



## Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

### Newsletter No.15



Fig. 1 April showers passing through on 25th. *R D E Stott*

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2014 Annual General Meeting has been set at 6:30pm on **Wednesday 18 June 2014** in Pershore Civic Centre. As usual we plan to have a speaker to enliven proceedings.

### Review of our progress

**HLF Project - Wetlands for All** - Liz's Report on her first year

I can hardly believe that the first year of the project has passed, it feels like no time, but when you look back over the last year and look at all the things that the Friends have achieved as part of the Wetlands for All project, it's easy to see how time has flown.

Well over 100 people attended our first year's events and activities on the Meadows, ranging from walks with experts from the Worcestershire Recorders to look at plants, bugs, birds and beetles to the all-day bird watch and bat and moth night.

We've had a fantastic response from the local schools to visiting Avon Meadows. Last year we had visits from Cherry Orchard First School, Pershore High School, Bowbrook School and the whole of Holy Redeemer Primary School came out over two days last summer. Almost all the teachers from our local schools have been out around Avon Meadows and now have a really good idea of how they can use the meadows as an outdoor classroom.

Our volunteer numbers are steadily creeping up, many through referrals from the Volunteer Centre in Pershore, but we've also had a lot of interest from students at Pershore College. New volunteers are always very welcome - contact Ken Pomfret or Liz Etheridge if you'd like to find out more about how to get involved.

The big management task of the year has been cutting back the reeds, and thanks to funding from LEADER, we were able to buy a power scythe to cut reeds and grass. Over the next 5 years, we'll cut 2 sections of reed each year to make sure that we always have health reeds coming back year after year, whilst making sure that we have stands of mature reeds for

nesting and roosting birds. Being able to clear out the dead stems helps to stop the reed beds drying up and willow scrub from taking hold.

We've always had a great working relationship with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and they've kindly taken us around a couple of their sites as well as putting a few of us to work on them, too. Worcestershire Countryside Service has been a great help too and have brought most of their staff out to see how we're managing the meadows.

Lots of families enjoy Avon Meadows. It's easy to get to and you can see wildlife up close. Earlier this year we ran a Bug Club for dads with children under 5, with a walk around the meadows to look at the birds, then we built a bug hotel and had hot chocolate and a story about The Very Hungry Caterpillar, of course!



Fig. 2 Story time with the Bug Club. L Etheridge

Last year, the Friends of Avon Meadows gave over 500 hours of time to manage the Meadows. If you include all the surveying of wildlife that goes on, the bird counts, butterfly and moth surveys, dragonfly surveys and amphibian monitoring, then you can quite easily say that over 1,000 hours were spent managing and monitoring Avon Meadows by volunteers in the last year.

### What can we look forward to this year?

Lots and lots of wildlife identification training courses - Butterflies, dragonflies, grasshoppers and crickets, see the activity plan for full details and please book a place with Liz.

More wildlife walks through the spring and summer, come along and join experts from the Worcestershire Recorders as well as the Friends to explore some of the less well known plants and animals that we find on Avon Meadows.

Pershore Arts is using Avon Meadows as their inspiration for an exhibition in October this year.

Lots of school visits are planned, looking at water, wildlife and human impact on the environment.

Finally this year you'll see a new improved path surface put down, linking the car park to the boardwalk, making it easier for everyone to get to the heart of the Wetlands.

### Wader Scrape

As mentioned in the last Newsletter we must get the Wetland surveyed for the presence of Great Crested Newts before we can apply for formal planning permission. If Great Crested Newts are found then their habitat must not be disturbed during the development of the scrape. This survey work is proceeding and involves 4 evening site visits of which 3 have taken place to date. So far a great many **Smooth Newts** have been discovered but no **Great Crested Newts**.

### Site Management

Wood chip supplies have been restored from a number of sources and volunteers are spreading it on the muddier paths as we can get it to site. We have also had help from some of our younger members particularly with litter picking. (Alex by Val Wood)

### Dog Fouling

Our programme to reduce dog mess on the Wetland is to move on to its next stage. Explanatory notices will be put at the entrances

to the Wetland. Dog mess that is found will be sprayed with biodegradable paint and owners found leaving their dog's mess will be asked to pick it up. A bin for dog mess will be placed close to the SE gate into the Wetland for the convenience of dog owners however you should note that it is permissible to put your bag of dog mess into any Council waste bin. These measures are designed to improve the experience of everyone visiting the Wetland so we hope those few dog owners who forget to pick up their dog's mess will help us in this.



Fig. 3 Alex helping us clear up rubbish from the pool. V Wood

### Events

#### All Day Birdwatch

This will take place on **Saturday 3 May** this year and we hope to beat our record species count of 2 years ago. We count all the species we can see at hourly intervals from one hour before sunrise (5h00am) to one hour after sunset (9h00pm). This is an event open to everyone so please come along at a time convenient to you and add your sightings to the overall score. You do not need to be an expert. The more people that come along the more birds we are likely to see. There will be a gazebo near the main entrance (at the far end of Cherry Orchard) where you will be able to collect forms and find out how things are going. PLEASE COME ALONG!

#### Hedge-Laying Course

This event had to be deferred from mid-February as everywhere was so wet. The intention is to re-schedule it for the autumn.

### Recent Sightings

There is a pair of **Grey Wagtails** that put in an appearance occasionally. Our 50<sup>th</sup> species of the year, a small flock of **Lesser Redpolls**, was recorded on 3 Feb by Ken and Gwen Pomfret. Ken and Gwen were the ones to spot the first new bird of the year, a **Bittern** on 11 March. It only stayed for a day or so but lifted our total to 113 species. The first **Sedge Warbler** was heard chattering in the reeds on 16 Apr. John Andrews reported a **Yellow Wagtail** on 18 April, only our second record for this species.

We now have a resident pair of **Mute Swans** including our old friend X60 with a new mate, 83C which are nesting. **Moorhens** and **Coots** are busy nesting but the **Mallards** lead the race with several broods of ducklings with up to 16 chicks!

Other early breeding species include **Wood Pigeon, Collared Dove, Wren, Robin, Dunnock, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Carrion Crow, Starling** and **House Sparrow**. Many more species are on the way. A total of 43 species have bred on or near to the Wetlands in the last 5 years of which the overwhelming majority are regular breeders.

The mild winter has allowed **Common Frogs** and **Common Toads** to lay eggs in profusion which are now tadpoles. There are also large numbers of **Water Snails** present.



Fig. 4 Common Frogs bred in huge numbers this spring. *F Swart*

## Flora & Fauna Surveys

### Bird Survey

The current species count for 2014 is 66. A pair of **Common Linnets** was first seen on 23 January and again in late March. **Cetti's Warbler** continued to sing until 3 April but has not been heard since. A **Blue Tit** was seen checking out Nest Box No.1 as early as 23 January and a pair of **Common Starlings** was seen at a nest hole in one of the dead trees near the tilting weir on the same day. Several **Greylag Geese** have been seen on the scrape area, north of the main pool so perhaps they will breed too. The hirundines have all arrived for the summer, **Sand Martin** (20 Mar), **Barn Swallow** (3 Apr) and **House Martin** (17 Apr). For those with keen ears, **Goldcrests** are singing in the NW corner of the site. They have a very high-pitched descending song. The first **Common Swift** arrived on its own on 24 April, a new early record for this species with us. We believe a pair of **Ravens** may be breeding at Pershore Hall as we often see them flying over the Wetland.

### Butterfly Transect

The sunny weather has meant that the butterfly counts have got off to an excellent start with 7 species recorded to date. **Brimstone, Orange Tip, Holly Blue** and **Small Tortoiseshell** were the first to be seen in the 1<sup>st</sup> week of April. So far this year (after 4 weeks counting) we have recorded the highest numbers since we started in 2011. To give you an idea of what this means, the cumulative totals butterflies counted each year after 4 weeks are; 2011-91, 2012-21, 2013-37 and 2014-121 which just shows what nice warm weather does for insects.

### Moth Group

Half-a-dozen stalwarts turned out on the evening of 11 April and we trapped 5 moth species during our session. Not many, but it is very early in the season, however all were new species for the Wetland bringing our moth species total to 241. We plan to run moth nights throughout the summer on Fridays at fortnightly intervals. A caterpillar popularly called a 'wholly bear' was seen walking along a path on 24 Apr, it is the caterpillar of the **Garden Tiger** moth a very dramatic creature.

## Mammals

We put out 2 mink rafts during April with the purpose of detecting the presence of mink. They take the form of a floating platform with a tunnel on top in which soft clay is left. Mink are very inquisitive and will surely investigate this structure in due course leaving their tell-tale footprints behind in the clay. It is quite likely that other semi-aquatic mammals will check the rafts out too, it will be interesting to see what we get.



Fig. 5 Mink raft waiting to be positioned on the water. R D E Stott

## How you can help us

Work Parties - see Diary Dates below.

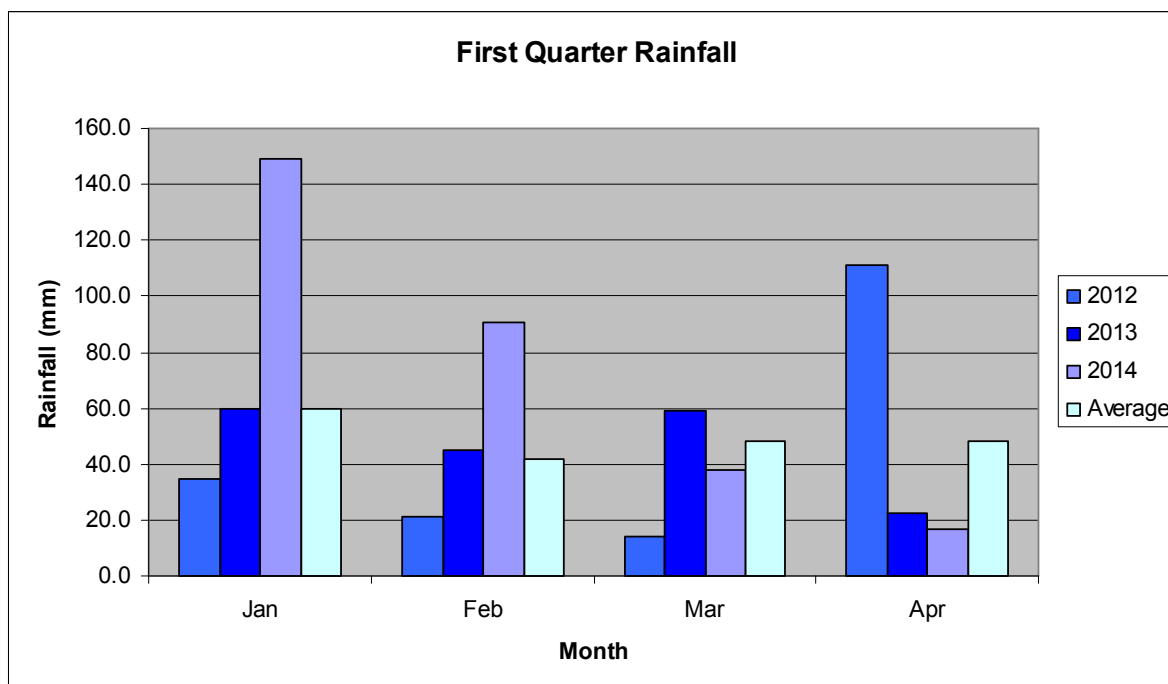
Interesting sightings - Take a picture. Send it to Liz, Bob or Richard with date, time and approximate location.

Join one of the training courses - see Diary Dates below.

Please note that you will be welcome to join any of our events. If you are at all uncertain, please contact either Liz or Richard for more information.

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

## Water Levels



The chart says it all, the first two months of the year were extremely wet and it has dried up since then. At present when the water level in the main pool is at the top of the tilting weir water leaks over the south bund in several places. We plan to correct this when we create the wader scrape at which time we will have plenty of soil available. The water level falls quite quickly at this time of year if we do not have rain with all the vegetation springing into life and sucking up water.

## Diary Dates

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

| Date              | Activity  | Date             | Activity   |
|-------------------|---|------------------|--|
| Fri 25 Apr        | Moth Group 20h30-23h30                                | Mid-Jun          | Phase 1 habitat survey and plant ID training           |
| Thu 1 May         | Newt Survey - IV<br>17h30-19h30                       | Fri 20 Jun       | Moth Group & WWT bat walk<br>21h00 to 00h45 tbc.       |
| Sat 3 May         | All Day Bird Watch<br>05h00-21h00                     | Fri 4 Jul        | Moth Group 21h45-00h45                                 |
| Sun 4 May         | Tiddesley Wood Open Day                               | Wed 16 Jul       | Butterfly identification and monitoring course         |
| Fri 9 May         | Moth Group 21h00-00h00                                | Fri 18 Jul       | Moth Group 21h30-00h30                                 |
| Sat 10 May        | Work Party<br>10h00-13h00                             | 19-20 July       | WWT Bioblitz event<br>Lower Smite Farm                 |
| 17/18 May         | Pershore Arts on the Wetland                          | Fri 1 Aug        | Moth Group 21h30-00h30                                 |
| Fri 23 May        | Moth Group 21h30-00h30                                | Wed 6 Aug        | An introduction to Grasshoppers and Crickets           |
| Fri 30 May        | Spring wildlife walk with<br>Worcestershire Recorders | Wed 20 Aug       | An introduction to dragonflies and damselflies         |
| Fri 6 Jun         | Moth Group 21h45-00h45                                | Aug Bank Holiday | Plum Festival display and activities                   |
| Sat 7 Jun         | Work Party 10h00-13h00                                | Fri 22 Aug       | Moth Group 20h30-23h30                                 |
| Tue 10 Jun        | An introduction to freshwater invertebrates           | w/c 8 Sep        | Autumn wildlife walk with<br>Worcestershire Recorders  |
| <b>Wed 18 Jun</b> | <b>Annual General Meeting</b><br>18h30-20h00          | w/c 6 Oct        | Wetlands, how they function and how we impact on them. |
| mid-Jun           | Phase 1 habitat survey and plant ID training.         |                  |  |

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  
 Work Parties - Ken Pomfret KenPomfret@btinternet.com

## Website

The web address: <http://www.avonmeadows.org.uk/>. We are working hard to keep the site up to date.

## **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](mailto:jim.burgin@wychavon.gov.uk)

Ms Liz Etheridge, Wetlands for All Project Officer

Tel: 01386 565366

eMail: [liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk](mailto:liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk)

Let us hope this nice weather continues so that we can all have a nice summer on the Wetland.

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