



## Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

### Newsletter No.13



Fig. 1 Taken in the afternoon of 8 Oct, one of our last warm days! Not as much autumn colour in the leaves as there was at this time last year. (R D E Stott)

### Review of our progress

#### **HLF Project - Access For All**

Liz is busy making contact with the schools in the area, showing teaching staff around the Wetland, and has produced an activity calendar for schools. Access path routes are being developed and it is expected that path and wader scrape construction will run together. Liz is much involved with all the work we are undertaking and providing us with invaluable help.

#### **Wader Scrape**

The Environment Agency has formally approved our proposal for the wader scrape. The next step is to undertake a habitat survey to see if it is suitable for Crested Newts before we can submit a formal planning submission to Wychavon District Council.

#### **Site Management**

In the event the grazier chose not to put any cattle onto the Wetland this summer. It has been decided, for the time being, to continue without cattle with one or perhaps two hay cuts per year and see how the habitat develops.

The plan is to cut all the reeds on a 5-year cycle dividing the reed beds into 10 sections and then cutting 2 non-adjacent sections in the autumn each year. This work is essential to stop the reeds taking over all the open water areas. With the generous support of the Leader Project we now have a power scythe which has been given the nickname "The Beast"! Work continues is clearing existing channels which have become choked with reeds.



Fig. 2 Ken in charge of the BCS Power Scythe aka "The Beast". (V Wood)

Our success in gaining funding for equipment has presented us with the problem of where and how best to store it. At present it is all stored safely off-site but it would be much more convenient if it could be stored securely on-site. To this end we are looking for a position to site a 20 foot ISO container which would form a secure, weather-proof store.

### Local Nature Reserve

Liz has met representatives of Natural England on the Wetland who were enthusiastic about our proposal to have the area designated a Local Nature Reserve. Wychavon DC has to approve the application (Persnore Town Council has already done so) and once formalities have been completed Persnore will have its own LNR.

### Hedge Laying

Arrangements are being made to continue the hedge laying work started in the early part of this year so that the hedge in the middle of the Wetland will be completely laid well ahead of next year's breeding season.

### Events

#### BES Exploring Avon Meadows Wetlands Events

Unfortunately the last of these events had to be cancelled due to heavy rain. The previous two were well received and everyone that attended found them very interesting so we plan to run similar events next year. The expert naturalists who guide these events frequently turn up new or unusual species and this time **Water Ladybirds** (yellow with black spots) were found as well as **Tubular Water-dropwort**, both rather local species.

#### Bat and Moth Night

14 people turned up for our Bat and Moth Night at the end of August. We were blessed with almost perfect weather; warm, dry and little or no wind. It turned out to be a most successful night. There were a great many bats feeding over the main pool comprising 4 species of which the most numerous were **Daubenton's Bat** and **Soprano Pipestrelle**.

The moths were not to be outdone and, using our own two traps, we recorded 56 species of which 17 were new records for the Wetland. These bring our total moth records to 235 species since 2011. A detailed report of the bats and moths recorded during this night has been prepared which is available on request.

The success of this night has encouraged us to start a **Friends of Avon Meadows Moth Group** which would meet on the Wetland on Fridays, twice a month, throughout the summer for the first 3 hours after sunset. It is intended that we will identify our own moths so this will be a real learning exercise. If anyone is interested in joining the FoAM Moth Group do please get in touch. No previous experience is necessary!

### Recent Sightings

It has been a good year for frogs and toads when occasionally, after heavy rain, large numbers could be seen.

Single **Common Greenshanks** have been seen for short periods on several pools, the first was recorded on 18 August. It is very nice to see that **Little Egrets** have returned with as many as 4 being seen on 4 August. A **Red Kite** flew over on 24 August and an **Oystercatcher** was seen the following day. These sightings



Fig. 3 It was a good summer for amphibians and many of you will have seen Common Toads like this on the paths. (C Fowle)

bring our species count to 93 for the year to date.

'Our' **Mute Swans** moved off after a difficult summer but recently the surviving adult (X60) has been seen on the main pool. Another pair (leg ring numbers R84 and T52) have been seen occasionally with 3 cygnets and it will be interesting to see who takes over the territory.

More recently a **Tufted Duck** has been seen with the **Mallard** and several **Common Teal** have been on the main pool over the last week.

Not a recent sighting but rather a non-sighting! Happily Ash Die-back disease has not come to the Wetland this summer. It seems that the rate it moves has been rather exaggerated and although it may come it could take several years. There has only been one instance of the disease in Worcestershire this year and that was from an imported ash sapling.

## Flora & Fauna Surveys

### **Bird Survey**

A **Spotted Flycatcher** was recorded during our regular Thursday bird survey on 8 August which is our 112<sup>th</sup> species for the Wetland. A small number of **Meadow Pipits** arrived for the winter on 15 Sep followed by **Common Snipe** on 26 Sep and then our first **Redwing** was seen on 10 Oct, a new early date for us.

### **Butterfly Transect**

This has been the best summer for butterfly numbers since we started recording in 2011. Fewer species this year but there was a 140% increase in the total number of butterflies counted compared with the dreadful summer of 2012.

Some of you have asked me about "butterfly kits" available on the Internet. These kits provide materials necessary to raise butterflies from caterpillars to mature insects and the instructions recommend that these insects be released into the wild. Butterfly Conservation's official view of the matter is as follows:

*Butterfly Conservation does not recommend the purchase of butterfly larvae or ova for increasing the population of local stock. We prefer to encourage people to help wildlife conservation through practicing wildlife gardening, joining a local practical conservation work party, or joining a wildlife conservation organisation, such as ourselves, local Wildlife Trusts, the RSPB etc. If butterflies or moths are not using a particular habitat, it is highly unlikely that introduced species will survive there; the surrounding habitat is just as crucial as the site in question is. More information can be found in our Conservation policies on our website*



**Fig. 4** This little insect was photographed on the boardwalk in early October. It is only 10mm long and is a species of caddis fly (not a moth) called European Fly Angler. (R D E Stott)



**Fig. 5** Last issue we showed their caterpillars on nettles, this month the adult Small Tortoiseshell on a teasel. (T Blatch)

*However, there is value in breeding Lepidoptera if the purpose is for education and enjoyment, not conservation. Breeding should be confined to migrant species which cannot maintain a sustainable breeding population in this country e.g. Painted Lady, as this species is a very common migrant and the numbers would be small, so records would not be adversely affected. The caterpillars would need to be raised with great care, or the butterflies would not emerge, or be too crippled to fly.*

### Dragonfly Survey

Paul Jenkins has made a start on a regular dragonfly survey this summer. Regular recording of all species has led him to find 2 new ones. He recorded 12 species during summer of which the new ones were, **Red-eyed Damselfly** and **Ruddy Darter** bringing the total number recorded to 15 species (note that the Worcestershire list has 26 species).

The Ruddy Darter is very similar to the Common Darter as you can see from Paul's photographs. However the Ruddy Darter differs in the following ways; the abdomen is more waisted and the sides of the thorax and legs are all dark, not easy to see without a photograph!

### Wild Flowers and Plants

Never worry about cutting reeds, they re-grow fast, see Fig.8. These **Common Reeds** were cut on 30 Aug and when photographed on 8 Oct they had sprouted to over 12 inches in height!



Fig. 8 Reed re-growth after 5 weeks! (R D E Stott)



Fig. 6 Common Darter, frequently seen from mid-summer onwards. (note pale legs) (P Jenkins)



Fig. 7 Ruddy Darter, identified on the Wetlands for the first time this year. (note dark legs) (P Jenkins)



Fig. 9 Trifid Bur-marigold, new for the Wetland. (R D E Stott)

During August a new plant species was identified on the Wetland, **Trifid Bur-marigold** (Fig 9). As it is quite a large and obvious plant it seems likely that it has arrived recently and by natural means. Several plants were noted in wet areas. This brings the number of vascular plants recorded to 197.

**How you can help us**

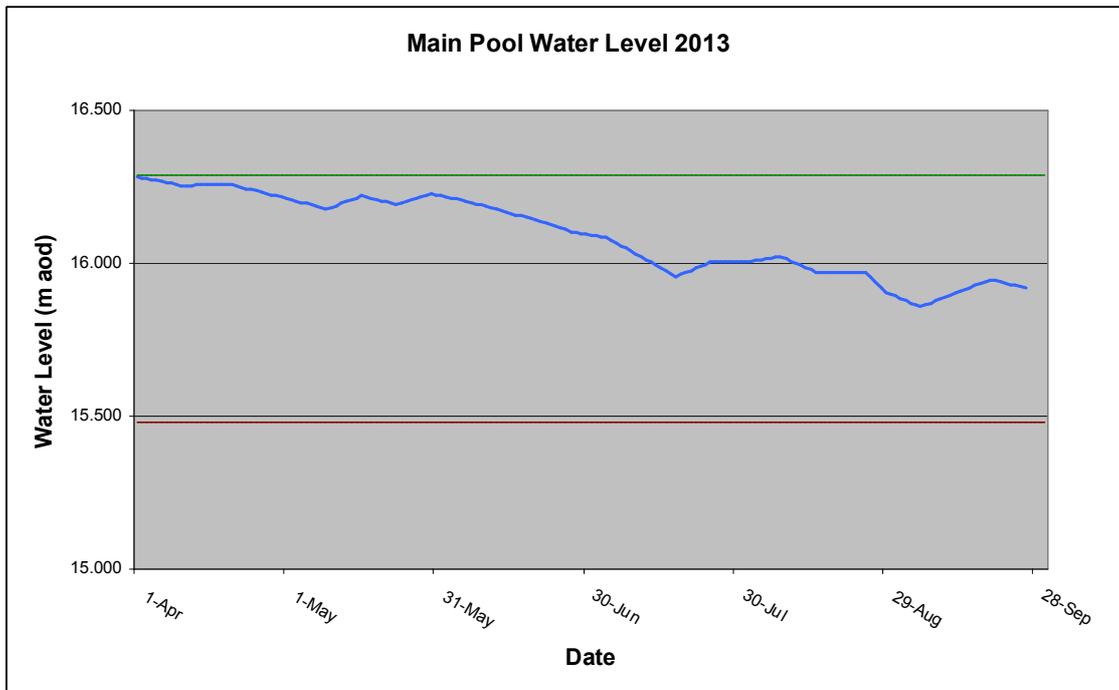
Work Parties - see Diary Dates below.

Interesting sighting - Take a picture. Send it to Liz, Bob or Richard with date, time and approximate location.

Newsletter - know anyone who would like one? Let Richard have their eMail address.

**Water Levels**

The rainfall over the summer was about average with higher rainfall in July being compensated for by lower rainfall in August. This time it might be more interesting to look at the water level in the main pool over the summer as shown below. The upper (green) horizontal line indicates the level at the top of the tilting weir and the lower one (red) when mud just shows by the boardwalk platform. It is worth noting that the few wading birds we see on the pool prefer the level at its lowest over this period.



**Diary Dates**

Activities for the next five 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 5 Oct	Work Party (10h00 - 12h30)	Sat 7 Dec	Work Party (10h00 - 12h30)
Fri 25 Oct	Moth Group (17h45 - 20h45)*	Sat 11 Jan	Work Party (10h00 - 12h30)
Sat 9 Nov	Work Party (10h00 - 12h30)	Sat 8 Feb	Work Party (10h00 - 12h30)

\*To be confirmed.

A number of additional work parties will be arranged primarily to clear reeds but you will be notified of these separately by Ken when the weather looks OK.

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.

### **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**

Bob and Liz have made a number of improvements to the website and particularly there are some photographs of it in the really early days. We are working on the biological records page so please bear with us. Have a look and please let us know if you have any suggestions.

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

Please report any sightings you make to Liz Etheridge, Bob Gillmor or Richard Stott so that we can post them on the website.

### **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 565366  
eMail: liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk

May we wish you all a very enjoyable and interesting autumn on the Wetland. The next Newsletter is not due out until January 2014 so may I wish you all a very Happy Christmas!!!

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



### Supporting Friend Application/Renewal Form

New member  Renewing member

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