



Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

Newsletter No.16



Fig. 1 Just before lighting the moth trap on Friday 25th July. Moulting Mallards seeking safety on the pool. (R D E Stott)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2014 Annual General Meeting took place on Wednesday 18 June 2014 and I am pleased to report that your Officers and Committee were re-elected to serve for another year. Professional insect expert, Roger Umpelby, gave a very interesting talk about the invertebrates that occur on the Wetland illustrated by his own excellent photographs. This provided us with new insights into the importance of the insect population to the success of the Wetland.

Review of our progress

HLF Project

We are already half-way through this project! This time has flashed by. We are now formally a Local Nature Reserve to give encouragement to our efforts to improve the site for wildlife.

Liz has started running courses for Friends; the first one led by Peter Case from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust for pond dipping was very well received.



Fig. 2 Kirstie, Gwen and Peter Case examining their catch. (L Etheridge)

Training in habitat assessment was arranged by Liz and carried out by Graham Davis, who runs the consultancy Focus Ecology. Eight Friends attended a very interesting day to learn some of what is involved in this important subject. This course was arranged with our future plans for meadow improvement (see Site Management below).

Pershore Arts members are using Avon Meadows as their inspiration for an exhibition of paintings and photographs to be put on in October this year in Pershore Library.

Wader Scrape

No evidence of Great Crested Newts was found during the survey and now the Phase 1 habitat survey has been completed the final document set for our planning application can go ahead. This application will include a wheelchair access path which will run north to south along the west side of the main pool from King George's carpark to the Mayfield Road playing field with a connection to the boardwalk of course. We live in hopes of being able to start work this autumn.

Site Management

It will be obvious to all who have visited the site recently that we have had the first hay cut of the year. We hope to have 2 cuts per year mainly to control undesirable plants such as thistles, docks and sedges. The plan is not to eradicate them but simply to stop them taking over.

Looking to the future management of the meadows we are looking at the possibilities for grassland restoration by introducing native wild flowers which would have occurred here in previous centuries but modern agrochemicals have caused to die out. The first part of this project is to establish what we have in terms of plants, soil quality and water levels which is being put in place. Liz has arranged for a graduate student from Worcester University to help us with the necessary soil analysis work.

In the meantime "The Beast" has greatly eased the matter of keeping growth back along the main footpaths and as the bird breeding season comes to an end we will begin to cut back reeds where they have spread into waterways using our underwater reed cutter.

Dog Fouling

Again we would like to thank the majority of dog owners for clearing up after their pets and I am delighted to report there has been a discernable improvement. There is still a small number of dog owners who have little respect for other users of the Wetland and leave their dog's mess; some has even been found on the boardwalk! We plan to continue our campaign to keep mess off the paths and ideally nowhere on the Wetland.

Events

The All Day Birdwatch on 3 May enjoyed warm, sunny weather but fewer species this year, 46 species (cf. 49 in 2013). Much of this is to do with the timing of the event and whether or not it coincides with the peak arrival time of migrant species. However it was not without interest and we recorded our earliest **Lesser Whitethroat**.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust recently ran its Bioblitz event when experts were invited to its HQ at Lower Smite Farm to record as many types of creature as possible over a 24 hour period. The Friends of Avon Meadows were represented and two of us went over on the Saturday evening to run one of our moth traps. We contributed 38 species of moth.

Recent Sightings

Most people will know that now only three **Mute Swan** cygnets of the original seven remain. However they have been around long enough to get quite large now. One of the more surprising records was of a **Common Grasshopper Warbler** on 12 June, a new early record. It stayed

around for several days and was last seen on 30 June. As I write our Coots still have six chicks that are quite big now.

The Moth Group does not just record moths. During one of our recent Friday moth trapping sessions we recorded **Tawny Owl**, **Daubenton's** and **Pipistrelle Bats**. On good nights the bats take almost as many moths from the air 20 feet above us as we do in the trap!

Reptiles are not to be forgotten and this summer has been good for **Slow Worms** and **Grass Snakes**.

Mink continue to leave evidence of their presence on one of the mink rafts and one was found dead on the site in early July. It is not known how it died. **Common Shrew** and **Field Vole** continue to be seen regularly on the Wetland.

Flora & Fauna Surveys

Bird Survey

Most birds have had a reasonable summer and we believe that about 39 species bred on, or close to, the Wetland. Water bird chick numbers seem to be down, presumably due to predation. We have recorded 73 species so far this year, no new species since the last newsletter though.

Butterfly Transect

In early July Kirstie found a new species of butterfly on the Wetland, the **Essex Skipper**. Skippers are a group of butterfly that some people think of as being half-way between normal butterflies and moths. They are small and fast-flying and the Essex Skipper is very similar to the Small Skipper. In fact they are identical except that the tips of the antennae of the Essex Skipper are wholly black whereas those of the Small Skipper are black and orange!

So far this year butterfly counts are generally up on 2013 although the significance of this so far only means that many species started flying earlier this year due to the warm weather.



Fig. 3 The Coot chicks soon after hatching. (K Pomfret)



Fig. 4 We have a good population of Grass Snakes on the Wetland, this is a nice photograph of one waking up. (S Davis)



Fig. 5 A chance sighting of a recently emerged Small Tortoiseshell still pumping fluid into its wings. (R D E Stott)

Moth Group

This is our most recent monitoring effort and so far we have had 6 sessions. We try to photograph most of the species we see on moth nights and these photographs can be seen at <https://picasaweb.google.com/Synallaxis/FriendsOfAvonMeadowsMothGroup>. We have recorded 74 species so far on these nights and our total species count for the Wetland has risen to 251.

Dragonfly Transect

Dragonfly counts have been excellent this year. The new species of last year, **Red-eyed Damselfly**, has been found frequently this year and **White-legged Damselfly** has been found which, until this year, had only been found twice.

If anyone is interested in either learning more about any of the above activities or simply having more information just let us know and it can be arranged. Similarly if any of you have a photograph of a creature you would like to know more about please eMail it in.



Fig. 6 A Red-eyed Damselfly resting on one of its favourite places, a lily pad. (P Jenkins)

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.

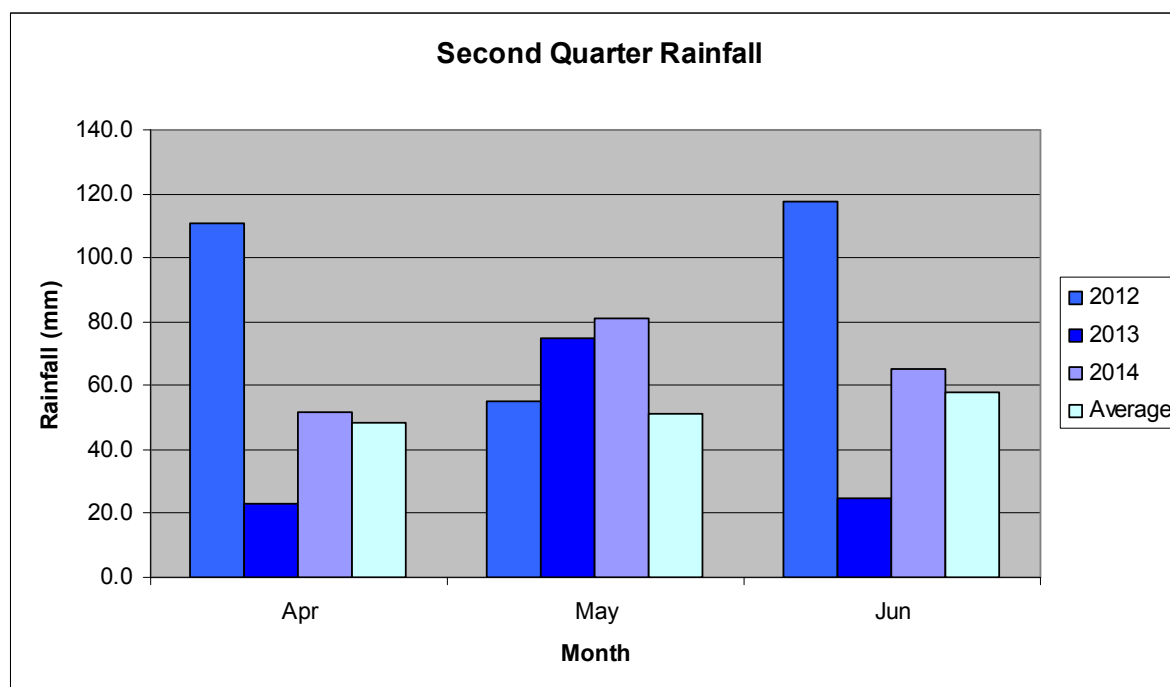
Newsletter - know anyone who would like one? Let Richard have their eMail address.



Fig. 7 A very cooperative White-legged Damselfly which allowed us to get close up! (R D E Stott)

Water Levels

As we all now realise the rainfall varies considerably year on year as the chart below shows. However the good water levels in the main pool this year are the result of rainfall over the last 3 months and were close to average after a very wet year in 2012 and very dry year in 2013. As though to emphasise this variability the storm we had overnight on 17 July dropped 50mm of rain, more than we normally get in the whole month of July!



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
Wed 30 July	Visit to The Ercall and Wenlock Edge	w/c 8 Sep	Autumn wildlife walk with Worcestershire Recorders
Fri 1 Aug	Moth Group* 21h00-Midnight	Wed 10 Sept	Committee Meeting 18.00 hrs Civic Centre
Wed 6 Aug	An introduction to Grasshoppers and Crickets	Sat 13 Sep 10h00-13h00	Work Party
Sat 9 Aug 10h00-13h 00	Work Party	Fri 19 Sep	Moth Group* 19h30-22h30
Wed 20 Aug	An introduction to Dragonflies and Damselflies	Fri 3 Oct	Pershore Arts Avon Meadows Exhibition Pershore Library
Aug Bank Holiday	Plum Festival display and activities	Fri 3 Oct	Moth Group* 19h00-22h00
Fri 22 Aug	Moth Group* 20h30-23h30	w/c 6 Oct	Wetlands, how they function and how we impact on them.
Fri 5 Sep	Moth Group* 20h00-23h00	Sat 13 Sep 10h00-13h00	Work Party
		Fri 17 Oct	Moth Group* 18h00-21h00

* Weather dependent.

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.

Although not organised directly by the Friends of Avon Meadows you may be interested to know that one of the Friends has started a blog to track happenings on the Wetland which helps to keep us all up to date! The blog Coot's Eye View can be followed at

<http://cootseyeview.blogspot.co.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 565366
eMail: liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk

I hope you are enjoying the 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