



NEWSLETTER

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The pool level is quite low at the moment so there is an area of exposed mud on the left. As you can see the reed growth since January been considerable.

Photo: Richard Stott

From the Chairman

Spring is with us but getting off to a surprisingly dry start. It is looking like being the driest spring on record. The scrape is dry earlier than ever before but not before our Canada Geese produced 9 goslings and were able to move away before the foxes found them!

Rather unusually, we are putting out an appeal for the Vale Wildlife Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre which, as many of you will remember, helped us a couple of times when our swans were shot. They are a small charity and need our support to keep going. Details about how to donate are given on p.2.

Thank you particularly to the volunteers who planted 200 plug plants and who continued to diligently water them since. This was essential in view of the dry weather.

A new species of dragonfly has been found on Avon Meadows, a Hairy Dragonfly, our 20th dragonfly species! Thanks to Roger Mason for finding it and getting an excellent photograph.

For those that visit the meadows regularly, you will see that Wychavon has put up some attractive new signs. The old ones were getting rather weathered and a change is good.

Members' Photographs

This is a species that nearly everyone recognises! It is of course a Common Kingfisher a species which visits Avon Meadows regularly to the delight of all that catch site of one.

Not always so easy to decide is whether it is male or female. This bird has an all black bill which indicates it is a male bird. Females have red on their lower mandibles.

This lovely photograph was taken very recently on the scrape. Kingfishers hover briefly when hunting to locate their prey before diving quickly to catch it.

Photo: Judith Fulton.





The scrape was completely dry by 17 May, 7 weeks earlier than last year! Photo: Richard Stott

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Vale Wildlife Hospital

The Vale Wildlife Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre at Beckford is a wonderful facility as anyone who has had occasion to use it will know. The Mute Swans rescued from Avon Meadows were collected and treated without cost to Avon Meadows and returned to us. As with all charities funding is an ever present issue and we are asking

members to support this wonderful local facility.

You will find detailed information about how to donate at <https://www.valewildlife.org.uk/membership/>

People there work really hard to support injured animals so I urge you to either become a member or make a donation. Many thanks.

Progress on the Wetland

WYCHAVON'S ACTIVITIES

The reed cutting around the main pool is complete and nature is rapidly turning everything back to where it was before! Wychavon's contractors will now be turning their attention to keeping the paths clear.

New noticeboards have been installed by the entrances from the carpark providing an attractive update to our signage. It is depressing to

see that someone has tried to kick the new sign off the bird screen within a week of it being put up.

As shown in the photograph on the next page, a storm-wrecked willow tree that had fallen across Piddle Brook has now been removed as it was in danger of blocking the brook.

VOLUNTEERS' ACTIVITIES

Water Quality Testing

The water testing is continuing and many thanks to the loyal band of volunteers who are keeping this

work going. The longer we continue to gather this data the more significant the data becomes.

Plug Planting

The plug planting went ahead as planned and 200 plugs were planted in 3 areas. The wild flowers planted were: Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), Sneezewort (*Achillea*

ptarmica) and Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus coniculatus*). As mentioned earlier, the extraordinary dry weather has meant that our volunteers have had to put in a great deal of effort watering simply to keep the plants alive. Very many thanks to them all.



↑ The last Newsletter showed a willow demolished by recent storms. Wychavon DC contractors have now cleared it to prevent it blocking Piddle Brook.
Photograph: Graham Avison



↑ Plug planting in late April in the Middle Meadow.
Photograph: Peter Penhallow



↑ One of the smart new signs put up recently by Wychavon DC.
Photo: Richard Stott



↑ A pair of Large Red Damselflies mating. This is one of the early species to emerge in spring.
Photo: Roger Mason



↑ A Banded Demoiselle, a beautiful, riverside species.
Photo: Roger Mason

Science Section

TOXINS IN BIRD NESTS

We reported in Newsletter No.55 that the active compounds in pet flea protection products (e.g. Frontline) have been found in streams and rivers. Recently University of Sussex research shows that the active insecticides (e.g. fipronil and imidacloprid) has been found in birds' nests. This raises the possibility of chicks eating contaminated prey and skin contact between chicks and these potent compounds.

LOCATION OF SWIFT NEST BOXES

A recent research paper from the Netherlands shows that it is very important to put built-in nest boxes in houses facing in the right direction. Nest boxes incorrectly placed can get 10°C above the surroundings (<40°C) resulting in chicks dying of hyperthermia. The recommendation is that built-in nest boxes should face **north** and generally between **northwest** and **northeast**.

[Ref: Schröder, J., Hoekstra, J. & van der Lilie, F. 2025. *The positioning of built-in nest boxes for Common Swifts*. British Birds 118:pp.256-262]

While on this subject, you may be interested in the following. It seems that the Government is about to backtrack on a super simple plan to help save

Swifts and Sparrows: by blocking a proposed new rule that would make housing developers put a £35 nest brick in every new home. It is a nature-friendly common sense idea that would help British birds. The Government wants to block it because they think it would be unpopular with voters!

I wonder if you would like to sign this on-line petition to show them the opposite and that the public wants them to back this law. It will only take a moment of your time and you can do this via the link, <https://38d.gs/rzgp>.

NEW BIRD DATA ON-LINE PORTAL

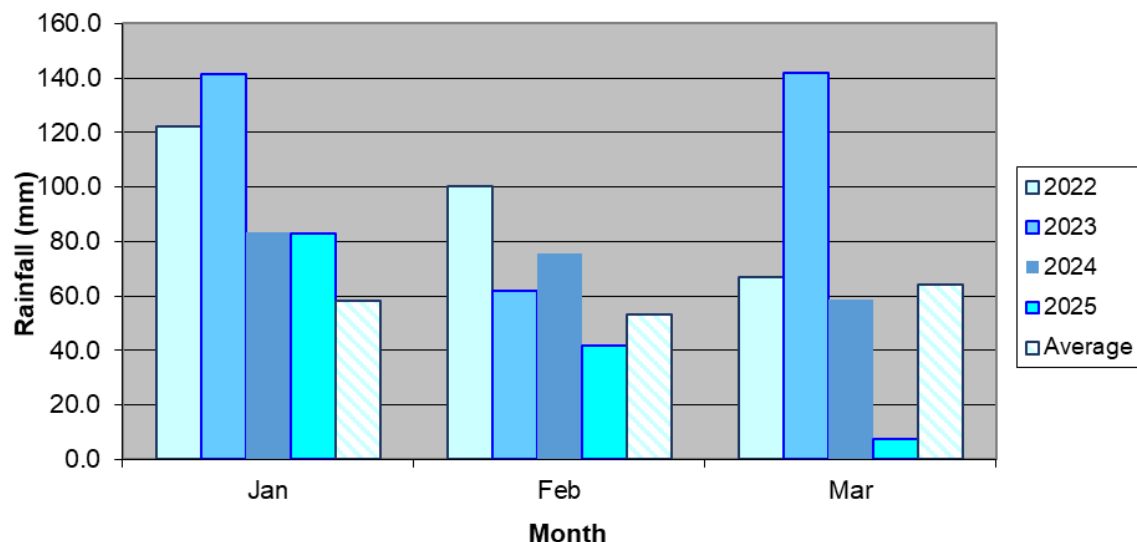
One of the important international bird organisations BirdLife International has recently opened website which provides conservation data for over 11,000 species of birds. BirdLife's DataZone can be found at <https://datazone.birdlife.org/> (you may have to copy and paste this link).

UPCOMING EVENTS

THURSDAY BIRD COUNT

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

2025 First Quarter Rainfall



The 2025 bars show the start of the driest spring since records began. As shown above, March only had 7.3mm of rain, just 15% of average, April was a little better with 22.4mm (48% of average) and May is shaping up to have very little rain. The scrape has completely dried out much earlier than ever before!

Surveys and Sightings

BIRD COUNT RESULTS

2025 to 30 April

A total of 74 species have been recorded to the end of April, remaining below average. Interesting species have been **Little Grebes** and **Little Egrets** seen on several occasions. A pair of **Shoveler** stayed for a couple of weeks in February. **Kestrels** are now uncommon on the meadows but have been recorded twice so far. Four **Lapwing** landed on the scrape at the very end of the period. Mostly we record them flying over. **Common Snipe** have been hard to find but a **Curlew** on 24 April was our first record since 2019. The first **Cuckoo** was heard on the evening of 21 April and there have been up to two pairs present. **House Martin** and **Swallow**

numbers have been low and a single **Stonechat** record for the spring was disappointing. Several **Rooks** have been seen, they are surprisingly scarce over the meadows given that there is a rookery at Pinvin. Encouragingly, **Linnet** numbers are good this year.

BUTTERFLIES

Survey work is proceeding with 10 butterfly species recorded to date.



Hairy Dragonfly, the first on for Avon Meadows. Note the shape of the bluish spots on the abdomen and the very long claspers at the end of the abdomen.

Photograph: Roger Mason

DRAGONFLIES

Most dragonflies emerge a bit later but the recent warm weather has brought out 5 species so far. A female Scarce Chaser on 23 May was a new early record. However, the most exciting find was a Hairy Chaser photographed on 9 May which is a new species for Avon Meadows. This was, until recently, a scarce species across the country but recently it has been extending its range. It is the first of the hawkers dragonflies to emerge. The hair that gives it its name is found on the thorax but can be tricky to see in the field.

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!