

AVON MEADOWS COMMUNITY WETLAND

Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

Newsletter No.7



Fig. 1 The Wetland on 2 Mar 2012 with the water level 380mm below that of the same time last year and showing an area of reeds cleared by students from Pershore College.
(R D E Stott)

Annual General Meeting

The date AGM has been set for **Wednesday 23 May 2012 at 18h30** in the Committee Room of Pershore Civic Centre. I hope you can all come!

One item that will reappear on the agenda for this meeting will be that of fund raising. It is proposed that we invite Friends to become Supporters for a minimum donation of £5. As you are aware our main fund raising activities are from other sources but we still need a small amount for such things as stationery, fuel, personal safety equipment etc. which is not easy to obtain funds for from other sources.

Review of our progress

We can all see now that the winter has not been as severe as last year. This has meant that birds and plants are anticipating spring much earlier. On the other hand there is much less water in the pools than at this time last year.

Work continues putting woodchip on the paths and trying to maintain them in a good condition and it is hoped to be able to extend the scope of this work if we can get more people to help.

The 2012 weekly bird survey has started and that for 2011 is now complete (for a summary see below).

We have installed a number of bird nest boxes and hope that they will provide suitable low-cost housing for smaller species. Four already have Blue Tit occupants! A single Kestrel box has been erected on the NE boundary of the Wetland.



Fig. 2 Frank, Paul and Ken improving the paths using our new wheelbarrows and rake!
(R J Gillmor)



Fig. 3 Stuart Blunsom (tree surgeon) helping us erect the rather heavy Kestrel nest box.
(V Wood)

Looking forward to other activities for 2012, we are hoping to conduct more insect surveys and begin a medium-term species mapping project (see below). We are also considering some habitat improvement for a small trial meadow area which will involve broadcasting some wild flower seed to encourage more insects. The seed is to be carefully selected as being appropriate to this habitat and locally sourced.

Recent Sightings

In mid-January a single Water Rail was seen on several occasions at the east end of the boardwalk. Coots returned just before Christmas and Reed Buntings began to return in mid-February. The mild winter resulted in low numbers of Fieldfare and Redwing and no Brambling were recorded. A male Common Teal has been present for most of the winter as have Meadow Pipits in the meadows. A Grey Wagtail has been seen along the top path near Cherry Orchard School.

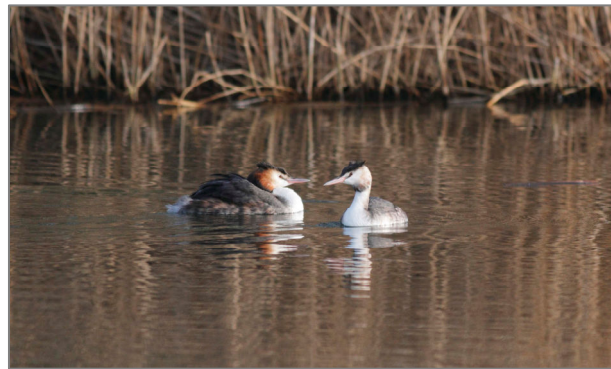


Fig. 4 Great Crested Grebes on the river beside the Wetland on 2 Mar. Note that the bird on the left is in summer plumage (R D E Stott)

Single individuals of a number of species have occurred during the period; a Little Grebe was present on 12 Jan and again on 1 Mar, a Common Snipe was seen on 15 Jan and a single female Siskin was present on 6 Jan. A Little Egret flew over on 23 Feb heading south. A European Woodcreeper was found beside Piddle Brook on 1 Mar. Great Crested Grebes were seen on the river beside the Wetland on 1 & 2 Mar.

A late Red Admiral butterfly was recorded during a Saturday morning work party on 3 December 2011.

We have recorded good numbers of Water Voles already this year and Common Toads have been seen mating on 23 Feb and 1 Mar.

Cattle Grazing

The cattle were removed just before Christmas and it is planned that they return in mid-summer after the bird breeding season. In the meantime additional fencing has been put in place to prevent the cattle from accessing the boardwalk and the top path. This fencing will close off short-cut routes along the pipelines but we hope people will bear with us as the reason for doing this will be for everyone's benefit.

Avon Meadows HLF Project – Access For All

Becky Lashley is making good progress with a view to submission in April. We are planning signed trails, disabled access, regularly updated notice boards and to get the website up and running.

Flora & Fauna Surveys

Bird Survey: The 2011 bird survey is of course complete. During the year, 80 - 2 hour survey visits were made logging a total of 80 species which compares with a total of 81 species for the year. The species that eluded the survey team was a Northern Shoveler whose short stay did not include a survey day. Only 2 species were recorded on every survey visit, Mallard and Blue Tit! Additionally a total of 13 species were only recorded during a survey once, these were; Little Egret, Pintail, Red Kite, Red-legged Partridge, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit, Greenshank, Common Tern, Treecreeper, Raven and Siskin.

Normally during a 2 hour survey we would expect to see about 30 species, maybe one or two more or less. In January this year we saw 39 species but we hope to beat this daily total during the All-day Bird Watch event at the end of April (see below).

You may have seen these species more often, if you have, or if you see anything unusual, please let us know. We keep a full record of all species seen.

Mute Swans: We have received news that all cygnets hatched on the Wetland survived. Those in 2010 that disappeared but were later tracked down to the River Avon. Last year, of the six cygnets that started out, one disappeared quite early on and was later traced to the River Severn at Worcester! We are keeping track of the orange leg ring numbers of swans that appear on the pools. The resident pair has rings numbered **41B** and **X60**. Let us know if you see any swans with different numbers.

Bryophyte Survey: I had the pleasure of accompanying Dr Ann Hill around the Wetland for this survey and discovered first that mosses have a vocabulary all of their own and that you need good eyes and a powerful magnifying lens! She writes; a bryophyte survey was undertaken in dry but breezy weather conditions on Friday 25 November 2011. The survey found that bryophytes were scarce across Avon Meadows, especially within the wet grassland and reed-beds. The semi-aquatic moss Kneiff's Hook Moss *Drepanocladus aduncus* was locally abundant growing on moist ground on the sides of drainage channels. Common *pleurocarpous* mosses were present at the base of a few oak and willow trees with occasional rounded cushions of *Orthotrichum* species on the branches. The brick walls around the sluices and dams provided habitat for a number of small common *acrocarpous* mosses and Silver Moss *Bryum argenteum* was visible as compact and silvery tufts on the brick wall adjacent to the River Avon. Overall, 18 moss species were recorded during the survey; no liverworts were noted.

[**Glossary:** Mosses are split into two groups; *pleurocarpous* which are lower lying and carry their seeds on branched stems and *acrocarpous* which are more upright and bear their seeds at the end of short stems. *Ed.*]

Water Levels

Although rainfall picked up in the late autumn and early winter so far in 2012 the rainfall has been well below average leading to the level of the main pool being 380mm lower than at this time last year, meaning that spring and summer rainfall will be particularly important. The rainfall data for the period is set out below with mean figures in brackets as usual.

November	46.1 mm (53 mm)
December	70.2 mm (64 mm)
January	34.8 mm (60 mm)
February	21.0 mm (41.5mm)

Species Mapping Project

The plan is to map unusual species recorded within the Wetland. Clearly not all species are suitable for this approach as they move about too much, e.g. not birds! However birds nest locations, wild flowers and mammals can provide useful information for mapping. With this in mind, we have purchased a GPS unit for survey work which allows us to measure accurately, using satellite technology, the position of any species we are interested in recording. If any of you have skills or are interested in taking part (even if you know very little about the subject) please let us know and you can be included. The map here shows sites where Field Voles (alive or dead!) have been found so far (shown by red squares). It is produced using MapMate software and plotting is based on a 10m grid (the grid drawn is a 100m one). We are still feeling our way rather with this so our ideas may well change over time.



How you can help us

First may I thank the loyal regular volunteers who put woodchip on the paths and erect nest boxes. In particular Dave Keen deserves a mention as he has helped us with his mechanical digger to level some of the paths and to move woodchip around the Wetland.

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

On Saturday **28 April** there is to be an ALL-DAY BIRD WATCH! The idea is to keep a record of each bird species seen, each hour, from 05h00 until 20h00. You do not have to be there all day but please do drop in during the day and give us a hand.

The Work Party schedule for the next 6 months is set out below and we will be delighted to see you there.

31 March	7 July
12 May	4 August
2 June	1 September

Note that work parties are usually on the first Saturday of every month (adjusted to avoid public holidays) and now always on Saturdays and start at 10:00am from the Mayfield Road car park.

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 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 robert.gillmor@btinternet.com
Secretary - Val Wood valeriewood@uwclub.net

Website

<http://avonmeadowspershore.org/> (remains 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 all continue to enjoy, learn and take part in Wetland activities throughout the spring!

Richard Stott