

# **AVON MEADOWS COMMUNITY WETLAND**

## **Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows**

### **Newsletter No.10**



**Fig. 1** Floods have been the story of this autumn and winter so far. This photograph was taken looking NE on 23 Nov 2012 when the water level was 16.82m aod. (R D E Stott)

First some very sad news. Our friend, colleague and Committee Member **Dave Shaw** died very suddenly on Saturday 5 January 2013. We will all miss his ready smile and wise advice.

### **Review of our progress**

#### HLF Project - Access For All

You may have seen in the Pershore Journal that a job advertisement has gone out this week for a *Wetlands for All Project Officer* for which applications must be in by 27 Jan. This is an essential step to get the project moving and most aspects of our work within this project will depend on this important appointment.

#### New scrape

A provisional design has been created for the re-profiling of a new scrape for wading birds. It is planned that this will be in the boggy area just to the north of the main pool. Discussions have taken place with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust on its design and the next step will be to seek approval of the Environment Agency which controls all works within the river flood plain. Only then, once we have a clear idea of what work is necessary, can we begin to look for funding.

Ash Dieback: Luckily there are not many Ash trees on the Wetland. Those that we have been plotted on the Wetland plan so we know what we have and where. You may well have read that ash dieback is caused by a fungus, *Chalara fraxinea*, whose spores (seeds) are so tiny that they carry on the air like smoke. At the time of writing no ash dieback has been recorded in Worcestershire but it seems that it is inevitable that it will come and there is no known way of preventing it. In other countries infected trees mostly die but some do survive. Our plan is to keep a watch on our ash trees as their leaves sprout in spring and fell those that die (before they fall on someone!) and leave the survivors. Replanting may be considered in future but we shall have to see how things turn out.

## Recent Sightings

In winter sightings mainly concern birds as flowers and insects are dormant during these months. Birds have thrown up some surprises with 3 new species for the Wetland since the last Newsletter.

A **Yellow-legged Gull** was seen standing on the ice on the main pool on 6 Dec.

Rob Prudden reported 9 **Bohemian Waxwings** flying over on 17 Dec.

Waxwings are known as an "irruption" species meaning that in some years large numbers invade the British Isles from Europe and this is one such year. Sadly not many have invaded Worcestershire and Rob's is the only record for the Wetland to date. A **Lesser Redpoll** was recorded with Goldfinches near the main gate on 21 Dec during our regular bird survey. This brings our species total for the Wetland to 106.



Fig. 2 A Common Kingfisher taken on 23 Dec 12 during the floods looking for fish in shallow water over the main path. (R D E Stott)

The swans that nested on the Wetland during last summer are still around perhaps beginning to think about breeding in 2013! The adult birds have orange leg rings numbered X61 and 41B.

All nest boxes we erected in the spring of 2012 were used. Mostly they were occupied by either Great Tits or Blue Tits. The "kestrel" box was used by Collared Doves. All boxes were cleaned out in October. During our bird survey on 3 Jan a Blue Tit was seen leaving one of the boxes already!

So far this year some scarce birds have turned up during our regular bird survey work. 4 Lapwings flew over on 5 January, on 10 Jan a Northern Shoveler was found on the river and two Peregrine Falcons flew over. The wetter areas are full of Common Snipe at present with flocks of up to 50 having been reported. If you are lucky you may find a tiny Goldcrest, often near conifers, and occasionally a Bullfinch makes an appearance. Good numbers of Redwings and Fieldfares are present. So lots to look out for!

## Flora & Fauna Surveys

Survey work is light during the winter months as no insect surveys take place.

### Bird Survey:

This is our second year of full bird surveys which allows us to compare data between the years for the first time. As might be expected the number of new species seen each succeeding year tends to fall off as more common species get recorded.

Looking at total numbers of birds recorded during the survey walks it seems that 2012 was a better year for birds in spite of the awful weather as 38% more birds were counted. In part this could be put down to surveying with groups of 2-3 observers instead of one but it is believed that the weather played a part too. The cold winter and

iced pools in early 2011 reduced bird numbers on the Wetland in the early part of the year but the numbers had recovered by the end of the year.

| Description  | 2011 | 2012 |
|--|------|------|
| Total bird species recorded during the year                | 82   | 91   |
| Records sent in by Friends                                 | 3    | 6    |
| Records from regular surveys                               | 79   | 85   |
| New species for the Wetland                                | 17   | 8    |
| Species recorded on 100% of survey visits                  | 2    | 7    |
| Species recorded once only during the year                 | 13   | 12   |
| Species recorded in previous years but not in current year | 15   | 15   |

Species recorded on every survey visit this year were; Mallard, Coot, Wood Pigeon, Blackbird, Blue Tit, Carrion Crow and Goldfinch (those underlined were the two from 2011). Surprise omissions were Starling (94%) and House Sparrow (99%).

**Moths:** The total number of moth species recorded on the Wetland to date is 216. Expert, Oliver Wadsworth, added a further 18 new species when carrying out a leaf mine survey in October 2012. Leaf mines are tracks left within leaves by the tiny caterpillars of certain moths many mines being characteristic of particular species.

In the last couple of years you may have seen damaged leaves on Horse Chestnut trees. This is caused by the leaf mines of the Horse Chestnut Leaf Miner moth caterpillar *Cameraria ohridella* (of which were some examples on the Wetland). It spreads through the natural movement of the adult moths and is now found in most of southern Britain. Unlike ash dieback this caterpillar does not kill Horse Chestnut trees although it does make the leaves look unsightly.



Fig. 3 A Silver Birch leaf with mines (arrowed) of *Ectoedemia occultella*. (R D E Stott)

Fig. 3 shows the characteristic leaf mine of the small (wingspan 5-7mm) moth *Ectoedemia occultella* (it has no English name) that was found recently on the Wetland. This moth lays its eggs on Silver Birch leaves and when the caterpillars hatch they have a ready food supply to munch through. While eating the caterpillars leave the characteristic roundels with a dark brown centre and a thin yellowish ring on the outside. It is a widespread species throughout Britain.

## Water Levels

It does not need me to tell you that we had an extraordinarily wet winter to date on top of a wet year causing widespread flooding. The maximum level over the Wetland

occurred on 26 November when 17.24m aod was recorded (derived from the Environment Agency's data on its website). One of the foot bridges near the northeastern boundary of the Wetland has floated away from its correct position and should not be used until we have had time to reposition it.



Fig. 4 Water rushing from the main pool over the south bund on 23 Dec 2012. (R D E Stott)

The rainfall data for the period is set out below with average figures in brackets as usual.

|          |                  |
|----------|------------------|
| October  | 82.7 mm (58 mm)  |
| November | 148.6 mm (53 mm) |
| December | 113.4 mm (64 mm) |

The consequences of the floods are not all bad. We are hoping that lots of small fish will have been washed in to provide food to tempt herons and kingfishers onto the Wetland more often.

### How you can help us

Please let us have any photographs or notes of sightings that may be of interest. If you do see something interesting note the date and time and approximate location!

We are considering putting together a calendar of photographs taken by Friends on the Wetland to represent each month of the year. We will take this forward if enough people are interested, please get in touch by eMail if you are interested.

If you know of anyone you think would be interested in receiving this Newsletter by eMail please let me know with their eMail address.

### Diary Dates

The Work Party Schedule for the next six months is set out below and we will be delighted to see you there. \* indicated dates adjusted to avoid Bank Holidays.

|            |         |
|------------|---------|
| 2 February | 11 May* |
| 2 March    | 9 June* |
| 13 April*  | 6 July  |

Note that work parties are usually on the first Saturday of every month (adjusted to avoid public holidays) and start at 10:00am from the Mayfield Road car park. Occasionally we add additional work parties which you will be notified of separately but the start time and place are always the same unless otherwise notified.

Please let Ken know if you can come (kenPomfret@btinternet.com) a few days before (in case there are last minute changes) but do not worry if you cannot, just turn up at the car park at the far end of Cherry Orchard at 10:00am on the appointed day.

At present we have no woodchip available so work on footpaths will have to wait. However we are cutting down small willow saplings to control their size and spread and plan to have most removed before the start of the breeding season.

The Worcestershire Recorders have received a grant to celebrate the Centenary of the British Ecological Society to conduct 3 afternoon events, Exploring Avon Meadows Wetland. Everyone is welcome so please come along. The events will be held between 13h00 and 16h00 on Friday **21 June**, Tuesday **9 July** and Sunday **4 August**. Note the dates in your diaries. It is planned that there will be expert people to show you around and particularly tell you what there is to be seen. Let us hope we get some good weather!

A Hedge-laying Course will be carried out on the central hedge between the main pool and the river during February. The large trees will of course be left. The purpose of this work will be to rejuvenate and thicken the hedge to improve it as a nesting site and food source for birds.

## Officers of the Committee

Chairman - Richard Stott richarddestott@gmail.com

Treasurer - Bob Gillmor avon.meadows@btinternet.com

Secretary - Val Wood val@wood20.plus.com

## Website

Although we are going to get professional assistance in developing the website please let us know if you have any suggestions.

The web address: <http://www.avonmeadows.org.uk/>

## Contacts

If you would like any more information about volunteering contact either an officer of the Committee directly by eMail or by telephone to:

Mr Jim Burgin, Wychavon District Council.

Tel: 01386 565366

eMail: jim.burgin@wychavon.gov.uk

May we wish you all a very Happy New Year and that you all continue to enjoy, learn and take part in Wetland activities throughout the spring and summer!

Richard Stott

NOTE: If you would like to become a Supporting Member an application form is on the next page!

Please print off this form and return it, together with your cheque to:

Mr R J Gillmor

20 Loughmill Road

PERSHORE

Worcestershire, WR10 1QB

***Friends of Avon Meadows***  
**Supporting Friend Application Form**

Family subscription £10 per annum       Individual subscription £5 per annum

FULL NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ TITLE (Mr, Mrs, Ms): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ POST CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

eMail: \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT PAID: £ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheques payable to Friends of Avon Meadows

Please print off this form and return it, together with your cheque to:

Mr R J Gillmor  
20 Loughmill Road  
PERSHORE  
Worcestershire  
WR10 1QB