

AVON MEADOWS COMMUNITY WETLAND

Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

Newsletter No.11



Fig. 1 Dry, cold winds have been a feature of recent weeks making the reeds and other plants at the water's edge look very dry. Taken on 6 Apr 13. (*R D E Stott*)

Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM will be held on Wednesday 22 May 2013 at 18h30 in the Civic Centre. You are all very welcome to attend. Liz Etherage (see below) will give an illustrated talk on her work for the Wetlands.

Review of our progress

HLF Project - Access For All

We are delighted to announce that Liz Etheridge has been appointed to the post of Wetlands for All Project Officer. She writes:

Hello, I'm Liz Etheridge, the Wetlands for All Project Officer. I've been in post since the middle of March and have been busy getting to know the Wetlands and the people that care for it. I've come from Shropshire Wildlife Trust, where I spent most of my time developing funding bids for projects and encouraging people to get more involved with their local green spaces.

We've got some exciting things planned for Avon Meadows over the next three years. Thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Wychavon District Council and Pershore Town Council we have funding to improve the access and interpretation around the meadows, train and support the Friends to help them manage and monitor the site even more comprehensively and encourage more people to explore the site for themselves.

There are going to be some fantastic opportunities to get involved with the project, starting very soon. We'll be looking for people who would like to improve their skills in recording the different plants and animals that live on the wetland or could help support school groups to understand how they can use the wetland as an outdoor classroom.



Fig. 2 Liz having just seen the first swallows of spring! (*R D E Stott*)

Do feel free to give me a ring or drop me an email if you'd like to know more about the project. I'm often out and about on the meadows, so if you see me, come and say hello.

Liz Etheridge, Wetlands for All Project Officer 01386 565217 or email liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk

New scrape



Fig. 3 The area to be developed into a scrape for water birds. Small islands will be created to provide safe refuges for the birds. (R D E Stott)

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 Environment Agency, which controls all works within the river flood plain, has offered no objection. We are actively seeking planning permission and funding.

A Hedge-laying Course was run for Friends during February which took place on the central hedge between the main pool and the river. 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. The remainder of the hedge will be laid in the autumn. Where gaps remain saplings will be planted.

Wildlife Recording Equipment:

We are fortunate to have received a grant to purchase some equipment for recording wildlife on the Wetland. This includes a bat detector, a camera for macro photography, a camera trap, pond dipping equipment and two moth traps. This equipment is for use on Wetland projects and particularly in conjunction with our HFL project.



Fig. 4 The hedge-laying course in action. (V Wood)

All Day Bird Watch 2013

We are running an All Day Bird Watch event again this year on **Saturday 18 May 2013**. The name means what it says and the event will start at 04h30 in the morning and finish

at 21h30 in the evening! Our hope is to beat our record count of 53 species in the day of last year.

We encourage you all to take part, it is a fun event, great expertise is not necessary. We break the day into 1 hour sessions and the idea is to see how many species you can see in one hour. We are setting up a rota for people either to check species off on the master list or go round counting or both! Please contact Richard Stott if you are willing to go on the rota. Remember with a bit of luck you can see a bird that nobody else has!

Recent Sightings

No new species for the Wetland have been recorded since the last Newsletter. Our total species count for the year to date is 68 but this total will soon increase as the summer visitors arrive. The cold weather is likely to have an effect on insect numbers and quite possibly on bird numbers too. However in England one never knows what the weather will do and a warm, dry summer will work wonders.

One of our cygnets, ring number 98D, was hanging about the Wetland looking rather sorry for itself. You will be pleased to learn that it was taken into care in March by Swan Rescue who will nurse it back to health and release it away from our area.

Tony Bradstock spotted a **Red Kite** over the Wetland with Common Buzzards in mid-February, a scarce bird with us. As I put this newsletter to bed, Liz Etheridge and I have just seen the first two **Barn Swallows** of spring (12 April) over the Wetland.

We are eager to be able to record all animals, insects, birds and plants to be found on the Wetland. You can help us for although we do carry out regular surveys if you see something interesting or unusual do please let us know. All I need is an eMail with what you saw, the date you saw it and roughly whereabouts. Several people are doing this already so please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Flora & Fauna Surveys

Bird Survey:

In January a drake **Northern Shoveler** showed up on the river, a common winter visitor in the county but scarce on the Wetland. Rather to our surprise a party of 6 was seen in the scrape area in early March. Another unusual January sighting was of two **Peregrine Falcons** overflying. A flock of 30 **Northern Lapwings** was seen on 17 Jan followed by

70 on 21 Feb. This used to be a common sight in Worcestershire but changes in farming practice has reduced their numbers. Another winter visitor to the UK is the **Brambling** and a single male bird was seen in January near the gardens of the houses on Cherry Orchard.



Fig. 5 An adult Common Gull in winter plumage (left) photographed on the main pool together with two Black-headed Gulls. (R D E Stott)

Early February saw a pair of **Gadwall** on the main pool and a **Common Kingfisher** has been paying much attention to the pools during the whole period. **Common Gulls** are not common on the Wetland but one or two have appeared occasionally throughout the winter. You can see from Fig.5 the Common Gull is a little larger than the Black-headed Gulls and in flight have distinctive black tipped wings with the very ends of the wing white. The first **Chiffchaff** of the year appeared on Valentine's Day. A **Water Rail** and **Lesser Redpoll** were recorded on 7



Fig. 6 Reed Buntings, male (left) and female (right) taken feeding on bullrush seeds from the boardwalk in April. (R D E Stott)

March. A **Skylark** flew over on the 13 March making us believe that spring was on the way. At the end of March a **Treecreeper** was spotted behind the Cherry Orchard houses. Early April saw the arrival of the main population of **Chiffchaffs**, **Reed Buntings** (Fig.6) and a **Little Grebe** returned to the main pool.

A big surprise on 4 April was a **Snow Goose** flying over. This species breeds in the arctic of North America and eastern Siberia and winters in the southern United States. It is recorded every year in the UK in very small numbers however this individual was almost certainly a bird that has escaped from a captive collection.

Butterfly Transect

Butterfly Conservation has reported that 2012 was the worst year for butterflies on record in the UK. We have started our transect again this year from the beginning of April but the cold weather is keeping butterfly numbers down at present.

The Worcestershire Recorders have received a grant to celebrate the Centenary of the British Ecological Society and plan 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. There will be expert people to show you around and particularly tell you what there is to be seen covering a variety of wildlife. Let us hope we get some good weather!

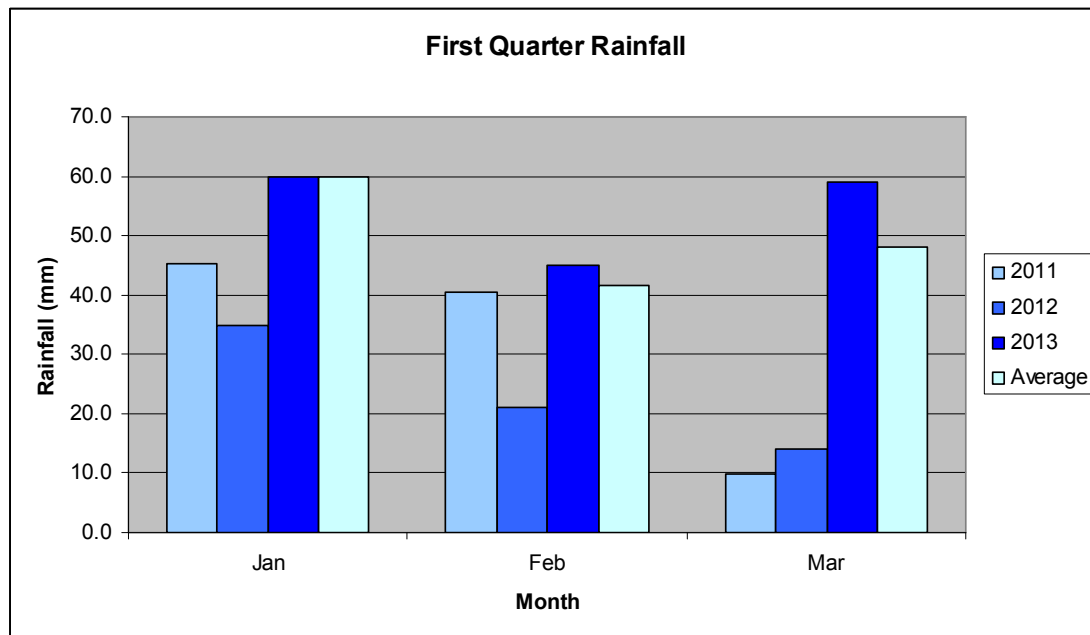
The Worcestershire Recorders are running county-wide surveys for dragonflies, bumblebees and grasshoppers & crickets. We intend that the Wetland will be part of this and we encourage any of you to get in touch if you would like to help. Please do! Previous knowledge of these species is not essential.

Water Levels

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

January 60.0 mm (60 mm)
 February 45.0 mm (41.5 mm)
 March 59.0 mm (48 mm)

Although we have had a period this year from 23 March to 10 April without significant rainfall the total for the first quarter of 2013 is considerably more than for the previous two years but only slightly above average (see graph below). The extremely wet summer of 2012 is responsible for the water levels on the Wetland being what they are today.



The consequences of the floods are not all bad. We are expecting that lots of small fish will have been washed into the permanent pools 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!

Additionally I am always looking for interesting photographs taken on the Wetland for this Newsletter. Get yourself published!

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

Activities for the next six months are set out below and we will be delighted to see you there at any or all of them!

Date	Activity	Date	Activity
Sat 13 Apr	Work party (cancelled)	Fri 21 Jun	Worcestershire Recorders' event (13h00 - 16h00)
Sun 5 May	Tiddesley Wood Open Day	Sat 6 July	Work Party
Sat 11 May	Work party	Tue 9 July	Worcestershire Recorders' event (13h00 - 16h00)
Sat 18 May	All Day Bird Watch 2013 (04h30 - 21h30)	Sat 3 Aug	Work Party
Wed 22 May	Annual General Meeting	Sun 4 Aug	Worcestershire Recorders' event (13h00 - 16h00)
Sat 8 Jun	Work Party	Sat 7 Sep	Work Party

Work parties are a valuable part of our activities on site and start at 10:00am from the Mayfield Road car park. It is a good idea 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 has had 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.

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

Ms Liz Etheridge, Wetlands for All Project Officer
 Tel: 01386 565 366
 eMail: liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk

May we wish you all a very enjoyable summer on the Wetland and that you are able to take part in some of 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