



NEWSLETTER

The main pool taken on 3 November 2023, just before the arrival of Storm Ciaran. The duckweed is particularly thick this year. *Photo: Richard Stott*

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From the Chairman

Our Wychavon Project Officer, Liz Etheridge, has undergone important surgery which means she has been away from work for some time. I am sure you will all be pleased to learn that she is making steady progress but getting back to normal but it will still take a while.

She is the key person in drawing together our new Management Plan and although discussions as to its content are well advanced it is not yet in a form that we can present for discussion.

I therefore have to apologise once again as this will mean a further delay in our planned Members' Forum. It was important that Liz had this surgery and it is just unfortunate that it has come at this

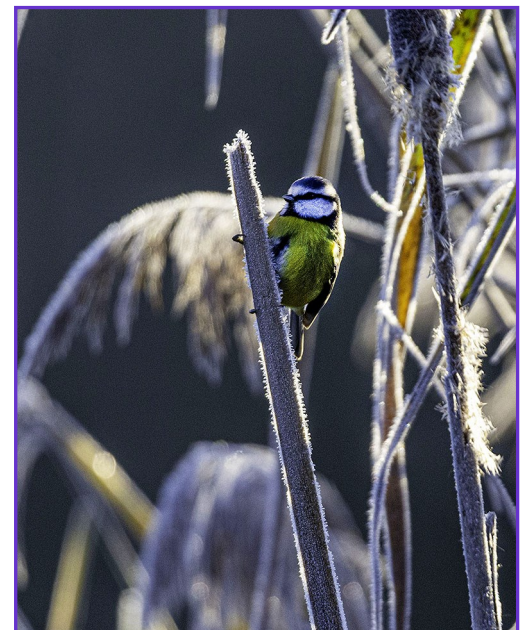
time. We will keep you posted of a new date for the Forum. In the meantime we must ask for your forbearance.

Recent visitors to the Meadows will have noted that Wychavon's contractors have started keeping the paths clear. This is all part of a body of work that it is taking on. Things are not quite perfect yet but the contractor gain experience and get a good idea of what we need.

We held a Bioblitz at the end of August on the scrape taking the opportunity to see what we could identify there while it was dry and any nesting birds had gone. It turned out to be a very successful event (see below).

Members' Photographs

A rather different kind of photograph this time from the camera of **Steve McLaren**. A familiar bird, a Blue Tit, on reeds in early morning sunshine. So, not just a simple bird photograph but one that cleverly introduces atmosphere and an indication of the bird's behaviour. This species is agile and climbs on twigs and in this case a reed stem in search of insects.





The scrape taken on 3 November 2023. The volunteers have cleared much of the area of summer growth but the rain in late October prevented further work. The growth needs to be cut back each autumn to leave clear pools and islands for winter waterbirds. *Photo: Richard Stott*

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Progress on the Wetland

WYCHAVON'S ACTIVITIES

Wychavon DC has taken on most of the path, gate, boardwalk and bridge maintenance on Avon Meadows. Visitors will have noticed that much

VOLUNTEERS' ACTIVITIES

Himalayan Balsam is an invasive plant which has no place in the countryside. The seeds get washed down the River Avon so it has to be removed each year. Happily it is fairly easy to pull up.

During the summer bramble shoots grow at an amazing speed. Volunteers make regular visits to cut these back so they do not injure visitors.

Before the Bioblitz (see below) the scrape had to have access pathways cut through dense reed growth. This work was carried out on the weekend before the Bioblitz.

By far the largest volunteer task of the autumn is

clearing the scrape so that there will be clear patches of water to attract waterbirds during the winter and spring. The timing for this must be nicely judged to be after breeding birds have left and before the autumn rains arrive to fill the scrape. This work normally takes 3 weekends of hard work to complete. We need to use of our power scythe and brush cutters as well as dedicated people to rake the cut material away.

path clearance has taken place. This will be ongoing work during the growing period. As the contractors gain experience in the details of what needs to be done things will get even better.



Liz battling with a giant Himalayan Balsam plant. *Photo: Sue Comely*

This year the first Saturday in October was warm and sunny and our hard working volunteers made excellent progress. Similarly on the second weekend but by the third weekend the heavens had opened and the meadows were flooded. As so often with work on nature reserves, we will not be able to get onto the scrape to work now for another year as the water birds have taken over and must not be disturbed!



↑ After the bird count, splendid view over the North Meadow.



↑ Elephant Hawk Moth caterpillar walking across the main path!

Science Section

WHITE THISTLES

These Creeping Thistles sprouted after our summer haycut. They appeared on two parts of Avon Meadows for the first time this year. The most likely cause is a bacterial disease *Pseudomonas syringae*. This disease was identified only six years ago in England, in Kent, having been previously identified infecting Creeping Thistle in 2003 in Canada.

Another possibility is the fungus *Phoma macrostoma* which occurs naturally and has a similar effect on the thistle. It is sold commercially as a bioherbicide to kill off weeds. If it is *Phoma macrostoma* then it could kill a wide variety of broad leaved plants on Avon Meadows.

STATE OF NATURE REPORT

The 2023 State of Nature Report for the UK has recently been published, (see www.stateofnature.org.uk)

Unsurprisingly, it paints a gloomy picture for plants and animals in England. For example, it looks at 453 moth species and reveals a reduction in abundance of 44% since 1970 (i.e. 53 years). On average breeding bird abundance has dropped by 16% overall but within this overall figure, farmland bird (many of which use Avon Meadows) abundance has dropped by a staggering 59%!

The significance of quoting mobile species like moths and birds is that they can quickly choose where they want to be so act as an indicator.



↑ Creeping Thistle with unusually pale leaves. Photo: Richard Stott



↑ Migrant Hawker. Photo: Andy Gibbons

Surveys and Sightings

There have been several records of species new to Avon Meadows since the last Newsletter as described below. Our total species count is now 1,200! And the Bioblitz did find new species!

BIOBLITZ

A bioblitz is usually a day-long event where experts arrive to count as many species as possible. As long as it is living, it counts!!! We held our own mini-Bioblitz on 31 August on the scrape over a period of 3 hours. So, a small area for a short time. The scrape is not normally accessible to people but on this afternoon members were invited to locate and identify as many different species of living thing as

possible. The weather was not kind being quite cool with occasional showers which reduced the insect count considerably.

In spite of there being so many factors against us, 108 species were recorded of which 12 were new records for Avon Meadows. Perhaps the most obscure was a fungus, *Puccinia menthae*, that forms a rust-coloured coating on the leaves of Water Mint. We also found a type of fly, impressively named the **Six-spotted Snailkiller!** The event was very successful and we hope to repeat in the future but at a different time of year.



↑ Robin's Pincushion. Photo: Richard Stott





↑ Uncut strips have been left in the meadows this autumn as an experiment. We want to see if there are any differences in the plants that flourish when comparing cut and uncut areas. Photo: Richard Stott

Surveys and Sightings (continued)

BIRDS

We have recorded 98 species on Avon Meadows so far this year, which is about average.

The August counts were surprisingly low in variety although overall numbers were about normal.

However numbers have picked up recently.

Looking at the more unusual sightings, **Little Egrets** and **Common Terns** visited several times in late summer. Perhaps the most interesting sighting for us was of a young **Tawny Owl** spotted by members

of Wychavon DC staff during a visit to the meadows. The owls have been heard in every month over the last two years which is strong evidence of breeding but it is always good to find the actual juveniles. **Cuckoo** activity was perhaps less than normal although there was certainly one pair present. **Common Whitethroats** were hard to find in 2023 whereas **Lesser Whitethroats** were seen frequently, the reverse of previous years.

An American ornithologist visited Avon Meadows early one morning in the third week of September and found 36 species including a **Siskin** and a **Yellow Wagtail** (both passing through). A **Gadwall** flew over in early October, only the second record for 2023. More recently a **Great White Egret** was flushed from the meadow during a Thursday bird count and a pair of **Mandarin Ducks** turned up briefly on the scrape.

BUTTERFLIES

It has been a quiet year for butterflies however it was unusual to see a large influx of **Red Admiral** butterflies in late summer.

DRAGONFLIES

The autumn was enlivened by a good number of **Migrant Hawkets** (see photograph on p.3) and **Common Darters** (red bodies) are still flying on sunny days. As with butterflies, counts have been a little down in recent years.

MOTHS

There have been few opportunities for moth trapping this summer. The **Elephant Hawk Moth** caterpillar was photographed (p.2) crossing the main path in the middle of the day on 14 September. Elephant Hawk Moths are common on Avon Meadows as their caterpillars feed on various species of willowherb of which there is plenty!

ROBIN'S PINCUSHION

I expect many of you have seen these over the years (see photograph on p.3). It is caused by the **Bedeguar Gall Wasp**, *Diplolepis rosae*, which lays its eggs in a rose bud. On Avon Meadow they are normally seen on Dog Roses although other members of the rose family can be affected. This extraordinary growth occurs to protect and feed the young grubs before they emerge as adults in the spring to start the cycle all over again.



↑ A tiny fungus found in early November on grassland. It is a **Pleated Inkcap**, *Coprinus plicatilis* and is quite common. It happens to be the 1200th species to be recorded on Avon Meadows.

Photo: Richard Stott



↑ The underside of the **Pleated Inkcap** (necessary for identification). Photo: Richard Stott

UPCOMING EVENTS

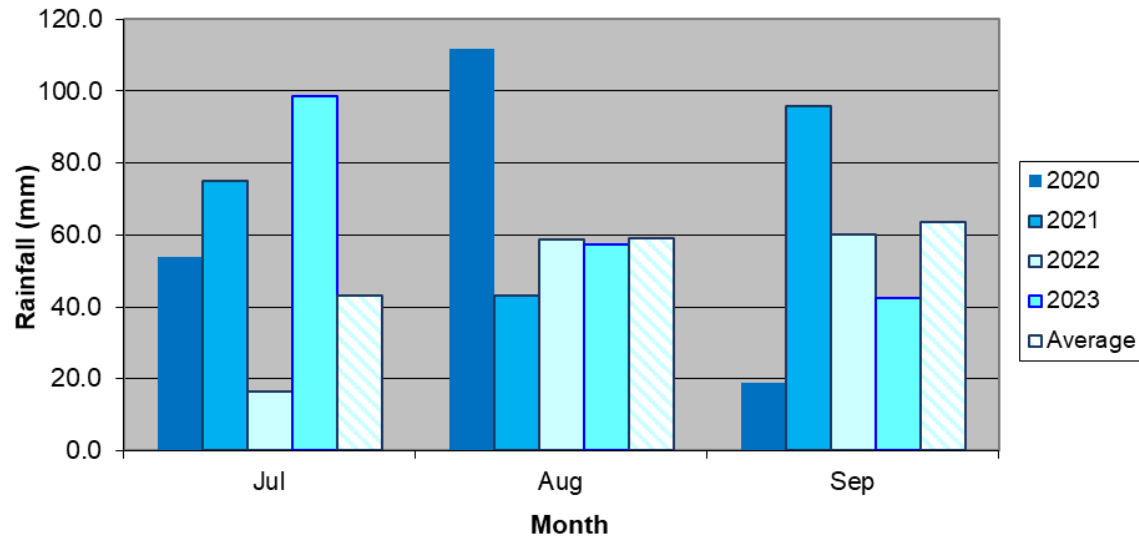
WORCESTERSHIRE RECORDERS

The Worcestershire Recorders new website is very much worth a look.

See it at: [http://](http://www.worcestershiwildliferecorders.org.uk)

www.worcestershiwildliferecorders.org.uk

2023 Third Quarter Rainfall



We seem to be 'enjoying' swings in weather, July was wet with 230% of average rainfall, August average and September fairly dry, 67% average. October was very wet with 244% of average rainfall. Taken altogether though the year is only 12% above average at present.

MEMBERS' FORUM

Delayed until Spring 2024.



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.

The graph above is a screenshot taken from the Government website which shows the river level at Pershore. This is measured continuously and automatically. This screenshot covers the period of the most recent flood event on Avon Meadows. Avon Meadows begins to flood, starting in the South Meadow, once the river level gets much above 3.61 metres.

Note that the highest level every recorded was 6.07 metres on 21 July 2007. Many people in Pershore will have bad memories of that day.

[See: <https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/station/2049>]

Flooding in the North Meadow most often comes when Piddle Brook overflows its banks.

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: _____

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PLEASE TICK THIS BOX IF YOU WOULD LIKE US TO RECEIVE GIFT AID

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.

If you are enjoying Avon Meadows please remember us in your will, it will be put to good use!