

Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

Newsletter No.20



Fig. 1 The rain at the end of July has put some water back into the main pool but the gulls at the back are still standing on the bottom! (R D E Stott)

Annual General Meeting

The committee and officers were re-elected unanimously by the AGM. The Chairman presented his report reviewing the progress made during the year and particularly thanking Liz Etheridge and Jim Burgin for their considerable efforts in supporting Avon Meadows.

Gary Farmer gave a fascinating illustrated talk on some of the insects that inhabit the Wetlands.

Review of our progress

HLF Project

The wheelchair access path linking King George's car park with the boardwalk and the Mayfield Road entrance will now be complete by the end of August. A lovely carved wooden arch has been installed at the end of the boardwalk and new interpretive notice boards will be erected soon after, completing this aspect of the work.

The new wader scrape has been used by some birds when it was wet but recent dry weather has led to its drying out completely. We are planning for volunteers to construct the bird screen for which Wychavon DC has kindly provided a grant for the materials. Later in the year volunteers will need to clear some of the islands which have become overgrown. The plan is to clear the



Fig. 2 The new arch at the beginning of the boardwalk. (R D E Stott)

islands of vegetation to make them attractive to water birds by removing cover for predators. Thereafter we would ask visitors and their pets not to enter this area so as to leave it undisturbed for wildlife.

Site Management

Visitors will have noticed that the volunteers have cleared a number of the main paths so ease passage as the plants grow tall.

Some of you may be aware that we have installed a series of 10 dipwells across the Wetlands. These take the form of a plastic pipe sunk 1 metre into the ground and the ground water level is monitored each week. This work allows us to learn how the dampness of the soil varies throughout the year and therefore which species of plant are likely to flourish in particular areas.

Wild flowers can only compete with meadow grasses when the soil is low in nutrients. Our aim is to allow wild flowers that might have existed in the meadows 100 years ago to become re-established. The recent hay cut is one way of reducing the nutrient load as the nutrients in the hay itself are removed from the meadow to feed farm animals. A small area has been sown with Yellow-rattle which is a partial parasite of grasses and serves to further reduce their vigour.

Dog Fouling: We continue to spray biodegradable paint on dog mess to help people avoid it. It is only a very small number of inconsiderate people that leave their dog's mess behind and show a lack of respect to other users of the Wetland. I must thank the majority of people who walk their dogs on the Wetland for their consideration in picking up any mess their dog makes.



Fig. 3 Moth traps on the main path during the Bioblitz. (V Wood)

Events

Avon Meadows Bioblitz

This turned out to be a wonderful event, the weather was kind and over 200 people turned up to find out what was going on. It was particularly pleasing to see so many new visitors and schools on the day.

The present species count for the day stands at exactly 400 species. There has been some delay as difficult species have to be dissected to be certain of their identity. 52 species of bird were seen including our first **Hobby** of the year, 51 species of beetle and even a **Roe Deer** at 04h45 in the middle of the Meadow Buttercups! The botanists identified 110 species of plant adding one new one to our list, **Great Burnet**. The moth night was the best



Fig. 4 Wendy making friends with an Eyed Hawk-moth. (R Gillmor)

of the year to date with weather conditions turning out to be just right so the 30 or so visitors that turned up had a really interesting evening with 50 species of moth to identify including 11 new ones for us.

These events serve to show how valuable havens like Avon Meadows can be to our wildlife. On the Bioblitz day our experts identified 72 species of fly of which 4 had never been recorded in Worcestershire before.

We were very grateful for members of the Worcestershire Recorders and volunteers whose hard work made the day so successful.

Bee Identification Course

This course took place in mid-June and surprised the participants with the number of different sorts of bees that were present.

Dragonfly Identification Course

This is the second year we have run this course and, if possible, it was even more successful than last year's. A record count of 11 different species of dragonfly was achieved.

Pershore River Festival

Some of the Friends of Avon Meadows took part in the Pershore River Festival held on Saturday 18th July. Activities included pond dipping and wildlife walks.

Surveys & Sightings

Please check the website for up to date sightings on the Wetland. We will keep this up to date through the summer months when most things are happening.

Birds

76 species have been recorded so far this year with another new species for the Wetland (our 116th), a female **Northern Wheatear**, recorded on a wet morning in May. **Cetti's Warbler** (see below) has been

confirmed to be breeding on the Wetland for the first time when juvenile birds were recorded on 13 July. There has been a lot of activity from the **Cuckoos** too with as many as 5 present on a single day. A young Cuckoo was seen flying from the reed bed across the main pool on 14 July confirming breeding on the Wetland this year. The adult birds return to winter in Africa first, leaving the youngsters to fledge and find their own way there. If you see a young Cuckoo from July onwards please let us know.



Fig. 5 A Green Lacewing belongs to a group of insects not surveyed on the Wetland so far. (K Pomfret)



Fig. A Broad-bodied Chaser on the small pool. (R D E Stott)



Fig. 6 A Sedge Warbler bringing a juicy moth for its chicks! (K Pomfret)

On the 30th July a **Black-tailed Godwit** spent some time feeding voraciously on the main pool, the 76th species for the year. It is only the second time this species has been recorded on the Wetland, the previous time being 7 July 2011. We also recorded 2 more **Hobbys** on the same day, only our second record for 2015.

Our resident pair of **Mute Swans** produced 7 cygnets in early May to the delight of all. However the grim reality of nature intervened and 3 of them disappeared (Fox?) in their first few days, however the remaining 4 were doing well before the family moved off to the river partly due to the dry weather lowering the levels on the pools.

Butterflies

The cool spring has kept butterfly numbers down but by late June the numbers were beginning to climb as the **Ringlets** and **Meadow Browns** emerged. Thus far the totals have not matched previous years. We have had 2 sightings of **Painted Lady** this year, our first record since 2012 and there has been a more than usual number of **Marbled Whites** around.

Dragonflies

As with butterflies the weather kept dragonfly numbers down although The Bioblitz day produced only our second record for **Beautiful Demoiselle**. **Red-eyed** and **White-legged Demoiselles** seem to be increasing slowly in number. **Brown Hawkers** were first recorded this year on 25 July.

Moths

We have been able to maintain our regular moth nights at fortnightly intervals so far with only two Fridays rained off. We thought Bioblitz night was a good night but on 26 June it was even better and we recorded 63 species! So far this year we have recorded 34 new species for the Wetland bringing our total to 300 moth species. Note that last year's photographs remain in place but a separate album for this year's can be found at:

<https://picasaweb.google.com/Synallaxis/FoAMMothGroup2015>

Other Species

Two **Tench** were discovered in the main pool in May, a nice addition to our short list of fish species. On 23 & 30 July 6 young **Pike** were seen in the pond dipping pool.



Fig. 7 Black-tailed Godwit on the main pool, 30 July. (S Fowle)



Fig. 8 Our Mute Swans in happier times with their new cygnets. (J M Stott ARPS)

Botanists may notice that there is a lot of **Trifid Bur-marigold** on the new bund to the east of the wader scrape amongst all the sow thistles.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

Name: Francesco Cetti (1726-1778) (pronounced *Chetty*) was a Jesuit who was sent to teach mathematics the University of Sassari in Sardinia. While there he wrote 3 books on the zoology of the island wherein he described a rusty-coloured warbler. Forty years later Alberto della Marmora visited Sardinia and found the same rusty-coloured warbler which he named after Cetti. (Marmora also has a warbler named after him!)



The genus *Cettia* comprises a family of 17 species of Bush Warbler all confined to the Far East except for Cetti's Warbler.

Range: At the time Cetti found this bird on Sardinia its breeding range only extended around the Mediterranean. Since then it has expanded very significantly to the northwest, eventually reaching the UK in 1964, and its first breeding record here was in 1972. More recently, and particularly since 1988, its population in the UK has steadily increased to the point that it was taken off the list of rare breeding birds (over 300 breeding pairs) in 2002. The latest estimate indicates a population of at least 2,000 males (average between 2006-10) in the UK.

Its worldwide range extends from the Middle East and Central Europe in the east to Portugal and the UK in the west. The northwest limit of its range is the UK where it occurs south of a line between south Wales and The Wash. Its stronghold in the UK is Kent.

UK numbers are much affected by severe winters and cool wet summers. The main Worcestershire breeding population is at WWT Upton Warren Reserve near Droitwich. However this population was reduced from ~6 breeding pairs to 2-3 individuals during the severe winter of 2010.

The species is generally rather sedentary although first-year birds will move away from their breeding areas at the end of the summer and cold weather will cause birds to move to find better conditions. There is some movement in spring too. The species normally has 2 broods each year which in favourable weather conditions allows a population to increase comparatively rapidly.

Ringling recoveries within the UK indicate short distance movements, mostly west-east and so far there are only 2 ringling recoveries from across the English Channel although the initial colonization must have come from continental Europe.

History on Avon Meadows: The first record for Cetti's Warbler on Avon Meadows was on 27 April 2013 on a day when several other migrant species had arrived on the Wetland. It was not recorded again during 2013. It was recorded on 8 occasions during 2014, mainly in spring and autumn. In 2015 there was a single record in January then, since 26 March, it has been recorded almost every week culminating in proof of breeding on 13 July when juvenile birds were recorded.

How to find it: Cetti's Warbler is a small skulking bird rather like a plump Reed Warbler. It is rufous brown above with a white eyebrow, a white throat with the rest of the underparts grey. It has pale pinkish legs, rounded wings and tail and flies quickly from one patch of cover to another. When perched, it often cocks its tail. Like many skulking birds it has a loud and distinctive call which can be heard regularly from the reed beds and dense bushes it likes to live in; on the Wetland most often from the boardwalk. (to hear the call go to the RSPB website at: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/name/c/cettiswarbler/index.aspx>)

It is tricky to see but the best chance is during spring when they occasionally sing from an exposed perch. Otherwise it takes considerable patience to catch sight of it.

Please note that Cetti's Warbler is listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act and as such is it protected at all times and severe penalties may be imposed on anyone interfering with the birds. By all means look from the path but do not approach them.

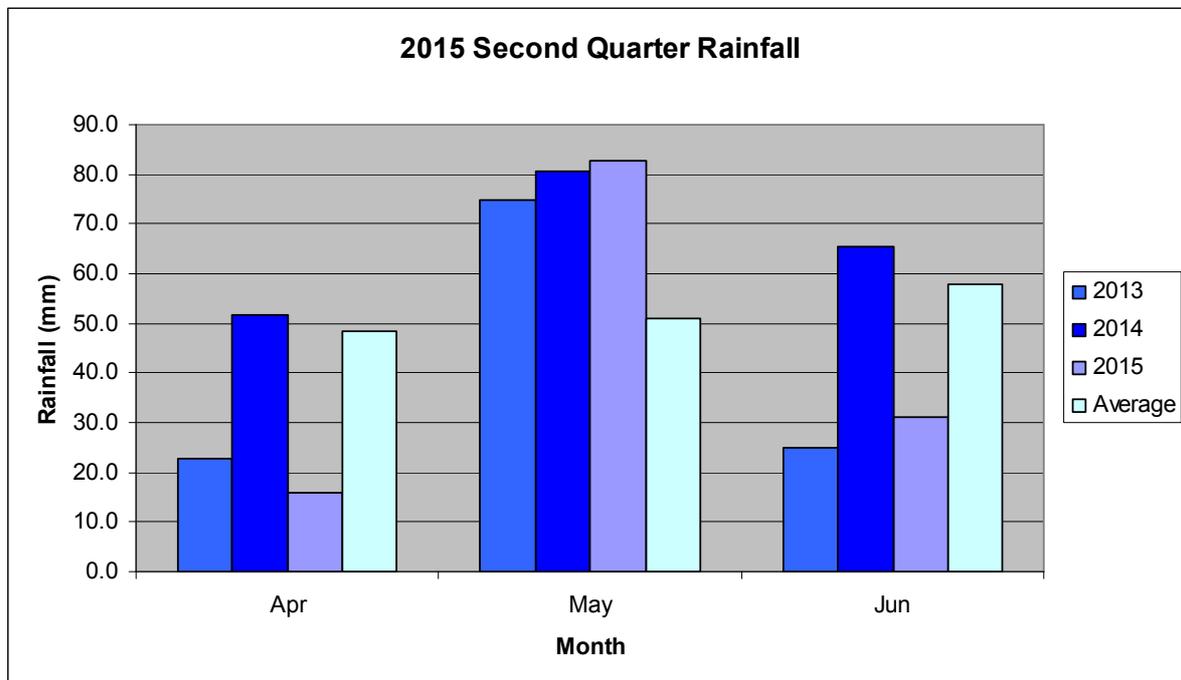
How you can help us

Work Parties - see Diary Dates below. Please come along they, are good fun!

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

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

Water Levels



Water levels have not recovered since winter in spite of a wet May. July too was a dry month until the last week. The new wader scrape in particular needs water in order to attract birds.

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 Jul*	Moth Night 21h00-00h30*	Fri 4 Sep*	Moth Night 19h20-22h50*
Sat 1 Aug	Work Party 10h00 to 13h00	Sat 5 Sep	Work Party 10h00 to 13h00
Fri 7 Aug*	Moth Night 20h20-23h50*	Fri 18 Sep*	Moth Night 18h45-22h15*
Fri 21 Aug*	Moth Night 19h50-23h20*	Fri 2 Oct*	Moth Night 18h15-21h45*
Mon 31 Aug	Pershore Plum Fayre	Fri 16 Oct*	Moth Night 17h45-21h15*
Wed 2 Sep	Committee Meeting	Fri 30 Oct*	Moth Night 16h15-19h45*

* Subject to weather.

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 and a new "Sightings" section has been set up for this summer.
 Coots Eye View 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 continue to enjoy 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

Alternatively you can transfer the funds electronically to the FoAM bank account:

Sort Code: 40-36-46
Account Number: 60018732

If you do electronically transfer money **please confirm by eMail** to avon.meadows@btinternet.com giving your name and the amount so that receipts can be cross checked.