



A dull January morning but note that the willow heron has returned!

Photo: Richard Stott

Newsletter No: 26

January 2017

Progress on the Wetland

Site Management

Sheep were introduced for grazing from October to mid-December as part of our management plan. There was no reason for dog owners not to take their pets onto the Wetland provided they kept them on a lead.

The water level of the main pool is still being maintained at its late summer level to allow machine access to cut the reed beds. Work is well advanced clearing reeds from the two sections to be cleared this year (see aerial photograph on next page). Even with machinery this is a large amount of work so any help you can give us will be very welcome. (see Diary Dates section) You get wonderful exercise in our "green gym" and there is no joining fee!

Very many thanks to those of you who have been able to come along to the work parties and help us make such good progress. The photographs show work in Area H. The volume of reeds is such that they have to be burnt in-situ. The completed area looks rather barren but in 12 months you will not be able to see where it has been cut! The far edges of the cleared area is a good place to look for Water Rail.

In line with the management plan a drainage channel between the tilting weir and our southern boundary has been cleared. This involves clearing just half of the channel from its centre to one bank in alternate sections. This is a standard technique which allows plants, invertebrates and amphibians to recolonise from undisturbed areas.

The Management Plan is undergoing Natural England's approval process and will be open for public comment on the website in February 2017.

Dog Fouling

New signs have been fitted at all entrances to Avon Meadows to remind people to pick up their pet's droppings for the benefit of all visitors to the Wetland.

Work Party



Photo: Liz Etheridge

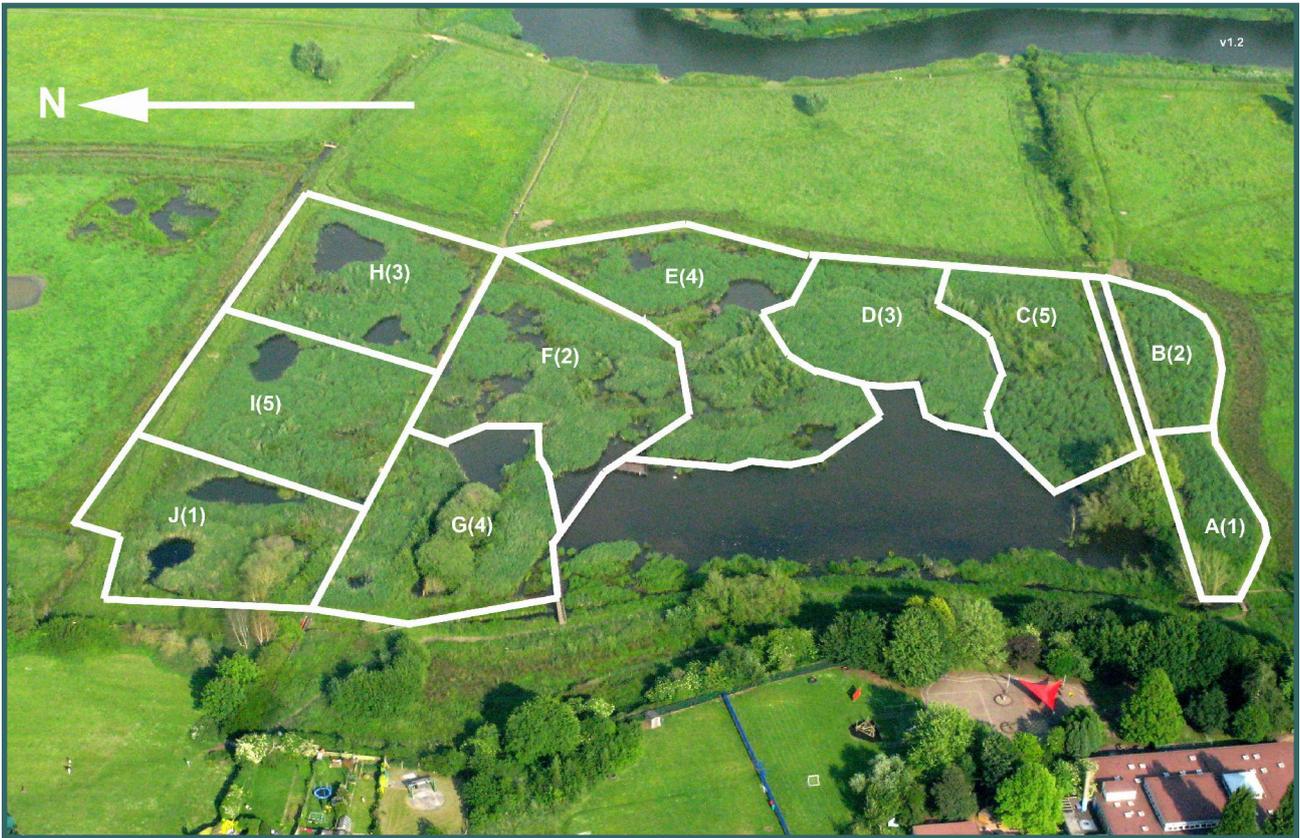


Photo: Richard Stott

Car Parking

The long promised extension work to Cherry Orchard House has started which has seriously reduced the car parking available at the main entrance to the Wetland.

At present the only options are roadside parking on Cherry Orchard or Mayfield Road or to use the Riverside Carpark beside Pershore Football Club. Note that this car park is closed when flooded and often has large puddles in winter.



This aerial photograph shows how we are managing the reed beds. The numbers in brackets indicate the sequence we clear each area. This year is (3) in the sequence so we have cut Sections D and H.

Wetland Events

Planning is beginning for Bioblitz 2017 which this year will be on a Saturday in August. The actual date is being finalised and will appear in the next Newsletter.

This year we will be part of the National Meadows Day which will include trips round the meadows describing what can be seen and that we are trying to do.

Botanical Surveys: We have a number of surveys coming up, can you help—get in touch with Liz if you can.



A work party ready for action! Photo: C Tucker.

Committee Member

Are you somebody who is passionate about the natural environment? Perhaps you have some expertise you would be able to share? We are looking for expressions of interest from people who might be interested in joining our committee.

We are applying to become a charity (CIO) so the management of the Friends is becoming even more important,

Funding

Tesco Bags for All Scheme:

We were selected to be one of 3 good causes in December to take part in the Tesco Bags for All Scheme. Thanks to all of you who put your tokens into our box.

This has resulted in an additional £4750 for our funds and our thanks go to Tesco too for selecting us to take part.

This funding will support our events and work on the Wetland, in particular the Bioblitz event in August.

Higher Level Stewardship Scheme

Avon Meadows application to government for a Higher Level Stewardship scheme has been accepted. Actual funds become available once our new Management Plan has been accepted by Natural England. We believe that we have a good plan and Natural England is reviewing it at the moment. These schemes are closely monitored by Natural England but allow us to carry out tasks necessary to maintain and enhance the area which are beyond the scope of volunteers.

Surveys and Sightings

Weekly Bird Count

Common Shelduck and Common Goosander, 118th & 119th, new species making a total of 97 species recorded during 2016, a new high count doubtless partly due to the effect of the new wader scrape.

Referring to the regular Thursday bird counts in 2016:

The 12 species in Table 1 were seen every Thursday. No surprises there as most visitors will see these species on a visit to the Wetland. The species on this list have been stable for several years.

There have been no significant Common Starling murmurations this winter. In January there have been small flocks of up to 1000 Starlings gathering between 16h00 and 16h30 but nothing more.

Mallard
Wood Pigeon
Wren
European Robin
Blackbird
Blue Tit
Great Tit
Magpie
Carrion Crow
Common Starling
House Sparrow
Goldfinch

Table 1

The species in Table 2 were scarce on the Wetland during 2016 and seen once only during the year on a Thursday bird count.

As the wader scrape develops we would expect the water bird species to visit more often and for longer periods.

Red Kite wander in summer and can be seen at almost any time.

Little Grebe
Mandarin Duck
Shoveler
Goosander
Red Kite
Red-legged Partridge
Common Redshank
Greenshank
Common Sandpiper
Coal Tit
Eurasian Jay

Table 2

Table 3 lists species that were not seen on a Thursday bird count at all but were recorded at other times of the week.

It is not surprising that some birds simply do not turn up on Thursday mornings. This year there were 10 such species. The owls are often only recorded in the evening.

We do not have the habitat on the Wetland for birds like the Yellowhammer which need winter grain to feed on to get them through the winter.

Common Shelduck
Eurasian Wigeon
Merlin
Peregrine Falcon
Little Ringed Plover
Green Sandpiper
Barn Owl
Tawny Owl
Yellow Wagtail
Yellowhammer

Table 3

2017 So Far

We have got off to an excellent start this year with 4 surveys under our belts already producing 57 species and the most recent weekly count of 48 species was our best-ever January count. To top it off we had a new species too, the Common Pochard!



A Common Pochard photographed on the river beside the Wetland on 19 Jan 17. This is the 120th species recorded to date. It is one of the diving ducks (Mallards are dabbling ducks) which like deeper water than is usual on the Wetland.
Photo: Andy Gibbons

Having seen our first Goosander last December it was a complete surprise when three were reported flying down the river in mid-January just as a work party was getting started.

Northern Shoveler is another winter visitor which we see occasionally in winter. There have been 4 on the main pool or the scrape occasionally in the last two weeks.

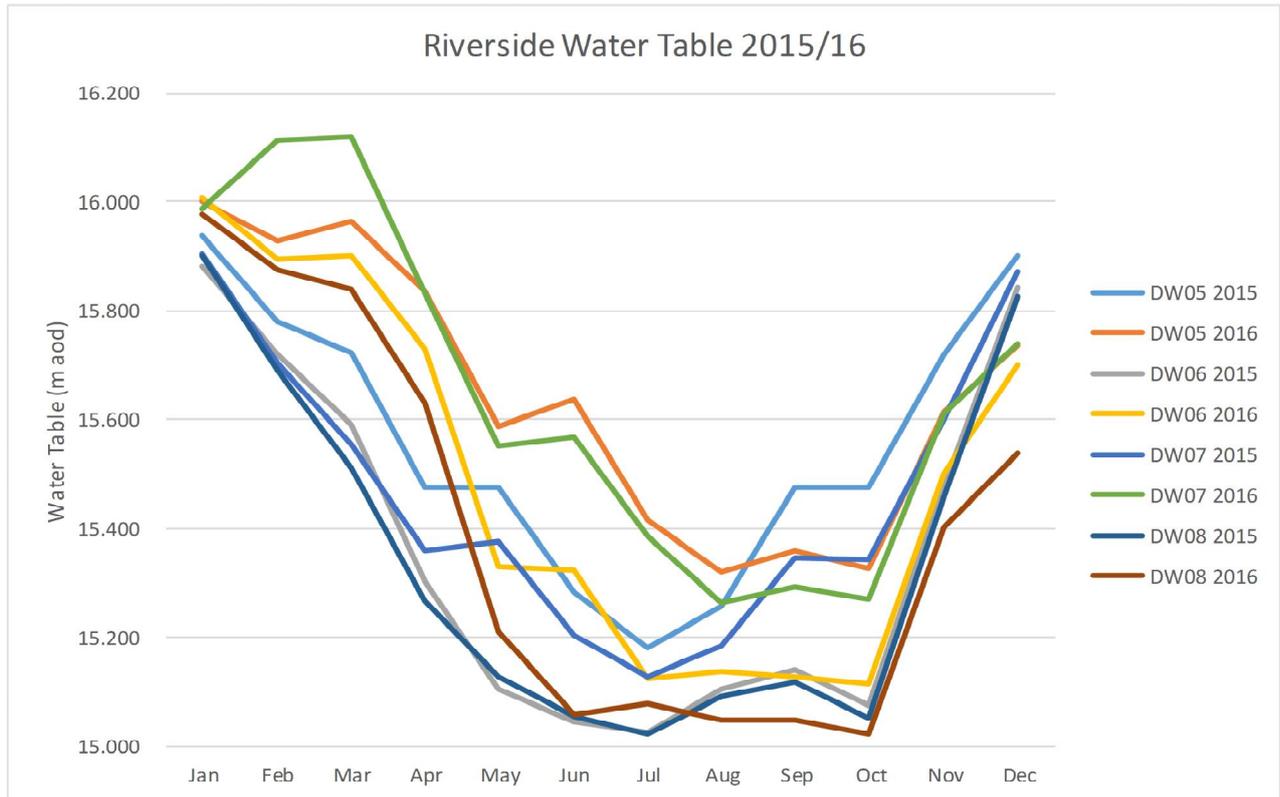
Little Grebes have been seen on the main pool recently; they last bred on the Wetland in 2013.



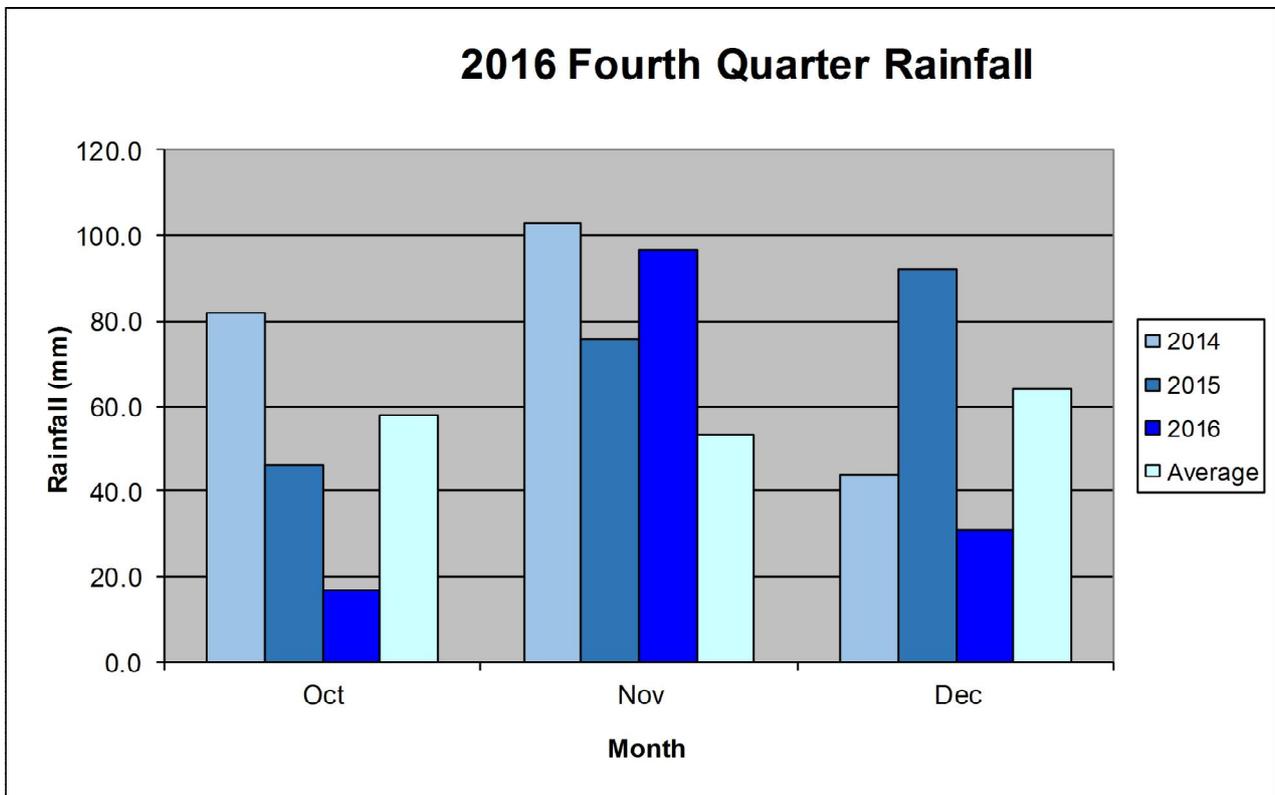
An interesting photograph showing 3 species of gull on the scrape. Top left are Common Gulls (Not common with us! Note white tips to black wing feathers), in front in the water is a Black-headed Gull (black dot behind the eye) and the brown gull on the right is a first winter Herring Gull. Herring Gulls take 4 years to get their full adult plumage.
Photo: Sarah Fowle

The Common Gull previously been recorded as single birds flying or roosting on the main pool. This year up to 6 have been seen over the Wetland at one time.

Water Levels



There are 10 dip wells on the Wetland that have been monitored weekly over the last 2½ years. Groundwater levels above 16.000m on this graph indicate the grassland is flooded. The graphs show monthly averages for each of the 4 dipwells that are closest to the river taken over the last 2 years. In spite of quite different years in terms of weather it can be seen that the overall trends between the years are quite similar. Ground nearer the river tends to be drier!



As is usual there are wide swings in rainfall from month to month. Taking the year as a whole the rainfall was 105% of the average to in this respect a typical year.

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 eMail address.

Diary Dates

Date	Activity	Date	Activity
Sat 4 Feb 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Tue 16 May 17	AGM 18h30-20h00
Sat 11 Feb 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Tue 23 May 17	Committee Meeting 14h30-17h00
Sat 18 Feb 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sat 1 Jul 17	National Meadows Day
Sat 25 Feb 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Tue 28 Jul 17	Committee Meeting 14h30-17h00
Sat 4 Mar 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sat 19 Aug 17?	Bioblitz 2017 05h00-00h00
Tue 28 Mar 17	Committee Meeting 14h30-17h00	Tue 26 Sep 17	Committee Meeting 14h30-17h00
Sun 30 Apr 17	Tiddesley Wood Open Day	Tue 28 Nov 17	Committee Meeting 14h30-17h00

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

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.