



Taken on a cool April morning, spring is arriving in spite of the cool breeze.

Newsletter No: 23

April 2016

Progress on the Wetland

Annual General Meeting

Please note that our AGM will be held in the Civic Centre at **6:30 pm** on Tuesday **17 May 16**. Liz will review the HFL Project and one of our own, Ken Corrigan, will show an RSPB video on wetland birds.

HLF Project

I am delighted to report that funding has been arranged so that Liz will be staying on until June.

We are in the process of putting together a case to the Heritage Lottery fund for a new and substantial project to develop other sites in the county along similar lines to Avon Meadows. The sites presently under consideration are Stoulton Woods, Droitwich Woods and Broadway Gravel Pits. These big projects take several months to put together and we are hoping that Liz will be able to help us to do this.

Site Management

Improvements to the entrance path are substantially complete at least for the time being and I am pleased to note several people using mobility scooters on the Wetland paths.

Unfortunately the reed cutting programme planned for this winter was prevented by the amount of rain. However with our new HQ (see below) work parties can be set up at much shorter notice and we stand a better chance of getting machinery into the reed beds when they are drier.

Dog Fouling

As ever we are asking for your cooperation in picking up your dog's mess and particularly keeping the paths clear. Children use the paths and serious illness can arise if they come into contact with dog faeces.

Theft!

Sometime over the weekend of 5/6 March our tool store in the grounds of Cherry Orchard School was broken into. These 'master criminals' made off with two wheelbarrows, some waders and some hand tools. A big nuisance for a small organisation.

Photo Challenge!



One of our Common Stonechats taking a snack!

Photo: Jeff Steady

This excellent photograph was taken on the Wetlands back in January. The Stonechats left us in early March which is about their usual time.

Funding

We are delighted to announce that **Pershore Town Council** has awarded us a £500 grant towards our running expenses. While we keep our running expenses comparatively low we have to pay insurance and fuel costs for our equipment which will use most of this amount during the year.

Our new 'HQ' (Equipment Store)

Our new container has been nicknamed 'HQ' and we are in the process of finishing it off so that it can become just that. This is all thanks to a grant from Severn Waste's 'Welcome to Our Future' scheme and to Severn Trent for allowing us to use part of its site on Cherry Orchard and to Worcester Container Hire Ltd for letting us have a new green container for the price of a second hand one!

Avon Meadows smart phone app!

Just type in Avon Meadows to your app store and download the free interactive app onto your smart phone. The app was officially launched on 22 April and it offers a new insight into Avon Meadows. It is great fun for younger visitors!

Willow Heron

The Willow Heron has been repaired and we are now waiting for the water level in the main pool to drop a little so that we can gain safe access to put it back in place!

Wader Scrape Access

A gate is to be erected shortly to discourage access to the scrape area so that breeding birds can feel safe. It does seem as though waterbirds are already showing an interest in the area judging by the number that have been recorded this spring.

Binoculars

People often ask what sort of binoculars should I buy? The first and most important piece of advice is try before you buy. There are a number of shops catering for wildlife people where you can easily do this. Try expensive ones and cheaper ones, you may not be able to see the difference!

Most bird watchers use either 8x40 or 10x40. The first number is the magnification and the second the diameter of the large lens at the front which lets in all the light. Try these and others too to see what suits you. Remember the larger the magnification the harder it is to hold them steady!

If you plan to use them outside in poor weather then nitrogen filled ones will prevent condensation forming inside. If you are interested in insects get binoculars that focus down to 2.5 metres or better. Think about the weight, if you carry them all day they can seem very heavy by the end!

Wetland Events

Frog and Toad Identification

Large amount of toad and particularly frog spawn was located during the day which is very encouraging as the recent floods might have washed it away!

Small Mammal Identification

A good number of people turned up on a lovely morning and found evidence of the presence of Field Vole and European Otter. However the recent flooding meant that most mammals had moved off to higher ground to avoid drowning!

BIOBLITZ 2016

A repeat of last year's very successful event is being planned for this year. It has been decided to make it a little later in the year and on a Saturday. Please put **Saturday 18 June 16** in your diaries and watch the website for more information.

The event will start with walks to hear the dawn chorus and finish with moth trapping. In between times experts from the Worcestershire Recorders will be searching the meadows for interesting plants and insects. It is an event that is open to all so please do come along even if only for an hour!

Surveys and Sightings

Birds

New Species

A Common Shelduck (see photo) was spotted by Sarah Fowle on 16 March, was a first sighting for the Wetland and was our 118th species.

Early Arrivals

Following the mild winter eight of our summer visitors have arrived with us a little earlier this year than in previous years. In March a House Martin on 28th (6 days earlier), the first Barn Swallows arrived on 31st (2 days earlier) and a Willow Warbler on the same day (3 days earlier).

April is the peak month for the arrival of summer visitors. A Sedge Warbler was heard on 10th (4 days earlier). On our record count day, 14th, we had new early records for Common Cuckoo (3 days earlier), Reed Warbler (1 day earlier) and Common Whitethroat (4 days earlier).

On 21th a Lesser Whitethroat was heard calling (another new early record—20 days earlier).



Common Shelduck on the scrape on 16 March 2016.

Photo: Sarah Fowle

Winter Departures

The winter birds have moved out; the Common Stonechats were last seen on 3 March and the last Fieldfare on 20 March. The Water Rails, Redwings and Lesser Redpoll left us soon after 24 March. The last Meadow Pipit was seen on 31 March and the last sighting of Common Snipe was of a pair flushed on 14 Apr.

Interesting Records

New species for 2016 continue to accumulate as those of you who check the Website will have noticed. An early morning visit to the scrape on revealed 3 Northern Shoveler (06h00 on 31 January) clearly using it as an overnight roost and checking through the Black-headed Gulls turned up a 1st winter Common Gull (2 February). A pair of Barn Owls seen on 10 Feb. caused great excitement but they have not been seen since. The following day Eurasian Treecreeper turned up (last seen on 12 Mar 2015), followed by two in the same place on 15 Apr. A Eurasian Wigeon appeared on 16 March.

The flooding in early March brought in occasional Common Gulls and approximately 200 Pied Wagtails roosting on the scrape.

By the end of March our Cetti's Warblers were displaying (see photo) with birds calling from 3 territories as the summer birds began to arrive. A Yellow Wagtail passed through on 23 Apr (last seen in 2014). This is a good spring for Willow Warblers which have been recorded throughout April. Yellow Wagtail was seen passing through on 23 Apr (last seen in 2014).



Dedicated survey work in rising flood water on 10 March!

Photo: Richard Stott

The new scrape is beginning to attract wading birds including a pair of Eurasian Oystercatchers (not seen since 2013), a Little Ringed Plover (not seen since 2009), several Common Redshank (not seen since 2010) and a Common Sandpiper (not seen since 2012). All have appeared in the last 4 weeks.

It was very exciting to see a pair of Little Egrets fly over on 14 Apr, sadly not stopping. The last time we saw more than one in a year was 2013.

Yellow Wagtail was seen passing through on 23 Apr (last seen in 2014).

Survey Summary

The survey work has been very productive this year averaging 42 species in the morning and equalling our best count of 47 species on 31 March. This was bettered by our best ever counts of **50** on 14 April and 28 April as the summer visitors arrived!

So far **86** species have been recorded on the Wetlands in 2016.



Cetti's Warblers are really difficult to see let alone photograph! They do show more often in early spring.

Photo: Sarah Fowle

Wild Flowers

Spring is on its way when the Blackthorn (Sloe) bushes flower which this year began to show in late March. The Blackthorn flowers before it has leaves whereas Hawthorn only flowers after the leaves have appeared.

Marsh Marigolds are showing well beside the new boardwalk and Lady's Smock, a small pinkish-white flower, is beginning to appear on the meadows.

A new species has been recorded on the Wetland, Green Alkanet. It is quite common and our 224th species of plant.

Butterflies

Our butterfly survey work has started although not many appear so early. Most that do are individuals that have hibernated over winter and can appear at all sorts of surprising times provided the sun is out. Early fliers are the Brimstone and Small Tortoiseshell. Currently we can add Small White, Orangetip, Peacock and Comma to our list.

The cold weather at the end of April will delay dragonflies.

Mammals

A European Otter was seen on the river beside the Wetland in mid-April in the middle of the day to the delight of the person who was lucky enough to see it! There was another sighting a few days later near the tilting weir. This is good news on a variety of fronts not least that Otters will scare the American Mink off and it is the Mink that take young birds.

Soprano Pipistrelle bats can be seen from the path beside the main pool in the early evening.

The small section of path that has been scuffed up near the tilting weir is believed to be the work of a Badger.

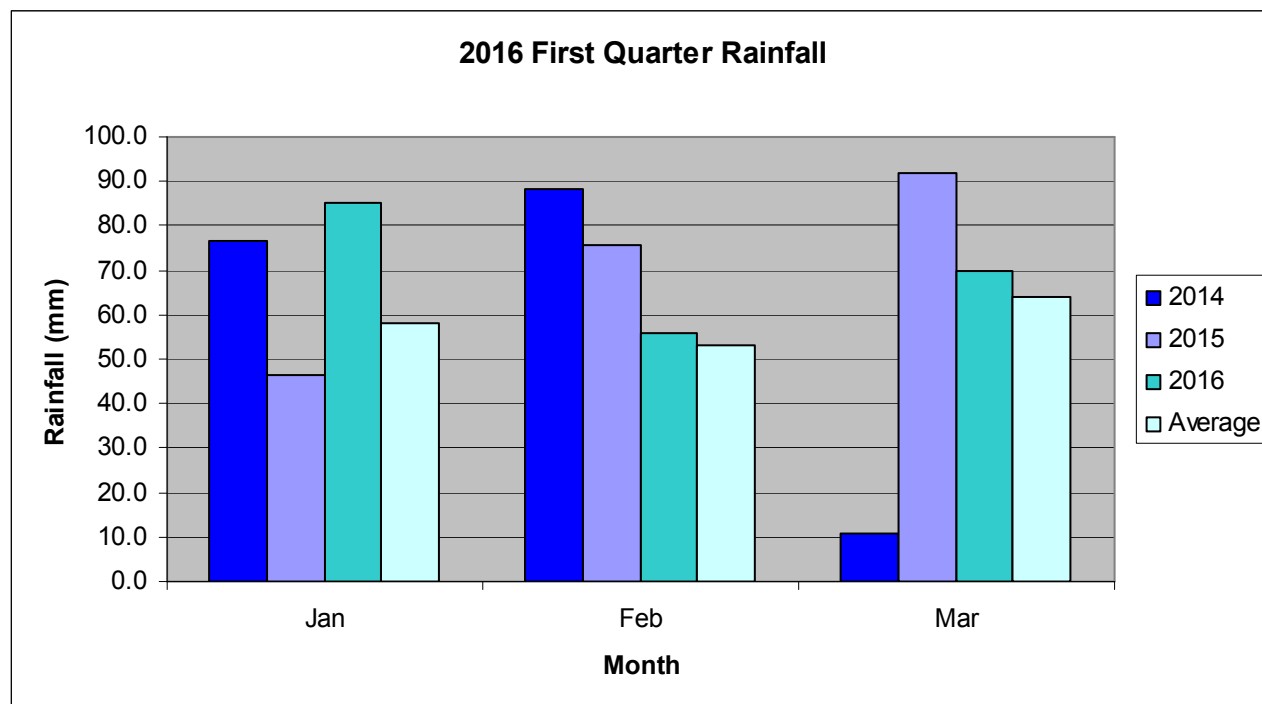
How you can help us

Work Parties - see Diary Dates below. Please come along they, are good fun! Cheaper than a gym subscription!

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



Over 30mm of rain on 8 March in the River Avon catchment resulted in the river itself flooding on 10 March (see photo on previous page). There was more flooding in the meadows on 14/15 April after a similar rainfall.

Diary Dates

Date	Activity	Date	Activity
Fri 22 Apr	Avon Meadows app launch 15h00	Sat 18 Jun	Bioblitz 2016 05h00- 00h00
Fri 6 May	Moth Night 20h45-00h15*	Tue 28 Jun	Committee Meeting 14h30-17h00
Sat 7 May	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Fri 1 Jul	Moth Night 21h30-01h00*
Tue 17 May	Annual General Meeting 18h30-20h00	Sat 2 Jul	Work Party 10h00-13h00
Fri 20 May	Moth Night 21h00-00h30*	Fri 15 Jul	Moth Night 21h30-01h00*
Sat 11 Jun	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Fri 29 Jul	Moth Night 21h30-01h00*
		Sat 6 Aug	Work Party 10h00-13h00

* Weather dependent!

** Takes place every Thursday at this time.

† Booking required. See **Events** section.

Work parties are a valuable part of our activities on site and start at **10:00am** from the **HQ** just inside the main gate. 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.

Administration

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/>. The site will be kept current, check here first to see what is happening!

Coots Eye View blog: <http://cootseyeview.blogspot.co.uk/> is another way of finding out what is going on.

The Website holds a number of other interesting and useful links which are worth exploring.

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

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

IMPORTANT! 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.