



Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows



After the heat of mid-July, the rain on 28 July. Duckweed begins to make an appearance again. *Photo: Richard Stott*

Newsletter No: 44

July 2021

Annual General Meeting

Please note that our AGM will be held on **Wednesday 6th October 2021 at 18h30**. It is planned to hold the meeting in the Pershore Civic Centre however COVID precautions may not allow this in which case the meeting will be held over Zoom as last year. You will be notified if the meeting is NOT to be held in the Civic Centre.

COVID-19 Precautions

Although the Government has removed all rules please note that the Friends of Avon Meadows is still observing the same precautions as before. This particularly applies to social distancing (2m) and organised parties/groups (6 max).

Progress on the Wetland

Hay cut

Those of you visiting Avon Meadows will have seen that the hay cut has been taken, baled and removed. This year saw our second largest hay crop at 66 tonnes. We believe that this was due in part to the frequency of flooding and consequent introduction of nutrients into the soil which drained from farmland upstream over the winter.

Work parties

Ken Pomfret has continued to run work parties (less than 6 people) to keep the paths clear during this period of rapid growth. Many thanks to Ken and the volunteers who helped with the hard work for the benefit of us all.

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Member's Photographs



A lovely image of a male Banded Demoiselle on Avon Meadows. The females do not have the wing patches and their abdomens are iridescent green.

Photo: Jeff Steady LRPS

Funding

I am delighted to announce that Pershore Round Table presented us with a donation of £750 towards the restoration of the pond dipping platform. Many thanks to the Round Table members for this generous help.

Progress on the Wetland (continued)

Contractors' Work

The dipping platform path is still to have gravel laid and culverts are to be created where the footbridges have been removed in the North Meadows.

One of the consequences of COVID is that we have all been doing DIY resulting in a shortages and cost increases of building materials. This has resulted in a delay to the planned work on Avon Meadows.

Grassland Monitoring Programme

Following on from Ken Pomfret's article *Shoots to Roots—Floodplain Meadows Partnership* in the last Newsletter the work of monitoring the species of wildflowers and grasses growing on Avon Meadows has been continuing quietly under the guidance of Ken and Gwen Pomfret. A short summary of the current position is set out below.

The basis of the development of wildflower meadows is that the nutrients in the soil must be reduced so that the wild flowers can out-compete the grasses. This is achieved on Avon Meadows by taking an annual hay cut, introducing sheep to graze each autumn and harrowing the meadows from time to time to partially break down the grass roots. The main counter effect to these efforts is flooding whereby silt and nutrients are washed down from upstream farmland.

Over the last 12 months, there have been several flooding events as a result of which we were unable to safely bring sheep onto the meadows to graze last autumn. Additionally hot, dry periods in spring will not have helped young wildflower seedlings grow. It is likely that nutrients have built up considerably resulting in an excellent hay crop this year but recent surveys show very small number and variety of wild flowers (with the exception of buttercups!)



North Meadow on 1st June. Photo: Richard Stott

Expert advice is that we should not worry too much as the seed bank will persist in the ground. Until now we had been making good progress with wild flowers but it does seem to be a case of two steps forward and one step back!

We plan to extend the grazing period with the sheep in the

autumn (weather permitting) and take a series of soil samples for nutrient testing to confirm our suspicions. All we can do then is to hope for more favourable weather conditions.

It's nearly Annual Subscription time!

PLEASE SUPPORT US BY SUBSCRIBING!

Just a reminder that annual subscriptions become due in September.

Many thanks to those who have already paid in advance, as well as our Life Members and those who pay by annual Standing Order (which is a very convenient method all round!).

These have been challenging times, and it has been heartening to have increased our subscribing member base over the past 18 months. Full details on how to pay are in the subscription form attached to this newsletter. Feel free to eMail me on timhutton28@gmail.com if you want more information on subscribing options.

Floodplain Meadows Partnership 2021 Arts and Crafts Competition by Sue Comely

Many readers will be aware that the Floodplain Meadows Partnership and Meadow Arts were behind the recent Avon Meadows arts project and some of you may have taken part in one of the workshops.

Whether you did or not you may be interested in this competition to promote awareness of the value of floodplain meadows. The Partnership is looking for artworks that reflect the role of floodplain meadows, their beauty and diversity.

All you have to do to take part is visit Avon Meadows, or any other floodplain meadow, and create an artwork that responds to the landscape. You can use any media you like, or any combination - painting, photography, poetry, film, sound and music, textiles, sculpture etc. You can submit up to 3 entries per person.

The Partnership will hold a digital exhibition of entries and may hold a physical exhibition. Photographs of 12 of the exhibits will be used in a 2022 calendar and the lucky winner will also receive a £250 voucher from the Field Studies Council.

The closing date is **August 28th 2021**. Full details of the themes of the exhibition and how to submit entries, including a link to the submission forms, can be found at <https://www.floodplainmeadows.org.uk/projects-and-events/art-competition-2021>

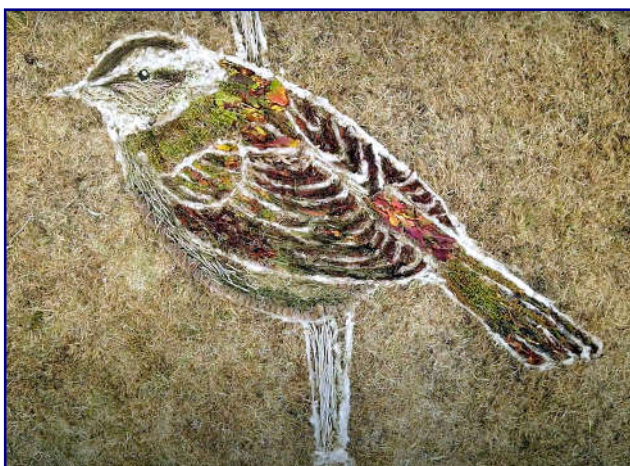
Writers, artists, photographers, crafters — this is for you!

Meadow Arts Project Update

Melanie Woodhead, the photographer who wrote about her work in the last newsletter, finished her part of the project at the end of May, after running two workshops with Year 8 students from Pershore High School. The first was a photography walk on the meadows and the second, at the school, involved the students experimenting with their images using photographic processes such as transaquotypes, photomontage and other techniques.

Melanie herself also created a series of transaquotypes showing the transformative effect of water on inkjet colour, which bleeds out unpredictably, reflecting the shifting landscape and seasonal changes on the meadows. Melanie's planned site specific installation evolved into something rather different.

For more information on Melanie's work see: <https://artandgardening.wordpress.com> and click on blog.



An artistic representation of a Sedge Warbler (a common summer visitor) created by Kate Raggett on Avon Meadows. *Photo: Andrew Fell*

Kate Raggett, who followed Melanie, is an artist who creates temporary works in nature using natural found materials. In June, you may have seen her work on the South Meadow.

On one cleared patch Kate created a circular sheep fleece drawing 50 feet in diameter, using fleece donated by the farmer whose sheep graze Avon Meadows. The dynamic, swirling design seemed to suggest the movement of water, aquatic creatures and plant tendrils.

On a nearby mown patch Kate made a 10ft fleece drawing of a perched Sedge Warbler. Attendees at her workshops were invited to forage for natural materials, such as leaves and grasses, to colour and define the plumage. The work was absorbing and rewarding and was recorded by the drone flyer and photographer Andrew Fell in a short video, at the end of which you also get a glimpse of Kate's creation.

See the YouTube video at <https://youtu.be/EkXkdol52SU>

You can also read more about Kate at www.kateraggett.com

The arts project has now come to an end but there was considerable interest shown and we are seeking funding for a similar event next year.

Surveys and Sightings

BIRDS

Weekly Bird Count

The average count over the last twelve weeks has been 41 species per week, fewer this quarter as it is only breeding birds that are present. Bird numbers have been good so far this year but the variety is less than we would have hoped.

We have recorded 97 species and this year remains, just, the third best year so far. As is described below, we have recorded a number of new species on Avon Meadows recently and the total number recorded so far stands at 1,144.

Interesting or Unusual Species

In May there were two highlights; on the 6th a male **Montagu's Harrier** was photographed flying over Avon Meadows, our 133rd species. It is a breeding bird of marshland and steppes of Europe, many overwinter in southern Africa and India. The UK breeding population in 2020 was just 8 pairs.

We had hardly recovered from that surprise when a **Turtle Dove** was watched flying over Avon Meadows on 17th and has been heard as recently as 28 July. At the time this was only the 3rd Turtle Dove recorded in Worcestershire this year. This bird stayed for several weeks, mostly just off to the northwest of Avon Meadows near the new housing estate on Wyre Road. The shocking statistic is that the breeding population of Turtle Doves in the UK has dropped by 98% since 1970.

There have only been two brief sightings of Hobby's this summer on 27 May and 24 June.

The first half of July saw a small passage of birds passing through Avon Meadows, including; Common Sandpiper, Oystercatcher and Willow Warbler.

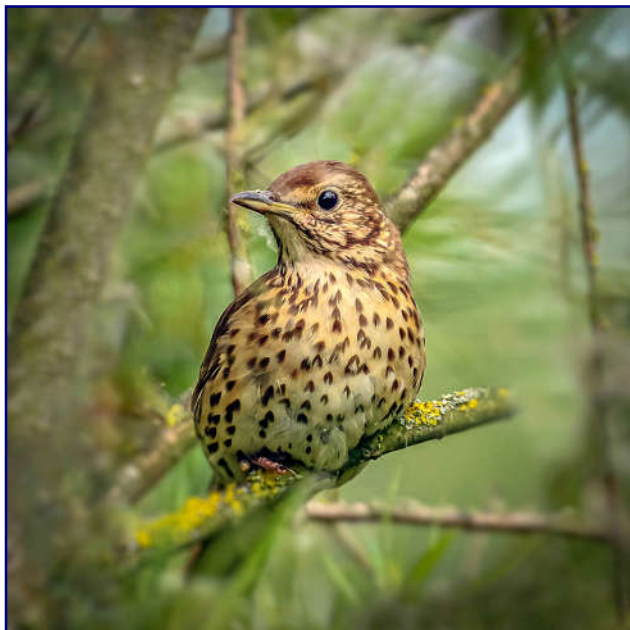
A Barn Owl was seen flying over on 5 July and the Tawny Owls behind Cherry Orchard remain and are presumably breeding.

Breeding Birds

The bad news from early May was that both our Mute Swan's nests were predated and all their eggs taken. We guess that this was due to a Fox as it was a very tidy job with no broken shells or other evidence.

Otherwise our other breeding birds seem to have done well and the warm weather ensured a good supply of insects to feed their young.

The last adult Cuckoo was seen on 28 June (the young birds follow their parents 6-8 weeks later) and a young Cuckoo was located being fed by Reed Warblers on 1 July. Young Cuckoos are notoriously difficult to catch sight of.



A nice study of a juvenile Song Thrush taken on Avon Meadows.
By Jeff Steady LRPS

Butterflies

After a break last year due to COVID we were able to restart our butterfly transect again this year. (A transect is a fixed route along which butterflies are counted at weekly intervals.) Numbers generally are down this year with an average of just 7 butterflies per visit covering 12 species as opposed to 29 of 17 species in 2019. Of course there could be a late rush so it is too early to be gloomy!

A Large White reported on 22 April was a new early record for Avon Meadows.

Dragonflies

Dragonfly numbers too are down this year although most species have shown.

A Ruddy Darter recorded on 22 July was a new early record for this species. As for butterflies, the average number of dragonflies per visit is 88 of 8 species whereas in 2019 the count for the season was 105 of 14 species.

Moths

Once again, COVID has limited us to individual trapping sessions whereby two members take their own equipment to monitor the moths on Avon Meadows. Moth trapping is very reliant on the weather not just for the comfort of the trappers but for the variety of moths to be found too.

Over the four sessions so far, 105 moth species have been recorded. Of these, 5 were new for Avon Meadows. They are; The Seraphim on 27 May, the micro moth *Recurvaria nanella* on 29 June and on 14 July another micro, *Endotrichia flammealis*, plus Dwarf Cream Wave and a huge Privet Hawk

-moth. The moth count for Avon Meadows now stands at 393 species.



Not all moths are found at night! This Elephant Hawk Moth was photographed in mid-morning beside a path on Avon Meadows.
Photo: Jeff Steady LRPS



A Leopard Moth on the pavement on Cherry Orchard!!! Also recorded recently on Avon Meadows.
Photo: Richard Stott

Other Insects

Caddisflies can look quite similar to micro moths and frequently come to light at night in the same way. Most do not have common names but five new species have come to the moth traps this year.



A typical caddisfly caught recently on Avon Meadows. Note the long antennae and the spurs on its legs, the latter are an important identification feature.
Photo: Richard Stott

How you can help us

Work Parties - Contact Ken Pomfret if you are able to help.

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!

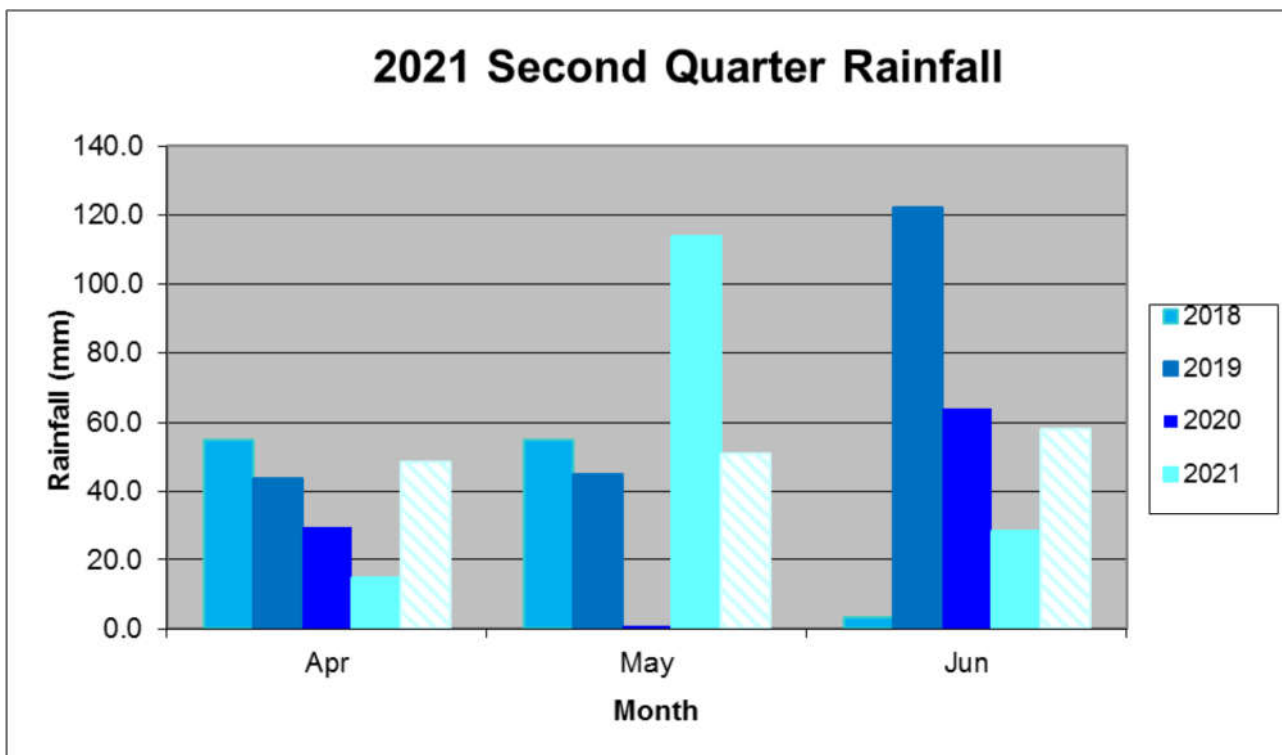
We are always on the lookout for new and interesting photographs to put in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of it. We are trying to increase the number of photographers who provide photographs for the Newsletter.

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



The scrape is now bone dry following a hot, dry July. Otherwise the rainfall has swung up and down although the total rainfall for April to June is almost exactly on average!

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!

Note that the website has been temporarily suspended. We are working hard to get it back up again, please bear with us!

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.): _____

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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.

