



## Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

### Newsletter No.19



Fig. 1 Low rainfall has prevented the level of the main pool recovering since it was lowered for reed cutting in the winter. (R D E Stott)

### **Annual General Meeting**

Please note that our AGM will take place on **Wed 13 May 2015** at **6:30pm** in the Council Chamber of Pershore Civic Centre. Gary Farmer has kindly agreed to give us an illustrated talk on *Bugs and Weeds* which I am sure will be most stimulating!

Please note that the AGM is the time when many Supporting Members' donations become due so it is a good opportunity to hand your cheque to the Treasurer!!!

### **Avon Meadows Bioblitz - Friday 22 May 2015!!!**

This is our major event of the year so please do make an effort to come along. It will run throughout the day starting on the boardwalk at 5:00am for the dawn chorus and carrying on until midnight when we will shut down the moth traps! We'll have plenty of fun and family friendly activities going on all day, with pond dipping, bug hunting and wildlife walks. As the darkness falls, we'll switch to torchlight to search for wildlife and bring out the bat detectors and moth traps to identify some of our nocturnal visitors.

We'll have experts from Worcestershire Biological Recorders and Worcestershire Wildlife Trust to help us identify the insects, plants and mammals that we find and our grand plan is to try and count as many different species as we can. Do please come along and join us, you'll have a really good chance to see Avon Meadows at one of the best times of year.

### **Review of our progress**

#### **Hot News!!!**

I am delighted to announce that that we have been awarded a Wychavon Community Grant for £2000 to build a bird screen to overlook the new scrape. Many thanks to Bob and Ken for preparing the application and to Wychavon DC for awarding it.

### Twinning Visit

We were delighted to host a party from our twin town, Plouay in Brittany, to visit the Wetland on a lovely sunny afternoon two weeks ago. The visit went very well and our visitors were most impressed with what they saw. Thanks to the Internet most of the bird and flower names could be translated! How other wise were we to know that our Common Buzzard is called Buse variable?

### HLF Project



Fig. 2 Kirstie, Ken and Liz keeping an eye on the scrape as it progresses.

Congratulations are due to our Work Party Coordinator, Ken Pomfret, who has been accepted on the Floodplain Meadows Partnership Ambassadors Work Shop against stiff opposition. This is a prestigious 2-year course teaching the latest methods of managing the UK's important wet meadow areas and will be of enormous help to us managing our meadows into the future.

### Wader Scrape

The excavation works needed to create the wader scrape are complete creating a series of islands and channels. Very many thanks to Severn Waste, our major sponsor for this work. The most interesting of original ponds within the scrape area has been left untouched to preserve its flora and fauna. It is now for Mother Nature to fill it with water and weather the soil to make it attractive to new species. We will be watching it carefully to see which species colonise it first.



Fig. 3 The scrape looking south as it approaches completion (P J Attwood)

### Aerial Video

You may have read in the press about aerial drones used to take photographs. Local Worcester University student, Paul Atwood, has been invited to use his drone to take aerial videos of the Wetlands from time to time. These videos provide a fascinating new perspective on our developing Wetland. A link is given below showing the new wader scrape during its creation. : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rxo3VTXWwk>

### Site Management

The reed cutting is complete for 2015. In the end we did not cut Area D as the Mute Swans looked as though they might be nesting there and so Area B was cut instead. In order to carry out this work we lowered the water level in the main pool as far as possible to allow access for

reed cutting. The tilting weir was raised fully again at the end of the first week of March but less than average rainfall during March has meant that the pool is filling up more slowly than might be expected.

You will see that the bunds around the south side of the main pool have been built using spoil from the wader scrape. Compaction of this bund had reduced its level too far allowing water from the main pool to leak out in places. Volunteers will put wood chip down on this bund as soon as we can get supplies of wood chip. The clay gets soft and sticky when wet.

The wheelchair access path is planned to be completed during May with a compacted hardcore surface linking King George's carpark with the boardwalk and the Mayfield Road entrance.

### **Dog Fouling**

We continue to spray dog mess with brightly coloured biodegradable paint and refuse bins (which can be used for dog mess) have been moved near to the entrances to King George's carpark. Many thanks for the vast majority of dog owners to continue to dispose of their pet's mess in the bins provided.

### **Mink Control**

A Mink trapping programme was carried out during March 2015. No Mink were caught! There was some evidence of the presence of Otter during this time indicated by scats containing fish bones. If this theory is correct the Otter would have seen the Mink off. It is planned to carry out monitoring throughout the summer and further trapping next winter.

## **Events**

### **Training activities**

Three training events have been arranged during June this year, **Bee Identification** on 17 June, **Dragonfly & Damselfly Identification** on 19 June and **Butterfly Identification** on 24 June. The similar courses run last year were very well received so book early with Liz to avoid disappointment!

### **Pershore River Festival**

The Friends of Avon Meadows will be taking part in the Pershore River Festival, to be held on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July. Avon Meadows will play host to all our normal activities of pond dipping and wildlife walks, but we expect to have some visitors from further afield, who will bring a whole new dimension to the Meadows and put on a different kind of show. Watch this space for more information, but do put the date in your diary, it promises to be an exciting day!

## **Surveys & Sightings**

### **Birds**

68 species have been recorded so far this year with daily counts averaging 37 species. A **Red Kite** cruised overhead on 8 Mar (possibly from Bredon Hill). Winter thrushes, **Fieldfare** and **Redwing**, have been much harder to find this winter resulting in quite low counts. **Cetti's Warbler** is still singing and we hope they will stay to breed with us. Sadly the **Water Rail** has not been heard since 15 Apr. The most exciting find of the period was a **Common Treecreeper** in willow trees beside Piddle Brook on 12 Mar which was last recorded in April 2013. **Ravens** have been recorded less frequently over the Wetland of late, presumably because they are settling down to nesting. A pair of **Greylag Geese** inspected the new wader scrape with interest but have moved on now. Our first **Barn Swallow** was seen on 2 Apr, a new early record

for the Wetland but the main body of Swallows did not arrive until 23 Apr with **House Martins** recorded on the same day. A **Common Swift** arrived on 20 Apr, another early record. **Sedge** and **Reed Warblers** have started to arrive and can be heard singing in the reed beds and a single **Common Whitethroat** was seen on 23 Apr and early this same morning our first **Cuckoo** was heard.

Breeding activity is becoming more evident; our resident pair of **Mute Swans** is nesting again, there are several broods of **Mallard** ducklings to be seen and 6 **Coot** chicks with reddish heads have hatched from a nest on the main pool this week.

### **Butterflies**

We are into the 4<sup>th</sup> week of butterfly transects already. Nine species have been recorded to date; **Brimstone**, **Large**, **Small** and **Green-veined Whites**, **Orangetip**, **Holly Blue**, **Small Tortoiseshell**, **Peacock** and **Speckled Wood**.

### **Dragonflies**

Work on the dragonfly transect has just started with two **Large Red Damselflies** on 18 Apr, which is a new early date for us.

### **Moths**

The first moth night of the season took place on the evening of 17 Apr. There was a cool breeze which kept moth numbers down but the hardy few who turned up did manage to trap 3 species; **Powdered Quaker**, **Hebrew Character** and **Shuttle-shaped Dart**. These species were all recorded at the same time last year. Photographs of some of the moths we catch will be put up on Picasaweb as we did last year. This year they can be found at: <https://picasaweb.google.com/Synallaxis/FoAMMothGroup2015>. Check the dates of future moth nights in the Diary Dates table at the end of this Newsletter.

### **Other Species**

A **Brown Trout** was found in early February trapped in shallow water in the main pool because the water level had been dropped; an odd sighting of a species usually found in fast flowing rivers.

Another new species was found on 8 Apr when a **Weasel** was observed running across a path.

The **Marsh Marigolds** are in flower providing a splendid display near the new wheelchair access path.

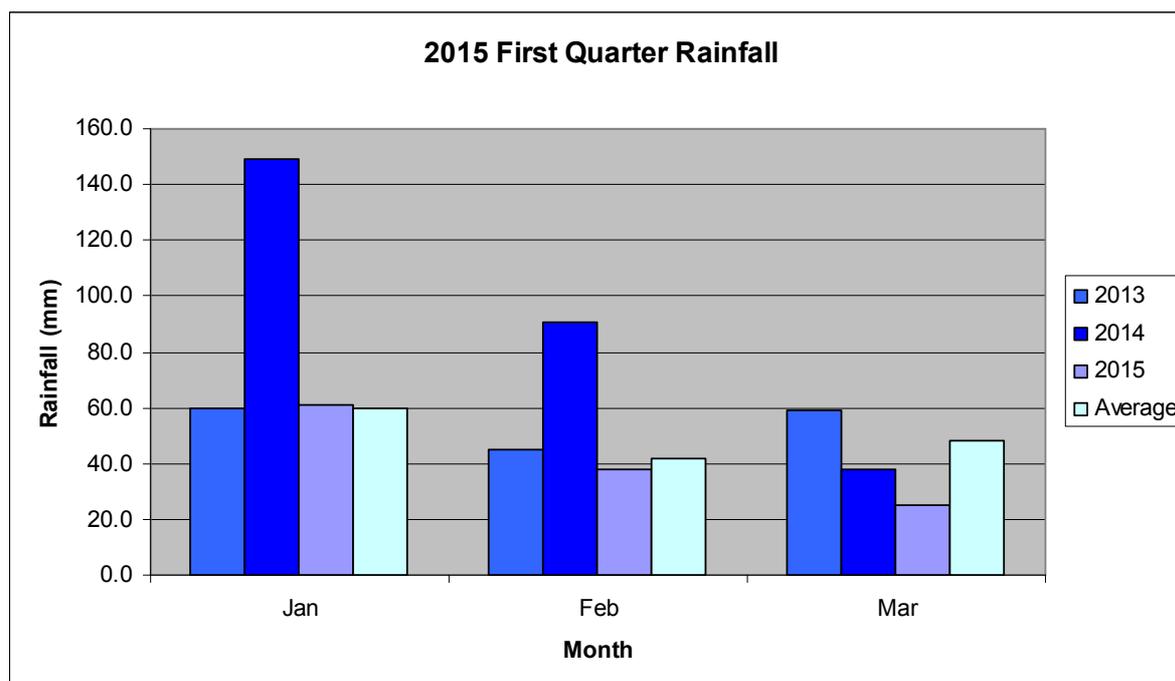
### **How you can help us**

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



The tilting weir was lowered for reed cutting and was raised to its full height on 5 March 15. However as we have only had 30.5mm of rain since then so the level in the main pool remains low.

## Diary Dates

Activities 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
Fri 1 May*	Moth Night 20h00-11h30*	Sat 4 Jul	Work Party 10h00 to 13h00
Sat 9 May	Work Party 10h00 to 13h00	Fri 10 Jul*	Moth Night 21h00-00h30*
Wed 13 May	<b>FoAM AGM</b> 18h30-20h00	Sat 18 Jul	Pershore River Festival
Fri 15 May*	Moth Night 20h30-00h00*	Fri 24 Jul*	Moth Night 20h45-00h15*
Fri 22 May	<b>Avon Meadows Bioblitz</b> 04h45 - 24h00	Sat 1 Aug	Work Party 10h00 to 13h00
Fri 29 May*	Moth Night 20h45-00h15*	Fri 7 Aug*	Moth Night 20h20-23h50*
Fri 12 Jun*	Moth Night 21h00-00h30*	Fri 21 Aug*	Moth Night 19h50-23h20*
Sat 13 Jun	Work Party 10h00 to 13h00	Fri 4 Sep*	Moth Night 19h20-22h50*
Wed 17 Jun	Bee Identification	Sat 5 Sep	Work Party 10h00 to 13h00
Fri 19 Jun	Dragonfly & Damselfly Identification	Fri 18 Sep*	Moth Night 18h45-22h15*
Wed 24 Jun	Butterfly Identification	Fri 2 Oct*	Moth Night 18h15-21h45*
Fri 26 Jun*	Moth Night 21h00-00h30*	Fri 16 Oct*	Moth Night 17h45-21h15*
Wed 1 Jul	Committee Meeting 18h00-20h00	Fri 30 Oct*	Moth Night 16h15-19h45*

\* Subject to weather.

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 "Sittings" section has been set up for this summer.

Coots Eye View blog: <http://cootseyeview.blogspot.co.uk/>.

Aerial video of new scrape: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rxo3VTXWwk>

### **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

I hope you enjoy summer on the Wetland!

Richard Stott with thanks to Liz for her input.

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