



## Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

### Newsletter No.21



Fig. 1 Taken on a dull, windy day at the end of October. Although the surface of the water is smooth it is quite shallow as we await winter rain to raise the level. (R D E Stott)

### Review of our progress

#### HLF Project

The wheelchair access path linking the riverside car park with the boardwalk and the Mayfield Road entrance is substantially complete but there is some remedial work required to the gate and access path to it at the Mayfield Road entrance which is in hand.

#### Site Management

Work has been carried out to clear some of the growth from the islands on the new wader scrape. The islands need to be kept fairly clear to tempt water birds to stay by not providing hiding places for predators.

Reed cutting of two further sections, that have not been cut before, is due to start before the end of the year. This is a big job which is carried out entirely by volunteers. Anyone that can give some time to help us will be extremely welcome!!!

It is that time again when a flock of sheep is to be introduced to graze. The purpose of this is in part to make good use of the grazing but also to reduce the fertility of the grassland (sheep consume more than they leave behind!) to improve the chances of wild flowers flourishing allowing them to out-compete the grasses.

Bird screen is now structurally complete. It was designed and erected by the Friends of Avon Meadows but the materials were bought thanks to a Wychavon Community Grant and we are very grateful to Wychavon for this grant.



Fig. 2 The new bird screen is complete except for its 'living roof'. (K Pomfret)

The bird screen does provide some modest shelter from the weather if anyone is caught out by a sudden shower.

**Dog Fouling:** We continue to spray biodegradable paint on dog mess to help people avoid it. The impression is that this problem has got worse in recent months and we do ask people who walk their dogs on the Wetland to please respect other users of the area. It is frustrating to realise that it is only a very small number of inconsiderate people who leave their dog's mess behind I must continue to thank the majority of people who walk their dogs on the Wetland for their consideration in picking up any mess their dog makes.

## **Events**

**River Festival:** The Friends of Avon Meadows joined Avon Navigation Trust and the Riverside Youth Centre to celebrate the Pershore River Festival with the theme of the event being linking the historic town and river. We were duly invaded by Vikings, who arrived in a stunning replica longboat, to be greeted most cordially by the Mayor of Pershore.

The living history exhibition of Viking and Saxon life proved very popular, with members of the public able to try on chain mail suits, helmets and heft swords, as well as seeing how leather, horn and wood were worked to create buttons, belts and jewellery items.



**Fig. 3 The ducks do not seem to mind the ferocious Vikings! (L Etheridge)**

Of course, no Viking invasion would be complete without a battle and at 3pm the clash of sword and shield began, in spite of the sweltering heat.

We had to join in the fun, making Odin helmets and rune bracelets and as the day drew to a close, the sight of a Viking longboat sailing upstream past Avon Meadows is one that I will remember for quite some time.

**Glow worms:** Members of the Friends also paid a night-time trip to Droitwich Community Woods to hunt for glow worms. We joined volunteers and staff from Worcestershire Wildlife Trust to search out these unusual insects. We were a little down-hearted at first, with nothing glimmering in the long grass, but as true darkness fell amazing points of eerie green light shone from the embankments, looking for all the world like green LED's rather than anything out of nature.

In the end, we counted 11 glowing females, including one who had decided that beneath the underpass was a good idea! Impossible to photograph well, you'll just have to take our word for it.

## **Surveys & Sightings**

We are keeping the website 'Sightings' page up to date with sightings on the Wetland so if you want to find out quickly what has been seen check there.

### Birds

The last **Swifts** were seen on 5 Aug but **Meadow Pipits** arrived on 12 Sep along with **Common Snipe** a few days later, although these first snipe have moved on. It is pleasing to report that both a **Water Rail** and a **Common Stonechat** have returned, hopefully for the whole winter. A **Green Sandpiper** was heard arriving on the main pool after dark on a moth night on 7 Aug. A **Little Egret** flew over the main pool on 17 Sep. At least 3 **Cetti's Warblers** are singing now. A **Common Greenshank** stayed for about 24 hours on 19 Sep around the new scrape. **Bullfinches** are not common on the Wetland but several were recorded eating berries during September. **Common Teal** returned to the main pool on 17 Sep. Single **Willow Warblers** were recorded on passage in Sep, a **Red Kite** flew over on 13 Oct and a **Barn Owl** was flushed from one of our large nest boxes on the same day. Amazingly our second **Northern Wheatear** was seen and photographed on 26 October!



Fig. 4 A young female Northern Wheatear photographed on the Wetland on 26 Oct 15. (S Bradstock)

Look out for the murmurations of **Starlings** in November which is the time they appeared over the reed beds in the evening last year.

Recent news on World bird issues gives the names of four species that occasionally use our Wetlands as 'Near Threatened' with extinction; these are Northern Lapwing, Eurasian Curlew, Eurasian Oystercatcher and Black-tailed Godwit. In addition two species have been added to the European Species Action Plan, Common Snipe and Common Redshank. This Action Plan is aimed at protecting the breeding sites of these species. As I write the Wetland provides a safe haven for these species occasionally but who knows what the new scrape will attract. All the above species, except the snipe and godwit, breed in Worcestershire at present.

### Butterflies

The end of the butterfly monitoring season arrived with overall butterfly numbers down by 24% on last year presumably due to cool, wet weather occurring at the wrong time. However this was offset by our first record for **Clouded Yellow** on 7 Sep followed by several more 10 days later. These records kept our total species count up to a respectable 20 species recorded throughout the summer. A **Painted Lady** was recorded on 27 October, a new (very) late record for us (Sarah's photograph is on her blog, Coot's Eye View).



Fig. 5 Clouded Yellow butterfly photographed on 17 Sep 15. (R D E Stott)

### Dragonflies

Dragonflies were affected even more than butterflies as they do not like windy conditions as

well as the cooler periods resulting in numbers being down by 66% on 2014 which was a particularly good year. The species count of 18 was near the average for the Wetland.

### **Moths**

Unlike the other insect groups moths do not seem to have been affected by the summer weather and counts have been very good with nightly moth counts up by 129% and the annual species count (to date) up by 78%. It should be noted that these statistics are based on only 2 years' data and will be less dramatic in years to come.

The last moth night of the year took place on 30 Oct and attracted 5 new species which were **Garden Rose Tortrix** (a micro moth), **Green-brindled Crescent**, **The Brick**, **Red-line Quaker** and **Beaded Crescent**. Photographs of many of these can be seen on <https://picasaweb.google.com/Synallaxis/FoAMMothGroup2015> . It is worth pointing out that all moths trapped are carefully released back onto the Wetland. New species added this year included 44 macro moths and 25 micro moths bringing the current Wetland total to 334 species.

### **Mammals - Bats**

Over recent weeks Liz has organised a comprehensive bat survey which has been carried out using sophisticated professional recording equipment. This has turned up some exciting results; first and foremost there is a lot of bat activity over the Wetlands. It confirms that species previously recorded are indeed regular users of the area and 2 new species (and maybe more!) have been added to our list bringing our total bat species recorded to 8 (out of 18 UK species). The new species for us are **Natterer's Bat** and **Nathusius' Pipestrelle**. This last species is widespread in the UK but rare none the less. In much of Europe it is migratory although its status in the UK is not certain but it seems to be most numerous in September.

### **Other Species**

On 28 Sep a dead **Water Shrew** was found on the path near the new bird screen. This is an uncommonly recorded species in Worcestershire.

Andrew Conway has been methodically seeking new species of wild plants and flowers and has added a number to our list over the summer, the species total now stands at 226.

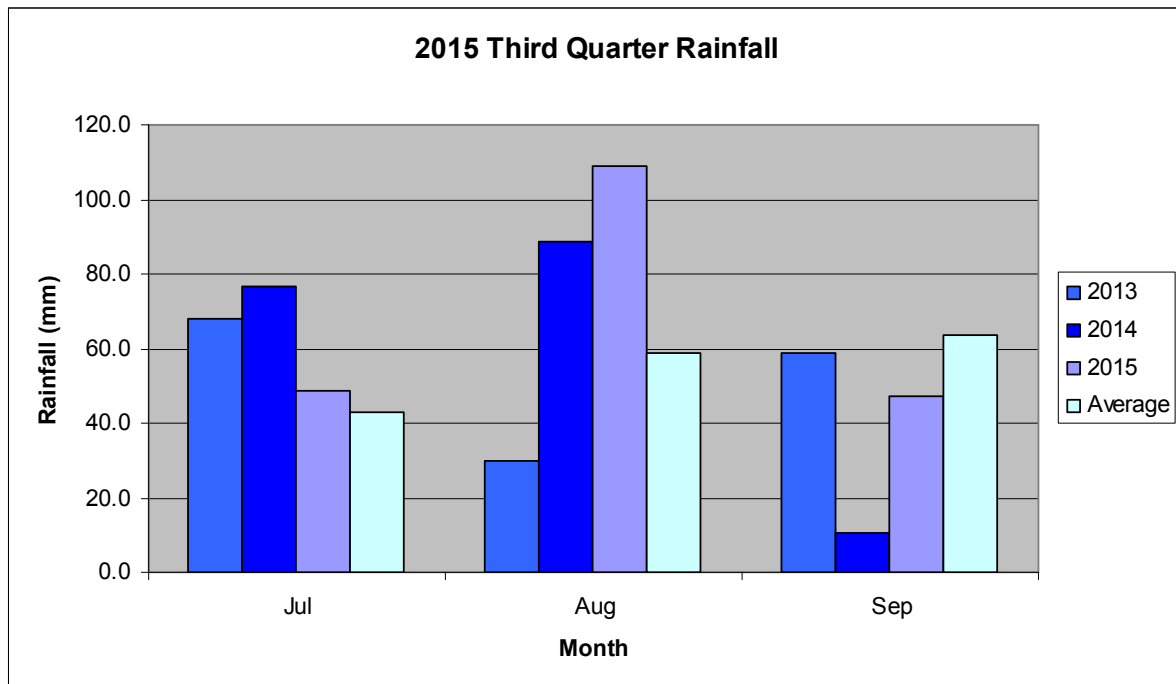
### **How you can help us**

Work Parties - see Diary Dates below. Please come along they, are good fun!

Interesting sightings - Take a picture. Send it to Liz, Bob or Richard with date, time and approximate location.

Newsletter Circulation - know anyone who would like one? Let Richard have their eMail address.

## Water Levels



As you can see July and September have had about average rainfall and August was very wet (185% of average). Even so water levels have not recovered since last winter in spite of this. The new wader scrape in particular needs more water in order to attract birds.

## Diary Dates

Not quite so many activities in winter but those for the next few months are set out below and we will be delighted to see you there at any or all of them!

Date	Activity	Date	Activity
Sat 7 Nov	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Thu 17 Dec	Committee Meeting 14h30-16h30
Sat 5 Dec	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sat 9 Jan	Work Party 10h00-13h00

Work parties are a valuable part of our activities on site and start at **10:00am** from the **Mayfield Road** car park. It is a good idea let Ken know if you can come (KenPomfret@btinternet.com) a few days before (in case there are last minute changes) but do not worry if you cannot, just turn up at the car park at the far end of Cherry Orchard at 10:00am on the appointed day.

## Officers of the Committee

Chairman - Richard Stott richarddestott@gmail.com  
 Treasurer - Bob Gillmor avon.meadows@btinternet.com  
 Secretary - Val Wood val@wood20.plus.com  
 Work Parties - Ken Pomfret KenPomfret@btinternet.com

## **Website**

<http://www.avonmeadows.org.uk/>. We are working hard to keep the site up to date and a new "Sightings" page has been set up. The Coots Eye View blog: <http://cootseyeview.blogspot.co.uk/> is another way of finding out what is going on.

## **Contacts**

If you would like any more information about volunteering contact either an officer of the Committee directly by eMail or by telephone to;

Mr Jim Burgin, Wychavon District Council.

Tel: 01386 565366

eMail: [jim.burgin@wychavon.gov.uk](mailto:jim.burgin@wychavon.gov.uk)

Ms Liz Etheridge, Wetlands for All Project Officer

Tel: 01386 565366

eMail: [liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk](mailto:liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk)

I hope you enjoy the autumn on the Wetland!

Richard Stott

NOTE: If you would like to become a Supporting Member an application form is on the next page!

Please print off this form and return it, together with your cheque to:

Mr R J Gillmor  
20 Loughmill Road  
PERSHORE  
Worcestershire, WR10 1QB



### Supporting Friend Application/Renewal Form

New member ☐ Renewing member ☐

Family subscription £10 per annum ☐ Individual subscription £5 per annum ☐

FULL NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ TITLE (Mr, Mrs, Ms): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ POST CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

eMail: \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT PAID: £ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheques payable to **Friends of Avon Meadows**

Please print off this form and return it, together with your cheque to:

Mr R J Gillmor  
20 Loughmill Road  
PERSHORE  
Worcestershire  
WR10 1QB

Alternatively you can transfer the funds electronically to the FoAM bank account:

Sort Code: 40-36-46  
Account Number: 60018732

If you do electronically transfer money **please confirm by eMail** to [avon.meadows@btinternet.com](mailto:avon.meadows@btinternet.com) giving your name and the amount so that receipts can be cross checked.