

AVON MEADOWS WETLAND VOLUNTEERS

Newsletter No.2



Figure 1: The Wetlands in early November with a little more water (16.08m aod). (R D E Stott)

Review of our progress

A few loyal volunteers have been carrying out maintenance work during the summer. Activities undertaken include bridge repair and putting wood chip and hoggins on the paths.

It is part of the management plan to mow the meadow areas and then to graze them with either sheep or cattle. Sheep are grazing at present. This management strategy is intended to continue the land use as it has been for hundreds of years to maintain the historic habitat and species populations that depend upon it.

Species recorded in surveys so far during 2010 on the Wetland have revealed species counts as follows:

Birds	70
Butterflies	15
Dragonflies	12
Vascular plants	149

Please let Dave Jeynes know if you have any interesting records (davejeynes@live.com).

Wychavon District Council and Pershore Town Council are jointly in the process of seeking Heritage Lottery Funding for a project to raise the profile of the Wetland. This would include appropriate signage in the town, together with a major initiative to involve local schools in the Wetlands. Events involving the natural history of the Wetlands for the benefit of local people are also under consideration, but it will be 2011 before we know if our application has been successful.



Figure 2: Small Tortoiseshell *Aglais urticae* taken on the Wetlands (K Pomfret)

Pershore Town Council is considering putting the southern meadow up as part of the Queen Elizabeth II Fields Challenge (see <http://www.qe2fields.com>). Although the Challenge seems to be primarily aimed at creating playing fields it also covers natural areas so there need be no concern as to a change of character of the Wetland.

We are also fund raising on a rather smaller scale for equipment for Wetland maintenance, and within this will be a gauge board so that water levels may be measured conveniently.

Breeding Birds

Most of our breeding birds have dispersed now and the Wetland is shutting down for the winter. The Mallard population seems to have moved south to the football field beside the river near the Leisure Centre.

In common with the whole area, Greenfinch numbers are down and have only been recorded on the Wetland in small numbers. The probable culprit is a parasite called *Trichomonas gallinae*. If you use bird feeders at home please clean them regularly and allow the feeder to dry out afterwards to minimise its spread.

The Mute Swan cygnets seem to have been chased off by their parents. Swan families sometimes split up in September as adult birds start to be aggressive towards their offspring. Apparently this behaviour occurs more particularly in urban areas.

Recent Sightings

Winter visitors have begun to arrive and Meadow Pipits and Common Snipe can be encountered on the grassy areas; wading birds tend not to stay long but often drop into the Wetlands to take a breather, as did a Common Greenshank in late August. On 22 Oct 10 a Raven flew over the wetland. Ravens breed on the Malvern Hills and visit the Throckmorton Tip from time to time so we are roughly on their route.

More recently in October there was a possible sighting (but no photograph) of a rare Rough-legged Buzzard soaring with Common Buzzards. The Rough-legged Buzzard can be separated from the Common Buzzard by its white tail with a dark band at the tip. Confusingly some young Common Buzzards can also show quite a lot of white in the tail so photographs are essential to be sure of the identification.

At the end of October, the first Tufted Duck of the winter arrived, a flock of Redwing flew over and a flock of c.250 Starlings can be seen wheeling over the wetland at dusk. The first week of November brought in a single Fieldfare and Stonechat.

Butterflies have gone (a Red Admiral seen on 3 November!) now but occasional dragonflies can be seen and Common Darters (the red bodied ones) have been seen on sunny days in early November.

Water Levels

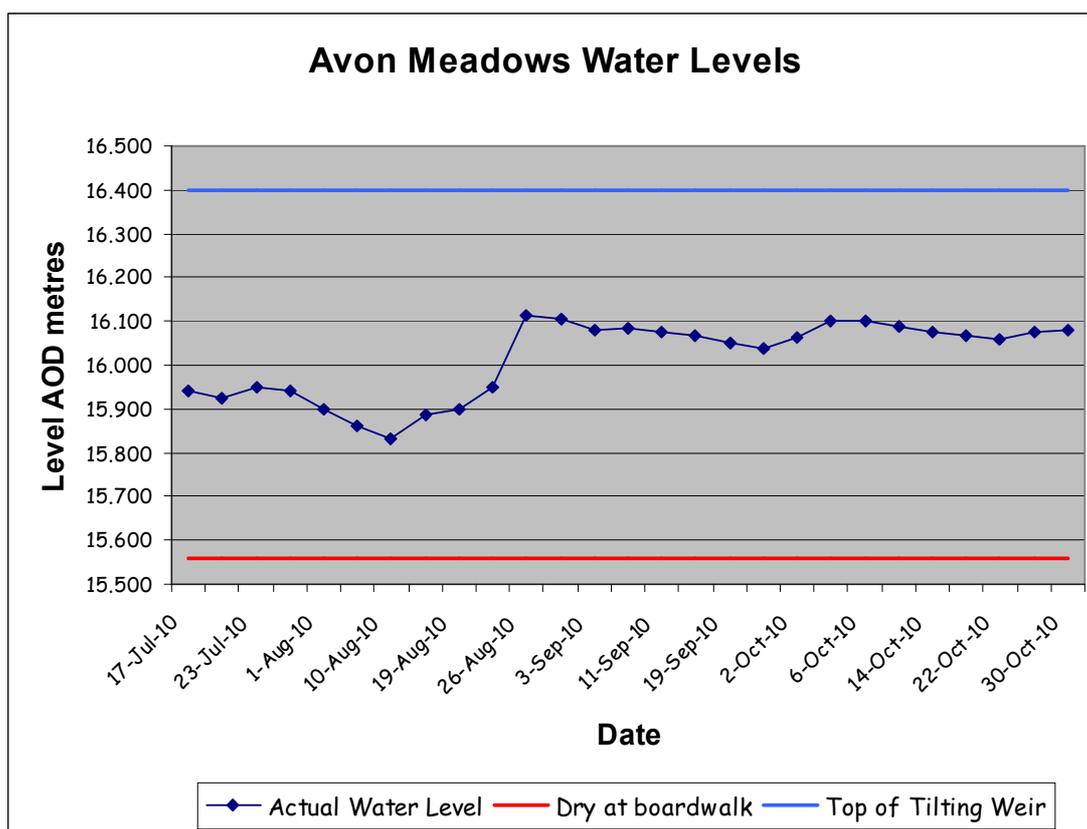
During this dry summer the water level on the Wetland has been a matter of concern. In the event this concern turned out to be unnecessary as the water level was maintained well. We are trying to learn more about how water levels are affected throughout the year so that it can be managed effectively.

Surface water from the Cherry Orchard Estate is piped into the Wetland to clean it up before it enters the River Avon which in turn serves to increase the Wetland water level. Investigation thus far leads us to conclude that for every 1 cm of rain that falls, the level on the Wetland will rise by about 2.8 cm. This rise is offset by a combination of evaporation and take-up by the plants which will change with the seasons both

because of the ambient temperatures and the plant life cycles. Present indications are that the loss of level varies between 2.5mm and 5mm per day. Water levels have been plotted for the Wetland since 1 Aug 2010 and the graph below shows that we have little to worry about provided rainfall and temperatures remain within historical norms.

The rainfall over the period has been as follows (average figures are in brackets):

August 124.6 mm (38.5 mm)
 September 21.0 mm (39.9 mm)
 October 48.7 mm (55.7 mm)



How you can help us

We, the Committee, are always grateful for any help you can give as it is your Wetland as much as ours. If you have interesting ideas please let us know. Several things have occurred to us recently as follows.

1. We would like any suggestions you might have as to how we can improve your experience of the Wetlands. We have been thinking in terms of bird watching and nature photography workshops. We can set things up if there is sufficient interest but need to know what you would like to do. Please get in touch with Bob, Val or Richard.
2. We are always looking for volunteers to help with maintenance. Generally the tasks are not arduous and the work period runs from 10.00am



Figure 3: Dave and Bob clearing paths. (V Wood)

to 1.00pm. Ken Pomfret has put together a work party schedule alternating between Saturdays and Wednesdays as follows:

Wednesday 1 December
Saturday 8 January 2011
Wednesday 2 February 2011
Saturday 5 March 2011

You are always welcome and the more people we can get the more work we can undertake. Please let Ken know if you can come (kenPomfret@btinternet.com). An urgent task is to remove willow saplings before we are overrun with them.



Figure 4: Ken expertly handling woodchip.
(V Wood)

3. Next year we are planning to carry out organised surveys for birds, butterflies, dragonflies and plants. There will be separate surveys for each species group. Fauna surveys will be carried out regularly, ideally weekly, and if you are interested in taking part (no experience necessary!) please let me know (richarddestott@gmail.com).



Figure 5: Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina* & Gatekeeper *Pyronia tythonus* - check the number of white dots in the black spots on the forewing. (K Pomfret)

Police

We all hope there will be very little trouble on the wetland that calls for the attention of the police. To cater for this eventuality there are two things to bear in mind.

- If you see an offence of any sort taking place on the wetland call 999. (e.g. carrying firearms, dogs out of control attacking wildlife/farm animals). The police are not magicians and need evidence in order to bring a case. Note down details of the event and take a photograph if possible.
- Our Wildlife Liaison Officer is PC Neil Price. If you see nuisance activities taking place you can leave a message for PC Price on 0300 333 3000 ext. 3339 or by eMail at neil.price@westmercia.pnn.police.uk. You can of course contact an officer of the Committee.

Officers of the Committee

Chairman - Richard Stott richarddestott@gmail.com
Treasurer - Bob Gillmor robert.gillmor@btinternet.com
Secretary - Val Wood valeriewood@uwclub.net

Please continue to enjoy your Wetland!

Richard Stott