



NEWSLETTER

29 January 2024 and the duckweed has gone! A combination of ice and flooding has got rid of it although some is still lurking at the base of the reeds. *Photo: Richard Stott*

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From the Chairman

I am delighted to be able to report that Liz Etheridge is back at work showing that she is fighting fit once more!

We have scheduled the Members' Forum for Friday, 27 September 2024 delaying it further to allow a more fruitful agenda. It will happen!!!

We have two new projects coming up this year for which we will need your help. We are planning to plant wild flower plug plants quite soon and then nurture them through the summer. There is also a plan in progress to begin testing the water quality on Avon Meadows to see how water quality effects our wildlife. Both these projects are really interesting; you do not need any previous

experience but you will gain experience and knowledge in the process so please DO VOLUNTEER! We need your help. For more information see **Volunteers' Activities** on p.2.

Fund raising is always an issue with all charities, particularly small ones like the Friends of Avon Meadows. We are extremely grateful to those of you do make donations. It would be wonderful if more of you could use the back page of this Newsletter to start your donation. All our funds go directly to the benefit of Avon Meadows, we have no overheads.

The page giving web links on our website has been updated—check it out!

Members' Photographs

This exciting shot of a **Roe Deer** was taken by one of our regular photographers, **Jeff Steady ARPS**. It was one of two Roe Deer seen in mid-morning on 1 February 24. They browse fresh shoots on the meadows but seem to spend much of their time in the woods on the other side of the river. This individual is wet from



crossing the river, something they do with ease and without hesitation! They are often seen on the scrape and it is surprising how comparatively large mammals can disappear in the reed beds so that you need really sharp eyes to spot them.



Floods have removed most of the cut reeds volunteers did not have time to remove last October when this photograph was taken on 29 January 2024. *Photo: Richard Stott*

Contact Details

Chairman

Richard Stott
chairman@avonmeadows.org.uk

Secretary

Val Wood
secretary@avonmeadows.org.uk

Treasurer

Bob Gillmor
treasurer@avonmeadows.co.uk

Membership Secretary

Tim Hutton
avonmeadowspershire@gmail.com

Wychavon Wildlife Sites and Project Officer

Liz Etheridge
lizetheridge@wychavon.gov.uk

Committee Members

Graham Avison
Sue Comely
Andy Miller
Charles Tucker
David Wilson

SOCIAL MEDIA

Website

www.avonmeadows.org.uk

Facebook

[friendsofauonmeadows](https://www.facebook.com/friendsofauonmeadows)

Progress on the Wetland

WYCHAVON'S ACTIVITIES

The contract has been let for a large body of work involving repairing/replacing damaged footbridges and laying gravel in muddy gateways.

VOLUNTEERS' ACTIVITIES

Volunteer activity over the winter has been restricted to bird surveys. The unusually wet conditions prevented any further work from taking place.

Training

Several of the volunteers involved with work parties underwent first aid training. This was a very thorough 2-day session organised in conjunction with the Vale Landscape Trust.

Work Party

We are planning to cut scrub in the area where **Marsh Marigolds** grow to encourage these attractive plants and also to prevent them being obscured so that people walking along the boardwalk can enjoy them. We hope that this work can take place before the end of March. We need the ground to be dry to gain access.

Litter Pick (volunteer opportunity)

We are looking for volunteers to collect litter off Avon Meadows at end of March. [If you would like to help please get in touch via the website or our Facebook page.](#)

This work will greatly improve the convenience of visitors to the meadows. There may be still some delay as the meadows are still very wet and the flood season is still with us.



Scrub cutting with 'The Beast' on the scrape in October.

Plug Plant Cultivation (volunteer opportunity)

We have not had much success introducing native wild flowers into the North Meadow and have a plan to improve matters. We plan to clear the growth from a number of small areas in the North Meadow and, with the help of volunteers, plant plugs of particular wild flower species. These will include, Great Burnet, Birds-foot Trefoil and Meadowsweet. Then the volunteers who had planted a particular patch would nurture it through the summer, watering if necessary. [Please get in touch if you are interested.](#) (richarddestott@gmail.com)



↑ The Thursday bird count.

Photo: Steve McLaren



↑ A January afternoon with Mallards.

Photo: Val Wood



↑ Hornet's nest in a dead tree.

Photo: Richard Stott



↑ Hornet's nest detail.

Photo: Jeff Steady ARPS



↑ Red Fox on the scrape.

Photo: Jeff Steady ARPS

VOLUNTEERS' ACTIVITIES (continued)

Water Quality Testing (volunteer opportunity)

Two things started this project off. First, the ever increasing amount of Duckweed on the main pool which we believe is caused by nutrients in the water and second, other volunteer groups are testing the River Avon for pollution.

Our plan is to gather a small rota of volunteers to test water in the pools at weekly intervals

Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

by Liz Etheridge

Avon Meadows features in at least two of the 3 supporting documents that you are encouraged to read before answering the survey questions:

Worcestershire's State of Nature Report 2023 (https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-11/65847_worcestershire_state_of_nature_report_final_digital.pdf);

Assessment of floodplain meadows in Worcestershire and their potential to store soil carbon (https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-11/assessment_of_floodplain_meadows_in_worcestershire_and_their_potential_to_store_soil_carbon_final_report.pdf) and:

State of Worcestershire's Grasslands (https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-11/state_of_worcestershires_grasslands_report_final_v2.pdf)

The development of LNRS's is an important part of the Environment Act 2021, with every county working with it's neighbours to create a joined up network of habitat creation and improvement opportunities that enhance and expand our existing high quality habitats.

The Issues and Options consultation document will:

- ◆ Summarise the key pressures on nature which threaten its recovery.

according to a set procedure. You would be trained in how to conduct tests and all necessary equipment would be provided. We would record these data for analysis. Please do get in touch if you are interested. (richarddestott@gmail.com)

Bioblitz

Following the successful event held last year we are planning an all-day event this summer at a date to be decided.

- ◆ Set out a draft mission statement for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- ◆ Propose headline principles for the preparation of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- ◆ Invite views on the most important local opportunities for nature recovery that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy should focus on.
- ◆ Invite views on potential locations where nature recovery measures could be delivered.
- ◆ Set out the next steps and timeline for preparation of the LNRS.

Your views matter. This is an incredible opportunity to shape the how and the where of nature's recovery across Worcestershire and this is only the beginning. Further consultation events are planned throughout the summer and autumn so if you are interested in taking part in the process as it progresses, do sign up for further news from the Local Nature Recovery Strategy team at Worcestershire County Council.

Link to the supporting documents, draft habitat map, consultation paper and online survey can be found here [Worcestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy | Worcestershire County Council](#)

The consultation is open until **23rd February 2024.**



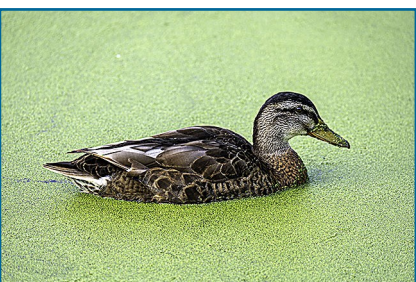
↑ Drake Gadwall on 1 Feb.

Photo: Jeff Steady ARPS



↑ Male Reed Bunting on 1 Feb.

Photo: Jeff Steady ARPS



↑ Duckweed with Mallard!

Photo: Steve McLaren



↑ A young Robin growing up.

Photo: Steve McLaren

Science Section

Butterflies—Small Copper

Butterfly Conservation has just published its United Kingdom Butterfly Monitoring Scheme Annual Report 2022. This report quantifies the status of butterflies for that year. Interestingly, albeit sadly, it notes that **Small Coppers** had their third worst year ever in 2022 showing a 32% drop in its population during that year. We have recorded none on Avon Meadows in 2022 or 2023.

Birds—Mute Swan

Small changes can have a big effect. Since the ban on the use of lead angling weights in 1987 the population of Mute Swans has increased by 35%. Mild winters and autumn sowing in arable crops have helped. [In Bird Study Vol. 70 Issue 3 (2023)]

Surveys and Sightings

BIRDS

The STOP PRESS highlight is a new species for Avon Meadows, our 136th—a **BLACK REDSTART!** This is a bird only slightly larger than a Robin but is mostly slate grey with a brick-red tail. One or two Black Redstarts visit the Malvern Hills each year favouring rocky habitat. Not the sort of habitat we have on Avon Meadows! Our Black Redstart was first seen 9 February on Cherry Orchard House which to a redstart could be classed as rocky! They became widespread in the UK after WWII when they occupied bomb sites thinking they were their more usual rocky sites.

2023 has gone down as a moderate year when we

Birds—Whinchat

A migrant on Avon Meadows as they travel to their upland breeding grounds, recorded alternate years but last recorded in 2021. The paper looked into the reasons that the breeding population of Whinchats in the UK has dropped by 57% since 1995. Much of this decline seems to have been caused by changes in its habitat including and more intensive farming practices (e.g. grazing) and reforestation of its favourite grassland breeding grounds resulting in low juvenile survival. Thus there are fewer birds returning from their tropical African wintering ground to UK uplands via Avon Meadows. [In Bird Study Vol. 70 Issue 4 (2023)]

[Note: Bird Study is the scientific journal of the British Trust for Ornithology].

ended up with 99 species logged over the year. This was the second year in succession when we did not have a week with a bird count of 50 or over. The **Coal Tit** seen well on 23 Nov 23 was only the second for 2023.

Contrast that with 2024 so far: on 1st February we recorded 52 species! This has brought the 2024 total recorded up to 62 species.

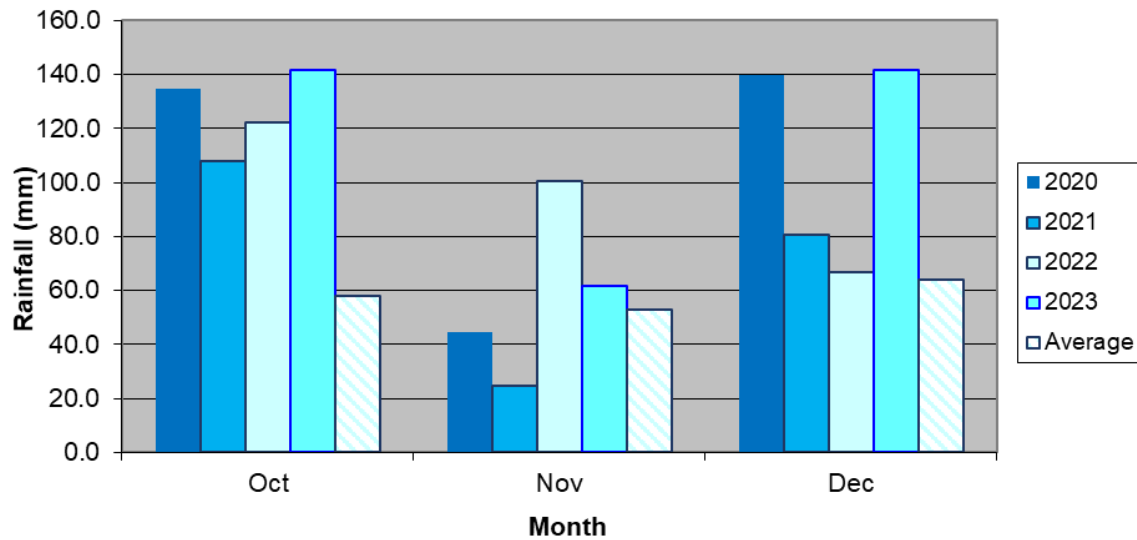
The wet weather has its effect in that there are fewer water birds on Avon Meadows during times of flood. This in part because they have a lot more places to choose to go and, more importantly, their feeding areas on lake margins are under water and

MEMBERS' FORUM

Set for **Friday, 27 September 2024** to start at **6:30pm** at **Pershore Civic Centre**. More details will be announced in the next Newsletter.

THURSDAY BIRD COUNT

Our Bird Count starts each Thursday morning (provided there are no floods!) outside **Cherry Orchard House** at **09:00am**. All are welcome. Bring binoculars!



We have had serious flooding in December following an autumn as wet as it was in 2020. The rainfall for the last 3 months has been nearly double the average for this time of year. A series of named storms have passed through since mid-October leading to very high rainfall. The maximum river level recorded at Pershore was 4.79 metres on the evening of 3 January 2024. (Compare highest ever recorded of 6.07 metres on 21 July 2007).

Surveys and Sightings (continued)

no longer available.

‘Our’ **Tawny Owls** have been heard on several occasions this year. Less usual birds that have been reported include **Kingfisher** and **Jack Snipe**.

Thursday Bird Count

The first count of 2024 had to be cancelled as the meadows were flooded! As described above, the number of birds is reduced in these conditions as well as access for observers being impossible. It is interesting to note that in spite of this **Red Kites** were seen on several occasions.

Once the floodwater receded, 2024 got off to a good start. There has been a record of a **Little Egret** already this year as well as 3 species that are quite uncommon on Avon Meadows, **Treecreeper**, **Redpoll** and **Bullfinch**. None of these 3 species has been recorded for nearly a year. The **Gadwall** shown on p.4 was the first seen since 3 October 23. There have been two sightings of **Lapwings** this year and several **Common Snipe** records including a count of 16 feeding at the edges of receding floodwater. A **Common Gull** (not common on Avon Meadows!) flew over on 11 Jan. **Meadow Pipits** have been rather few this year with just one seen

on 1 Feb. Overwintering **Blackcaps** have been found every week and **Chiffchaffs** just twice. Several **Goldcrests** are setting up territories already.

Mammals

Two **Roe Deer** were seen in late morning (and photographed) for a short time before bounding off and, without a pause, jumping into the river and swimming across.

The **Red Fox** (also photographed) was one of two young animals that looked very healthy. They were found in the morning on the scrape making a small flock of **Teal** very nervous.

Wild Flowers

The first **Lesser Celandines** were beginning to open on 25 Jan.

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.



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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