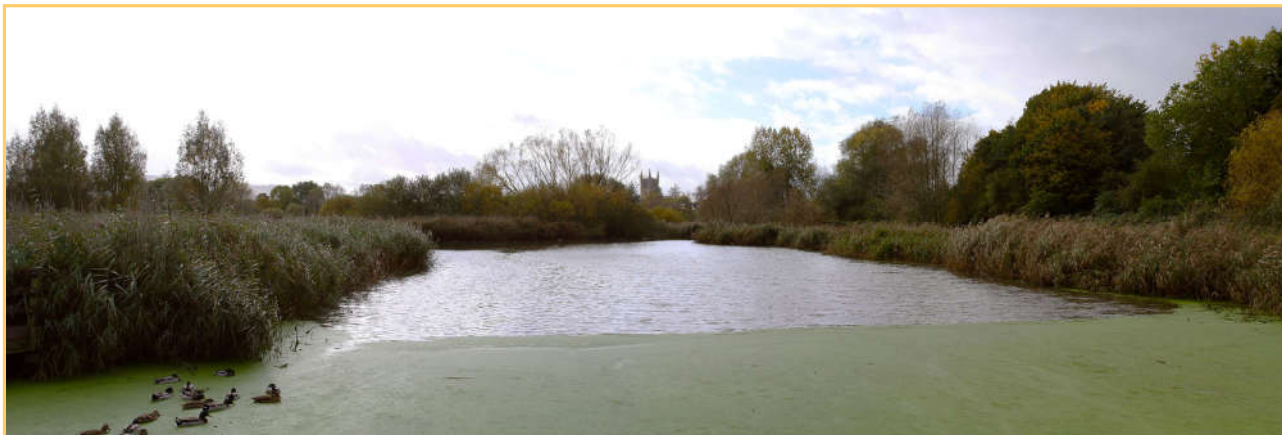




Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows



Between the showers on 31 October 2021.

Photo: Richard Stott

Newsletter No: 45

October 2021

Annual General Meeting

CHANGE OF DATE!!! The date of our **AGM** has been put back and will now be held at **6:00pm on Wednesday 10th November 2021**. This change has been made in the hope that we will be able to hold the meeting in the Pershore Civic Centre which at present will happen. You will be notified if the meeting is NOT to be held in the Civic Centre.

If you plan to attend you **MUST** register interest so that we can make suitable social distancing arrangements inside the building. (Contact richarddestott@gmail.com) Please note that if you do not register your interest you may NOT be allowed to attend!!!

Forum

Your Committee has been discussing the possibility of holding an open forum for members to discuss the next 5 years on Avon Meadows and in particular the Friends of Avon Meadows contribution to any plans.

We are a charity and Avon Meadows is a nature reserve so any proposals must be in line with our charitable objectives.

These objectives are detailed fully in the Constitution (copy available on request) but in short seek to improve Avon Meadows for wildlife, encourage public access to enjoy nature and to seek to educate them in conservation matters.

Please get in touch (Contact richarddestott@gmail.com) if you feel this is a good idea or if you have some suggestions.

Member's Photographs



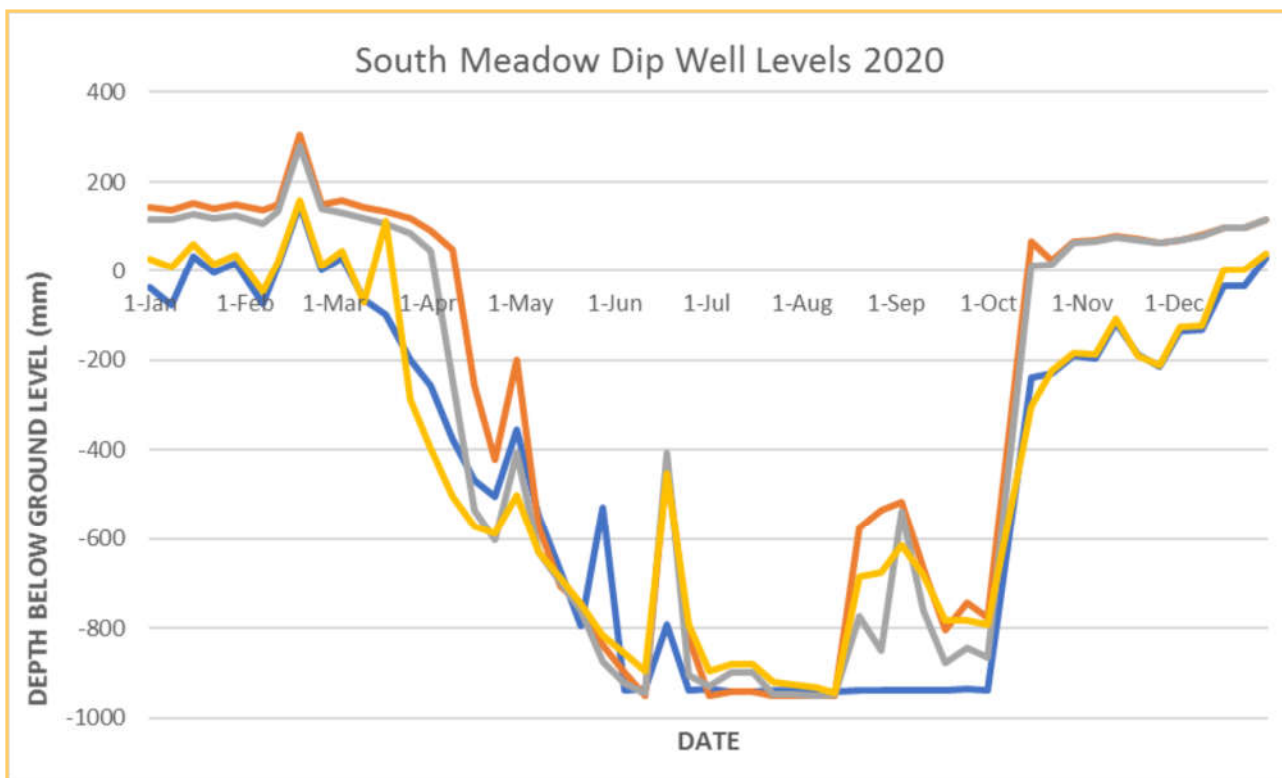
Elephant Hawk-moth caterpillar taken on the boardwalk!

Photo: Trevor Hyde

It is amazing what you can find on Avon Meadows if you keep your eyes open. This handsome caterpillar (about the size of your third finger!) was found on the boardwalk, normally a busy area for the safety of slow moving caterpillars!

It feeds on a wide variety of plants including Great Willowherb and Purple-loosestrife both of which are common on Avon Meadows. You can find them from July to September and, when they are at their largest, like this one, they rest on the ground in daytime and feed at night.

There is more about this year's moths later on.



NOTES: When the graph is above zero, the dip-well is under water! We do not record below -950mm. The **blue** line well is nearest to Cherry Orchard between the houses and the drainage channel. The **orange** line well is just east of the boardwalk, the **grey** line well in the middle of the meadow and the **yellow** line well is nearest to the river. So, the lowest level is often that nearest to the river!

Progress on the Wetland

Dipwells

Some of you may have bumped into someone with what looks like a dip stick wandering around the meadows. It is indeed a dip-stick used for monitoring the ground water levels.

We have 10 dip-wells set out around the meadows which are checked and recorded at weekly intervals. The dip-wells go down about 1 metre as it is only the surface layers we are interested in. This is all part of the wild flower reintroduction programme and some species flourish in wetter conditions than others and this data builds up over time to provide an excellent historical record of the aquifer.

Sheep

Those of you who have visited recently will have seen about 160 sheep have arrived on 20 Oct and will stay for a couple of months. We need them to eat as much grass as they can to weaken the grass to give wild flowers a better chance.

Work parties

Work parties have continued under the watchful eye of Ken Pomfret. Since the last Newsletter they have cleared the scrape (just in time before it began to fill up with water again!) so it will be ready for visiting winter birds. Again, very many thanks to Ken and the volunteers who helped for the hard work for the benefit of us all.

Contractors' Work

There has been little progress here presumably because of the amount of work that contractors have on at present. We will keep pushing to get our works to the top of his list!

Surveys and Sightings

The autumn Newsletter is the time for looking back at the year's surveys, particularly those involving insects.

Insects have made to biggest impact on our list of new species for Avon Meadows details for many of which are given below. The total species count for all groups now stands at **1160!** This list is kept up to date and my thanks go to those who send in records, especially when accompanied by photographs.

BIRDS

Weekly Bird Count

The average count over the last twelve weeks has been 46 species per week. The improvement from the previous report can be explained in part by the late departure of some summer species and the early arrival of some winter ones!

We have recorded 106 species and this year has now climbed up to be the second best year so far. It is interesting to note that **Jays** have been recorded regularly this year over Avon Meadows (they breed in Tiddesley Wood) whereas previously they were rarely encountered. Conversely, the last **Coot** recorded this year was on 25 Mar!

We keep a count of the total species counted each month and this year we had a new record count for September of 75 species! Well done to all who contributed.

Four of our members took part in the West Midlands All-dayer on 4 Sep when birds are counted on sites throughout

Surveys and Sightings (continued)

the region. Our members managed to record **60** species, about mid-table in the regional rankings which is excellent when competing with some of the most productive sites in the West Midlands.

I am pleased to be able to report that the FoAM Bird Group now count on Thursdays as a group so we leave together from by Cherry Orchard House at 9:00am on Thursday mornings. Do come along if you are interested! You do not have to be an expert.

Autumn Migrants

One of our first migrants to arrive was a **Whinchat** on 28 Aug followed by a single **Wheatear** the following day which was our only Wheatear record of the autumn. We had just 3 records of Whinchats this year which compared poorly with the bumper year 2020 when we had 27 passing through. Our first **Garden Warbler** arrived on 28 Aug and a good number of **Willow Warblers** followed. **Siskins** (16 Sep) and a **Lesser Redpoll** (1 Oct) were both new early records for us. These last two can turn up almost any time over the winter.

Winter Visitors

Winter visitors have come in fits and starts. First to arrive were several **Common Snipe** on 2 Sep followed by **Meadow Pipits** on 4 Sep. We had to wait until 1 Oct for the first **Stonechat** to arrive. At present, there are two pairs on Avon Meadows.



A female Stonechat photographed last Thursday on the bird count in the South Meadow. Photo: Robert Edwards

A flock of 117 **Golden Plover** flying over on 30 Sep was our first record for 2021. They use ploughed fields in the winter in our area. The winter thrushes are late this year, there were several flocks of **Redwings** flying over on 14 Oct and 2 **Fieldfares** on 30 Oct, there have been few Redwings after the initial wave.

Interesting or Unusual Species

Only our second record of **Yellow-legged Gull** was made on 14 Sep. It was a juvenile bird flying together with two young Herring Gulls. It is very similar in appearance to the Herring Gull, leg colour being the obvious difference, Herring Gulls have pink legs. There are subtle plumage differences in juvenile birds which takes considerable skill and experience to notice. Yellow-legged Gulls are a bird of the Mediterranean coasts but visit the UK in winter where they are regarded as local or scarce. So, a very good record for Avon Meadows.

Mammals

There was an excellent record of a **Weasel** alongside Piddle Brook on 30 Oct, our first since 12 Apr 2018.

Butterflies

It has been a disappointing year for butterflies. This is not just Avon Meadows, Butterfly Conservation has reported low counts throughout the UK. We recorded 15 species but in quite low numbers compared with previous years.

Dragonflies

Although not disastrous, it has been an average year for dragonflies with 13 species being recorded although overall numbers have been down. **White-legged Damselflies** have done alright as have **Ruddy Darters**.

Moths

Paul Rhodes has kindly donated his moth trap to the Moth Group for which very many thanks. Let us hope that COVID will allow us to use all our 3 traps in 2022.

This year only 2 members have been trapping using their own equipment due to the COVID precautions. They have done extremely well so many thanks to them for their work.

Because of these efforts the moth count for Avon Meadows now stands at **398** species adding 10 new species during the year. 4 of these have been recorded since the last Newsletter.



The new micro moth *Anarsia innoxiiella* recorded on Avon Meadows on 15 September 2021. Photo: John Boon

The micro moth illustrated above is interesting as it was only discovered to be a separate species in 2017. It has a very similar cousin and originally they were assumed to be one

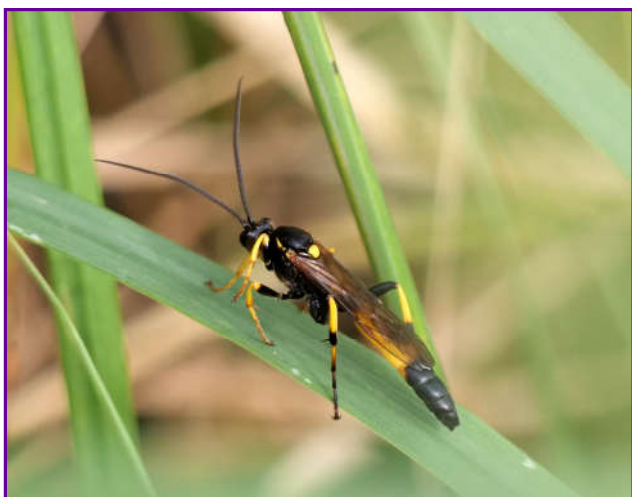
species. It was only after careful scientific investigation it could be shown that there were in fact two species involved.

It had not been recorded in Worcestershire before but several were recorded in different parts of the county during September 2021.



A handsome Red-green Carpet trapped on Avon Meadows on 15 September 2021. (The scale at the bottom of the photograph is in millimetres.) *Photo: Richard Stott*

Other Insects



Dusona falcator (a type of Ichneuman wasp), recorded on Avon Meadows on 6 August 2021. *Photo: Craig Wright*

This wasp has not been recorded very often in the UK and is possibly either a first for Worcestershire or one of very few records in the county.



A Big-headed Digger Wasp which was recorded on Avon Meadows on 4 September 2021. *Photo: Craig Wright*

The **Big-headed Digger Wasp** was one of several species new to Avon Meadows. Another was a **Hornet Hoverfly** which does not sting but mimics a hornet which does! Finally, a fly, *Panzeria anthophila*, which is quite common in England although much scarcer further north and a new record for us.

Website

Some of you will have noticed that our website has been taken down. We are very sorry about this and are doing what we can to reinstate it.

Our previous web host, BT, decided to withdraw from the web hosting business leaving us with no easy options. We are looking for a hosting system that is fairly easy to set up either by ourselves or for no charge which can have its content edited easily to keep it up to date. As you are all aware there are dozens of organisations which can design fancy websites but they can be extremely expensive. The Friends of Avon Meadows does not have thousands of pounds to spend in this way and even if it did, should be spend it so?

If anybody can provide help themselves or suggest a reliable person who can help please do get in touch.



Sadly not a species found on Avon Meadows. This lovely Monarch butterfly can be found in the carpark beside Avon Meadows and as you probably all know is the work of "Pershore's Banksi"!

How you can help us

Work Parties - Contact Ken Pomfret if you are able to help.

Newsletter Circulation - Know anyone who would like one? Let Richard have **their name and eMail address**.

This is an important way of expanding our membership!

PLEASE NOTE!

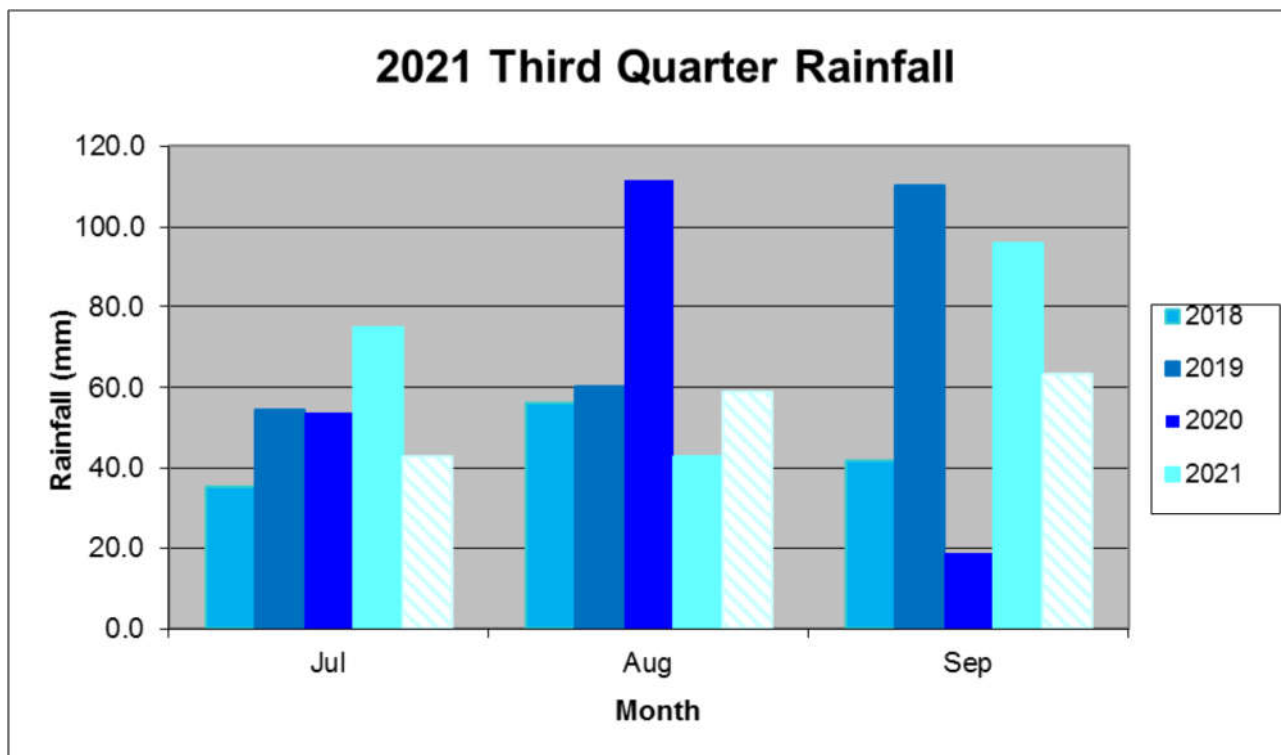
We are always on the lookout for new and interesting photographs to put in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of it. We are trying to increase the number of photographers who provide photographs for the Newsletter.

We need the original, unedited, picture file, that it is taken on Avon Meadows and it must be in focus.

Send the date, time and approximate location of the image.

Contact: richarddestott@gmail.com

Water Levels



As you can see we have been experiencing the usual swings and roundabouts with our rainfall. Through this period the scrape has been bone dry. Heavy rain at the end of October (186% of average) has begun to put water back into it now.

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/>. Note that the website has been temporarily suspended. We are working hard to get it back up again, please bear with us!

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 []
Life Membership subscription a single payment of £50 []

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

ADDRESS: _____

TOWN: _____ POSTCODE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

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

I am happy to receive information from The Friends of Avon Meadows:

by e-mail [] please tick ✓ by post [] please tick ✓

We will never pass your details to any third party organisations.

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

