



NEWSLETTER

On 6 August 2024 the duckweed has returned although less than last year. The plan is to try a traditional method of controlling duckweed by putting barley straw into the pool.

Photo: Richard Stott

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From the Chairman

I am delighted to announce that Karen Rose has joined the Wychauon DC team as its new Wildlife Sites and Project Officer. She has already started work and many of you will meet her in the coming months.

We are working in putting together an agenda for the Forum which will take place at the end of September (see p.4 for details). We shall present the new management plan for the next 5 years and consider where we want to take Avon Meadows and the Friends of Avon Meadows in the future.

Much of what we can achieve in the future depends on our Committee and volunteers. Their skills and the time they devote to Avon Meadows is crucial and I thank them all for it. We have recently lost key Committee Members and are looking to replace them. If you are interested do please get in touch with the Chairman via the website. The work is interesting and gives a great sense of satisfaction. I can recommend it!

Finally, I would like to thank members who sent in photographs which help to enliven the Newsletter.

Members' Photographs

Roger Mason's wonderful photograph of a **Brown Hawker** dragonfly was taken recently on Avon Meadows. Brown Hawkers are quite common at this time of year and easily identified with their substantially brown bodies and rust-coloured wings.

They are about 73mm long with a wingspan of about 102mm. Their peak flight period is between June and September. Extreme dates on Avon Meadows are 31 May to 26 September. These dates are interesting because they provide an indication of the weather conditions as insects need warmth to fly. Early warm periods bring them out early to and similarly late warm periods allow them to fly later in the year.





Taken on the 6th August, this view is almost unrecognisable from the previous image taken on 5 May! This has been an extraordinary year for plant growth, particularly reeds and grasses.

Photo: Richard Stott

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Also taken on the 6th August from further into the scrape where the water usually lies and is the last area to dry out. Surprisingly, in spite of all the wet weather in the first part of the year, this area dried out at about the same time as it did in 2023.

Photo: Richard Stott

Progress on the Wetland

WYCHAVON'S ACTIVITIES

Regular visitors will have noticed that the contractors have been busy keeping the paths clear. Keeping brambles clear is particularly difficult at this time of year to stop them straying across the paths as they grow so quickly.

The main contractor's work is well advanced now. Gravel has been put down on areas that turn into soft mud in the winter months. Work continues in replacing bridges in the North Meadow as well as a number of smaller activities.

The haycut was taken on 27 July this year.

VOLUNTEERS' ACTIVITIES

Plug Plant Cultivation Update

Those of you who volunteered to help will have noted that we have not been in touch. In view of the extraordinarily wet spring we decided to defer this project until next year. So, another victim of the unusual weather in 2024.

Water Quality Testing *by Sue Comely*

In Newsletter 54, at the beginning of the year, we announced a plan for a volunteer project on Avon Meadows to monitor water quality. We asked for interested people get in touch and some of you did. We're sorry that it has been such a slow process, but we are now closer to being able to implement



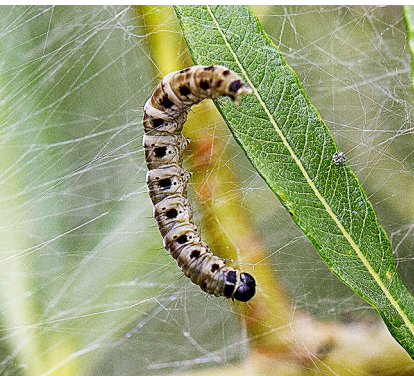
↑ Many of you will have noticed these webs in willow and apple trees. They are the webs of the micro moths, Willow Ermine or Apple Ermine.

Photo: Richard Stott



↑ A typical Cuckoo pose in a willow tree on Avon Meadows. This Cuckoo was photographed when competing with another male Cuckoo. They are easy to spot when having an argument!

Photo: Robert Edwards



↑ The caterpillar of the Willow Ermine moth. The webs shown above act as protection for the caterpillars as they feed.

Photo: Richard Stott



↑ Four-spotted Chaser.

Photo: Roger Mason



↑ Red-eyed Damselfly.

Photo: Roger Mason

Water Quality Testing (continued) by Sue Comely

the plan. We hope to buy a testing kit very shortly and would like to call again on your help with this project. We'll start by testing for nitrates and phosphates using simple handheld devices and we will arrange training for this. If you'd still like to

take part please confirm your interest and if you missed the original announcement but would like to be involved in a citizen science project please let us know. Contact Richard Stott at richarddestott@gmail.com

Science Section

Soldier Beetle Identification

Soldier Beetle identification is made much easier with the splendid identification charge available free of charge on the UK Beetle Recording website. It is a beautifully illustrated guide which can be downloaded as a pdf file from: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/OBO08cp9g-Pm8a3pETIBfejFERm8/uew>.

UK Earthworm Population Falling

The BTO has recently published a scientific paper which has studied the changes of the UK earthworm population over the last 100 years. The study is what is known as a meta analysis which means it collates data from a large number of earlier papers studying earthworm populations. Concerningly, there has been a decline in the earthworm population of between 1.6% and 2.1% annually, equivalent to 33% to 41% over the last 25 years. The losses appear to be greatest in urban parkland and pasture/meadows. The causes are

not clear but there will be significant knock-on effects for other species. (e.g. Song Thrushes and Blackbirds eat earthworms). The significance of the results goes much further as earthworms are an important factor in soil fertility and improvement (viz. compost heaps!).

[For original scientific paper see <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0282069>]

Only one species of Redpoll now!

A recent genetic study strongly suggests that the Lesser, Common and Artic Redpolls are in fact variations on a single species—Redpoll *Acanthis flammea*. The International Ornithological Committee (IOC) is proposing to accept this change. For observers, it is still important to indicate the subspecies. The Redpolls occurring on Avon Meadows used to be called Lesser Redpoll.

[For original scientific paper see: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-27173-z>]

UPCOMING EVENTS

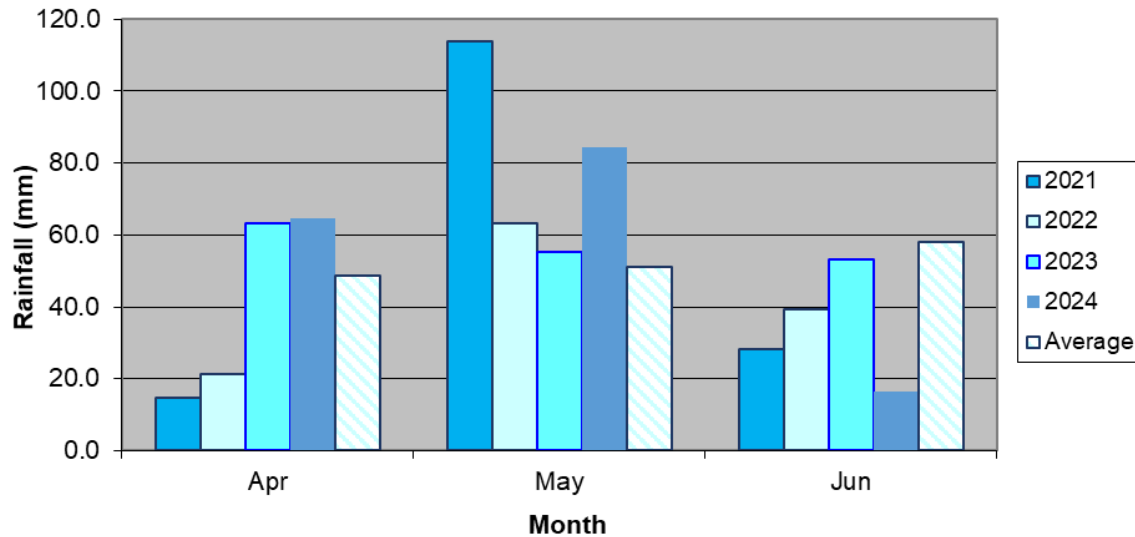
MEMBERS' FORUM

Set for **Friday, 27 September 2024** to start at **6:30pm** in the **Committee Room in Pershore Civic Centre**.

THURSDAY BIRD COUNT

Our Bird Count starts each Thursday morning outside Cherry Orchard House at 09:00am. All are welcome. Bring binoculars!

2024 Second Quarter Rainfall



June was a dry month which allowed the scrape to dry out around the usual time. July has been wetter and cooler than average.

Surveys and Sightings

BIOLBLITZ 2024

The Bioblitz this year took place on 28/29 June and was arranged in conjunction with Tom Ward of Heart of England Forest. Expert people were invited to count as many species as they could find in a day on Avon Meadows. We managed a respectable total of 242 species of which 14 were new records for Avon Meadows, This brings our total species count to 1,227.

BIRD COUNT RESULTS

While the variety of birds in weekly counts has been maintained, the total number of birds counted so far has been rather less than average. The total species count for the year is now up to 85 which too is rather below average.

Peregrine Falcons have been appearing more regularly over the meadows as the Pershore Abbey birds go hunting.

During June a **Great Egret** and up to 4 **Little Egrets** appeared on the scrape. As the water on the scrape evaporated, the small fish were concentrated into smaller and smaller pools making easy snacks for expert hunters.

A very early **Stonechat** has been seen already.

SUMMER VISITORS

Swallows and House Martins have been harder to find this year but **Swift** numbers have been about average. **Sedge Warblers** have been strangely silent but happily **Reed Warbler** numbers have been normal, good for Cuckoos who lay there eggs in Reed Warbler nests. The last **Cuckoo** was



A nice study of a Cuckoo taken on Avon Meadows.
Photo: Jeff Steady ARPS

recorded on 18 June and was almost certainly not one of the birds that bred on Avon Meadows but rather one migrating south from further north in the country.

Unusually for us a number of **Willow Warblers** have been recorded recently and they move south after breeding further north.

We will report on butterflies and moths at the end of the season.



Contractors at work putting gravel down in a gateway.

Photo: Richard Stott

PERHAPS YOU CAN HELP?

If you have interesting photographs taken on Avon Meadows we may be able to use them in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of the Newsletter. We are always looking for new photographers to send us photographs.

Please send the original, unedited, picture file, taken on Avon Meadows.

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

Contact: richarddestott@gmail.com

If you know anyone who would like to become a member of the Friends of Avon Meadows all we need is a name and eMail address.

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 avonmeadowspershore@gmail.com with the details requested below. If you would like to set up a standing order (we prefer this), 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:

Temporary Contact: avonmeadowspershore@gmail.com

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: _____

PLEASE TICK THIS BOX IF YOU WOULD LIKE US TO RECEIVE GIFT AID

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.

If you are enjoying Avon Meadows please remember us in your will, it will be put to good use!