



Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows



Taken following a wet week, it is summer and it is the school holidays so it is quite usual for the weather to be wet! The duck weed growth is extensive due to nutrients, particularly phosphates, in the water. *Photo: Richard Stott*

Newsletter No: 36

July 2019

Progress on the Wetland

Most of the physical work in summer involves cutting back along the paths. We have monthly work parties at this time of year which take place on the first Saturday of each month. Nettles and brambles need to be checked in between times as their growth rates are rapid at this time of year.

Survey work gets into its stride in summer and more information on this can be found under the specific species groups on the next page.

Two days ago, some silly children set fire to some cut reeds they had heaped beside the bird watching screen. Thankfully the damage to the screen is minor. Some of the trials and tribulations of operating on public land.

Gas Main Re-routing

Many of you will have noticed the large buoys on the bank opposite 'the beach' which have been there for some months now. They mark a point where the high pressure gas main which crosses Avon Meadows reaches the bank on the other side.

As the saying goes; "We have a problem Houston!" The bank on the other side is falling away at this point and Wales & West Utilities (WU), who are responsible for the pipe, advise that it is necessary to re-route it. We understand that the solution that WU have decided on is to move the gas mains river crossing point 350 metres south. This will mean running a new gas main through the wild flower meadows we have been so carefully developing at a time when they were just beginning to flourish. As you can imagine this is a bit disheartening. Clearly there is the obvious problem of destruction of the meadow and its flowers along the path of the new pipeline but there is also the hidden problem of soil compaction which will take place wherever any heavy machinery goes. The details are fluid at the moment but Wychavon District Council and Pershore Town Council, as land owners, are keeping a close eye on developments.

Member's Photographs



Young Common Whitethroats discovering the World of Avon Meadows in early June. *Photo: Jeff Steady LRPS*

Funding

We are very grateful for the donations received recently from the following organisations:

Severn Trent £500

Waitrose Evesham "Community Matters" £290

The Dumbreck Charity £1000

Fund raising to replace the pond dipping platform is going well to the point where it is possible to say that we should be able to start work after the breeding season.

A big THANKYOU to everyone who made a donation, large or small.

The Friends of Avon Meadows is carrying on monitoring work so that we know exactly what is growing there and therefore what any reinstatement work needs to involve.

Surveys and Sightings

BIRDS

Weekly Bird Count

It is becoming clear that 2018 was an excellent year for birds with high counts in all months. However, the monthly totals in the second quarter of 2019 have picked up (biggest totals are shown in red) and we have seen 99 species so far this year.

MONTHLY BIRD TOTALS

	April	May	June	July
2017	61	60	57	52
2018	82	70	59	63
2019	72	73	58	69

Interesting or Unusual Species

Wading birds are always of interest as they usually make use of the scrape. Over the last 3 months we have recorded Oystercatcher, Common Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover and a Greenshank. The scrape has become rather overgrown now.

A Whinchat passed through on 3 May and very occasionally we have seen Little Egrets. Red Kites have been seen overhead regularly and particularly when the hay was being cut. More recently a pair of Common Shelduck flew over followed by a pair of Hobbies a week later,

Breeding Birds

The first thing to say is that breeding water bird numbers seem to be down across the area, not just on Avon Meadows, and the reasons for this are not clear. Most obviously our Mute Swans who were nesting near the boardwalk deserted their nest as their eggs began to disappear. We had great hopes of Little Ringed Plovers breeding and they showed every sign but it looks as though crows and magpies put paid to their attempt.

On the plus side tits, warblers and other smaller birds seem to have done well. Perhaps best of all a Water Rail has been heard calling from the reed beds on and off throughout the summer. We had hoped that the Treecreepers that were seen nest building would go on to use their nest but there has been no sign of them.

A novelty this summer has been the number of sightings of Common Tern, normally only 1 per year, but this year there have been 4 sightings already. It turns out that 2 pairs are breeding on one of the lakes at Lower Moor and clearly they are using the river to fish.

Cuckoos have had a good year judging by the activity of both male and female birds and at least 2 juvenile Cuckoos have actually been seen.

Common species like House Sparrows and Starlings have done well again this year. There have not been many Swallows this year although House and Sand Martin numbers have been normal. We are still waiting for the Sand Martins to start using the Sand Martin bank!

CUCKOOS ON AVON MEADOWS

Avon Meadows must be one of the best places in the county to actually see Cuckoos. Everyone hears them but to actually see one is more difficult. This year the first one arrived on 18 April, they generally arrive between mid-April and the first week in May. This year there were usually two males and one female on Avon Meadows, each calling and frequently flying from tree to tree.

On Avon Meadows they are drawn in by the presence of Reed Warblers in whose nests they lay their eggs. The Reed Warblers build their nests in the middle of the reed beds and they are very hard to find. However the female Cuckoo perches in a nearby willow tree and just watches. She selects a target nest, usually with one or two eggs in it, and waits until the Reed Warblers have moved away for a short time, then she swoops down and lays just one egg which takes her about 8 seconds! Often she will remove just one Reed Warbler egg from the nest to balance the number.



A young Cuckoo being fed by a Reed Warbler on Avon Meadows spotted by Alfie's sharp eyes! This is a still image taken from a video.
By Steve Edgington.

As the Cuckoo chick develops it pushes Reed Warbler eggs and chicks from the nest to stop any competition. Then the Reed Warbler 'parents' have the huge task of keeping this gigantic chick fed.

This year the last adult Cuckoo left Avon Meadows on 3 July to make the long flight back to the Congo rainforest in West Africa. Until 2011 nobody was certain where our Cuckoos went in winter but in that year 6 birds that bred in East Anglia were fitted with satellite tracking devices and it was possible to work out which route they took and where they finished up.

When Cuckoos migrate they fly very high, mostly between 3 and 5 kilometres all the time looking for favourable tail winds to help them on their way.

Amazingly this is what our Cuckoo chicks must do and they do it without help or guidance from adult birds. They often return to the same area to breed the following spring.

BUTTERFLIES

The recent warm weather has brought out the butterflies. In early July there were quite a lot of Painted Ladies about, a species that migrates here from North Africa. There have been a good number of Marbled Whites about too, particularly in the NE meadow.

MAMMALS

In early June a dead Muntjac Deer was found in the North Meadow. It is not certain how it died but the local animals and birds had reduced it to a skeleton in two weeks!

We can now be certain that we have Badgers on Avon Meadows. The photograph below was taken using a camera trap and we believe there is a family of at least 6 individuals.



DRAGONFLIES

Counts have been good this year with most of our regular species being recorded. Emperor Dragonflies have been seen patrolling beside the boardwalk.



A Dotted Fan-foot moth found on Avon Meadows on 5 July 2019. This is the first time this species has been found in Worcestershire! Photo: Steve Whitehouse

MOTHS

A Dotted Fan-foot moth caused great excitement as it was the first for the county. During a busy moth trapping session Steve Whitehouse spotted an unusual species, thought it was a Dotted Fan-foot which was later accepted and is an official county record.

Diary Dates

Date	Activity	Date	Activity
Sat 3 Aug 19	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Fri 20 Aug 19	Moth Night 20h00—23h30*
Fri 9 Aug 19	Moth Night 20h30—00h00*	Sat 7 Sep 19	Work Party 10h00-13h00
Tue 3 Sep 19	Committee Meeting 14h30-16h30	Sat 5 Oct 19	Work Party 10h00-13h00

* Depends on the weather!

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 far end of Cherry Orchard at 10:00am on the day.

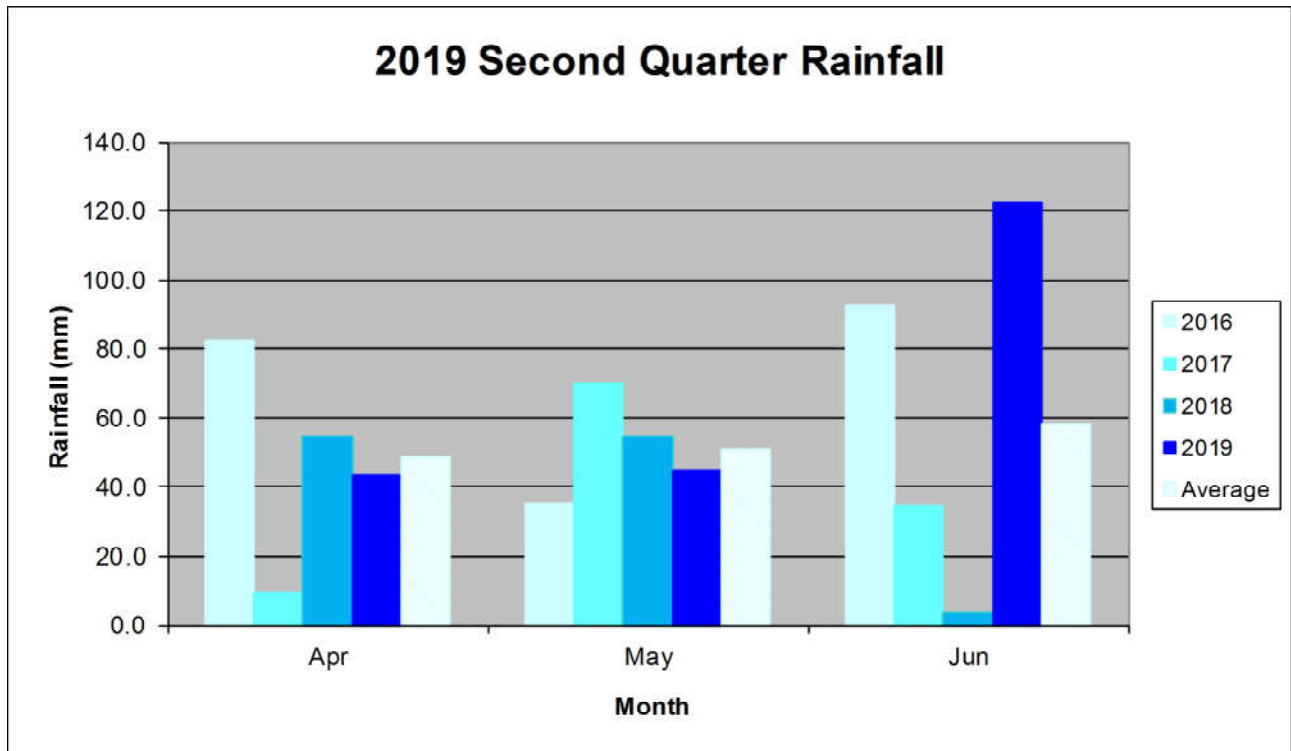
How you can help us

Work Parties - see Diary Dates above. 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.

Water Levels



From a wildlife point of view the most significant statistic here is the heavy June rainfall accompanied by unseasonably cold weather. This has a big effect on insects causing reduced numbers in the month of June. It is too soon to say whether or not this cold weather has effected populations in subsequent months. That said, as far as plants are concerned this has been a wonderful growing season!

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** ☐

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.