



NEWSLETTER

On 3 November 2024 the story is still one of duckweed!

Photo: Richard Stott

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From the Chairman

There was a good attendance at the AGM on 9th September at which the our accounts were approved and Trustees re-elected unanimously.

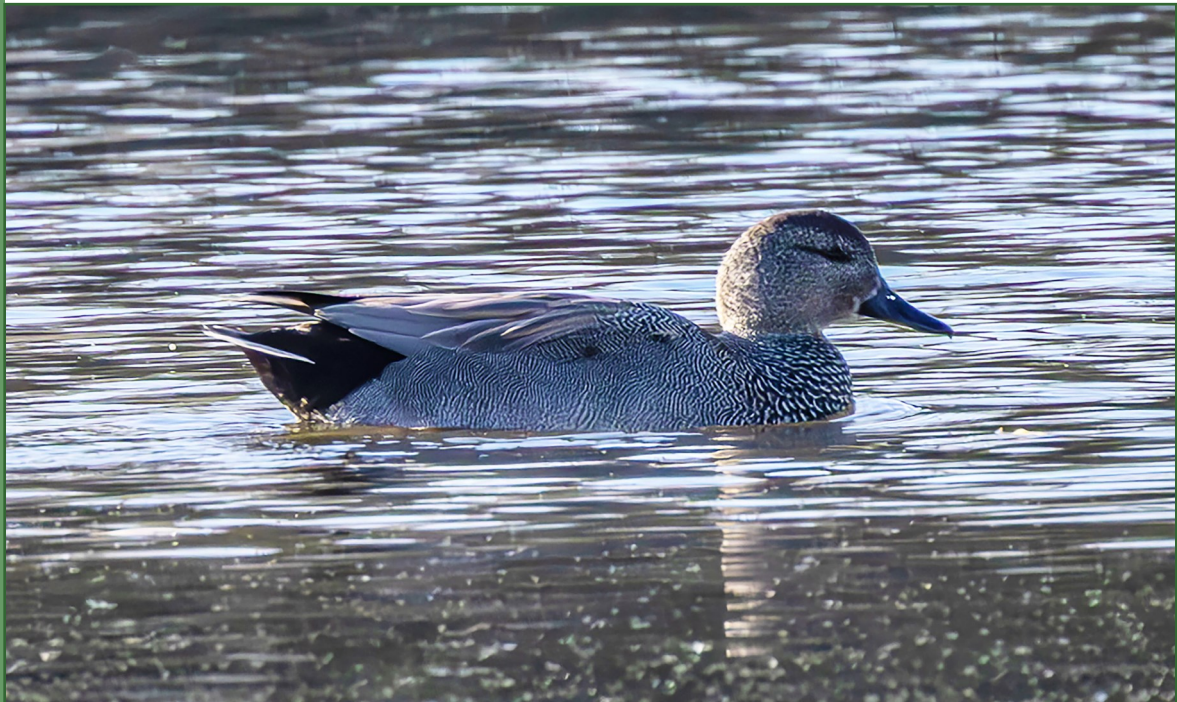
The long promised Members' Forum was held on 27 September which brought out a lot of interesting ideas. Chief among them was that members valued the pools and areas of clear water so future management should ensure that such features remain and are developed.

Early rain in September was enough to put water

on the scrape, halting volunteer clearing work and preventing introducing the sheep to graze the grass in the autumn. Indeed it has been the wettest start to the autumn since we began collecting water table data in 2015. (see p.4)

The ever-present duckweed turns out to be Least Duckweed, an invasive import from North America. It seems that the best way to manage it will be to remove it mechanically. The wildfowl simply cannot eat it fast enough!

Members' Photographs



Judith Fulton's lovely study of a drake Gadwall taken recently on the main pool. Gadwall's are occasional winter visitors to Avon Meadows in small numbers. They were first recorded in January 2011 and recently a new high count of 12 was present.



Taken on the 3rd November, once again, this view is almost unrecognisable from the previous image taken in August! This time it is because a work party of stalwart volunteers cleared it!

Photo: Richard Stott

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Progress on the Wetland

WYCHAVON'S ACTIVITIES

The wet September weather prevented the sheep from being introduced to the meadows. They are a necessary part of the meadow management as they help to reduce abundance of grasses thereby

giving wild flowers a better chance to flourish.

Several willow trees have blown down recently due to the combination of rain and high winds while the trees are in full leaf. This is an ongoing task as there always seems to be more to do.

VOLUNTEERS' ACTIVITIES

AGM

The Committee members are mostly Trustees of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Other Committee members are appointed by the Trustees for the skills they bring. At each AGM a third of the Trustees stand down in rotation and those that wish put themselves up for re-election.

us more flexibility to manage as we think best.

After the AGM, Wendy Bufton of Worcestershire County Council gave a very interesting presentation on flood alleviation schemes that she has been investigating. Some of these will be introduced on Avon Meadows in 2025. Their guiding principle is to slow down the flow of flood water as it heads towards the river

A Trustee is an important legal position and we try to involve people who are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about Avon Meadows and what it stands for.

Members' Forum

The Members' Forum provided a useful and stimulating discussion. The Chairman introduced the meeting with a brief review of the history of Avon Meadows which led into a discussion about the future of the meadows. In essence, the conclusion was 'more of the same', particularly future developments should include areas of open water while maintaining the pools that we have. If left, the present pools would change into wet willow woodland and disappear in just a few years.

A question was raised about government funding for Avon Meadows which arrives through the Higher Tier Stewardship Scheme. It was explained that this money is paid to the landowners (WDC & PTC) for specific tasks, once those tasks have been completed. There are new funding schemes in the pipeline where payments will be made for "public goods". It is not certain at present how these schemes will work but we are looking at one called the Sustainable Farming Initiative which will give

Scrape Clearance

This year we arranged work parties to clear the



Friends of Avon Meadows CIO
Registered Charity No. 1174083





↑ Redwings look rather like Song Trushes but note the broad eyebrow and brick red peeping out from beneath the folded wing. They arrive in autumn from Scandinavia. *Photo: Judith Fulton*



↑ A female 4-spot Orb Web Spider on 27 Aug. *Photo: Richard Stott*



↑ The nymph of a Dock Bug on 29 Aug. *Photo: Richard Stott*



↑ Candlesnuff Fungus, spotted by a member, are new for Avon Meadows. *Photo: Richard Stott*



↑ This small bracket fungus is known as Turkeytail. Another new one for Avon Meadows. *Photo: Richard Stott*

↓ A Pygmy Shrew found recently. They are ferocious hunters of insects. *Photo: Richard Stott*



VOLUNTEERS' ACTIVITIES (continued)

scrape 4 weeks earlier than in 2023 preventing access because of the high water level. However, September had over twice its normal rainfall and once again we did not have time to complete the work. We are hugely grateful to the volunteers who turned out on Saturday mornings to carry out this important work.

The scrape comes into its own in winter and spring as a haven for water birds. Once the water level is established we cannot access the area, mainly because the birds have taken over.

Water Testing Project by Sue Comely

Our Avon Meadows water testing project is starting soon. A group of interested volunteers attended a training session in October with Geoff

Sallis, the coordinator of the Safe Avon group, a citizen science project which collects water quality data along the Avon and its tributaries with the aim of bringing water pollution issues into wider public awareness. (See <https://safeavon.org.uk>)

Following the training a couple of volunteers had a trial run at two locations on Avon Meadows. Using the same equipment and carrying out the same tests as Safe Avon, our data will be comparable. We tested the settlement pond and the main pool, measuring water temperature and conductivity, nitrate and phosphate levels. We are now drawing up a rota for regular testing and, before starting we will make sure everyone is risk aware and confident in handling and using the equipment safely.

Science Section

ADDITION TO BIRDS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN

The seabirds section of the 'Red Data List', which records birds of conservation concern, has recently been updated. One species, that uses Avon Meadows occasionally, has been added to this list, the **Common Gull**. It is not common on Avon Meadows but does occur from time to time in the winter months. It breeds along the coasts and its numbers increase in winter as European birds arrive to escape harsh northern winters.

BADGER VACCINATION MAY BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN CULLS IN CONTROLLING BOVINE TB

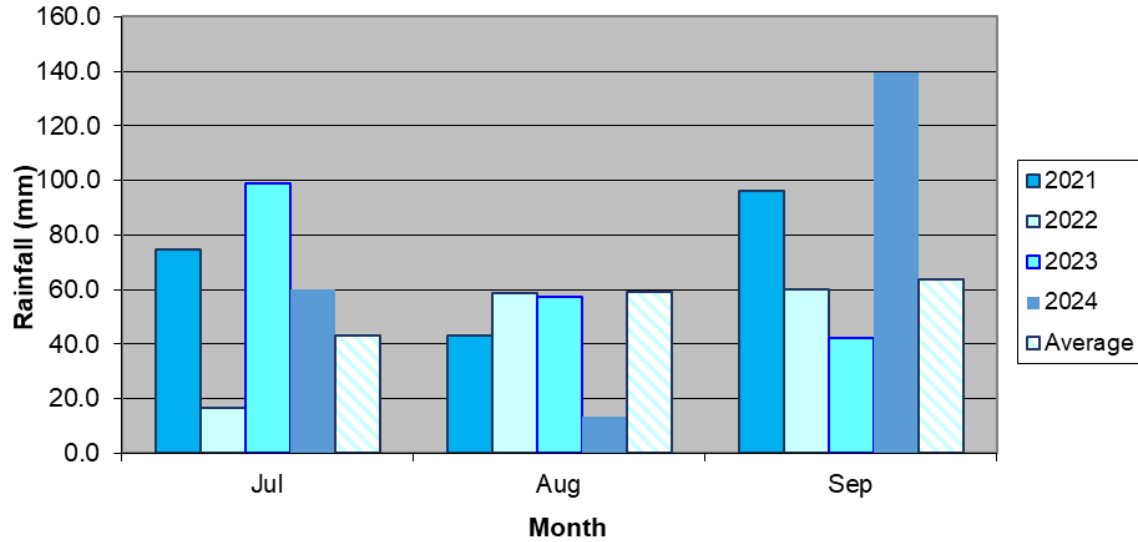
A recent small-scale study, led by farmers in Cornwall, has shown that badger vaccination for bovine tuberculosis is practicable and effective at controlling TB in badgers which is expected to reduce the instances of TB in cattle. Participating farmers are very enthusiastic about this vaccination programme. [For original scientific paper see: <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10691>]

UPCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY BIRD COUNT

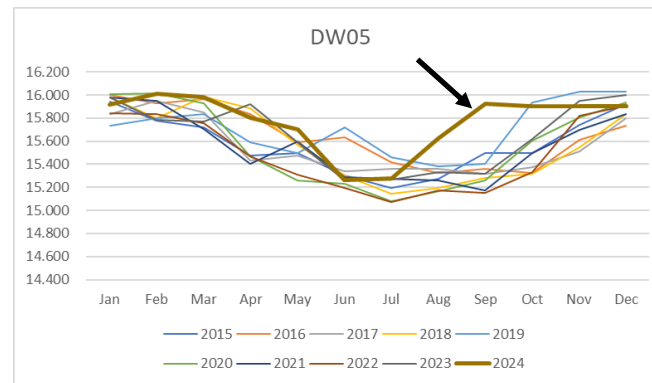
Our Bird Count starts each Thursday morning outside Cherry Orchard House at 09:00am. All are welcome. Bring binoculars!

2024 Third Quarter Rainfall



July rainfall was unremarkable but there have been large variations between dry August and wet September, not at all like recent years.

The dipwell data on the right shows levels over the last 10 years. The heavy line (arrowed) is for 2024 and clearly shows how the high September rainfall caused an unusually early rise in the water table level. This in turn ensured early filling of the scrape.



Surveys and Sightings

BIRD COUNT RESULTS

There was some concern that the low counts of **Blackbirds** in late summer was caused by a virus, the *Usutu* virus, that is causing Blackbirds to die. It was first noticed in city parks in the south of England, particularly London. Recent normal counts on Avon Meadows show that this concern was unfounded.

Low water levels on the main pool in August allowed **Water Rails** to emerge. They could be heard calling from the reedbeds in late summer.

AUTUMN BIRDS

It has been a good autumn for waterfowl. **Teal** arrived particularly early, we have good counts of **Gadwall** and **Shovelers**, and just one **Wigeon**.

The larger passerines, **Fieldfare** and **Redwing** arrived as normal but counts for smaller ones, **Meadow Pipit**, **Stonechat**, have been low so far.

There has been one **Siskin** record this autumn, but they are never numerous on Avon Meadows.

BUTTERFLIES

Butterflies have had a poor year throughout the United Kingdom. The charity, Butterfly Conservation, is calling it a Butterfly Emergency! Species such as **Holly Blue** are generally down 36%, **Small Tortoiseshell** 59% and **Peacock** 30%. We recorded just 17 species this year which is lower than average and numbers have been down for us.

MOTHS

We only held one moth night this year because the weather was so wet and because there was nobody available to run one. As with butterflies, moths have not had a good year although it is more difficult to quantify. We only collected 50 moths of 36 species. This total count is quite low, the average would be 100–200.

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**.



↑ The nymph of a Green Shieldbug showing a family likeness to the adult. (below)
Photo: Richard Stott

↑ A Field Mouse nest found in reed beds during the scrape clearance. *Photo: Richard Stott*

↑ A male Common Darter. This species is one of the last to be seen before the weather gets too cold. The latest record on Avon Meadows is 1 Dec 2020. *Photo: Judith Fulton*

Surveys and Sightings (continued)

DRAGONFLIES

It has not been a stellar year for dragonflies either, although not as bad as butterflies. We did record 15 species during the year which is about average.

NEW FUNGI

Fungi do not receive the attention they deserve so new records are easier to find.

Bracket fungi are often found on trees and rotting wood. The **Turkeytail fungus** (*Trametes versicolor*) (see photograph on p.3) is a common fungus, this specimen was found growing on a piece of rotting willow. Similarly the tiny **Candlesnuff Fungus** (*Xylaria hypoxylon*) (about the size of a matchstick, see photograph on p.3) is quite common but again a new record for Avon Meadows.



↑ The adult Green Shieldbug which are common on Avon Meadows. *Photo: Richard Stott*



Avon Meadows as it was in 2009, no reeds, no willows. It does show the original layout of the pools and interconnecting channels. *Photo: SkyWych*



↑ A handsome Common Scorpion Fly photographed on Avon Meadows.
Photo: Richard Stott

This photograph was taken with a smartphone so you too can take photographs of interesting looking creatures! If you get a nice one, send it into the website!
www.avonmeadows.org.uk

Pershire'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 avonmeadowspershire@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: avonmeadowspershire@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!