



NEWSLETTER

The main pool taken on 2 August 2023, dark skies hinting at the weather. Note the presence of Duckweed, now pushed to the southern end of the pool by the prevailing northerly wind .

Photo: Richard Stott

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From the Chairman

Many of you will be aware that a Mute Swan was shot in the head with a BB gun on Avon Meadows. Quick action by one of the Friends ensured it was taken very quickly to the Vale Wildlife Hospital at Beckford where I am delighted to report it has recovered well. Following its return to Avon Meadows it spent a few days there but since then has moved off and not been seen since. Our thanks go out to the staff at the Vale Wildlife Hospital.

An important task that is underway at the moment is the development of the new 5-year Management Plan. This will set out the way Avon Meadows will be managed for wildlife and will form part of any Government funding we may receive.

We are planning to hold the much delayed Members' Forum in November to discuss the draft plan and to hear your views (see [Upcoming Events](#) section on p.5).

We are also planning a Bioblitz on the scrape at the end of August when we will try to record as many species as possible on an area which is normally closed to the public. This should be an interesting day for all who can come along. (see [Upcoming Events](#) section on p.5).

Finally, do let us know if you have friends or meet people who would like to join the Friends of Avon Meadows. All we need is a name and eMail address.

Members' Photographs

This lovely photograph of a Coot was taken by Steve McLaren. Coots are a common species but with care and creativity it is surprising what an attractive image can be made of a common species.

Coots were once a regular sight on Avon Meadows but in recent years their number has fallen. The reasons for this are unclear but one factor may be lower water levels in the breeding season .





The scrape taken on 2 August 2023. As the pools dry up in summer abundant growth takes over. The plan is for volunteers to cut most of the growth back in early autumn to encourage water birds to use it in winter.
Photo: Richard Stott

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Progress on the Wetland

As you will be aware, our AGM took place on 5 July 2023. The Trustees were all re-elected for another year as were the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. Many thanks for having faith in us and we shall try to live up to it!

The AGM was followed by a delightful presentation of photographs taken on Avon Meadows by Jeff Steady and Steve McLaren. Many thanks to them.

Wychavon DC's contractors have undertaken the first path clearance cut. This did not turn out quite as we would like and future cuts should be more in tune with the needs of visitors. Please be patient!

Volunteer work parties continue with a closer focus on habitat maintenance work. For example, the area behind Cherry Orchard was part-cleared to favour the spectacular Marsh-marigolds that grow there. Repairs to the bird screen have been completed and anti-climb paint applied to the roof to discourage

youngsters from climbing on top. This is not because we are kill-joys but the roof is not designed to carry the weight of people on top of it so it is for their safety this has been done. Volunteers have a programme of work and other tasks are planned for the rest of the year, the biggest one will be to clear the scrape.

Another litter-pick was organised on 6 August which was very successful. Many thanks for all those who turned out to help keep the wetlands looking good.

Severn Trent has fixed two water sampling points (see photograph on p.3) on Avon Meadows recently that will automatically sample the water quality. They have been positioned at an outfall into the river and a few metres downstream of the outfall.

The haycut has been delayed this year due to the wet weather. It took place, at last, on 8 August about one month later than we would have liked.

Science Section

CHAFFINCH

Although this entry does not particularly apply to the birds that occur on Avon Meadows it may be of interest, If you see a Chaffinch when you are on holiday note that our familiar Chaffinch species is to be broken up (split) into no less than 5 species

as follows:

- Common Chaffinch in the UK.
- African Chaffinch in North Africa.
- Azores Chaffinch in the Azores islands.
- Madeira Chaffinch on Madeira island.
- Canary Islands Chaffinch in the Canary Islands.



↑ Volunteers cleared the benches of nettles.



↑ Warning sign on the bird screen. <Photos>: Richard Stott



↑ Severn Trent water sampling.



↑ An excellent image of a Small Tortoiseshell butterfly. Their caterpillars feed on nettles!
Photo: Robert Edwards



↑ A Drinker Moth caterpillar found during a Thursday bird count.
Photo: Richard Stott



↑ Above is a duck, note the much more speckled back and dark bill.

At this time of year Mallard ducks (females) and drakes (males) look rather similar as they are in their non-breeding (eclipse) plumage.

Below is a drake, not the plainer back, the beginnings of grey flight feathers and a yellowish bill.



Science Section (continued)

CUCKOOS

Several studies from the BTO and elsewhere have shown alarming declines in species that breed in the Britain and winter in West Africa. However, these declines are less severe in migratory species that have adjusted the timing of their arrival back to their UK breeding grounds to keep pace with ever earlier Northern Hemisphere springs. One species that has not shifted is the Cuckoo.

Using data from 87 adult Cuckoos tagged as part of

the BTO's Cuckoo Tracking Project it was found, surprisingly, the timing of departure from their wintering grounds in the Congo rainforest has little effect on their arrival time in the Britain. Indeed, birds leaving the Congo earlier tend to arrive in the Britain later, so not compensating for the earlier spring! It seems likely that one reason for this is that the arrival of the rains in that part of West Africa is not changing, so the food Cuckoos need to cross the Sahara, is simply not available earlier so they to wait for it to arrive.

Surveys and Sightings

There have been several records since the last Newsletter of species new to Avon Meadows as described later. Our total species count is now 1,177! With this high total, it is becoming more difficult to find things that have not been seen before, they are there though. Perhaps our Bioblitz will find something new!!!

BIRDS

We have recorded 94 species on Avon Meadows so far this year, which is about average. Weekly counts have been down on previous years although the reasons are uncertain. **Little Egrets** have flown over a couple of times and there have been 3 sightings of **Common Terns**, a high count for this species. **Cuckoos** have departed now, the last one being seen on 6 July. Cuckoo activity on Avon Meadows seemed to be less than in previous years but Avon Meadows remains one of the best

places to see Cuckoos in the county.

As for breeding species, there was great excitement when a young **Tawny Owl** turned up. We were fairly sure that they did breed on Avon Meadows as they are heard regularly throughout the year but it is always nice to be sure. **Barn Owls** have been seen from time to time but probably have not bred with us this year.

The summer visitors have been reliable with both **Sedge** and **Reed Warblers** being present in number. **Common Whitethroats** are usually regular breeders on Avon Meadows and **Lesser Whitethroats** simply pass through. This year the situation was reversed and at least one pair of Lesser Whitethroats nested and possibly no Common Whitethroats!

As for our resident species, **Cetti's Warblers** have

UPCOMING EVENTS

BIOBLITZ

We normally do not enter the scrape, keeping it for wildlife only. However this year we are planning a "Bioblitz" when members can enter the area for one afternoon to record every species of wildlife we can find. It will be great fun and we will all learn something!

It is scheduled for the afternoon of **Thursday, 31 August 2023 starting at 2:00pm**. Just come along and we look forward to seeing you there!

MEMBERS' FORUM

We have been promising a Member's Forum for too long now but at last we have a date. Recently the Committee has been developing a new Management Plan for the next 5 years which sets out the aims for the wildlife management for Avon Meadows. This will be an opportunity to hear some of the ideas we have in mind and to let us have your ideas too. We do not have all the good ideas!!!

This event is planned for the evening of **Thursday, 30 November 2023 starting at 6:30pm**. Do come along!

PERHAPS YOU CAN HELP?

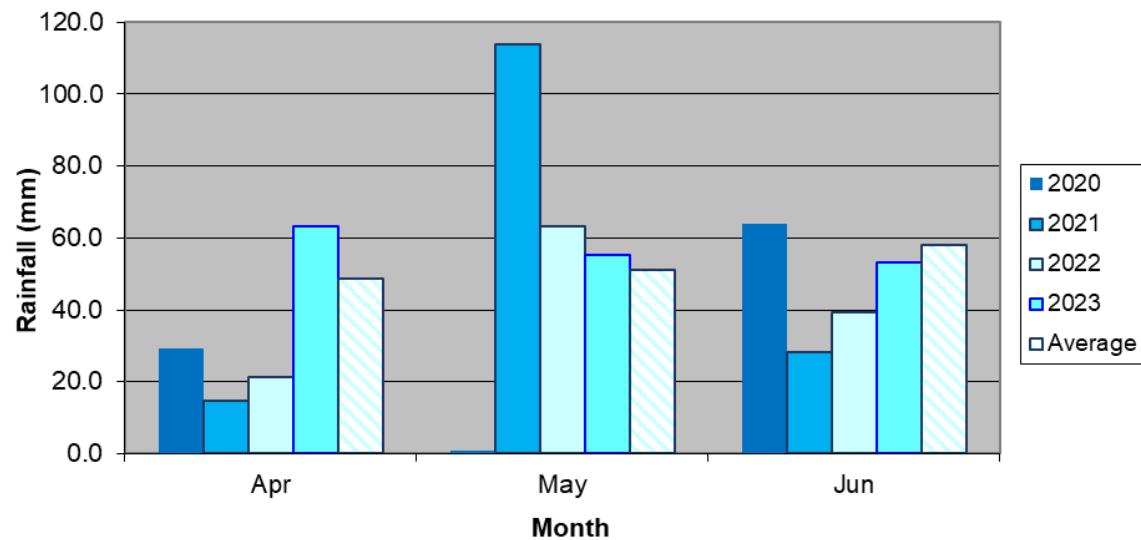
If you have interesting photographs taken on Avon Meadows we may be able to use them in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of the Newsletter. We are always looking for new photographers to send us photographs.

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

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.

2023 Second Quarter Rainfall



First, please note that the bar for May 2020 is there but we only have 0.8mm of rain during that month! The following year we had over double (233%) the average for the month. Nature has a way of levelling things out so both years were about 20% wetter than average on Avon Meadows

Surveys and Sightings (continued)

done well and at least one pair of **Water Rails** bred. Two pairs of **Linnets** nested but neither **Willow Warblers** nor **Grasshopper Warblers** stayed to breed. So we now await autumn and the arrival of migrants and winter visitors.

BUTTERFLIES

The wet July meant that counts early in the season were down. However, both **Common Blue** and **Brown Argus** have been recorded something that does not happen every year. **Small** and **Large Skippers** have been seen but in small numbers and just one **Marbled White** turned up.

MAMMALS

Several **Water Shrews** have been recorded which is good for a rather locally distributed species. A **Roe Deer** died trying to jump a barbed wire fence just north of Avon Meadows which was a very sad sight. **European Otters** have been seen in the river and recently a single **Mink** was seen. The latter are bad news as they feed on ground nesting birds.

MOTHS

Only one mothing session has been possible so far this year, the unseasonable and variable weather making it difficult to plan ahead. This did produce one new species for Avon Meadows, the **Box Moth**

Cydalima perspectalis. This is an attractive micro moth introduced to this county from SE Asia presumably on imported plants.

The rather spectacular caterpillar of the **Emperor Moth** was found recently on brambles. Two were found about this time last year.

Another new moth was discovered by careful observation of White Campion. The **Campion** moth caterpillar feeds on the seeds of several species of campion entering the seed capsule by making a small hole. This brings our total moth count to 405 species.

OTHER INSECTS

A **Hornet's** nest has been located in the top of the southernmost dead tree south of the tilting weir.

A **Hawthorn Shieldbug** nymph (young form) *Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale* was round during a Committee site visit last week. This is new for Avon Meadows. (photograph on p.5)

One frustration was a **Flesh Fly** photographed in July. Although quite common it was only recently recorded on Avon Meadows. It is one of a closely related group in the genus *Sarcophaga* that can only be identified to species level by microscope examination and dissection. (photograph on p.5)



↑ Grey-haired Mining Bee taken with an iPhone showing what is possible with simple photographic equipment.

Photo: Richard Stott



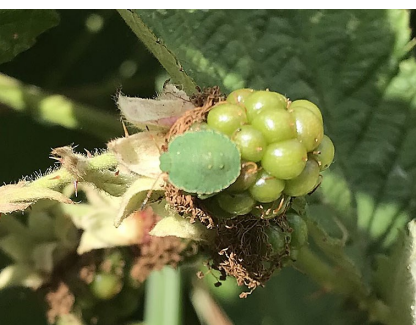
↑ Dock Bug, not an uncommon species on Avon Meadows.

Photo: Jayne Lewis



↑ Cucumber Spider species. Note the red spot on the tip of the abdomen.

Photo: Trevor Hyde



↑ Nymph of a Hawthorn Shield Bug, new to Avon Meadows.

iPhone photo: Richard Stott



↑ Flesh Fly species, newly recorded on Avon Meadows.

iPhone photo: Richard Stott



↑ Female Wolf Spider species carrying an egg sac.

iPhone photo: Richard Stott

Surveys and Sightings (continued)

OTHER INSECTS

It is always interesting when members send in photographs. An excellent example above is a **Dock Bug** which is a type of shield bug, These are adult insects and have taken on their characteristic shape from which they take their name. They are common on Avon Meadows and are apparently spreading in England.

I have included the image of the male **Grey-haired (or Ashy) Mining Bee** *Andrena cineraria* because it has come out rather well and shows what can be easily achieved using a mobile phone. This handsome insect is widespread in England and first recorded on Avon Meadows on 28 May 2019.

SPIDERS

Spiders get a bad press as the ultimate “creepy crawly” but are in fact a very interesting group. Some are easy to identify but others difficult requiring specialist knowledge and microscopic examination.

Both the spiders illustrated here are easy to put into a group but difficult to decide which member of that group they are. It is frustrating in that both are newly recognised on Avon Meadows but we cannot actually decide which member of the group they are!

The small green spider (top right) belongs to the genus *Araniella* known as **Cucumber Spiders**, of

which there are 5 species in Britain. The most likely here are two of these species are common and widespread but are thought to hybridise.

The second spider recorded recently is a species of **Wolf Spider** of the genus *Pardosa* of which 15 occur in Britain. They are called Wolf Spiders because they do not spin webs but chase their prey down. On Avon Meadows they can be found around the tops of the dipwells where there is a small depression in the ground which is free of vegetation and often damp. The females (as photographed) often carry their eggs in a pale coloured sac.

WILDFLOWERS

It is pleasing to note that our wild flower introduction efforts of recent years are proving worthwhile. **Yellow-rattle** has been evident for several years now and is an important plant to establish as it is semi-parasitic in taking some of the nutrients it needs from nearby grasses thereby weakening the grasses making it easier for flowers to flourish.

Other flowers that have become apparent due to our plug planting efforts are **Bird's-foot Trefoil**, **Common Knapweed** and **Ox-eye Daisy**,

On a not so happy note **Himalayan Balsam** has arrived again and will have to be removed as it is an alien invasive species.

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 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: _____

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