



NEWSLETTER

Careful what you wish for! After the summer drought, the pool has now been filled with floodwater from the river. This is the highest level since last winter. *Photo: Richard Stott*

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From the Chairman

Bob Gillmor: It is with considerable personal sadness that I have to announce the passing of Bob Gillmor after a short illness.

Bob was a tower of strength in the voluntary world with much of his effort directed towards wildlife conservation. He was a Council Member of the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, a trustee of the Vale Landscape Trust and a founding trustee Friends of Avon Meadows. Additionally, he worked on Pershore Town Council during which time he served as Mayor of Pershore. As if this were not enough, he was an Observer for the Institute of Advanced Motorists coaching candidates for their Advanced Driving Test.

Bob was utterly dependable, if he said he would do something you could consider it done, and done well. He was a good friend to all those who know him. Recently he showed terrific courage when told he was facing a life-limiting illness. The speed of his passing was quite unexpected, he was emailing me about handing over as treasurer on the evening before he died.

His friendly and competent presence will be sorely missed by many people.

Bird feeding dangers: Feeding birds in your garden poses serious hazards to birds. See the Science Section on p.3.

Members' Photographs

A lovely photograph of a magnificent Red Kite taken over Avon Meadows recently.

Photo: Judith Fulton.

In Elizabethan times Red Kites were numerous, scavenging the middens outside towns and villages. They were hunted to near extinction in the British Isles. In the 1950's the nearest place to see the few remaining birds was Tregaron bog in mid-Wales.

In the 1990's a successful reintroduction took place in the Chilterns. Today, they breed on Bredon Hill and are becoming a regular visitor over Avon Meadows.

(see Sightings section below)





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The scrape is now full of water thanks to the flood. It always dries out in the summer so we need a flood to reintroduce fish to the scrape which in turn will attract kingfishers.

Photo: Richard Stott

Progress on the Wetland

WYCHAVON'S ACTIVITIES

Contractors have finished cutting two areas of the reedbeds as part of a 5-year reed cutting schedule. This time the work included clearing the built-up mass of dead reeds, a necessary measure to keep the reedbeds in good heart. They did an excellent job in a short time which minimises disturbance.

A similar programme is being planned to control the willows. If left they would take over and we would just have a willow forest.

Two "selfie" posts are to be erected on Avon Meadows. The idea is that members of the public will be able to take photographs with their 'phones of the same view at different times of day and in different seasons.

VOLUNTEERS' ACTIVITIES

New signs provided by WDC have been fitted at the entrances to Avon Meadows. All the signs are now in the attractive new colour scheme.

Pershore Civic Society has kindly donated money for benches on Avon Meadows and this will be used to repair riverside benches which are much in need of some TLC.

Science Section

WHY ARE MOTHS ATTRATED TO LIGHT?

There have been many theories over the years as to why moths come to light. We know they are more strongly attracted to ultra-violet light and not red light. It has been shown that some species use the moon and stars to guide them during long-distance migration. More recently experiments with moths in laboratory situations where light can be controlled and the behaviour photographed.

The Thursday bird count continues, rain or shine and thankyou very much for the hardy volunteers that attend and make the effort successful.

David Evans has now taken over the water testing project and the results of the whole project to date will be published in a later Newsletter.

This experiment showed that moths tend to turn their backs to natural light whereas in the vicinity of artificial lights this behaviour causes them to become "trapped" and they circle round and round the light source.

[Fabian, S.T., Sondhi, Y., Allen, P.E. *et al.* Why flying insects gather at artificial light. *Nature Communications* **15**, 689 (2024).

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-024-44785-3>]



↑ Cleared within a week using lots of machines!
 Photograph: Graham Avison

↑ The areas at the south end of the main pool cleared. The reeds will have returned with a year but no dead reed material.
 Photograph: Graham Avison



↑ A female (grey back) Pied Wagtail.
 Photo: Judith Fulton



↑ A Grey Heron looking for frogs.
 Photo: Roger Mason



↑ A Common Buzzard: no longer our commonest raptor.
 Photo: Roger Mason

Science Section (continued)

SHOULD WE FEED BIRDS???

We were looking for a Christmas present for a friend who wanted a bird feeder. Not a controversial item you would have thought. We checked the RSPB website and found it no longer sells bird tables as they are proven to be a source of serious infection for birds! Indeed it does not recommend using them!!! This particularly applies to flat feeding stations such as bird tables, window feeders and other tray-type feeders.

As reported in a previous issue part of the problem is the avian disease, *trichomonosis*. This is a ghastly disease, spread by a parasite, which causes restriction of the throat leading to starvation and death. It particularly effects Greenfinches and

Chaffinches. What to do? It is acceptable to use bird feeders. By this they mean the tubular feeders of clear plastic or wire mesh with simple perches for the birds.

Hygiene is very important. Feeders and water baths should be cleaned at least weekly, more often if a lot of birds use your feeders. Avoid overfilling feeders and do not allow food to remain in feeders for more than a week.

If you see sick birds, stop feeding for 2-4 weeks until you do not see sick birds any more. Then restart feeding slowly.

[The Editor. 2026. *The RSPB Magazine—Winter/Spring 2026*. RSPB. p.36.]

Surveys and Sightings

YOUR RECORDS!

We regularly report that volunteers record and report many sightings. But in this sense you too are all volunteers! We are really interested to hear of your sightings, particularly if they are unusual.

Unusual can include early sightings of butterflies or large numbers of frogs for example.

Photographs are not essential but can enhance a record or help with identification if this is uncertain. Please let us know of things you see!

BIRD RECORDS

For the last 13 years we have been submitting our records to the BTO's Bird Track scheme which logs sighting from all over the country. In 2025 we submitted 52 records comprising 2079 records covering 81 species.

STARLING MURMURATIONS

Many of you will have seen this year's murmuration on our Facebook page, do look if you missed it. At the end of January this year, some 4000 Starlings wheeled and swooped over the reedbeds at dusk. We do not know why they pick

UPCOMING EVENTS

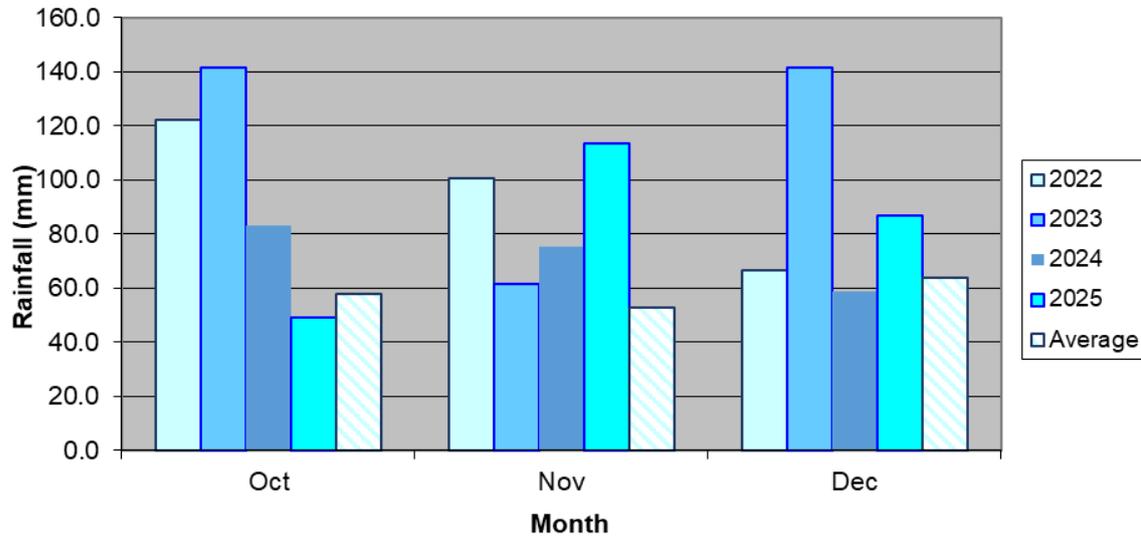
THURSDAY BIRD COUNT

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

WORCESTERSHIRE RECORDERS ANNUAL MEETING

This year the Worcestershire Recorders is holding its Annual Meeting at Lower Smite Farm on Saturday, 21st August 2026 starting at 10:30am. Non-members are very welcome to attend. (for reservation details see opposite).

2025 Fourth Quarter Rainfall



The autumn rainfall was above average bringing the pools back to something like normal with an exceptionally wet November. By contrast the August rainfall was the lowest we have recorded on Avon Meadows. The overall annual rainfall on Avon Meadows for 2025 was 84% of average. Only 2011 had less rainfall than 2025 which was another year when the main pool almost dried up.

Surveys and Sightings (continued)

particular times or particular years. They do seem to like freshly grown reeds, about 1 year old.

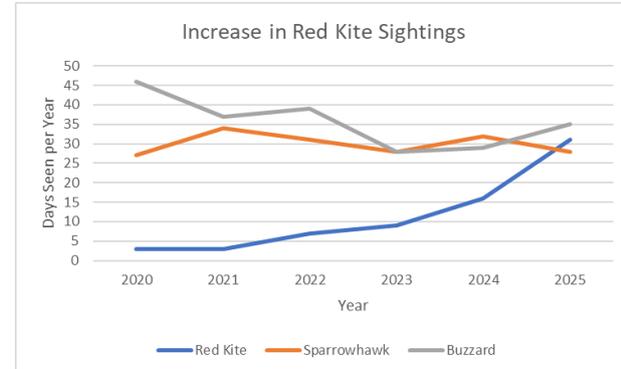
Previously, we have seen significant murmurations of up to 12,000 birds in Jan & Oct 2016, Nov 2017, Oct 2019 and Dec 2020.

Red Kites common!

The graph shows the rapid increase in Red Kite sightings on Avon Meadows compared with other common birds of prey. It seems that local breeding of kites and their habit of gathering over the Throckmorton tip in up to 20 birds.

Birds in 2026 So Far

The species count for this year presently stands at 64 which is a little above average while the total number of bird counted remains about average.



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.

Worcestershire Recorders Annual Meeting

Worcestershire Recorders is an expert group of naturalists who lead in making records of life forms in the county. New members are always welcome to join. You do not have to be a county expert to join!

The Worcestershire Recorders is holding its annual meeting at the Wildlife Trust headquarters at Lower Smite Farm. The theme this year will be 'mammals' and there will be a full day of talks. The keynote speaker is Johnny Birks (County mammal expert)

who will talk about Pine Martins. It promises to be a very interesting day and highly recommended.

Non-members are very welcome. Hot drinks and cakes are available but please bring a packed lunch.

To make your reservation please contact Francesca Beamish at cescabeamish@gmail.com. Note that there is a £15.00 attendance fee payable in advance.

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

Individual subscription £10 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!