

AVON MEADOWS COMMUNITY WETLAND

Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

Newsletter No.6



Fig. 1: The Wetland in early November 2011. The grassy area in the foreground is normally under 50cm of water. (R D E Stott)

Review of our progress

With autumn upon us and the clocks having gone back it is time to review the summer and this issue aims to do this.

The bird survey continues although that for butterflies is now complete for this year (see below). We plan to carry out a Bryophyte (these are mosses and liverworts) survey with the help of Dr Ann Hill at the end of November. As set out below, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) project is on the move again which will help raise the profile of the Wetland within the Community.

We refer a lot to surveys carried out and species recorded. If any of you are interested and want further information on anything mentioned we should be very pleased to deal with any questions or requests. Complete answers cannot be guaranteed but we will do our best!

Cattle Grazing

There has been mention in the local press indicating concerns about cattle grazing on the Wetland. Cattle have grazed on these meadows for very many years and today farmers take special care to ensure that only docile beasts introduced.

From a conservation standpoint we support the owners, Wychavon District Council and Pershore Town Council, in grazing cattle partly because they do not cut the sward as low as sheep and in partly because they break up the edges of the pools to the benefit of wading birds and insects. When the Wetland was created Worcestershire Wildlife Trust recommended to the owners that they use cattle for the reasons set out above and this is the first time since then that they have been able to arrange it.

Of course the cattle knock a lot of the reeds flat but we should not be concerned about this as they will come back with vigour next spring. It should be noted that the cattle will not be present throughout the year. For example they will not be present during the spring when birds are breeding and the grass is growing for the hay crop. The

owners are planning also to take steps to prevent the cattle having access to the main path and the boardwalk.

Link-up with Pershore College by Ken Pomfret

After an exploratory visit in September, October saw the first of a series of monthly work parties by students of Pershore College. Eight 1st and 2nd year students together with their tutor tackled rampant reedmace (bulrush or *Typha* sp.) and willow, making a visible difference especially around the boardwalk and viewing platform area. They also found and pulled up a couple of Himalayan Balsam plants (ugh!) and caught a reasonable sized Perch which was of course put back.

The students are all enrolled on the College's Countryside Management Course which is aimed at those wishing to pursue a career working in the countryside and related occupations. In addition to a sound general knowledge of the countryside, the course provides the opportunity to specialise through a selection of units relating to Environment, Ecology and Conservation, Land Use, Rural Tourism, Game and Wildlife Management, etc. On completion of the 2 year course, students are awarded a Level 3 Extended Diploma in Countryside Management at which point they can either get a job or go on to follow Higher National Diploma or degree courses.

As course lecturer Cecilia Dean (2nd from right in the group photo) remarks:

"The students are all on a Level 3 course which is the same level as A-levels, however there is a marked difference in the course compared to A-levels, concentrating on making the students work-ready and having the practical skills to help them in the work place and also the theoretical knowledge to back it up. The students are currently studying a Freshwater and Wetland unit which requires them to carry out practical management; it is a real bonus to be able to be involved in an actual wetland project from which the community will benefit."

As an added bonus, 2nd year student Ruth (3rd from right) and a friend will be using some of the coppiced willow to make garden tripods to train plants up. They have a good little business going with these and other willow products and will contribute some of their profit to the Friends fund.



Fig. 2 Students from Pershore College with their tutor taking a break. (K Pomfret)



Fig. 3 Pulling up reedmace and its rhizomes. (K Pomfret)

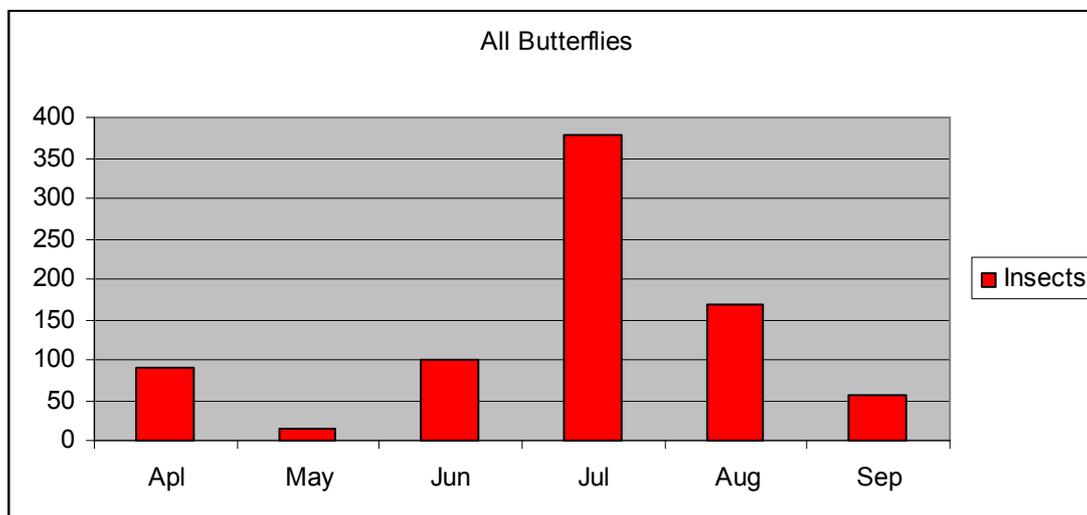
Avon Meadows HLF Project - Access For All

I am pleased to be able to report that Becky Lashley has joined this project to drive it forward for final approval by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The plan is to go forward for final approval in Quarter 2, 2012. I hope to be able to have more news in the next Newsletter.

Flora & Fauna Surveys

Bird Survey: Perhaps as a result of the dry weather bird species counts have dropped off in the latter part of the summer, 20-25 species being the usual number. Very recently the species count has begun to pick up again to around 30 per visit. To date a total of 75 species have been recorded since 1 Jan 2011.

Butterfly Transect: This work is now complete for 2011 and our results have been submitted to Butterfly Conservation to be included in the county survey data. We are very grateful for Kirstie Chippendale for carrying out this work.



This chart shows the total numbers of butterflies counted during each month (calculated from weekly totals). The high count in April corresponds with the unseasonably warm weather during that month. These totals comprise 22 species of butterfly.

Moth Surveys:

A second moth survey took place on 2 August 2011 although on this occasion only 3 traps were deployed. We caught 90 species on the night raising the total species count for the Wetland to 189. We hope to be able to repeat these surveys each year.

Recent Sightings

Reed Buntings disappeared after breeding as have the Coot but 3 female/juvenile Reed Buntings were recorded during a weekly survey on 3 Nov 2011 and there is no reason to believe Coot will not return too. A Common Snipe was recorded on 29 Oct 2011, part of a general movement of birds south and single birds or occasionally pairs have been seen since. A very late House Martin was seen on 3 Nov as was a single Oystercatcher. Fieldfares have begun to arrive in number from Scandinavia for the winter and finches, particularly Goldfinches are now in sizeable flocks.

Four Pike were discovered in the summer and as mentioned above a Perch to was caught quite recently. Given that there as been no flooding it is difficult to explain how such large species could arrive in the Wetland pools. In bird watching terms these records would be noted as Category D - *Species that have been recorded in an apparently natural state except that there is reasonable doubt that they would have occurred without human intervention.* We must keep our eyes open!

Flowers of Avon Meadows by The Duffer

AUGUST 2011

TRIFID BUR MARIGOLD *Bidens tripartita*

An interesting and unusual member of the Daisy family which can be found in small groups on the edge of the main marshy areas; the flower heads are quite distinctive.

Flowers July to October.



BITTERSWEET *Solanum dulcamara*

A scrambling member of the Nightshade family and also known as Woody Nightshade; identified by its distinctive purple and yellow flowers .

Several plants scattered on the reserve.

Flowers June to September.



SEPTEMBER 2011

COMMON MALLOW *Malva silvestris*

A generally common plant and as its name suggests a member of the Mallow family. Its leaves often have a black dot at their base. Found around the entrances near the main car park.

Flowers June to September.



GREAT WILLOWHERB *Epilobium hirsutum*

Very common on the reserve; this tall member of the Willowherb family is distinctive in the way the white stigmas in the flowers arch right back on themselves.

Flowers July to September.



OCTOBER 2011

HOARY RAGWORT *Senecio erucifolius*

Ragworts are another member of the Daisy family; this is the common one on the reserve. As its name suggests it appears quite hairy compared to the other two common ragworts (Oxford and Common).

Flowers July through to October.



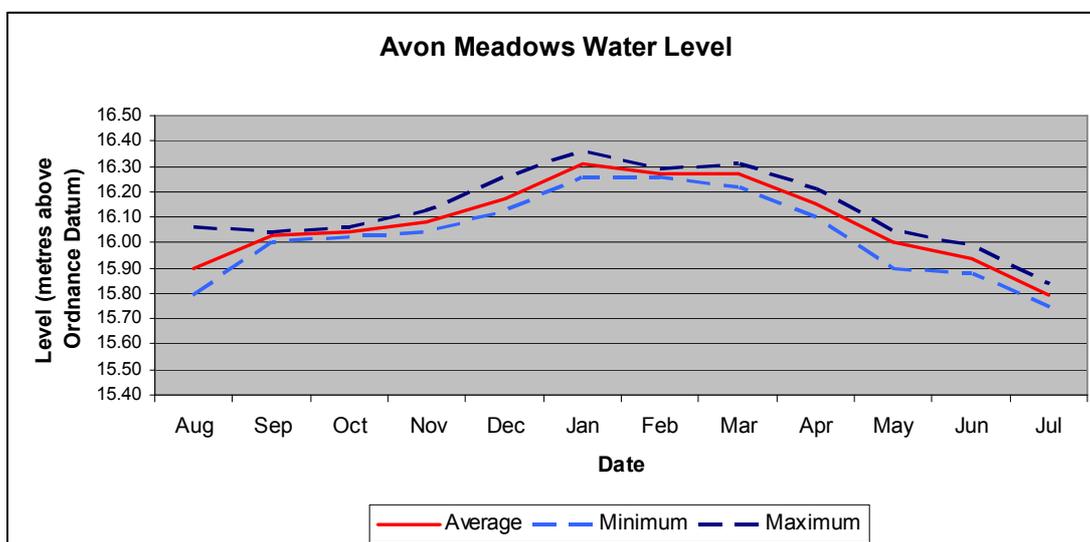
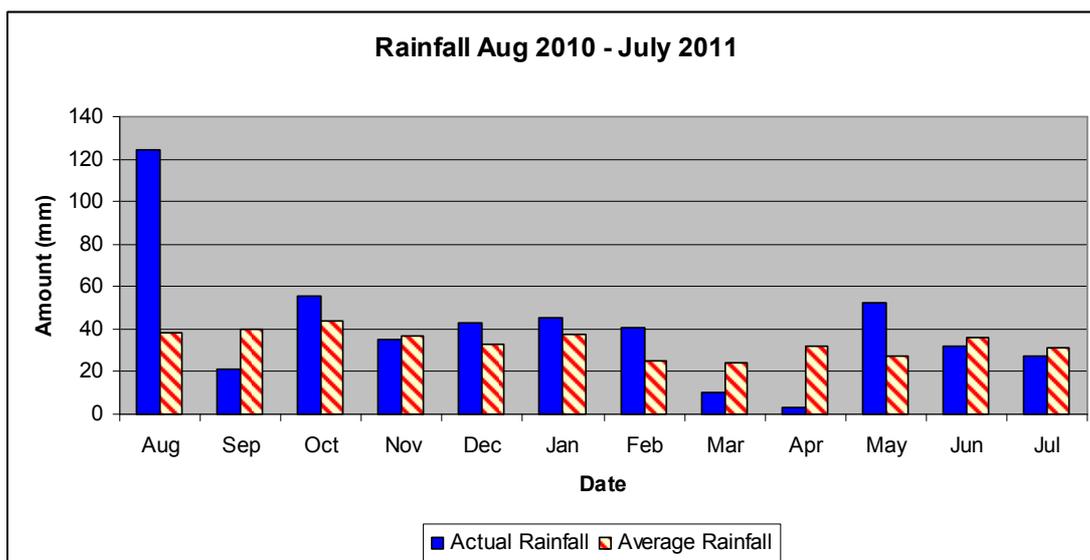
Water Levels

Water levels have continued to fall to even lower levels with another quarter of below average rainfall. For much of the time the water did not reach the tilting weir so accurate level measurement was not possible. The rainfall data for the period is set out below with mean figures in brackets as usual.

August	33.4 mm (38.5 mm)
September	29.1 mm (39.9 mm)
October	38.9 mm (43.8 mm)

We started collecting rainfall and level data in August 2010 and over the year from that date precipitation (i.e. including snow) and water levels have varied as shown below. It is encouraging to note that over 20mm of rain fell in the first 4 days of November so one is tempted to speculate that water levels could return to their normal winter levels quite soon.

It is planned to produce this data on a calendar year basis in future.



Note that the precise level at the top of the tilting weir is 16.36m and dry mud appears at the gauge board on the boardwalk at 15.48m.

How you can help us

First some news about how members have helped us! The following individuals have given donations during 2011 for which many thanks.

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Peter Bugg | Michael Partridge |
| Bob Gillmor | Frank Round |
| Heather Greenhalgh | Dave Shaw |
| Paul Jenkins | John & Miriam Tilt |

Please let us know if you have any photographs or sightings that may be of interest.

If you know of anyone you think would be interested in receiving this Newsletter by eMail please let me know with their eMail address.

If you want to find out more about volunteering please contact Jim Burgin at Wychavon District Council (see below).



Diary Dates

The scheduled Work Party days for 2011 are and we are looking forward to seeing you there. Note that work parties are usually on the first Saturday of every month and now always on Saturdays and start at 10:00am from the Mayfield Road car park.

3 December 2011	3 March
7 January 2012	7 April
4 February	5 May

Please let Ken know if you can come (kenPomfret@btinternet.com) a few days before but do not worry if you cannot, just turn up at the carpark 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 robert.gillmor@btinternet.com
Secretary - Val Wood valeriewood@uwclub.net

Website

<http://avonmeadowspershore.org/> (still under development)

Contact

Either directly by eMail to an officer of the Committee or by telephone to:

Mr Jim Burgin, Wychavon District Council.
Tel: 01386 565366
eMail: jim.burgin@wychavon.gov.uk

Donations to:

Post: Mr R J Gillmor
20 Loughmill Road
PERSHORE, Worcestershire
WR10 1QB

We hope that you are all continue to enjoy the Wetland and have a Happy Christmas!

Richard Stott