



Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

Newsletter No.17



Fig. 1 Autumn colour on a dull day at the end of October. *R D E Stott*

Review of our progress

HLF Project

Liz organised several courses during the summer, each led by an acknowledged county expert in the subject (see below). The people who were able to attend thoroughly enjoyed them to the point where we are looking at running similar courses in 2015.

Some of you may have noticed that our Willow Heron has disappeared. This is a deliberate action at the request of its creators. It has been taken away to have its legs modified to make them more elegant and it will return in the not too distant future.

Wader Scrape

With Liz's effort in pulling together the documentation and the support of Pershore Town and Wychavon District Councils we are delighted to be able to announce that we have now received planning permission for our wader scrape and wheelchair access path! The final phase can now begin, putting together funding for the work and finalising the construction details. It is our hope that it will all be complete by the spring of 2015.

It will take a few years for the scrape area to mature and achieve its full potential but it will provide a haven for a variety of water birds and increase the diversity of birds that visit us.

Site Management

During a summer of prodigious growth, regular use of The Beast on work parties has kept the footpaths easy to use. This machine does a fantastic amount of work and makes this path-clearing possible.

During September we installed a series of 9 dipwells. These buried tubes are set vertically in the ground and are spread out across the meadow area. They are intended to allow monitoring of the water table in the upper layers of the soil. Our interest is in the effect the water table

has on surface vegetation and therefore the dipwells only go down one metre. Once we have accumulated this data we will be able to determine which areas are suitable for particular species of wild flower. Our medium term plan is to re-introduce some of the wild flowers that would have existed in the area in times gone by. This in turn will increase the variety of insects that use the area.

Sheep

In line with the medium term plan for wild flowers mentioned above we are planning to introduce some sheep onto the Wetland this autumn to graze the grass down. We had hoped to make a second haycut but the first one turned out to be too late for the grass to grow sufficiently to justify a second cut. The sheep will stay on the meadows for as long as is necessary but probably 4-6 weeks. It will be nice to see the sheep on the meadows as it is a traditional way to manage them and there is something satisfying about this continuity in the age of the microchip.

The time is upon us when reed cutting has to take place. In part this is to maintain healthy reed beds and in part to control reeds spreading over areas of open water. It is a big job that has to be done. As last year, we will clear-cut two separate areas of reed and trim back reeds along some of the pool margins. We would be most grateful for anyone who feels they could help in this work to contact Ken or Richard.

Dog Fouling

Regular visitors to the Wetland will have noticed that we have started marking dog mess with biodegradable paint. This will serve the dual purpose of pointing out to the inconsiderate few who fail to pick up their dog's mess that we do notice and to highlight the mess so that we are less likely to step in it!

Events

The Butterfly Identification and Monitoring course on 16 July enjoyed lovely weather and was most successful. A delightful surprise during the afternoon was the discovery of Essex Skipper, a first for the Wetland. It is very similar to Small Skipper but the tips of its antennae are a different colour! Tricky!!! It seems there was quite an influx of these butterflies into the county this year.

On 6 Aug the Introduction to Grasshoppers and Crickets course took place. No rarities were found but, as we had never surveyed this group before, all the species were "new" to the Wetland. People on the course were charmed to see 3 species of Bush Cricket, 3 species of Grasshopper and 2 species of Conehead. Our helpful expert was very surprised to see how many grasshoppers there were seemingly hopping off every blade of grass.

Finally, on 20th August the course Introducing Dragonflies and Damselflies took place. The weather was fair, always important for looking



Fig. 2 Speckled Bush Cricket found on the Grasshoppers and Crickets course. L Etheridge

for insects, and two new species for the Wetland were discovered; Beautiful Demoiselle and Small Red-eyed Damselfly.

It will be worth keeping an eye open for the courses that are run next year as they provide an excellent way to spend an afternoon in delightful surroundings finding out from a real expert what the creatures are all about.

Art on the Meadows

This summer, Avon Meadows has provided the inspiration for an exhibition of artwork and photographs by Pershore Arts. Opening on 3rd October, the exhibition ran until 24th October at Pershore Library; if you missed it you missed a treat!

It has been really wonderful to see how others view the meadows and wetlands and we look forward to working with Pershore Arts on future projects around the meadows.

Recent Sightings

A Jay flew over on 11 Sep and the first Common Snipe on the same day. Meadow Pipits arrived on 23 Sep. A Kestrel has occasionally been seen overhead; this species has been an uncommon sight in recent years. As though to balance that, Ravens fly over the Wetland regularly where once they were uncommon. Grey Herons can be seen stalking the field margins in search of frogs or toads.

Moth nights are not always about moths! Some of the group were wandering about looking in the pools and found a weird Water Stick Insect. They look like something from the

Amazon jungle but apparently are not uncommon in the British Isles.

The Wetland can be a tough place to hang out for some creatures. The picture of a Common Darter dragonfly caught in a spider's web shows the poor dragonfly being eaten. The spider does not have an English name but is called *Meta segmentata*. Not a name that rolls off the tongue!

Ever since the floods of last year the fish population of the pools has increased. Young Pike can be seen often off the boardwalk. Although



Fig. 3 Another way to appreciate the Wetlands. Part of this summer's Pershore Arts event. *S Batty*



Fig. 4 The spider *Meta segmentata* attacking a Common Darter. *R D E Stott*



Fig. 5 A young Pike in Piddle Brook *D Devos*

Pike eat other fish, if they eat all the fish there will be nothing more for them to eat and they will die out. Nature will find a balance.

Flora & Fauna Surveys

Bird Survey

Most birds have had a reasonable summer and we believe that 39 species bred on, or close to, the Wetland. Water bird chick numbers seem to be down, possibly due to predation. Several species left us later than usual; the last Sand Martin on 28 Aug, the last Swift on 4 Sep and the last Swallow on 2 Oct.

With the onset of autumn species numbers can increase temporarily and on 2 Oct we logged a new survey record of 43 species in the morning. There was nothing particularly unusual around at the time it was just that everything appeared! Since then we have recorded two new species for the year bringing the total to date to 78. A Shoveler in winter plumage (brown!) was seen on the main pool and is still present as this is written. When compared with the very common Mallard the Shoveler has a much heavier bill which is grey on top and orange at the sides. Interestingly there are 4 species of Shoveler across the world (Eurasia, Africa, America & Australia) all of which share this distinctive heavy bill although their plumages are quite different. Our 78th species for the year was a pair of Stonechat off the boardwalk on 16 Oct which had increased to 3 by the following week. A Water Rail has been calling recently (the call is reminiscent of a piglet squealing) and we have had our first autumn record for Cetti's Warbler.

Butterfly Transect

Butterfly Conservation transect work finished on 30 Sep. This summer, after a bright start, numbers tailed off rather during the cool August. 26 weekly transect counts were completed and 19 species counted (17 in 2013) and 680 individual butterflies were counted (1034 in 2013).

Moth Group

The Moth Group has now met on 12 occasions recording 113 species. The total species count for the Wetland now stands at 265. There is a hard core of people who turn out on most occasions and a further half dozen who attend occasionally. Specimen photographs can be seen on: <https://picasaweb.google.com/Synallaxis/FriendsOfAvonMeadowsMothGroup>.

At present we have only been running a single moth trap but the plan is to run two during 2015.

Dragonfly Transect

Apologies to Paul for mis-spelling his name in the caption for the Red-eyed Damselfly. Records for Beautiful Demoiselle and Small Red-eyed Damselfly (see above) bring our total species count to 18 and it is pleasing to note that all species ever recorded on the Wetland were seen during this year.



Fig. 6 Migrant Hawker taken in September. This species was quite numerous towards the end of the summer. P Jenkins

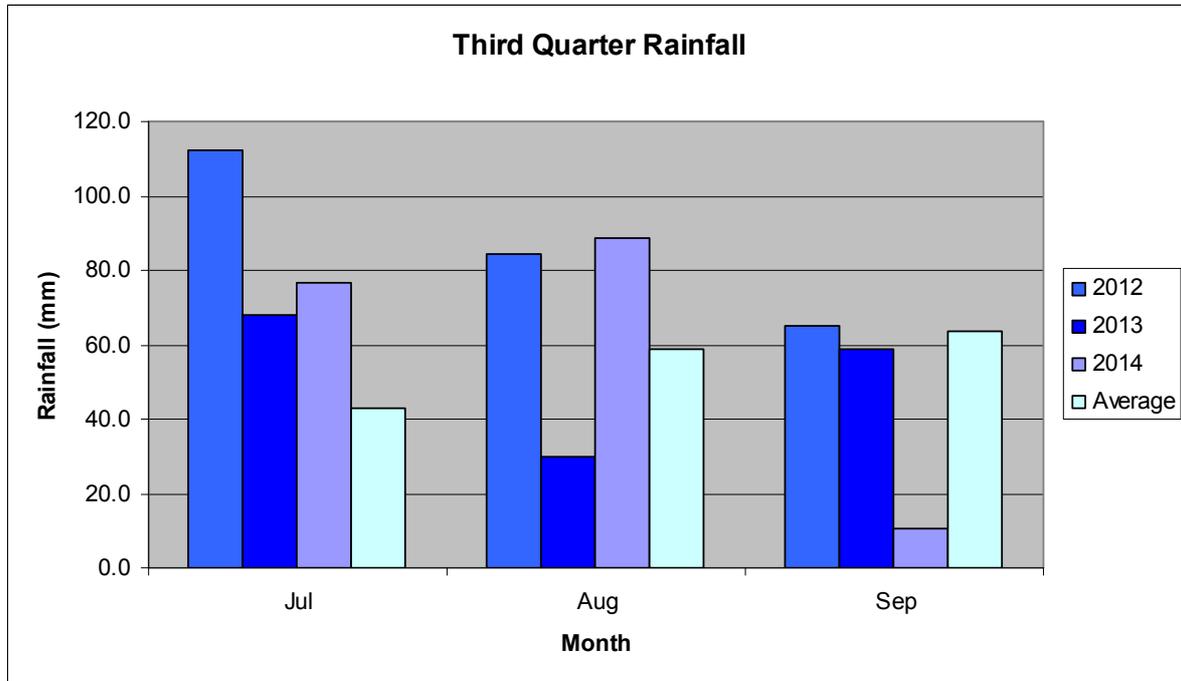
How you can help us

Work Parties - see Diary Dates below.

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

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

Water Levels



Water levels on the Wetland have remained quite steady throughout the summer and, as you can see in the bar graph above, July and August were wetter than average whereas September was exceptionally dry. The warmth and wet provided ideal growing conditions as gardeners will have noticed and certainly this was so on the Wetland.

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 31 Oct*	Moth Group 17h00-20h00 (GMT!)	Wed 10 Dec	FoAM Committee Meeting 18h00-20h00
Sat 8 Nov	Work Party 10h00 to 13h00	Sat 10 Jan 15	Work Party 10h00 to 13h00
Sat 6 Dec	Work Party 10h00 to 13h00	Sat 7 Feb 15	Work Party 10h00 to 13h00

* 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

<http://www.avonmeadows.org.uk/>. We are working hard to keep the site up to date.
Blog: <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 autumn and winter 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:

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Worcestershire
WR10 1QB