



**Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows**



Early on a summer morning over the main pool. Three months makes a big difference, there is little bird sound now. The pool level is low with mud showing in front of the reeds in places. The ducks can't eat the duckweed fast enough!

*Photo: Richard Stott*

**Newsletter No: 40**

**July 2020**

**COVID-19 Precautions**

A subject we have all heard too much about recently. However, in spite of Government relaxations, the virus is still with us and as far as Avon Meadows is concerned nothing has changed.

Please remember to maintain 2 metres (6 feet) social distancing from everyone not living with you and wash your hands as soon as you get back home.

*The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.* (1st Baron Courtney)

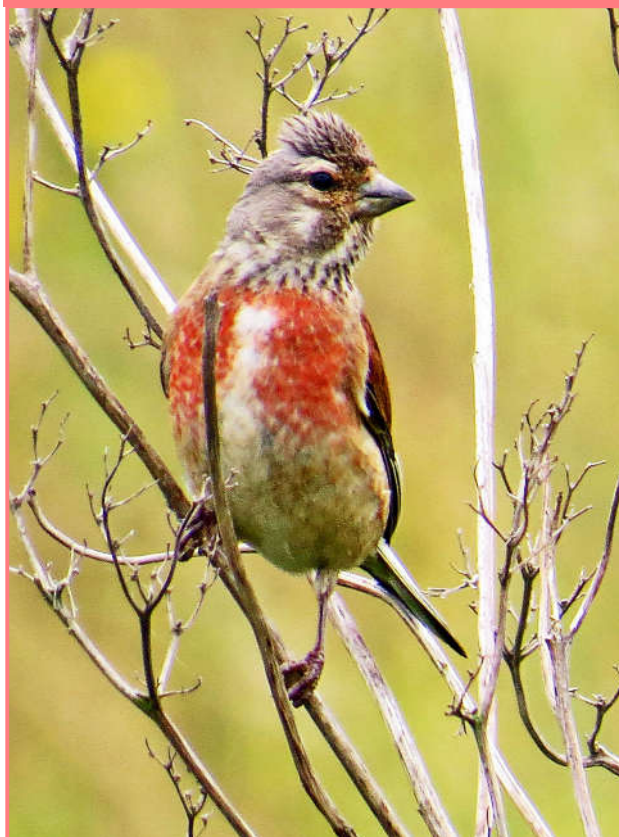
**Progress on the Wetland**

Avon Meadows has received many more visitors over the last 3 months and it is pleasing to know that more people have discovered for themselves what a wonderful facility we have. All visitors are to be congratulated on maintaining social distancing and generally showing consideration for others.

Those who have visited recently will have seen that work on securing the high-pressure gas main has been completed and all the work took place on the opposite bank of the river from Avon Meadows (photograph on p.2). We are thankful that the work has been completed without any construction work on Avon Meadows.

A number of the paths had become rather overgrown. The Friends of Avon Meadows volunteers have not been able to carry out their normal work due to the problems with COVID-19. The good news is that our contractor has cleared some of the most affected paths as part of his work on site.

**Member's Photographs**



**A wonderful male Common Linnet that had been showing well in early July.**

*Photo: Craig Wright*



**Now completed, but work in progress stabilising the river bank where the high-pressure gas main crosses the river.**

*Photo: Richard Stott*

Work has almost finished re-laying the main path and extending it up to the pavement beside Cherry Orchard house for the convenience of wheelchair users. The original path had settled so that puddles collected and it is hoped that the new surface will cure this.

The wooden arch at the entrance to the boardwalk which had floated up during the floods has been reset so wheelchair access is now possible again.

Work will start soon on clearing the pond-dipping pool once the birds have finished nesting. After that the new pond dipping platform will be built which has been made possible by generous funding from a number of local organisations . The pool itself is presently choked with reeds so clearance will be an occasional requirement, this time after 11 years!

The annual hay cut was taken on 28 July this year hoping for dry weather for it to be dried, collected and baled.



**Socially distanced bird watching amidst lush reeds.**

*Photo: Janet Stott ARPS*

## Surveys and Sightings

**NOTE: No Government guidelines have been breached in collecting the survey information.**

### BIRDS

#### Weekly Bird Count

The hot May seemed to suit the breeding birds and there have been good numbers of birds about. Oddly the variety of species recorded has been fewer than expected. As the bird breeding season comes to a close our species count for the year remains stuck on 94 species.

This may in part be due to the fact that the hot weather in May caused the scrape to dry out so a valuable wetland habitat was too dry to attract water birds thus cutting of a group of birds that usually lift our numbers.

It has been pleasing to note that our coronavirus regime for bird recording does seem to pick up all bird species present at a given time. This is only possible because of a group of dedicated bird watchers so many thanks to them.

#### Interesting or Unusual Species

A sighting of two juveniles confirmed that one or possibly two pairs of Grasshopper Warbler have bred in the reed beds on Avon Meadows this year. With such skulkers as Grasshopper Warblers, their call is the give-away; on one occasion an adult was seen carrying food, a sure sign it was feeding young and finding some young birds recently is the icing on the cake. All the more remarkable as this species had only been seen on Avon Meadows on 2 previous occasions!

#### New for the year

Once again, another 3 months have passed without any completely new birds for Avon Meadows. This is not really surprising for, as our list gets longer (now 130 species), completely new birds will inevitably be less common species.

There are good numbers of birds about although there is a distinct lack of variety compared with previous years. We have had 8 new records for 2020 since the last Newsletter. Many of these are regular summer visitors; Common Tern, Eurasian Hobby, Lesser Whitethroat, Garden Warbler, Whinchat and Yellow Wagtail.

#### Breeding

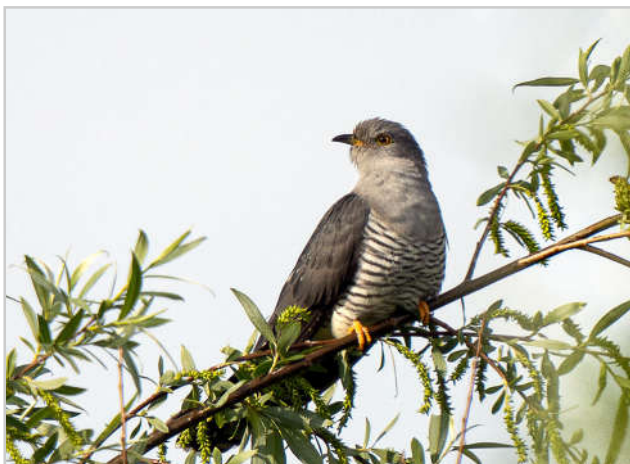
A number of common species have had 2 broods this year, for example, Mallard and Moorhen.

The Grasshopper Warbler lifts our list of species that have bred on Avon Meadows to 52. Other species we believe have bred this year, although no young birds have been seen, are Water Rail and Little Grebe.

Less regular or less common breeders whose young have been seen this year include Common Cuckoo, Cetti's Warbler, Blackcap, Common Whitethroat and Common Linnet.

Perhaps of most interest to many visitors are the cygnets. The pair of Mute Swans that bred near the river hatched 7 cygnets but they soon moved off up-river and recent reports are for a pair of swans with 6 cygnets. The pair that bred beside the main pool were not so successful, having hatched 4 cygnets of which 2 remain alive and well today.





The Common Cuckoos left us relatively early this year, before the end of June. However they did leave some young birds behind and two members patience paid off when they found one being fed by Reed Warblers.

Photo: Jeff Steady LRPS

**BUTTERFLIES**

**Don't forget the Big Butterfly Count!** (before 9 Aug)

The butterfly variety is normal although the dry May perhaps has not helped them as much as some other insect groups. We have not been able to carry out our usual transect this summer so the records are opportunistic! Small Skippers and Small Coppers have been showing well and, as the summer progressed, Marbled Whites have emerged too.



A Small Copper photographed in the South Meadow a few days before the hay cut.

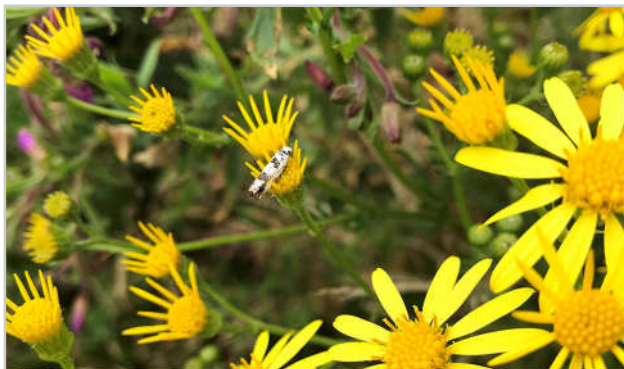
Photo: Richard Stott

**DRAGONFLIES**

The warm weather in May came a bit too early to benefit the dragons and the changeable weather since does not really suit them. There have been good counts and most species that we would expect to show by now have done so.

Sharp-eyed visitors will pick out White-legged Damselflies in the grass tops and Brown Hawkers along Piddle Brook, which unsurprisingly are large and brown!

We have records going back to 2008 and have been carrying out formal transects since 2013. A recent review of this data indicates that the way the habitat on Avon Meadows is developing does not favour dragonflies. They are a species whose larvae develop underwater on the stems of vegetation but need open water too. As water channels become choked with reeds and worse still, dry out, this reduces the places where they might thrive. This is not cause for panic but it will provide us with evidence-based guidance for future management of the site.



Last week one of the Friends of Avon Meadows found this tiny micro-moth on Common Ragwort. Its caterpillars live on the seed heads of the Ragwort. Its name is *Eucosma compoliliana*. It is a common and widespread species but as you can see from the top part of the image it is tiny so it took a sharp pair of eyes to notice it at all! (The graduations in the lower part are millimetres).

Photos: Richard Stott

**MOTHS**

There have been none of our usual moth trapping nights this summer, sadly. It is difficult to maintain social distancing when a number of people are working in the dark enthusiastically checking moths!

Two of our members have used their own traps with encouraging results. The one session that has been carried out so far produced 68 species on the night which included two new species of micro moth, *Pseudagyrotoza conwagana* and *Eucosma hohenwartiana* for Avon Meadows. These are tiny moths only a few millimetres long and are usually identified from photographs taken before they are released.

So far, 388 species of moth have been found on Avon Meadows!



**WILD FLOWERS**

The flooding of late winter and spring and then the heat of May has not suited many of our wild flowers. Even the Creeping Thistle has not flourished as it usually does. Last summer the Yellow-rattle was beginning to really take hold but this year has been reduced to small patches. The Meadow Buttercups put on a good show early on but the Creeping Buttercups are reduced from normal years.

On the positive side, the Common Knapweed has done well from the seed sown two years ago.

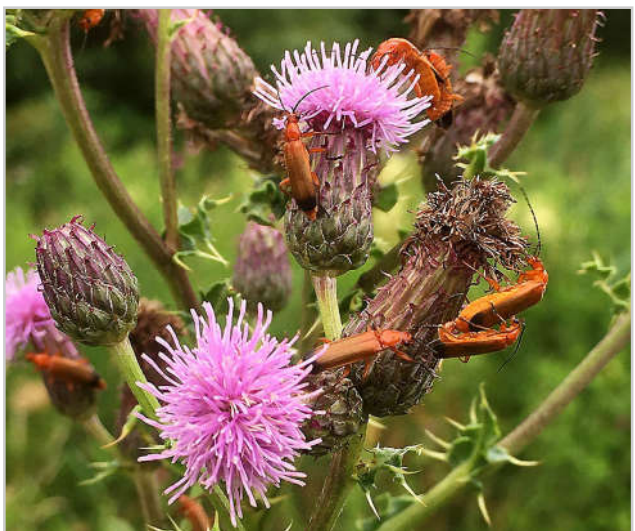
I think we must take heart from the fact that wild flower species have been thriving in this country since the last Ice Age so the odd wet and dry seasons should not upset things hugely. This is another instance where our records do allow us to see changes that occur by comparing in detail what did well and not so well in previous years.



A common butterfly, the Meadow Brown, enjoying taking nectar from one of our new Common Knapweed flowers.



Once the scrape dried out in May, great drifts of Scented Mayweed appeared. Avon Meadows is a constant source of surprises as new things appear from nowhere! Scented Mayweed has been seen before but never in such profusion. *Photo: Richard Stott*



There have been large numbers of Common Soldier Beetles about in the last week, these mating on Creeping Thistle. *Photo: Janet Stott ARPS*

**PLEASE NOTE!**

We are always on the lookout for new and interesting photographs to put in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of it. We are trying to increase the number of photographers who provide photographs for the Newsletter.

You do not need expensive equipment, a number of the images in this issue were taken using a smart phone.

The requirements are that you send the original, unedited, picture file, that it is taken on Avon Meadows and it must be in focus.

Send the date, time and approximate location together with any notes or comments so that we can give context to the image.

Contact: richarddestott@gmail.com



A Slow Worm seen crossing the main path not far from the entrance (now resurfaced). It was making slow progress and had to be ushered into the safety of the grass verge. *Photo: Richard Stott*

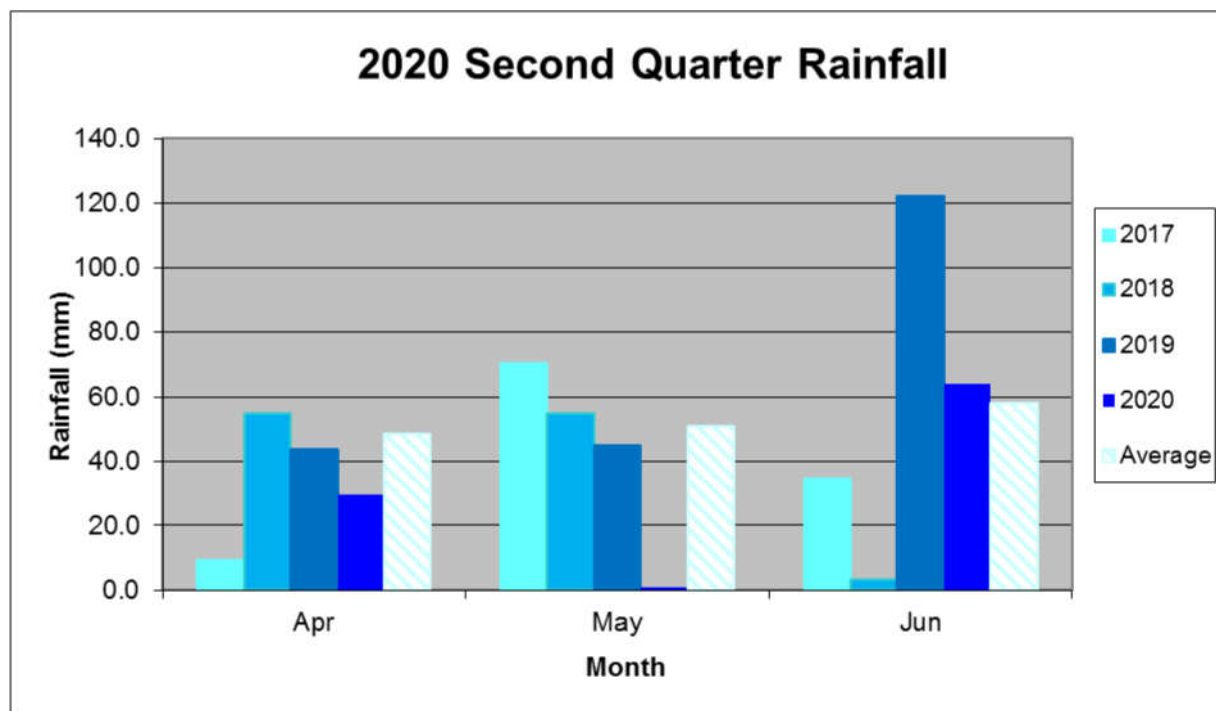
## How you can help us

Work Parties - Suspended due to COVID-19 regulations.

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**.

## Water Levels



At present, the level of the water table, as measured in our dipwells, is at least 90cm below the surface in spite of the June rainfall. This chart is particularly interesting as you can see the enormous variation in rainfall over the last 3 years, particularly in May and June. In 2019 the scrape only dried out for a 2-3 weeks at the end of August to early September, this year it was dry by the end of May with no extraordinary June rainfall to rescue it.

## Administration

### Officers of the CIO 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!

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:

Ms Liz Etheridge, Wychavon District Council.

Tel: 01386 565366

eMail: liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk



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 membership@avonmeadows.org.uk with the details requested below. If you would like to set up a standing order, 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:

Mr. T.C. Hutton, 15 Green Close, Childswickham, Broadway WR12 7JJ

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: \_\_\_\_\_

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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.

