



NEWSLETTER

Contractors have been clearing the reed encroachment into the main pool (see below).

Photo: Richard Stott

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From the Chairman

Those who have visited the Meadows during the last 2 weeks of January will have seen the huge amount of work carried out by contractors to clear the dipping pond and cut back the reeds encroaching into the main pool. This work is disruptive but necessary if we want to keep a nice stretch of open water. So far, bird species that use the reed beds seem to have adapted to the furore.

I am delighted to announce that Peter Penhallow

has joined the Committee as our new Membership Secretary. This is excellent news and our service to members will return to its normal level.

There are a number of excellent drone images in this issue taken by Wychavon DC staff for which we are very grateful. Please note that it is forbidden for members of the public fly drones over any Wychavon land, including Avon Meadows.

Members' Photographs



Not one of our usual creatures! Clearing Bulrush (*Typha*) and Canadian Pondweed (*Elodia canadensis*) from the dipping pond. Canadian Pondweed is commonly found in ornamental fish aquariums and it finds its way onto Avon Meadows when people empty their aquariums into the pools! It is expensive to get rid of.

Photo: Roger Mason.



Taken on the 14th February. Floodwater has cleared much of the cut vegetation that the volunteers did not have time to clear because of the onset of wet weather. *Photo: Richard Stott*

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Progress on the Wetland

WYCHAVON'S ACTIVITIES

Wychavon DC has instructed a contractor to carry out reed clearance work around the main pool and to clear the pond dipping pool.

The Member's Forum pointed out that one of the things we value about Avon Meadows are the areas of open water. To maintain this area we must, from time to time, restore the pool margins to those when we started at 14 years ago. The rotted reed material within the reedbeds builds up over time and has to be removed to bring the land level within the reed beds down to its original level. Reed beds put down a lot of dead reeds which slowly rot down increasing the level eventually to become dry land. If left, willow trees would proliferate and the area would become wet woodland.

This work needs heavy machinery and so cannot be carried out by volunteers.

This has been a huge task carried out efficiently by Dean Martin, the contractor. The work must be carried out in sections so that we do not wipe out the existing reed bed populations. The animal populations in the uncut areas will be able to recolonise newly grown areas.

The area cut is quite extensive but the counts of important reed bed dwellers such as Cetti's Warbler and Water Rail remain normal at the moment.

It should be noted that this work is costly and adequate funding and fund raising is vital for this work to continue.



The main pool before clearance (left image) on 6 Dec 24 and after clearance (right image) on 14 Jan 25. Note that the main clearance effort was on the lefthand side.

Photo courtesy of Wychavon DC.



↑ Digger clearing reeds on 14 Jan 25 using a special bucket for this work.
Picture courtesy of Wychavon DC



↑ The scrape taken on 6 Dec 25 showing it full of water.
Picture courtesy of Wychavon DC



↑ Water sampling of the main pool from the boardwalk platform.
Photo: Sue Comely

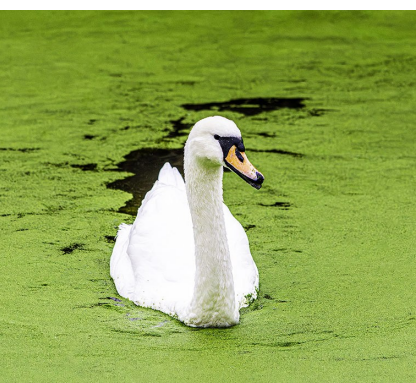
VOLUNTEERS' ACTIVITIES

Water Quality Testing *by Sue Comely*

After an Autumn training programme for volunteers and a trial run in November 24, our testing got underway in January this year. We take water samples at two sites on the meadows, the settlement pond, where the surface water from the streets is discharged from a pipe, and the main pond, where the wooden platform joins the boardwalk as it crosses the water. We are testing at roughly fortnightly intervals as only a small number of volunteers are able to test regularly. Starting in Winter presents a few challenges, but our volunteers are a hardy lot. We had to break the ice on the main pond to conduct the first test and our most recent one!

We record the water temperature and conductivity using an EC3 meter, measure nitrate using test strips and phosphate using a handheld phosphate

checker. The latter can be tricky in bad weather. It uses a reagent powder that can easily be blown away and the checker won't function properly if the temperature is below zero, so we sometimes complete this test at home. Our records are then uploaded to a spreadsheet. It's a little early to pick up trends from the data gathered so far, but in very broad terms we can see that water in the main pond has lower levels of nitrate and phosphate than the settlement pond water. Conductivity is also lower in the main pond. This suggests that the settlement pond is working as intended, i.e. lowering contamination of the main pond, but we don't know yet if it should be doing a better job. When we have collected more records we will need more detailed analysis.



↑ A familiar sight, a Mute Swan pushing its way through the duckweed.
Photo: Steve McLaren

Science Section

PESTICIDE BAN

Pressure from Butterfly Conservation, among other organisations, has persuaded the Government to ban the use neonicotinoid pesticides this year. The EU banned most of the products containing neonicotinoids in 2018. Farmers need them as they control insects that are harmful to crops and can seriously effect crop yields. They have a variety of uses, for example: oil

seed rape, cereal seed treatment, treating soil for pot plants, foliage sprays for apples and pears and household insect sprays. Neonicotinoides are systemic insecticides which are absorbed by plants and then appear throughout a plant's foliage. They are particularly toxic to all insects but less so to birds and mammals. In the UK situation, Honey Bees have been particularly badly affected, and

↓ A willow beside Piddle Brook demolished in the recent storms.
Photo: Richard Stott



An ariel view of the central part of Avon Meadows, the core area of modified habitat to form the nature reserve.

The image shows the area cleared recently. The “track” through the middle is the route used by the contractor’s vehicles and is not a new channel. At the bottom of the picture is the cleared dipping pond.

It is expected that most of the reeds will have grown back by the end of the summer!

Photo courtesy Wychavon DC



Science Section (continued)

these, as we all know, are important pollinators. Most rivers in southern Britain have some level of neonicotinoid pollution and traces have been found in honey! Neonicotinoids remain in the soil for a number of years after treatment has stopped. (see also Newsletter No.30—Jan 2018)

BIRD NAMES

Bird names often don't change as far as most of us are concerned. However if you travel abroad to watch birds it becomes more important. However, even if you don't travel, the names of our birds, as they appear in bird books, do change.

Very recently the main organisations responsible for naming birds across the world have come together to compile one definitive list under the name of **AviList**. The first version of this list will be issued later this year. It will define both common and scientific names in following the latest scientific information. For example, Redpoll is simply a Redpoll now (see also Newsletter No.56). We will let you know of changes that affect birds that we see on Avon Meadows as they arise.

PEREGRINE FALCON PREY BIRDS

Recent research on the prey items of Peregrine Falcons has been carried out on birds nesting on Norwich Cathedral and Cromer Parish Church. This study looks at breeding locations that are very similar to “our” Peregrine Falcons on the Abbey. The study made use of CCTV cameras to observe and identify prey items.

The results are perhaps not surprising as at least 75% of birds taken were pigeons both wild and feral. More surprising is the fact that some birds are caught before dawn and after dusk although the majority are taken during daylight hours.

Looking at other bird species that are taken the list is quite long, over 30 species. The species taken are firstly, those easily available in the area and then larger species are preferred. Thrushes and Starlings form the next most popular meal followed by Carrion Crows and Jackdaws. Nothing smaller than the occasional sparrow is taken.

[ref: Smith, M.L. et al. 2025. *Diet and activity of urban-breeding Peregrine Falcons revealed by video monitoring*. British Birds **118** pp.86-92]



A female Hedge Sparrow concentrating hard!

Photo: Steve McLaren



This fellow was found walking across the path on a sunny February morning. Surprisingly, it is a **Green Shieldbug!** This is an example of nature's never ending ingenuity. As you might expect, Green Shieldbugs are green in summer when the insect feeds on sap from a variety of plants and its colour offers it protection. Adults hibernate overwinter and take on a brown colour with protects detection in leaf litter.

Photo: Richard Stott

UPCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY BIRD COUNT

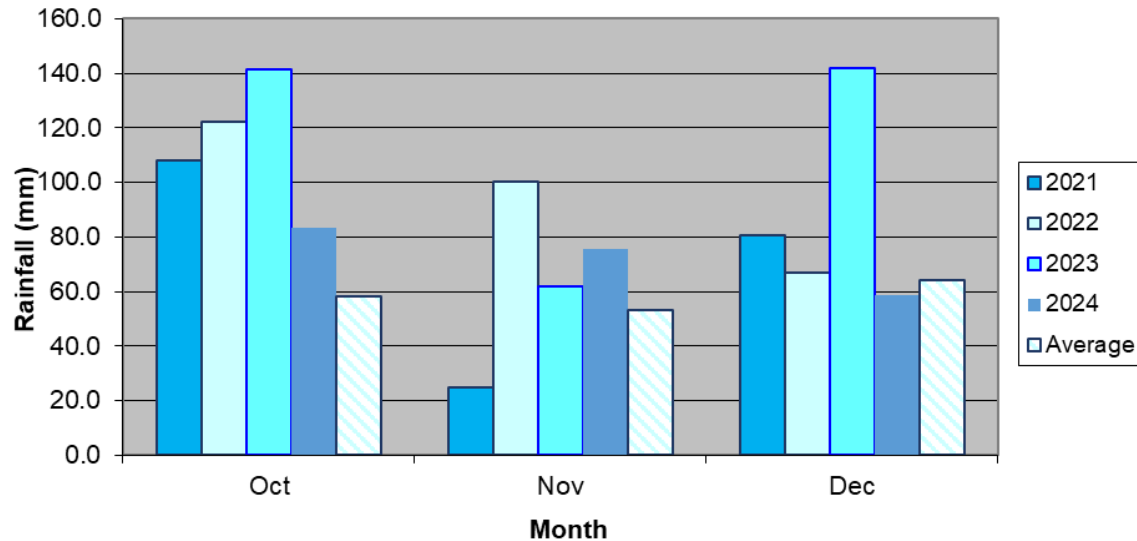
Our Bird Count starts each Thursday morning outside Cherry Orchard House at 09:00am. All are welcome. Bring binoculars!

Worcestershire Recorders

The Worcestershire Recorders Annual meeting takes place this year on Saturday, 15 March 2025 at Lower Smite Farm. Non-members are welcome to attend; note that there is a £15 charge.

Please see separate eMail for full information and how to apply to attend.

2024 Fourth Quarter Rainfall



A wetter than average quarter without being remarkable. There was some flooding at the end of November but the water did not stay for long.

Surveys and Sightings

BIRD COUNT RESULTS

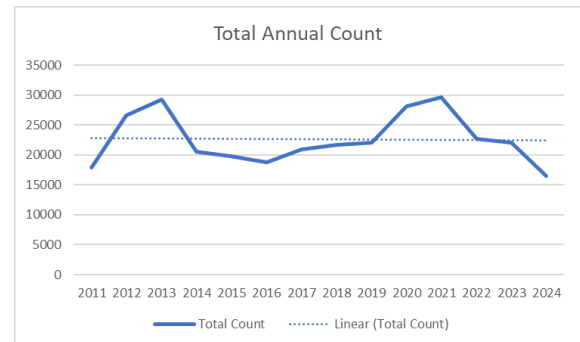
Review of 2024

2024 was not a stellar year for birds on Avon Meadows. The total number of species recorded was 89, our lowest count since 2015. The total number of birds counted was 16,500 the lowest count ever. So what is going on? One can only guess that it is weather related. That said, "one swallow does not a summer make" so before getting overly concerned we have to look at a series of years. The chart on the right shows the long-term situation with the trend about level with two peaks, 10 years apart.

There are plus points. We recorded two new species, **Little Bunting** and **Black Redstart**. The

Little Bunting was only the 6th record for Worcestershire so, a very unusual sighting. Black Redstarts are recorded from time to time on the Malverns in winter.

Egrets are being seen more frequently with both **Great** and **Little Egrets** recorded. **Gadwall**, **Teal** were frequently seen in winter and **Red Kite** turn up quite regularly. A **Jack Snipe** was recorded just once but there were 3 records for **Redpoll**. Key resident species, **Water Rail** and **Cetti's Warbler** both show a rising population trend.



2025 Stop Press!

A pair of **Whooper Swans** flew over Avon Meadows on 16 January, our 138th species!

2025 to date

A total of 53 species have been recorded in January, a little below average.

BUTTERFLIES

Some butterflies hibernate as adults over winter and these can often be found flying very early in the year. A **Red Admiral** was found flying on a sunny morning on 30 January this year, a new early record for Avon Meadows.

WILD FLOWERS

The first **Lesser Celandine** flowers started to appear on 5 January, spring is just round the corner!

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:

Membership Secretary: Mr P Penhallow, 1 Manor Court, Broughton Hackett, Worcs. WR7 4BB

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!