



One of the dull, windy days of a changeable summer with Mallards in eclipse plumage.

Photo: Richard Stott

## Newsletter No: 24

July 2016

### Progress on the Wetland

#### Annual General Meeting

There was a good attendance at the AGM at which your Committee was re-elected and it was further agreed that the Committee would proceed to apply for the Friends of Avon Meadows to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This change will allow us to seek funding from a wider range of organisations. Ken Corrigan presented an excellent RSPB video about wetlands and Liz put on a video summary of the development of the Wetland over the last 3 years.

#### HLF Project

The original Wetlands for All project is now complete. Our thanks must go to Liz Etheridge for making it such a success.

#### Site Management

With the presence of our new equipment store we can say with some confidence that the reed cutting will be carried out during the autumn.

A start has been made attacking the considerable vegetation growth on islets in the new scrape, This will have to be 'managed' so that birds thrive and visitors can see them thriving! This involves cutting thistles and nettles that are over head-height!

The haycut for all meadow areas is complete, all cut and collected during a dry period. A very satisfactory amount of hay was removed in order to reduce nutrient levels, just short of 80 tonnes.

Our new Management Plan is to be published shortly (it will be publicly available via our website) which will cover all maintenance requirements for the next 5-10 years setting out what is to be done and when. This plan will take account of the funding organisations' requirements (see Funding section opposite). It is worth saying that there is no conflict between funders' requirements and our own plans.

#### Dog Fouling

New signs have been fitted at all entrances to Avon Meadows to remind people to pick up their pet's droppings.

### Photo Challenge!



Feeding young! A Reed Bunting with two Small White butterfly caterpillars. The photograph is good enough to read numbers on its leg ring. Photo: Jeff Steady

### Funding

Two new funding applications have been entered:

One for the Higher Level Stewardship scheme, administered by Natural England, which we hope will provide money for major maintenance work, beyond the scope of volunteers. This will include clearing important drainage ditches.

An application has been made to the Heritage Lottery Fund funding for "Wychavon's Wildlife Challenge", a project to encompass Avon Meadows, Stoulton and Droitwich Woods and Broadway Gravel Pit. This will involve developing the other sites, with community involvement, along similar lines to those that have proved so successful on Avon Meadows.

The results of these applications should be available by the time of the next Newsletter.

## Wetland Events

### BIOBLITZ 2016

The weather was dry, if a little cool, which kept numbers of butterflies and dragonflies down. However there was considerable public interest and the event was really well attended and successful. Thanks must go to the support provided by the experts from the Worcester Recorders who helped with events through the day and of course Liz and our volunteers whose heroic efforts pulled the whole event together.

Our smart new gazebos were put to good use and Harry Green kindly brought along his digital microscope so that microscopic pond animals could be viewed on a TV screen.



Female Reed Bunting waiting to be released after having its ring fitted as part of the bird ringing programme.

*Photo: Sarah Fowle*



Preparations for the Bioblitz.

*Photo: Sarah Fowle*

**BIRD RINGING:** For the first time this year we arranged for a bird ringing exercise carried out by a team who hold BTO permits (necessary by law in order to handle wild birds). A good number of common birds were ringed, particularly Reed and Sedge Warblers, and it is hoped to repeat this exercise regularly.

**MOTHS:** Moths were not affected by the cooler weather and we recorded 70 species on the night, 20 more than last year. This included 4 new micro moths for us bringing our species total to 343.

**PLANTS:** 106 species were recorded (110 in 2015).

Records are still coming in so a full species count will not be available until the next Newsletter.

## Surveys and Sightings

### Birds

#### Breeding Bird Report

Bird breeding is almost complete as most first brood birds have fledged and it is second broods that are being fed now.

This year has been good for warblers, with Cetti's Warbler breeding again and Sedge and Reed Warblers, Chiffchaff, Blackcap and Common Whitethroat all breeding with us. This spring both Lesser Whitethroat and Willow Warbler stayed with us longer leading to hopes that they might breed too in years to come.

'Our' Mute Swans are raising 5 cygnets, and those of you using the path beside the main pool will have discovered how aggressive the cob can be! A second Mute Swan family with 4 cygnets has been seen around Wyre Mill.

Stock Doves used the large nest box we call the Kestrel box this year to raise their young.

STOP PRESS! A young Cuckoo was seen last week being chased by Magpies confirming our suspicion that Cuckoos have indeed bred on the Wetland this year.

#### Weekly Bird Count

Highlights of our weekly counts are now on the website. Bird species counts have remained generally high over the period which is encouraging.

At this stage in its development the scrape is adding variety to the birds seen rather than breeding species. Less common species, seen only once on the Wetland this year, are; Red-legged Partridge, Little Egret, Red Kite, Common Sandpiper, and Green Sandpiper,

As mentioned earlier the considerable growth on the scrape must be managed to attract water birds so that they can feel safe in islets and waterways mostly free from vegetation.

#### **Butterflies**

Numbers are down so far this year and no new species have been recorded in spite of diligent efforts on the butterfly transect. Marbled White butterflies seem to be more plentiful than usual.

## Moths



The caterpillar of an Emperor Moth photographed on the Wetland near the place where an adult was found in 2012. *Photo: Kirstie Chppendale*

Caterpillars of the Mullein Moth were found feeding on Figwort on the same day as the splendid caterpillar above.

Other insect groups have not fared so well in our changeable weather but moths are OK. We have added a number of new species to the Wetland list including, Oak Tree Pug, Waved Umber and Common Quaker, Scallop Shell (see below) and several micro moths.



Scallop Shell moth. *Photo: Bob Gillmor*

## Dragonflies

Dragonflies are fussy creatures which like warm days with little wind. On such days this year the usual species have been present but overall numbers seem to be down. This is entirely weather related. Visitors may have noticed the large hawker dragonflies beginning to appear, particularly the Brown Hawker.

## Mammals

We were very surprised to see a Roe Deer bound out of the scrub at the back of Cherry Orchard school during one of the Thursday bird counts. It headed off towards the river presumably to seek cover in the wood on the other side.

More recently a Water Shrew was found dead beside the path. This is a scarce species in Worcestershire; when we do see them they are usually dead for no apparent reason.

## Flowers

Diligent work has added a number of wild flowers to our list, many are quite common and simply not recorded with us before. The Greater Star of Bethlehem was a more interesting find.

Tubular Water-dropwort is showing its white flowers in many of the water channels and wet areas of Avon Meadows. It is nationally classified as Vulnerable so our population is of concern. A recent survey of this species recorded >1400 plants making Avon Meadows an important site for this species.



Greater Star of Bethlehem. *Photo: Richard Stott*

## Interesting Records

**BIRDS:** The first Common Swifts of the year arrived on 1 May, a few days later than 2015.

Conversely, the first Common Cuckoo arrived on 14 April, a few days earlier than 2015. Adult birds leave long before the young ones, the last adult was seen on 23 June.

A Common Redshank turned up on the scrape at the end of March, a pair of Eurasian Oystercatchers was present on the scrape during April and a Common Sandpiper was there around the same time. So the scrape is beginning to attract some of its target species.

## Survey Summaries

**BIRDS:** The survey work has been down a little this quarter averaging 39 species with a best count of 48. So far **90** species have been recorded on the Wetlands in 2016.

**BUTTERFLIES:** **16** species of butterfly have been recorded so far this summer.

**DRAGONFLIES:** **8** species have been recorded to date in what has been a strange season so far.

**MOTHS:** **98** species have been recorded to date in 4 outings so far this year.

Daytime insect counts are still low but there are more to come before the end of the summer.

**FLOWERS:** Several new finds have raised the total species recorded on the Wetland to date to **232**.

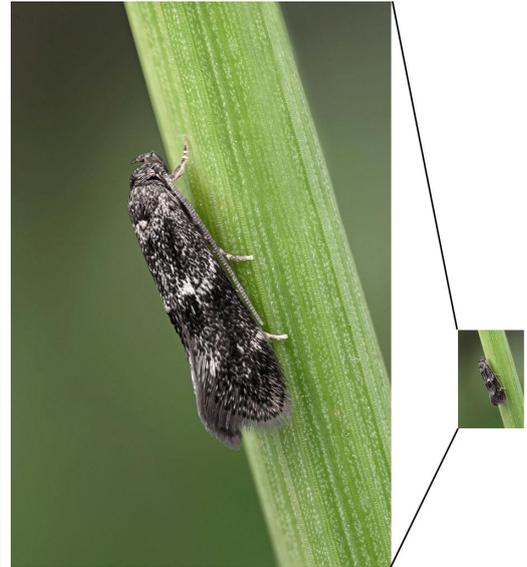
## Micro Moths

Micro moths are simply a group of mostly tiny moths (including the Clothes Moth) which are part of the British list. An interesting species found on Avon Meadows is the Sweet-grass Dwarf (*Elachista poae*). Its caterpillars are so small that they tunnel within the thickness of the leaves of Reed Sweet-grass creating what are called 'leaf mines'. The adult moth is ~6mm long so very easy to miss. When magnified they quite attractive.

It is widespread in Western Europe but restricted to southern Britain where it is scarce. It was first identified on Avon Meadows by County expert Tony Simpson during the Bioblitz event in 2015.

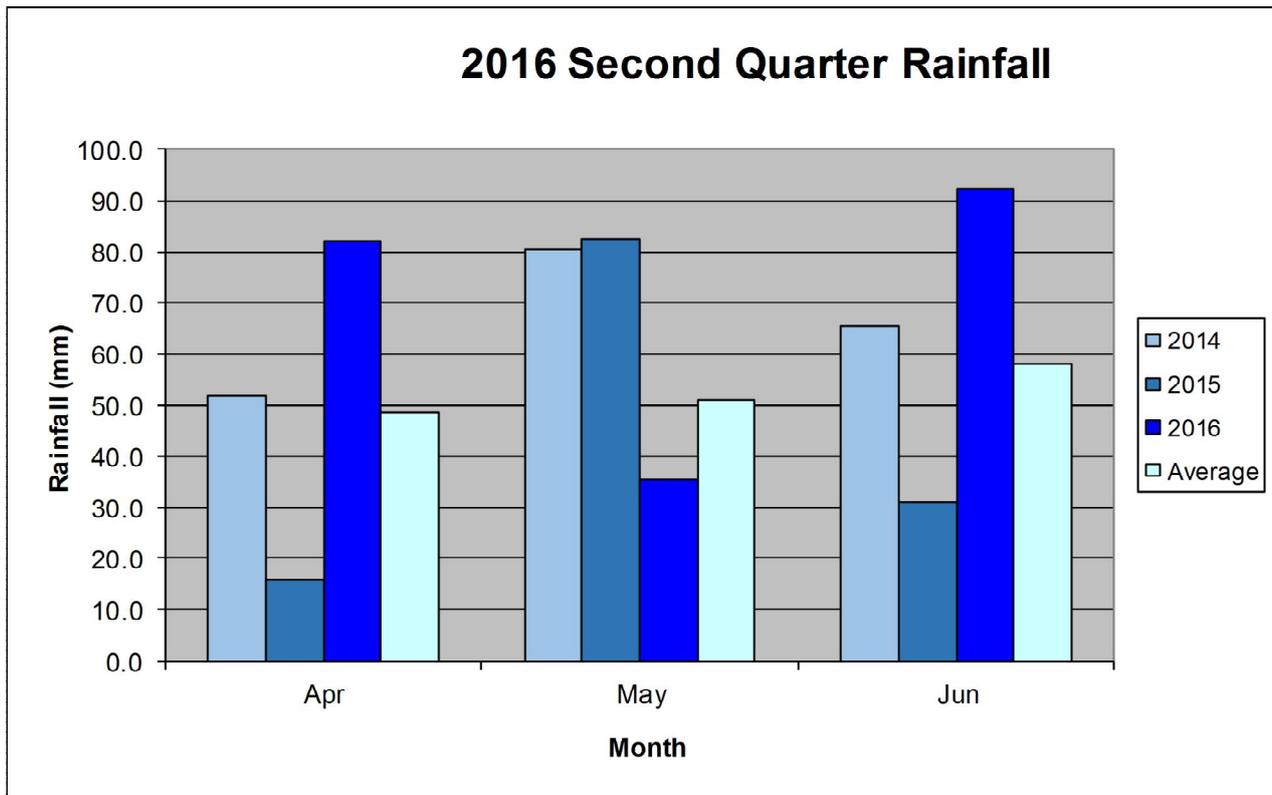


Leaf mine of Sweet-grass Dwarf micro moth. Photo: Richard Stott



An adult Sweet-grass Dwarf shown magnified and actual size. Photo: Patrick Clement

## Water Levels



Looking at the bars in the graph you can see that monthly rainfall varies considerably compared with the average. This year has been a mirror image of recent years with wet April and June and a comparatively dry May. This has served to maintain adequate water levels in the pools and promoted considerable plant growth but sun-loving insects such as butterflies and dragonflies have not done so well in the changeable June weather.

We are a wetland so rainfall is very important to us. The main pool receives two thirds of its water from surface water drainage from the Cherry Orchard estate. The scrape has been excavated to just below the "normal" water table so that it should remain wet or damp for most of the year.

We monitor the water table using 10 dip wells spread out over the meadows and find that it can fall as much as one meter below the ground surface at this time of year.

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## 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.

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## Diary Dates

Date	Activity	Date	Activity
Fri 12 Aug	Moth Night 20h30-00h00*	Sat 3 Sep	Work Party 10h00-13h00
Tue 16 Aug	Committee Meeting 14h30-17h00	Sat 6 Oct	Work Party 10h00-13h00

\* Weather dependent!

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 to let Ken know if you can come ([KenPomfret@btinternet.com](mailto: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.

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## Administration

### Officers of the Committee

Chairman - Richard Stott [richarddestott@gmail.com](mailto:richarddestott@gmail.com)

Treasurer - Bob Gillmor [avon.meadows@btinternet.com](mailto:avon.meadows@btinternet.com)

Secretary - Val Wood [val@wood20.plus.com](mailto:val@wood20.plus.com)

Work Parties - Ken Pomfret [KenPomfret@btinternet.com](mailto: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](mailto:jim.burgin@wychavon.gov.uk)

Ms Liz Etheridge, Wetlands for All Project Officer  
Tel: 01386 565366  
eMail: [liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:avon.meadows@btinternet.com) giving your name and the amount so that receipts can be cross checked.