



Sunshine between the showers with the Cuckoo calling in the background

Photo: Richard Stott

Newsletter No: 27

April 2017

Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Friends of Avon Meadows will take place on **Tuesday 16 May 17 at 18h30**. It will be held in the Pershore Civic Centre, This will be followed by a talk on Tiddesley Wood by Harry Green MBE.

Progress on the Wetland

Site Management

The reed cutting programme is complete and recent visitors will have noticed that work is in progress to reduce the cut willow to wood chip and to spread it on the paths. We are really grateful to our loyal band of volunteers who make all this maintenance work possible and keep the Wetland in good health.

An artificial Sand Martin bank is being installed (see box on next page) but generally summer tasks centre around maintaining paths and litter clearance.

There will be a hay-cut in early July (after the Bioblitz) and plans are afoot to scarify a section of meadow between the main pool and the river in order to sow wild flower seed. It is proposed to use 'green hay' which is cut from a flower-rich meadow in the area and then spread onto the prepared area. As contractors will be needed to carry out this work we are delighted to learn that we now have our promised Higher Tier Stewardship funding. (see Funding section)

Organisation

We have submitted our application to the Charities Commission to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. This will impose a little more administration but open the door to a larger number of funding agencies and provide us with a legal framework to handle larger amounts of money when necessary.

Our current Committee Members will become Trustees of the Friends of Avon Meadows, responsible in law to making sure that funds collected are wisely spent.

Bird Behavior



An interesting photograph of one of our Mute Swans having a drink taken by one of our younger members.

Photo: Carl Fowle

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. It is fun and interesting!

Funding

Higher Tier Stewardship Scheme

We have finally received formal confirmation that our plan and overall application have been accepted. This news has only come through in the last few days so we are still putting plans in place but it does mean that we have secure funding for the next 5 years.

Wetland Events

Botanical Surveys: We have a number of surveys coming up, can you help—get in touch with Liz if you can or would like to take part.

Tiddesley Wood Open Day



As usual we had a stand at the Tiddesley Wood Open Day on 30 April. Frank Round and Val Wood provided valuable assistance to Liz Etheridge in running the stand.

Bioblitz 2017

Planning is beginning for Bioblitz 2017 which this year will be on Saturday 10 June. Check the website for more details but the format will be similar to previous years with an early morning walk for the dawn chorus and finishing with moth catching at night. During the day there will be events to interest everyone so please come along and discover the wide variety of things Avon Meadows has to offer.

National Meadows Day

This year we will be part of the National Meadows Day which will take place on Saturday 1 July. This is an event initiated by the Floodplain Meadows Partnership to draw attention to this important but diminished habitat. For us it will include walks round the meadows describing what can be seen and that we are trying to do. Full details will be put on up on the Website.

Surveys and Sightings

Status to Date

The total number of bird species recorded on Avon Meadows is **122**. So far this year we have recorded 83 bird species.,

New Birds

European Golden Plover regularly spend the winter on fields around Lower Moor but on 9 March a small flock of 12 birds flew over the Wetland. This was the first time they had been seen over Avon Meadows.

On 9 April a Sandwich Tern was reported from Lower Moor. Later that same day a Sandwich Tern was seen flying over the scrape and south along the River Avon.

Sand Martin Bank



Many of you will have noticed the artificial Sand Martin Bank on the far side of the main pool. We are very grateful to Persimmon Homes for providing us with a grant to buy the materials.

Two foot long plastic tubes are set behind the holes you can see and at the back nest boxes are fixed. The front panel has to be made to look a little like a sand bank and so the plan is to glue a thin layer of sand to it. A little sand is put in the tubes and nest boxes and then we wait!

This design has been used with success elsewhere although it usually takes two or three years before the martins actually nest. Thereafter they are expected to nest each year.

Dog Mess Legislation

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act

Please be aware that provisions in this Act are about to be introduced. The Council will be able to designate Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) for particular areas such as playgrounds and parks. Dog owners entering PSPO's will be liable for an on-the-spot fine of up to £80 (or an appearance in court) if:

- they do not carry a poo-bag
- they do not clear up after their pet
- put their pet's mess in a bag and leave it behind

Apparently you cannot expect to get away without a fine if you say "I did not see my dog make a mess." You are responsible for your pet when in public places.

Weekly Bird Count

Our average morning count so far in 2017 is 42 species. Over the years these counts have slowly increased partly because the number of observers has increased and partly because more birds are using the area as different habitats are created.

The Little Grebes that we were excited about in the last Newsletter have left.

Results from this survey work are submitted each week to the British Trust for Ornithology's Bird Track online recording system.

Breeding Birds

As usual it is the Mallards that produce their chicks first and we have 2 broods at present on the Wetland. One of our Moorhens has been quick off the mark and 3 chicks were seen on 27 April.

The Water Rails have gone quiet and can only be heard occasionally leading to the expectation that they have started nesting.

Common Linnets arrived in early April and almost immediately started nesting. A female Bullfinch was seen carrying nesting material so perhaps they will nest on the Wetland this year too.

Surprisingly 'our' Mute Swans, having built a nest at the south end of the main pool, went on to desert it for a while. They were back for a couple of weeks and now seem to have gone again.

Cetti's Warblers seem to be holding two territories once more this year so we have great hopes for breeding success.

Starlings are well on with nesting using holes in trees and together with the House Sparrows making frequent trips to and fro collecting food for their nestlings.

Summer Visitors

You may have seen from our website that summer visitors have begun to arrive. Barn Swallows and Sand Martins arrived a little earlier than usual whereas the House Martin was late. Our first Cuckoo was heard on 19 April and has been heard early in the morning on most days since 23 April. Common Whitethroats are present as are Linnets, both in small numbers. Sedge and Reed Warblers are beginning to make their rattling calls from the reed beds but they can be difficult to see.

The Scrape

We all rather take The Scrape for granted now without always considering how it improves the bird life. You will remember that it was created in the summer of 2015 with funding from Severn Waste. The key to its subsequent improvement is the establishment of a good population of invertebrates which provide food for visiting birds. This process will take several seasons to complete but in the meantime birds are dropping in to try it out.

Common Snipe liked the area during winter and in spring we are now seeing 1 or 2 Little Ringed Plover quite often. Other than one recorded in 2016 the previous record for this species was in 2009!

Earlier in the spring Common Gulls often used the scrape and these are much easier to identify on the ground and can therefore be recorded with confidence on the scrape. Eurasian Oystercatchers turn up more frequently than in the past.

A report on 30 April of both a Whinchat and Northern Wheatear on the scrape which are both new species for this year. Clearly the Whinchat is a bird of regular habits as one was seen on 30 April 2016! These are migratory birds and usually only stay for less than one day.



A Common Frog enjoying the spring sun on 1 May.

Photo: Richard Stott

Insect Survey Work

Insect populations are an important indicator of the health of a habitat. So the other important summer activity is to carry out insect survey work which includes butterflies, moths, dragonflies and this year bumblebees for the first time.

Butterflies

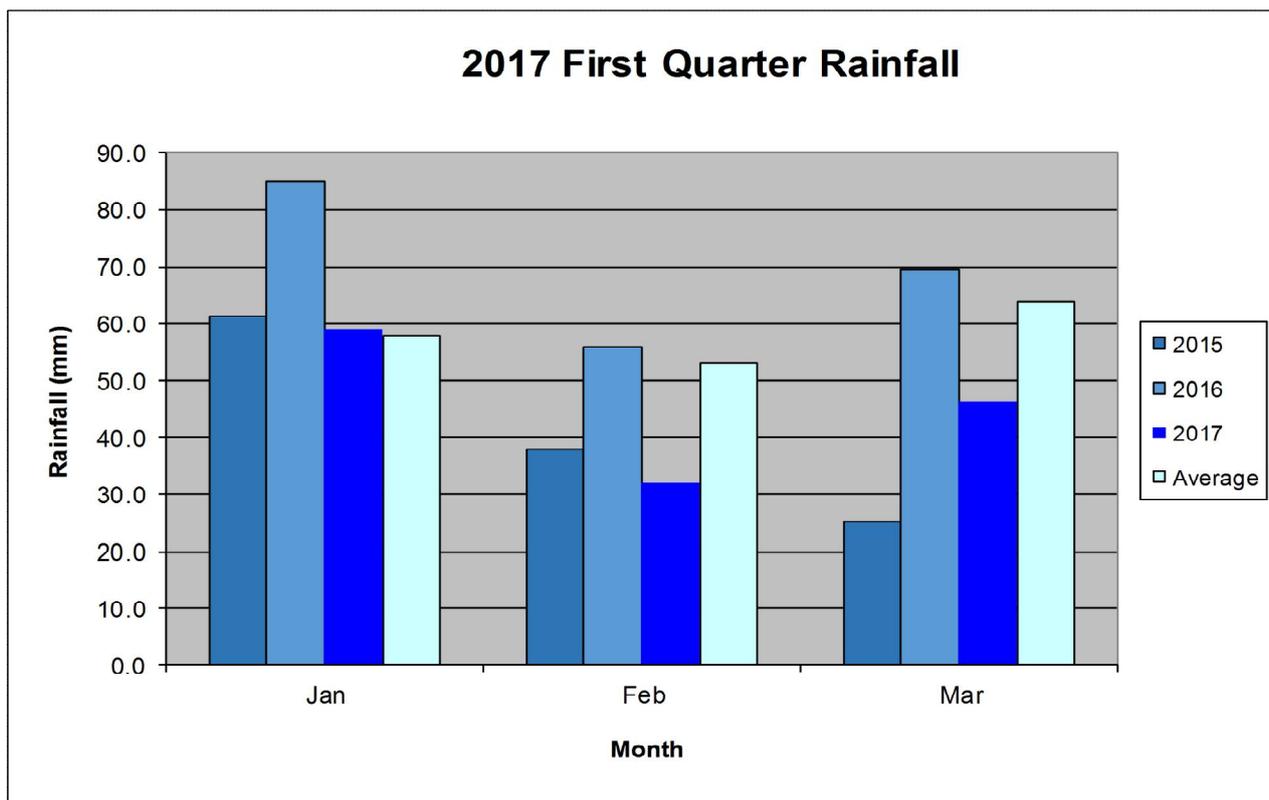
Our butterfly transect work starts on 1 April each year with the results being submitted as part of Butterfly Conservation's countrywide survey work.

Butterfly counts vary considerably with the weather as most insects, like us, enjoy warm, still days! So far 7 species have been recorded this year; Brimstone, Orangetip, Holly Blue, Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Peacock and Speckled Wood.

Moths

It is planned to start moth trapping in early-May. As with all insects, trapping nights are heavily dependent on the weather. The electrical equipment involved with moth trapping means that we need a dry night and little or no wind is helpful too. Moth trapping nights are held on a Friday night and normally run from the official sunset for 3½ hours, the first half hour being used for setting up. This is a team effort and anyone is welcome, check the website for dates.

Water Levels



The rainfall over the first 3 months of this year has been more even. However April has been an extraordinarily dry month, even so the water levels are holding up well.

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 name and eMail address.

Diary Dates

Date	Activity	Date	Activity
Sat 29 Apr 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sat 10 Jun 17?	Bioblitz 2017 05h00-00h00
Sun 30 Apr 17	Tiddesley Wood Open Day	Sat 1 Jul 17	National Meadows Day
Sat 6 May 17	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Tue 28 Jul 17	Committee Meeting 14h30-17h00
Tue 16 May 17	AGM 18h30-20h00	Tue 26 Sep 17	Committee Meeting 14h30-17h00
Tue 23 May 17	Committee Meeting 14h30-17h00	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

(note that Liz is only working part-time on Avon Meadows and so may not be always able to answer the telephone)

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.