



Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows



Taken on 1 Feb 2022 on a day that seemed to be like spring. However we have to get through February and March before we can hold those thoughts!

Photo: Richard Stott

Newsletter No: 46

January 2022

Annual General Meeting

The AGM was attended by nearly 30 members which was a relief after such a long period without face to face meetings.

Andrew Conway was a founder member of the Committee but decided to step down at the meeting. We would all like to thank him for his wisdom and efforts on the Committee.

A proposal was made by the Committee to increase the maximum number of Trustees permitted from nine to fifteen (15). It was passed unanimously. The Officers and Committee members were re-elected and Sue Comely was elected as a Trustee.

The minutes will be posted on the website in due course.

After the AGM closed, Richard Stott gave a presentation on the beginnings of Avon Meadows (now nearly 14 years ago!) and Jeff Steady showed us some of his wonderful bird photographs taken on the meadows.

Member's Photographs



The Magpies liked to be around the sheep and the sheep did not seem to mind. There was a 'mischief' of 18 Magpies present at the time this photograph was taken.

Photo: Steve McLaren.

Progress on the Wetland

Carpark Developments

Those if you who have been down to the carpark at the south of Avon Meadows recently will have noticed a lot of activity.

Pershore Town Council, who own and control the land, has developed a plan to improve the approach to Avon Meadows together with some necessary engineering work. This latter includes clearing the drainage channel and road drains. Of course the carpark will still flood as it is in the flood plain

Website

Following our request for help with the website, several people offered and I would like to thank them all for their offers of help.

I am delighted to report that the website is up and running again thanks to Geoff Moore of Cisco Systems. He got it up and running again in short order in its original form but we have plans to develop it further with his help. We are immensely grateful to Geoff for offering and Cisco Systems for allowing him time to help us in our hour of need.



The scrape cleared by volunteers and now nicely filled with water.

Photo: Richard Stott

Progress on the Wetland (continued)

but the water should clear more quickly afterwards. The emergency launching ramp will be brought back into service and a picnic area will be included at the river end of the carpark.

Work parties

The volunteer work parties have done Sterling work over the autumn and winter. The first job is to clear the scrape of summer growth, a task that is carried out after birds have finished breeding in September/October. We cannot control the water level in the scrape so timing depends on the weather. The photograph above shows the considerable extent of the work that has to be carried out.

Each autumn as the 5-year reed cutting cycle comes round two areas of reedbed are cut. Here we can control water levels which are kept low until around the end of February.



Area E in the process of being cleared. The new dipping platform can be seen in the background.

Photo: Richard Stott



Area G, last cut 5-years' ago. Photo: Richard Stott

Regular visitors to Avon Meadows will have noticed that while the cut areas look bare today, in 12 months' time you not be able to tell what was cut the previous winter! The reason for cutting is to keep the reed beds in good condition and to stop dead reeds from building up and creating dry areas simply by raising the ground level.

Surveys and Sightings

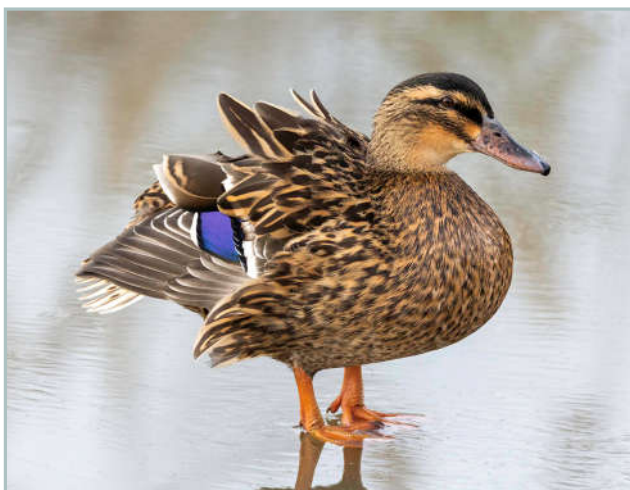
BIRDS

Weekly Bird Count

The average count over the last twelve weeks has been 43 species per week. As usual, wintering waterfowl have returned in small numbers to Avon Meadows. These include **Teal**, **Wigeon** and **Shoveler**. Shoveler numbers have been higher than usual, two flocks flew over on 30 Dec 21 totalling 46 birds and there were 7 down on the scrape on 2 Feb 22.

A **Bullfinch** was seen on 22 Dec for only the second time in 2021. Several small 'parcels' of **Linnets** have been seen recently which is a good sign for this declining species.

Looking particularly at 2022, the year has started well with 63 species have been recorded by the end of January. It started with a **Bullfinch** (4 Jan), a **Common Gull** (5 Jan), a calling **Tawny Owl** (6 Jan), a **Peregrine** (7 Jan), a pair of **Mandarin Ducks** (8 Jan) and two male **Siskins** (26 Jan). Overwintering **Chiffchaffs** and **Blackcaps** have been



The female Mallard is often overlooked but when studied carefully it is a very attractive bird.

Photo: Steve McLaren

Sharp-eyed observers may have noticed that some drake Mallards have been showing slate-coloured bills instead of the normal dull yellow. These are young adults slowly changing into their full adult colours and soon their bills will turn dull yellow too.

Surveys and Sightings (continued)

recorded regularly this winter, their presence encouraged by recent milder winters.

It is worth noting that **Peregrines** have been seen roosting regularly on Pershore Abbey this winter.

Flocks of up to 300 **Redwing** have been seen feeding on the waterlogged meadows. A 'deceit' of over 100 **Lapwings** flew by on 20 Jan 22.

Stonechats have been a regular sight on Avon Meadows with up to 5 being seen on one day. Mostly we seem to have two pairs, one on the South Meadow and the other spending time between Piddle Brook and the scrape. They are winter visitors arriving with us in September and departing in late March.

Interesting or Unusual Species

A **Common Redshank** was recorded from beside Piddle Brook on 9 Nov 21 and two **Nuthatches** on 28 Nov 21 both uncommon on Avon Meadows. These two species raised the total species count for 2021 to **108** species which is only beaten by the 110 total in 2018.

2021 is the first year when **Tawny Owls** have been heard in every month of the year. Now the trick is to discover whereabouts they roost in daytime!!!

A **Jack Snipe** was flushed from the scrape during a work party on 13 Nov 21. This is a species that will only fly if you are almost standing on it and so are difficult to detect. It is surprising how many interesting birds appear during a work party. Join the work party to see the birds!

It was quite a surprise to see a **Merlin** flying through at speed during the bird count on 13 Jan 22. They are an unusual sight on Avon Meadows.

[Note: Collective nouns obtained from Fanous, S. 2020. *A Conspiracy of Ravens*. Bodleian Library.]



A nice female Stonechat, a familiar sight in the South Meadow this winter.

Photo: Steve McLaren

Butterflies

The latest butterfly seen last year was a **Red Admiral** recorded on 11 Nov 21. The latest record for Red Admiral was on 19 Nov 19.

Dragonflies

A **Common Darter** was recorded beside the main path on 1 Dec 2021 which is a new late record for this species.



Another of Mr Sce's creations, this time actually on Avon Meadows! The model is Val Wood as I am sure most of you will know.

How you can help us

Work Parties - Contact Ken Pomfret if you are able to help at KenPomfret@btinternet.com.

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!

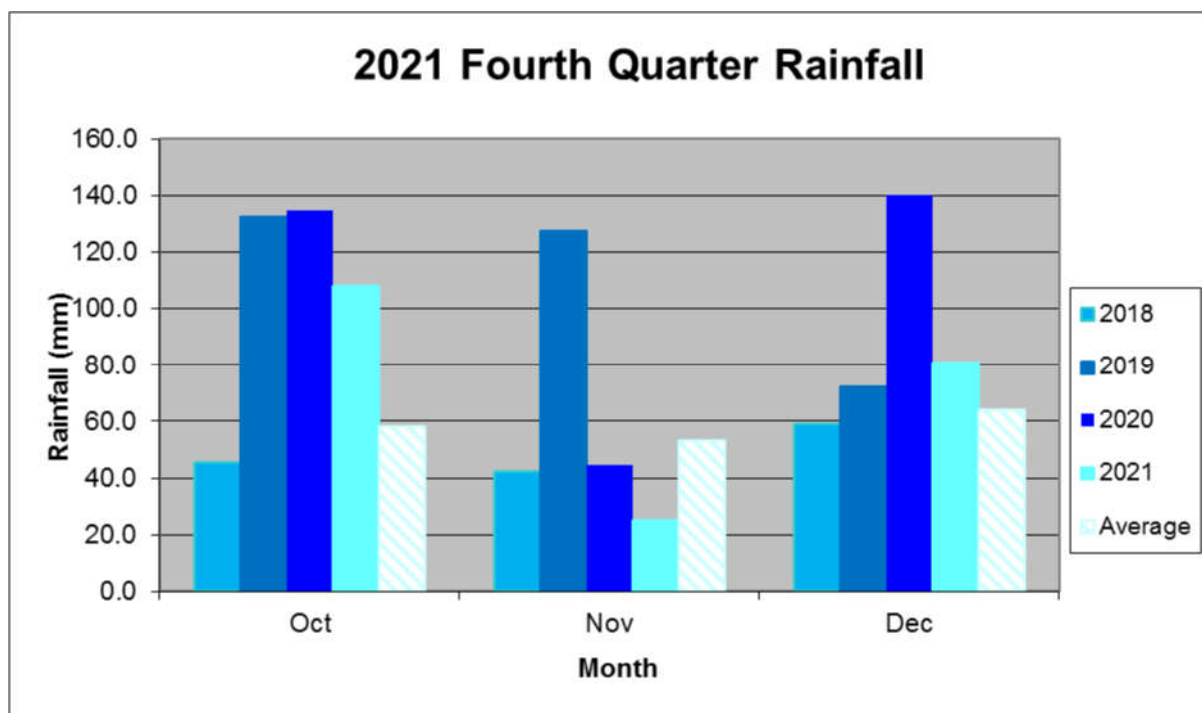
We are always on the lookout for new and interesting photographs to put in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of it. We are trying to increase the number of photographers who provide photographs for the Newsletter.

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



After a wet October things cleared up a bit and this has continued into the New Year with only 37% of average rainfall during January 2022. The rain that has fallen tends to lie due to the lack of transpiration by dormant plants and grass.

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/>.

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 would like to set up a standing order, please use the same details and again let us know by e-mail. We cannot currently handle direct debits.

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:

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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.

