



Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows



The duckweed is still with us as the trees begin to turn for autumn.

Photo: Richard Stott

Newsletter No: 29

October 2017

Progress on the Wetland

Site Management

Recent visitors to the Wetland will have noticed the sheep busy grazing as part of the Grassland Enhancement Project. They will be with us until December. Work on the project will continue by sowing wild flower seed over the middle meadow during the winter.

Volunteers have cleared the scrape to encourage wintering birds. This involves clearing and burning all the summer growth once the bird breeding season is over. Our plan this winter is to clear some of the islands altogether and put down a membrane to control plant growth with pebbles on top in the hope of encouraging Little Ringed Plover and other wading birds.

The duck weed infestation has come as a surprise to us as it has never been so extensive in previous years. While we do not want to get rid of it altogether (it is valuable food for wildfowl) we do want to limit its extent and are looking into safe and effective means of doing so..

Reed cutting in areas E & G is due to start (see photograph on p.3) and will continue for the next couple of months. These areas are divided by a number of small channels making it more difficult to get people and machinery into position safely. We will also be completing the Sand Martin bank in preparation for their return next spring.

None of this happens by accident of course and Liz Etheridge and Ken Pomfret deserve our thanks for all the hard work they put in planning and organising this work.

Organisation

As of 2 August 2017 the Friends of Avon Meadows is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (see header). Many thanks to Bob Gillmor for steering us through the formalities of the application process.

Dramatic Moths



A head-on shot of a Canary-shouldered Thorn moth taken on Avon Meadows on 8 September. See p.3 for Moth Review for 2017.

Photo: Richard Stott

Funding

FSC Training

The Field Studies Council has received a grant to train people in wildlife monitoring. It is focusing mainly, but not exclusively, on less usual species groups (e.g. spiders). FoAM members would be eligible to join courses as they become available.

At this stage we are looking for names of anyone interested in attending a course and the creatures they would be interested in recording. Please get in touch if you might be interested.

We would be particularly interested if anyone was interested in studying spiders!!! This is one group that has had very little attention on Avon Meadows so far.

Surveys and Sightings

BirdLife International is the main organisation setting out to protect all bird species in the world. For the most part it focusses on species that are endangered on a worldwide basis but its guidelines can be used anywhere.

First, it is important to recognise that the population of a particular species is falling. Second, having realised that working out really quickly why that is happening.

The Friends of Avon Meadows cannot save the planet. We can do our bit by recording our wildlife and habitat restoration which are important steps in doing just that. We are grateful to our recorders for all species on the Wetland for their work in this area.

BIRDS

Status to Date

The year total remains at 96 bird species.

Weekly Bird Count

The Bird Group's average Thursday morning count so far in 2017 has dropped to 42 species as breeding birds move off and we await the arrival of the winter visitors. There have been 44 bird counts in 2017 and we have logged 16,300 birds which is slightly above our average.

Some birds are with us all year round which include Cetti's Warblers and Water Rails. Although difficult species to see they have distinctive calls that reveal their presence. Recent counts indicate that there are at least 2 Cetti's Warblers on Avon Meadows and 6 Water Rails.

Reports have come in recently that Starlings are beginning to gather in the evening from about 4:00pm GMT. At present the number involved is relatively small, 400-2000, and there is not much of a spectacle as the birds are not gathering in a mass above the reedbeds before dropping down to roost. Watch the 'Recent Sightings' section of the website for updates on murmurations.

Winter Arrivals

The first of our winter visitors to arrive were Meadow Pipits on 13 Sep. Since then a Common Snipe has made a brief appearance; the ground is too hard for them to stay at present as they need to probe the soil for food. Recently two Common Stonechats have arrived to add a bit of colour. A single Redwing was seen flying over on 17 Oct and the first flocks turned up on 26 Oct coming from Scandinavia, later than usual due to the strong SW winds of previous weeks. The first Fieldfares arrived during a work party on 28 Oct.

Susan Hill's nice photograph was incorrectly attributed in the last issue. I apologise for that. Ed.



Breeding Species at Risk

A recent report in the journal British Birds reported on the breeding birds in the UK that are at risk of dying out as breeding species. The table below, extracted from that study, shows species that are at risk which breed or use Avon Meadows in summer. There are some surprises!

Although internationally recognised criteria were used to create the table it will not surprise anyone to learn that species at risk have either suffered recent population declines, only have a very small breeding population or only breed in a small area.

How does this affect us? Our regular Thursday bird surveys might seem to be a very simple thing to do but we have been running them since 2011 and the accumulated data can begin to provide powerful evidence as to how these species are doing in our area.

It is worth noting that two uncommon species we believe are breeding on Avon Meadows, the Water Rail

Endangered
Common Swift
Greenfinch
Vulnerable
Common Cuckoo
Common Kestrel
House Martin
Common Starling
Mistle Thrush
Near Threatened
Great Cormorant
Grey Heron
Eurasian Sparrowhawk
Common Coot
Collared Dove
Grey Wagtail
Linnet

and Cetti's Warbler, do not have UK populations that are large enough to provide statistically significant results for this study! However the breeding performances of Water Rail and Cetti's Warblers have increased considerably on Avon Meadows. It is worth noting that both are species that have arrived since the establishment of the reed beds.

Looking at our data over the last 7 years, Collared Doves have increased slightly but the big loser is the House Martin where figures have roughly halved. Starlings have dropped slightly, all others are roughly the same.

All we can do is to keep monitoring birds and keep an eye particularly on species that are listed above.

BUMBLEBEES

Jeanne Roberts carried out our first bumblebee survey through the summer with great success establishing a valuable baseline for further work. Statistics do not mean too much at present as we have no previous years to compare them with. We have recorded 11 species of bumblebee

She did find two new bee species for the Wetland, a Vestal Bumblebee and Ashy Mining Bee (photograph) which were plentiful in May.



It is amazing what you can find with enthusiasm and knowledge.

Photo: Jeanne Roberts



An aerial photograph of the Wetland showing the reed areas. Areas to be cut over the winter this winter are E and G.

MOTH REVIEW

We stop moth trapping in September as the nights get cooler and the moths fewer. The total moth species count at the end of September 2017 stands at 364 species of which 205

are so-called macro-moths and 159 micro-moths.

Thus ends the 4th year of our moth recording. We plan fortnightly visits from April to September but weather and availability of people meant we only managed 6 visits this year. However, for the first time we had moths that were seen on all 6 visits. These were; Brimstone, Flame Shoulder and Large Yellow Underwing.

We averaged 133 moths per visit, our best year to date. added 7 species of macro-moth and 13 species of micro-moth to the Avon Meadows list. The total number species recorded during the year was 153 (best year was 2015—210 species).

BUTTERFLY REVIEW

Many thanks to Kirstie Chippendale to continue to collect our butterfly data for the 7th year. This has been an average year for butterflies, better than 2015 and 2016 (which was very poor) but not our best year which was 2013. 19 species were recorded during the year which is the same as the past 3 years so very much average.

DRAGONFLY REVIEW

As with butterflies this has been an average year for dragonflies but many thanks to Paul Jenkins for undertaking our transect work, otherwise how would we know? It is the 5th year for 'dragons' and has been our best year since the exceptional year of 2014. 14 species were recorded during the year which is exactly on average!



Not all micro-moths are dull brown! This Beautiful Chinamark flew into our trap on 25 August and was one of our 13 new species of micro-moth. *Photo: Richard Stott*

Tewkesbury Nature Reserve

The Tewkesbury NR is about a mile from J9 of the M5 situated beside the A38 as it by-passes the town. There is a pub on the opposite side of the road where it is possible to park. On the OS map it is labelled Priors Park (SO899320).

It is a little larger than Avon Meadows at 44 ha but at very roughly the same stage of development and managed in a similar manner.

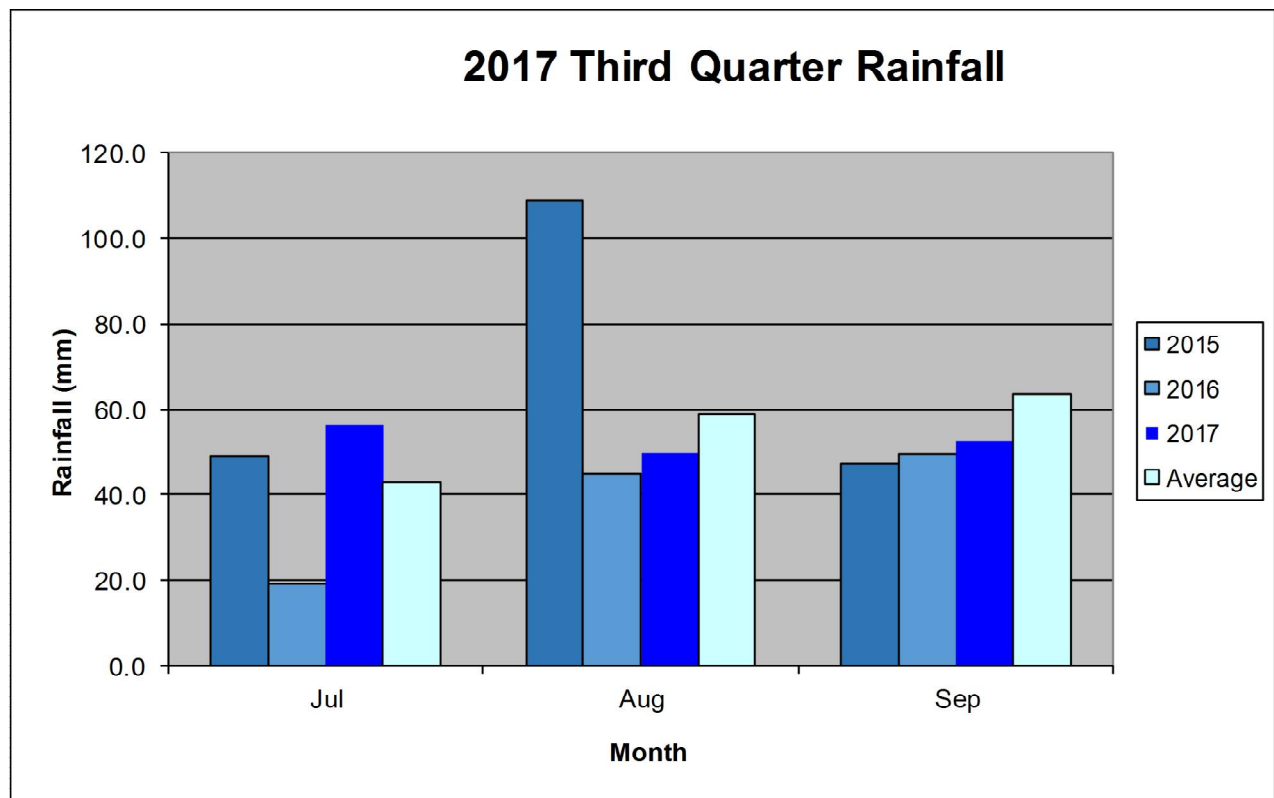
Committee members of both reserves visit one another from time to time so see how we are all getting on and to exchange ideas. As with Avon Meadows it is always open and access is free.



Visitors to Tewkesbury NR on 3 Oct.

Photo: V Wood.

Water Levels



Unlike the previous quarter the rainfall over the third 3 months of this year has remained close to average. As usual, the scrape has dried out completely and the water table, as measured by our 10 dipwells, is low, >500mm below ground level.

How you can help us

Work Parties - see Diary Dates below. Please come along they, are good fun! Cheaper than a gym subscription!

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 name and eMail address.

Diary Dates

Date	Activity	Date	Activity
Sat 4 Nov 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sat 2 Dec 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00
Sat 11 Nov 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Thu 7 Dec 17	Hedge Laying Course
Sat 18 Nov 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Fri 8 Dec 17	Hedge Laying Course
Sat 25 Nov 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sat 9 Dec 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00
Tue 28 Nov 17	Committee Meeting 14h30-16h30	Sat 16 Dec 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00

* Will be cancelled if raining. Work parties are a valuable part of our activities on site and start at **10:00am** from the HQ just inside the main gate. Without your help we cannot maintain the area properly. It is a good idea to 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.

Administration

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/>. The site will be kept current, check here first to see what is happening!

Coots Eye View blog: <http://cootseyeview.blogspot.co.uk/> is another way of finding out what is going on.

The Website holds a number of other interesting and useful links which are worth exploring.

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

Ms Liz Etheridge, Wetlands for All Project Officer
Tel: 01386 565366
eMail: liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk

(note that Liz is only working part-time on Avon Meadows and so may not be always able to answer the telephone)

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 Friends of Avon Meadows** bank account:

Sort Code: 77-68-78

Account Number: 01118468

IMPORTANT! If you do electronically transfer money **please confirm by eMail** to avon.meadows@btinternet.com giving your name and the amount so that receipts can be cross checked.