which provide a wonderful spectacle each spring.

### **MAMMALS**

Most of the small holes dug on the meadows

## NOTICES

IF ANYONE KNOWS THE NAMES OF BOYS USING BB AIRGUNS WE WOULD BE VERY INTERESTED TO KNOW. YOUR NAME WOULD BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL!

## WORCESTERSHIRE RECORDERS

The Worcestershire Recorders is a volunteer group of expert naturalists that carry out and promote wild life recording in the county. In the past they have helped on Avon Meadows by taking part in Bioblitz events when we all go to Avon Meadows to see what different species of any living thing we can find in a single day.

They produce a biannual journal, the Worcestershire Record, free to members and carry out a number of site surveys each year.

Membership costs £24 per year for which you get the Worcestershire Record, can attend the Annual Meeting which always has notable speakers and can attend the survey days.

If you would like more information get in touch with Richard at richarddestott@gmail.com.

### PERHAPS YOU CAN HELP?

If you have interesting photographs taken on Avon Meadows we may be able to use them in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of the Newsletter. We are always looking for new photographers to provide photographs for the Newsletter.

Please send the original, unedited, picture file, taken on Avon Meadows.

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

Contact: richarddestott@gmail.com

### NEW MEMBERS

If you know anyone who would like to become a member of the Friends of Avon Meadows all we need is a name and eMail address.



The Dunnock (once called Hedge Sparrow) is resident on Avon Meadows. Photo: Steve McLaren



A male Reed Bunting takes a variety of food including insects. Photo: Steve McLaren

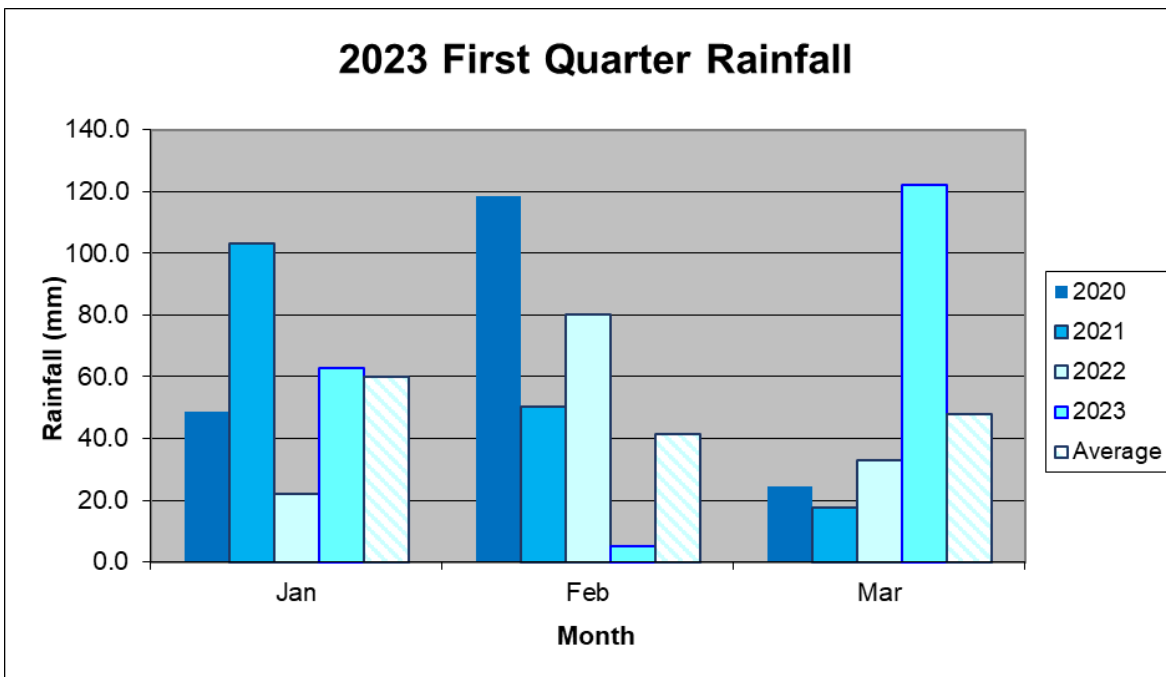
## Surveys & Sightings (continued)

were dug by **Badgers** in search of worms!

A **Roe Deer** was seen on the scrape on 9 March where they seem to like grazing on the young reed shoots.

A **Muntjac** was seen recently but to the delight of the observer, two **Otters** were seen at 'the beach' on 14 March, quite a surprise at such a popular spot.

## Water Levels



We are told that one of the likely features of climate change is more extreme weather. Looking at the rainfall figures they show this year had almost no rain in February and two and a half times the average rainfall in March. The average monthly figures are between 40mm and 60mm. Quite something for the animals and plants to have to deal with on Avon Meadows!

The high rainfall figures have resulted in some flooding on Avon Meadows, particularly in the North Meadow which gets flooded when Piddle Brook bursts its banks. The whole of the meadows is water-logged to a greater or lesser degree resulting in ducks grazing in the meadows. On the plus side, it does mean that the scrape has plenty of water in it.



Pershore's Community Wetland and Local Nature Reserve  
[www.avonmeadows.org.uk](http://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 [avonmeadowspershore@gmail.com](mailto:avonmeadowspershore@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.