



Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows



Taken on 29 October 19 just after the recent flooding. The level in the main pool is still high, overwhelming the tilting weir which is set as high as possible. *Photo: Richard Stott*

Newsletter No: 37

October 2019

Progress on the Wetland

Gas Main Re-routing

We had some really wonderful news in late August; Wales and West Utilities has decided not to re-route the gas main through Avon Meadows but rather to leave the gas main in its present position and reinforce the river bank. This will mean minimal disturbance on Avon Meadows and the new wild flower meadows which is a great relief.

Work Parties

Weekly work parties started in earnest in September which allowed us to clear the scrape. Reeds and scrub have been heaped up for burning but we must wait for the heaps to dry out before attempting to burn. We will not be lighting fires when the resulting smoke will be blown towards housing to minimise inconvenience to local residents.

Our faithful band of volunteers is dwindling and we need more help. If anyone is able to give 3 hours on a Saturday morning from time to time please get in touch with Ken Pomfret (kenpomfret@btinternet.com). This is vital work for Avon Meadows and we rely very much on volunteers.

The next job to be carried out over the winter is to clear two sections of the reed beds. We clear approximately 2 tenths of the reed area each winter so that they all get cleared once over a 5-year period. We have completed one cycle and are about to start on sections that were last cut 5 years ago. If we don't do this work the reeds will take over the pools in a surprisingly short time!

General Management

The sheep arrived on Avon Meadows on the afternoon of 17 October with a view to keeping them there until the end of the year. This is done annually to help reduce the vigour of the grass to enhance wild flowers. The recent flooding will mean they will be removed in early November this year.

The photograph (Photo: Ken Pomfret) to the right shows our new inflatable dinghy! We have an underwater reed cutter normally carried on someone's back which is potentially dangerous when working in deeper water. The idea is to carry the weight of the engine on the inflatable and tow it behind an operator working in the water.

Member's Photographs



A stunning photograph by Jeff of a Migrant Hawker; they have been seen frequently over Avon Meadows in the later part of the summer. *Photo: Jeff Steady LRPS*



Surveys and Sightings

BIRDS

Weekly Bird Count

Over the last 3 months we have maintained our high Thursday counts producing best species totals for August, September and October; so perhaps 2018 was not such a wonderful year after all! In terms of really unusual birds for us it has been a quiet autumn so far.

After the breeding season the first new birds we see are those leaving their breeding grounds in the UK to head south, a Common Snipe on 8 August was the first of these. A few Lesser Whitethroat passed through in mid-September together with Willow Warblers.

These were followed by locally breeding birds departing, leaving us for their winter quarters in Africa. Our last Swift was seen on 19 August, the last House Martin on 5 October (a new late departure date) and the last Swallow on 17 October. The majority of our warblers leave during this period too; Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Common Whitethroat, Sedge and Reed Warblers.

Now, autumn proper is upon us and our winter visitors are beginning to arrive. Among the first more regular species to arrive were Meadow Pipits on 15 Sep soon followed by European Golden Plover flying over on 28 Sep. Most of these pass through at first, only pausing to feed later on in the month. The first Siskins flew over on 22 Sep and there have been several sightings since but none have stopped. The first Stonechat arrived on 25 September which moved through during that day but now there is a pair present around the scrape. The first Redwing turned up on 10 October and then a Fieldfare on 26 October. In spite of the amount of water around recently water birds have been scarce so far. There have been a few Teal about either on the scrape or the main pool and a Northern Shoveler dropped in briefly on 21 October.

Interesting or Unusual Species

Birds appearing on Avon Meadows are much affected by the recent flooding. For example, six Great Black-backed Gulls flew over on 28 October, a species normally preferring the coast. As the water drains away leaving water-logged grass relatively large numbers of Meadow Pipits and Pied Wagtails pile in to feed around the edges.

A huge excitement for us was the discovery on 1 August of a Water Rail chick! Finally, after years of suspecting, we have proof of Water Rails breeding on Avon Meadows. They are a very secretive species spending most of their time within the thick reed beds where there is no chance of seeing them.

The last time we had really large numbers of Starlings roosting on Avon Meadows was in January 2016. Little is known about what makes these large numbers wheel about in the sky in "murmurations". So far this year the numbers have been comparatively low but if you look out soon after 16h00 you may be lucky! Starling numbers have been up to about 2000 at the time of writing.

DRAGONFLIES

Early promise was fulfilled and this proved to be a good year for dragonflies, 2019 producing the highest maximum daily count recorded so far.



This Southern Hawker alighted near us during a Thursday bird count in August. *Photo: Jeff Steady LRPS*

A total of 15 species were recorded during the year compared with 17 last year.

There was a new late record for Brown Hawker on 26 September.

BUTTERFLIES



A nice photograph of a Common Blue taken beside the main path. *Photo: Jeff Steady LRPS*

The butterfly year was about average with most counts falling in the middle of the range. There was a new late record of a Comma for Avon Meadows on 17 October. The whole summer was notable for the number of Painted Ladies around, a migrant from North Africa. There were also good numbers of Marbled Whites in mid-summer.

MOTHS

Unlike butterflies and dragonflies, which each have less than 100 species resident in the UK, for moths it is about 2500! So it is much easier to find new ones for Avon Meadows. Most people associate moths with night time but this year we found 3 new species for Avon Meadows in daytime. A Mother Shipton and a Scarlet Tiger were both found in the



An Elephant Hawk Moth caterpillar. Its extra 'eyes' are there to confuse predators. This is a common species in the trap in mid-summer but caterpillars are less often found. The caterpillar lives on Great Willowherb of which there is a profusion around the main pool.

Photo: Jayne Lewis

meadows among the grass stems. A Hummingbird Hawk Moth was found feeding on Buddlea. This last species is a migrant from the warmer parts of Europe and usually can be found hovering in front of flowers with its long tongue reaching into the flower to feed.

The excitement of the Dotted Fan-foot mentioned in the last Newsletter is now forgotten and now we can look back at the whole moth year.

At present we have recorded 385 moths on Avon Meadows. This year we added 10 species to the total over 7 collection sessions. Three of these were tiny micro moths which only have scientific names. The new macro moths were White-spotted Pug, Black Arches, Pale-shouldered Brocade and of course Dotted Fan-foot.



Not all micro moths are dull! This was new for Avon Meadows when it was trapped on 5 July it is called *Lozotaeniodes formosanus*. *Photo: Richard Stott*

Diary Dates

Date	Activity	Date	Activity
Tue 5 Nov 19	Committee Meeting 14h30-16h30	Sat 23 Nov 19	Work Party 10h00-13h00
Sat 9 Nov 19	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sat 30 Nov 19	Work Party 10h00-13h00
Sat 16 Nov 19	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sat 6 Dec 19	Work Party 10h00-13h00

* Depends on the weather!

Work parties are a valuable part of our activities on site and start at 10:00am from the HQ just inside the main gate. Without your help we cannot maintain the area properly.

It is a good idea to 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 far end of Cherry Orchard at 10:00am on the day.

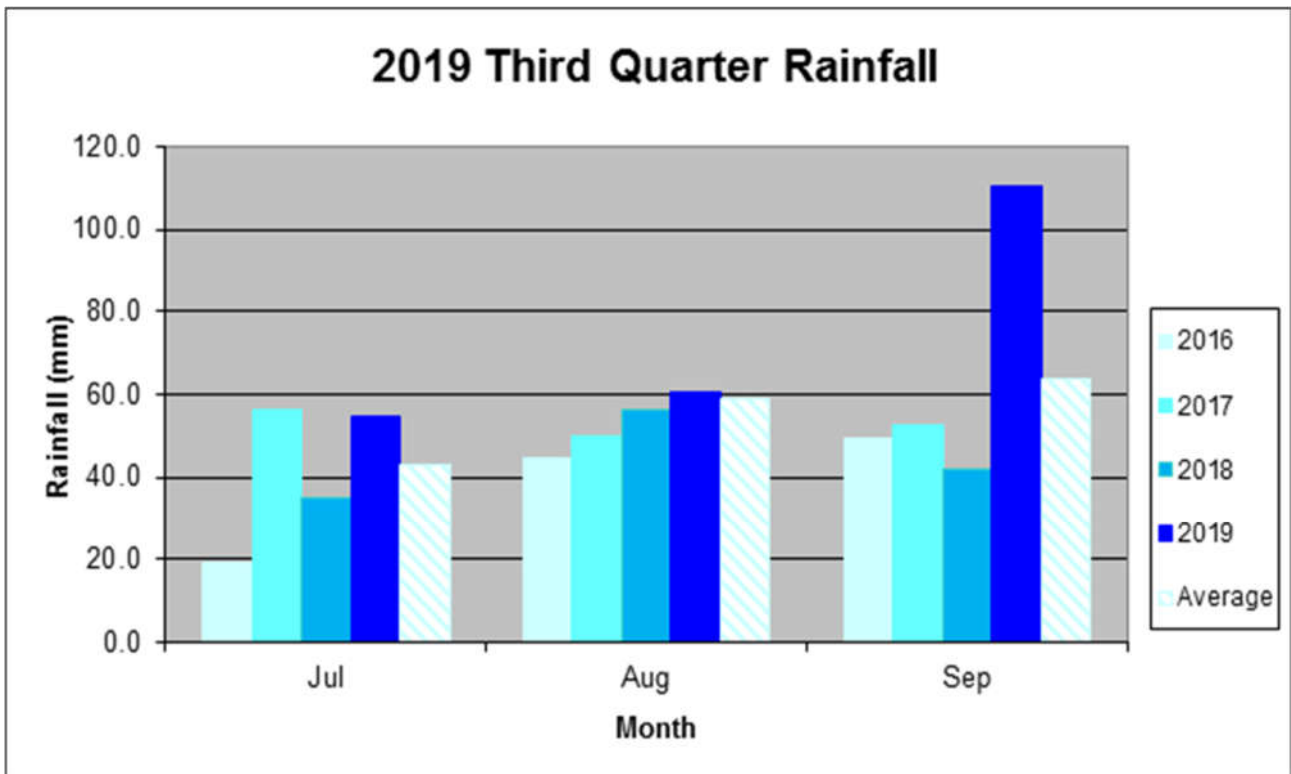
How you can help us

Work Parties - see Diary Dates above. 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 name and eMail address.

Water Levels



The June rains kept the scrape full until the end of August and then it was dry for 2-3 weeks. Heavy rain in September and October soon put that right! This is the first year that we have had such a short time when the scrape was dry.

Administration

Officers of the CIO 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!

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:

Ms Liz Etheridge, Wychavon District Council.

Tel: 01386 565366

eMail: liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk



Pershore's Community Wetland and Local Nature Reserve
www.avonmeadows.org.uk

Membership Application/Renewal

If you wish to join or renew by online banking, please use the following details:

SORT CODE 77-68-78 (TSB Bank), ACCOUNT NUMBER 01118468 and QUOTE YOUR SURNAME AS THE PAYMENT REFERENCE. Then please e-mail membership@avonmeadows.org.uk with the details requested below.

If you wish to join or renew by cheque, please print and complete this form and send it together with your cheque, payable to The Friends of Avon Meadows to:

Mr. T.C. Hutton, 15 Green Close, Childswickham, Broadway WR12 7JJ

Family subscription £10 per annum [] Individual subscription £5 per annum []

FULL NAME: _____ TITLE (Mr, Mrs, Ms etc.): _____

ADDRESS: _____

TOWN: _____ POSTCODE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

Charity Governance/Fundraising standards and Data Protection (including GDPR)

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Please do not contact me [] if you tick this box we will delete you from our records.

