



Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

Newsletter No.12



Fig.1: Real summer weather over the main pool. Taken just after sunrise on 7 July 2013.
(R D E Stott)

Annual General Meeting

Our new letterhead was introduced at the AGM and we are grateful to Liz Etheridge for organising this. The changes to our Constitution approved at the AGM are designed to bring it into line with the requirements of various funding bodies. As a highlight Liz gave a very interesting presentation on the way she sees her work with us progressing over the next 3 years.

A number of members renewed their Supporting Membership at the AGM for which we are extremely grateful. This is a very useful source of funding for us so if any existing Supporters would like to renew or any of you would like to start supporting us then there is a form at the end of this Newsletter. Many thanks.

Review of our progress

HLF Project - Access For All

Liz has been with us for 3 months already! One of the important purposes of her being here is to involve young people with the Wetlands. With this in mind she has been round the local schools and had a very positive reception from everyone. So much so that recently the whole of the Holy Redeemer

Catholic Primary School in Pershore visited the Wetlands in groups over a period of 2 days with Liz which was a very successful event.



Fig.2: This is what the Wetland is for! Pupils from Holy Redeemer Catholic Primary School searching for bugs. (V Wood)

New scrape

Planning work continues for this project. We were rather surprised to learn that an 8-inch gas main runs beneath the Wetland, particularly under the area we propose to re-profile. With the help of surveyors from the gas company we now know exactly where the pipe runs (some of you may have seen posts with yellow flags on top to mark the run of the pipe) and have been able to adapt our design to avoid any interference with this service and our revised proposal has been approved.

We are working hard towards putting forward formal planning submission which involves getting approval from the Environment Agency because this work will take place in the flood plain of the River Avon. We still hope to be able to start the site work later this year.

All Day Bird Watch 2013

On 18 May we held our All Day Birdwatch 2013 event on the Wetland which ran from 04h30 in the morning until 21h30 at night! The **Cuckoo** was almost the first and last bird heard although absent/quiet during the middle of the day. The total species count for the day was **49**. (53 last year but we were almost 3 weeks earlier in 2012.

During the day there were 2 new birds for 2013; **Hobby** and **Common Tern** and 6 species seen only once during the day and were; **Kestrel**, **Hobby**, **Common Tern**, **Green Woodpecker**, **Long-tailed Tit** and **Raven**. Another interesting bird was a **Kingfisher** that used the bridge displaced by the flood in the north meadow as a perch quite regularly. This bridge has now been repositioned so that it crosses the channel so is no longer of much use to the Kingfisher!

Finally, as we were walking off the Wetland in the gloaming, I thought to try out The Friends' new bat detector and identified several **Soprano Pipistrelle** hawking insects near the main entrance.

BES Exploring Avon Meadows Wetlands Event

We have to thank Simon Wood of the Worcestershire Biological Records Centre for obtaining this grant and organising these events with Liz's help.



Fig.3: Our Mute Swan X60 in happier days with 7 cygnets taken during the All Day Birdwatch (see Recent Sightings below). (V Wood)



Fig.4: The BES Event team. From l to r; Joe Botting (iSpot), Richard Stott, Harry Green MBE (WBRC), Simon Wood (WBRC), Liz Etheridge, Bert Reid, Jenni Schenke (WBRC). (V Wood)

attended. With the help of our experts all visitors were able to see interesting and attractive plants and insects. You all can come along to the next one which is on Tuesday 9 July at 13h00. The format is that you will be escorted round the Wetland and be introduced to our experts who will tell you a little about what they have found and show you examples.

Equipment Grants

We now have all the equipment from our Wildlife Recording Equipment grant which includes and so can be self-sufficient in providing equipment for events held on the Wetlands.

Additionally we have been most fortunate to obtain a grant from the LEADER Programme to purchase reed cutting equipment comprising a power scythe and a special brush cutter designed for reed cutting. (see Site Management below)

Site Management

As is the way of reeds, we show great enthusiasm for planting them at the outset but then they take hold and have to be controlled before they will take over all the pools that have been so carefully created. Our Management Plan suggests cutting on a 5-year cycle which in practical terms means once they have become established cutting 20% of the reeds each year. The time has come for this work to start and therefore it is particularly fortunate that we have been able to obtain funding for the equipment to allow volunteers to carry out the reed management work.

While the spring and early summer may not have been the best for us humans plants have grown apace, none more so than the hay crop on the Wetland. A grazer has been contracted to mow the grass and this will take place in the near future. Once the grass has been cut 12 English Longhorn cattle (dehorned!) will be introduced to graze the area and they will be prevented from accessing the reed beds. It is hoped that this low number of cattle will minimise their impact on regular users of the Wetland and volunteer cattle wardens will be trained to assist in this.

Recent Sightings

On 27 April Ken Pomfret reported a **Great White Egret** on the Wetland in the late afternoon. Telephones buzzed as the Great White Egret is a rare bird in Worcestershire and it attracted quite a lot of interest from local experts on the day. The UK population is only around 100 individuals. Later on that same afternoon 3 other new species for the Wetland were recorded; **Yellow Wagtail, Whinchat and Cetti's**

Warbler, the only new species seen on the Wetland so far this year bringing our species total to 110.



Fig.5: Great White Egret *Egretta alba* on the scrape area 27 April 2013. (R D E Stott)

The first **Common Cuckoo** on the Wetland was heard on 8 May.

A pair of **Canada Geese** have taken over the **Mute Swan's** nest from 2012 and the swans have moved to a spot, hidden by reeds, just north of the boardwalk. From there the swans produced 7 cygnets and the Canada Geese 4 goslings. Rather more surprising was the appearance of 3 Greylag goslings. Neither Canada nor Greylag Geese have bred on the Wetland before this year.



On 30th May a **Red Kite** flew over and again on 31st (see Fig. 6). For non-bird watchers, the V-shaped tail is the give-away.

Fig.6: Red Kite photographed over the Wetland on 31 May 13. (C Davis)

As I write this in early July I have to report the sad news that our Mute Swans (Fig.2) have lost 6 of their 7 cygnets. Worse, on Friday 5 July the death of one of our resident swans, 41B, was reported. One can only guess at the culprit but the parents were our resident pair of Mute Swans who have successfully brought up broods in previous years the best guess is that some new predator has come on the scene, possibly a Fox, an American Mink or even uncontrolled dogs. I am most anxious to hear from anyone who has seen anything or has any information that might shed some light on the death of this poor swan. I can be contacted on richarddestott@gmail.com.

Flora & Fauna Surveys

Bird Survey:

Regular summer visitors arrived a little later than usual this year. A **Barn Swallow** was recorded on 13 Apr (5 Apr in 2012), **Sand Martins** on 18 Apr (3 May in 2012) and **Common Swifts** on 5 May (26 Apr in 2012) although **House Martins** were a little earlier on 18 Apr (26 Apr in 2012). Conversely the last **Common Snipe** was recorded on 5 May, a record late date for us. Warblers arrived in force during April, with **Chiffchaff** on 6th, **Blackcap**, **Willow** and **Reed Warblers** on 13th with **Sedge Warbler** and **Common Whitethroat** on 25th. Among the occasional visitors, a **Great Crested Grebe** was seen on the river on 9 May. 84 species have been recorded on our regular bird surveys this year to date (85 were recorded during the whole of 2012).



Fig. 7 Sedge Warblers visit the Wetland to breed each year. (R D E Stott)

Butterfly Transect

Work surveying butterflies started again this year on 1 April but it is only about now that butterfly numbers begin to rise and we can assess what sort of a year it will be. The 11 species recorded so far are the "usual suspects" including; Brimstone, Large, Small and Green-veined Whites, Orange-tip, Small Copper, Common and Holly Blues, Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Comma. This week butterfly numbers have begun to increase.



Fig. 8 Small Tortoiseshell caterpillars on the top of a stinging nettle on the Wetland in late June. (R D E Stott)

Dragonfly Survey

We have made a start on a regular dragonfly survey this summer. As this is our first year of regular recording everything is new but exciting to find new ones even so. 6 species have been recorded so far during this year's survey.



Fig. 9 Male Banded Demoiselle often seen by the river. Look out for the black patches in the wings. (R D E Stott)



Fig. 10 Female Scarce Chaser occasionally seen beside drainage channels. (R D E Stott)

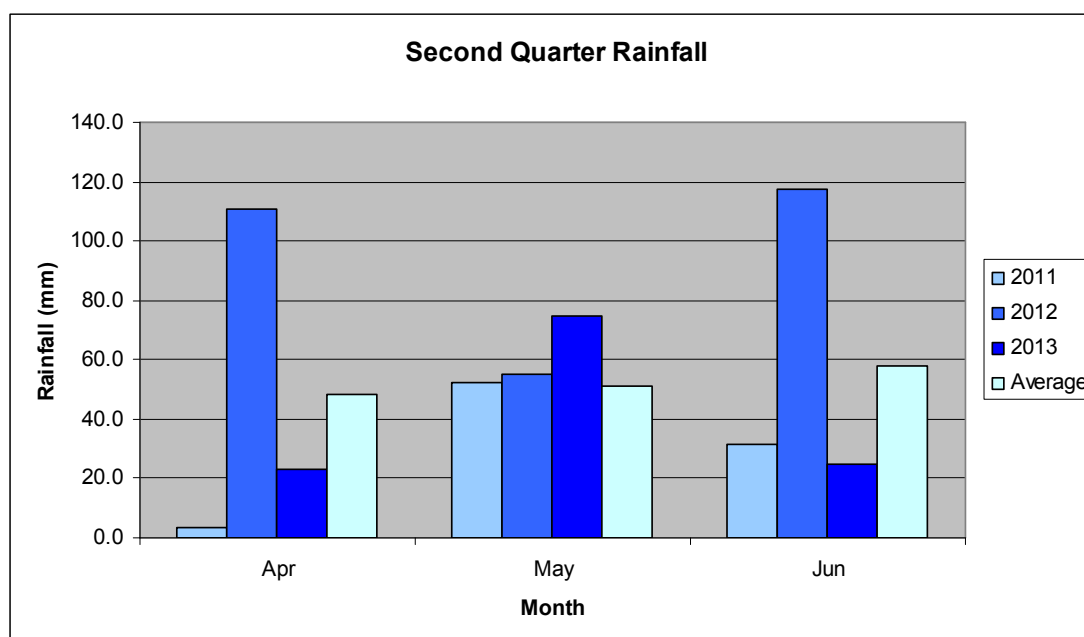
How you can help us

I put this in every month and we are serious. Please let us have any photographs or notes of sightings that you think are interesting. If you do see something interesting note the date and time and approximate location! Additionally I am always looking for interesting photographs taken on the Wetland for this Newsletter. Get yourself published!

If you know of anyone you think would be interested in receiving this Newsletter by eMail please let me know with their eMail address.

Water Levels

Given the extremely variable weather we have been experiencing in recent years it seems more interesting to use a graph to show what has been happening to the Wetland rainfall recently rather than a table of numbers. As you can see the average for this quarter jogs along at around 50mm whereas the actual rainfall has varied wildly.



Diary Dates

Activities for the next five months are set out below and we will be delighted to see you there at any or all of them!

Date	Activity	Date	Activity
Tue 9 July	Worcestershire Recorders' event (13h00 - 16h00)	Sat 7 Sep	Work Party (10h00 - 12h30)
Sat 3 Aug	Work Party (10h00 - 12h30)	Sat 5 Oct	Work Party (10h00 - 12h30)
Sun 4 Aug	Worcestershire Recorders' event (13h00 - 16h00)	Sat 2 Nov	Work Party (10h00 - 12h30)

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

Website

Although we are going to get professional assistance in developing the website please let us know if you have any suggestions.

The web address: <http://www.avonmeadows.org.uk/>

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 565 366

eMail: liz.etheridge@wychavon.gov.uk

May we wish you all a very enjoyable and interesting summer on the Wetland and that you are able to take part in some of activities!

Richard Stott

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