



## Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows



Your correspondent had to paddle out to the limit of his wellies to get this shot on 31 January 2021! Avon Meadows is flooded and the water discoloured by sediment. *Photo: Richard Stott*

Newsletter No: 42

January 2021

### COVID-19 Precautions

One wonders how many more Newsletters will start off with these words of warning. The virus is still very much with us and so please keep 2 metres away from other people when walking on Avon Meadows. Many of the paths are not wide enough for people to pass and keep a 2 metre distance, do show courtesy and step off the path to let others pass.

### Progress on the Wetland

It has been very much stop-go-stop with work parties as the infection rate waxes and wanes. In the event we only had time to clear one area of reeds this winter and have decided not to attempt another as the bird breeding season will be in full swing (over?) by the time the COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed.

We will continue to keep the safe passing places beside the main paths clear. This work will be managed carefully to avoid social distancing issues.

The new dipping platform is not operational yet. Plans are in hand to put gravel down to get to the platform and also on the very muddy section of path from the boardwalk past the dipping platform.

It was mentioned in the last Newsletter that the two footbridges in the North Meadow have been removed. They are to be replaced with culverts which will allow water to flow but present a fairly flat surface to walk over.

Clearly conditions underfoot need to improve before contractor's heavy machinery can be moved onto the site.

### Member's Photographs



A female Pied Wagtail (identified as a female by its grey back) standing on frozen meadows. The range of this species extends across Europe and Asia but this is the race that breeds in the UK and Ireland.

*Photo: Lloyd Evans*

### Bird 'Flu

A few weeks ago there were reports of swans dying from bird 'flu. This was noticed in places where a great many swans gathered together (e.g. Worcester). As you know, we do not have that density of Mute Swans on Avon Meadows and no illness has been noticed so far.

'Our' adult Mute Swans have chased off their cygnets in preparation for their next breeding season. This is quite normal behaviour. At the moment there is no sign of nest building but it is something to look out for.

## NEW! ARTS PROJECT FOR ALL

### Beauty and Utility - Avon Meadows Art Projects

*By Simon Hislam*

The contemporary art charity, Meadow Arts, has commissioned three artists to create projects and artworks at Avon Meadows during 2020/21.

The theme 'beauty and utility' will explore the practical and aesthetic value of the floodplain meadows and wetlands through the changing seasons. The projects will also reflect on the past and present uses of floodplain meadows such as floodwater management, community benefits, wildlife habitats and animal grazing over winter.

The first artist is Andrew Howe. Since December, Andrew has been collecting reeds, plants, berries, soil, and other materials from Avon Meadows. The sourced materials will be used to make paper, natural dyes, and pigments for his artwork.

Andrew is very keen to engage with Friends of Avon Meadows and the wider community via some upcoming online workshops. These events will provide an insight into the artistic process and give the chance for participants to be creative at home (perhaps some light-hearted fun in these challenging times).

If any members would like to be involved, please could you register your interest with Andrew by emailing: [andrew@andrew-howe.com](mailto:andrew@andrew-howe.com) (stating you are a member of FoAM). **Responses must be submitted by 8<sup>th</sup> February.**

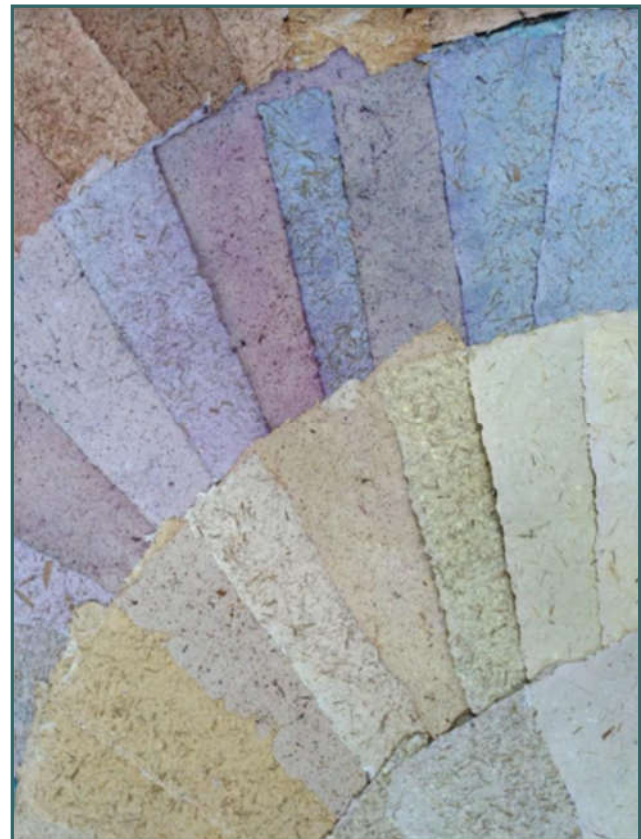
#### SOMETHING NEW TO TRY DURING LOCKDOWN!

As the year progresses (and COVID-19 restrictions are relaxed), it is hoped there will be opportunities for members to attend practical workshops - to meet the artists in person and learn about the various techniques. To keep up to date with the projects and upcoming workshops, please follow the links below:



Leaf ecoprint.

*Photo: Andrew Howe*



Dyed papers made from reeds and silver birch collected on Avon Meadows.

*Photo: Andrew Howe*



Leaf dye print.

*Photo: Andrew Howe*

#### Useful Links

Meadow Arts - <https://www.meadowarts.org/>

Andrew Howe (website) - <http://www.andrew-howe.com/>

Andrew Howe (blog) - <https://andhonenow.wordpress.com/2021/01/19/avon-meadows-the-creative-process-begins/>

## Surveys and Sightings

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

### BIRDS

#### 2020

For humans COVID-19 was and is the overriding problem. For birds the variations in the weather had to be coped with. The total species count for the year was **104** species, which makes 2020 our third best year. There is a dedicated group of expert bird watchers checking the meadows now which results in nothing much getting missed!

As reported in the last Newsletter, our one new species for Avon Meadows in 2020 was a Tree Pipit bringing the total count since we started recording to **131** species.

The overall total number of species of all sorts of living things is found so far on Avon Meadows is **1,133!** If you are interested in insects or spiders there is plenty of opportunity to increase this number!

Generally it was a good breeding season and we know that our Cetti's Warblers and Water Rails all produced young. The most exciting breeding record was of a Common Grasshopper Warbler, a bird that had only been recorded a couple of times before on Avon Meadows.

#### Weekly Bird Count

The average count over the last twelve weeks has been 44 species per week, one better than the previous quarter!

We have recorded 63 species so far this year which at this very early stage makes it the third best year so far.

Recent flooding has had the effect of reducing the variety of species recorded in part because of the change in available habitat and in part because recorders cannot get to where the birds may be!

#### Interesting or Unusual Species

Looking back at the last quarter of 2020, a Green Sandpiper was seen on 5 Nov, Wigeon on 8 & 15 Nov, a flock of Lesser Redpolls on 12 Nov, a Yellowhammer on 22 Nov and a Common Gull on 28 Dec.

Still early days for 2021 but a flock of 70 Lapwing was recorded on New Year's day. Several Blackcaps are overwintering with us, a country-wide phenomenon due to recent milder winters. There have been up to 5 Common Stonechats in and around Avon Meadows. Oddly, there have been very few Coot around, one seen on 21 Jan 21 was the first (and so far only) one recorded since 4 June 2020!

In late December there were Starling murmurations with up to an estimated 10,000 birds over the meadows! Most of the murmurations were less than half that number. It seems that Starlings begin to gather in big numbers over Avon Meadows and are then tempted to go off to the Gwen Finch Reserve near Birlingham! The numbers on successive nights were very variable so persistence was necessary to see a good display!

## Membership Opportunities

### Membership of the Friends of Avon Meadows

*By Tim Hutton*

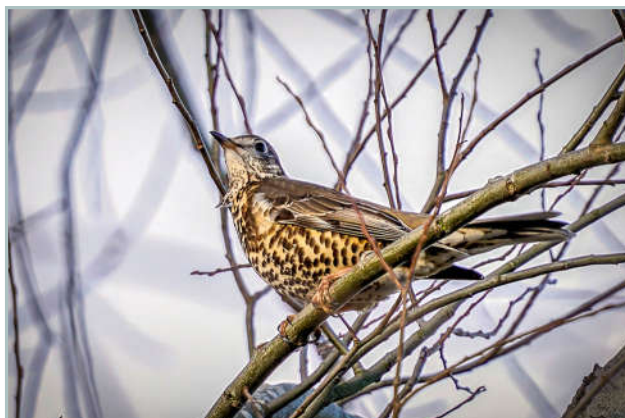
The introduction, last year, of our **Individual Life Membership** category has proved extremely popular, with over a third of our members taking up the opportunity to become Life Members – for a single payment of just **£50**.

In addition, many of those who prefer to pay the annual subscription of £5 individual/£10 family now do so by **Standing Order**. Both options mean that you don't have that age-old headache each year of wondering whether you have paid or not! (It also saves us a bit of admin time and cost.)

If you are not already a **Subscribing Member**, then please consider joining us. It isn't just the money that is important to us, it is the knowledge that we are increasing the support for our valuable community wetland site.

Details of how to pay are attached on the last page of each edition of this Newsletter.

If you currently pay by Standing Order and would like to make a one-off Life Membership payment, don't forget to cancel your Standing Order when you have done so!



**A nice shot of a Mistle Thrush, taken on Thursday 28 Jan 21, which can be an elusive bird on Avon Meadows. The spots on its breast are much rounder than those on the rather similar Song Thrush. Photo: Jeff Steady**

## How you can help us

**Work Parties** - Contact Ken Pomfret if you are able to help. Although there are no work parties taking place at the moment your name can go on Ken's list so he can contact you when we start up again.

**Newsletter Circulation** - Know anyone who would like one? Let Richard have **their name and eMail address**. This is an important way of expanding our membership!

### PLEASE NOTE!

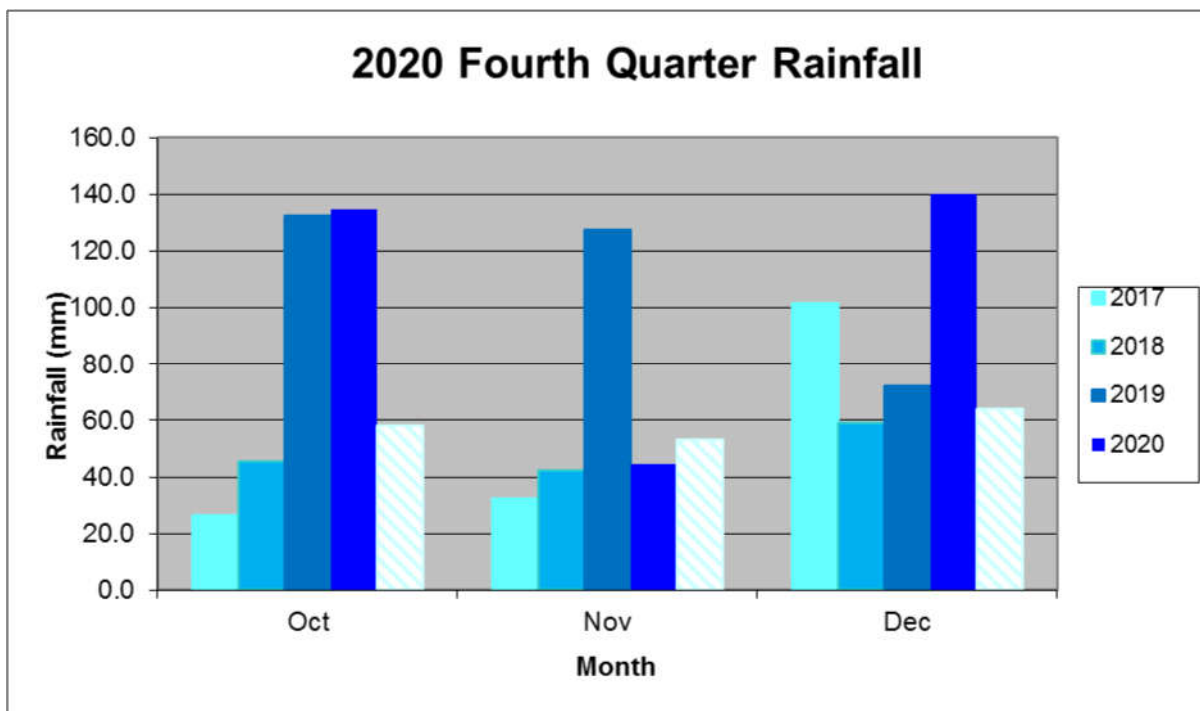
We are always on the lookout for new and interesting photographs to put in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of it. We are trying to increase the number of photographers who provide photographs for the Newsletter.

We need 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 of the image.

Contact: richarddestott@gmail.com

## Water Levels



Flooding has been a regular feature on Avon Meadows over the last quarter. Overall river levels have not been exceptionally high and as always the meadows clear very quickly once the river level goes down.

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

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.

