

AVON MEADOWS WETLAND VOLUNTEERS

Newsletter No.1

It is our intention that this Newsletter will be issued quarterly and it is anticipated that it will be published and distributed to our volunteers by eMail. This method has been chosen to save costs as funding is extremely tight at present and we hope that you will understand.



Figure 1: The Wetland photographed in early August 2010 showing low water levels, 15.9 metres aod. (R D E Stott)

Review of our progress

The final item of the main works was the installation of the handsome interpretive sign boards which were installed at the main entrances to the Wetland at the end of July. Now we move into the enjoyment phase with some maintenance work to keep things in good order.

At present our strategy for controlling the water level is to keep the tilting weir at its highest level (16.40m aod) to hold back as much water as we are able through the year. This gives us the ability to reduce the water levels if necessary although the water will be retained behind the bunds that have been constructed as part of the main project.

Volunteers have already started some work and those of you who have visited the Wetland will have noticed wood chip appearing on some of the footpaths to mitigate the effects of sticky mud at wetter times of year.

Litter collection is an ongoing problem but thanks to the efforts of people living nearby and forays by volunteers the build-up is being kept under control. Many thanks to everyone for that.

A Committee has been set up to organise activities, monitoring of flora and fauna together with ongoing volunteer maintenance work. It is our intention to keep lists of all



Figure 2: The tilting weir. (R D E Stott)

species discovered within the boundary of the Wetland. Contact details for officers of the Committee are given at the end of this newsletter.

As we all know this has been the driest summer for 80 years but it is encouraging to note that water level has held up in spite of this.

Breeding Birds

The presence of satisfactory amount of water has ensured a prolific breeding season for our birds. Early in the summer three Mute Swans were found dead, apparently killed by other animals. Mercifully this mortality has not been repeated and within a few days of their demise there were 14 new swans on the Wetland. Of the water birds, Mute Swans, Mallard, Little Grebe, Coot and Moorhen have all produced young. Of the less obvious species summer visitors such as Reed and Sedge Warblers have bred as has the resident Reed Bunting. A Common Cuckoo was much in evidence during the early part of the summer although no young bird has been seen.

Less Usual Sightings

Little Egrets have been a common sight on the Wetland with a high count of 5 birds present at the end of July. This species was a rare sight in England 10 years ago but a series of milder winters has encouraged them to become resident and there are a number breeding colonies in the southern counties.

There have been good numbers of dragonflies and damselflies and a Four-spotted Chaser was seen perching on a sedge leaf over the water in June.

It has been a good year so far for butterflies and after the meadows had been mown in July large numbers of Small Tortoiseshell, Meadow Brown and Ringlet were to be seen.

The Wetland has been a mass of wild flowers this year helped along by the warm weather. Spear and Creeping Thistles line the paths, Purple Loosetrife along the shoreline. There are a small number of Celery-leaved Buttercups in the soft mud at the edge of some pools.

If you seen anything you think is unusual or interesting please let us know and send us a photograph.

Things to come

We have many plans for the future. Following on from this newsletter we hope that before the next one becomes due we shall have our new website up and running. This will provide a ready means to keep you all in touch with what is happening and a vehicle for the publication of this newsletter in future. It will also be the place where full details of sightings and monitoring results are published.



Figure 3: Four-spotted Chaser *Libellula quadrimaculata* on Avon Meadows on 30 June 2010. (R D E Stott)

As far as the Wetland itself is concerned it is planned to let nature take its course for the next year or two. Doubtless there will be some need to control the growth of willows and reeds away from the breeding season but not much else apart from general maintenance.

We are planning to set up regular volunteer workdays each month which will alternate between Wednesdays and Saturdays. In the near future a brush cutting exercise is to be carried out to widen the paths to about 1 metre.

It is planned to conduct a full survey of the wild flowers on the wetland, an exercise that will be repeated at regular intervals in order to track the development of the flora as the Wetland develops. All our records will be formally submitted to the Worcestershire Recorders.

Your Committee does not have all the good ideas and we are sure that you have some too. Please let us know your thoughts or things you think we could usefully do. Bear in mind that we do not have much in the way of funds at present, but plenty of enthusiasm.

We are always looking for more volunteers to help on work parties or wildlife surveys. If you have any friends or acquaintances you think might be interested please ask them to get in touch.

Officers of the Committee

Chairman - Richard Stott richarddestott@gmail.com

Treasurer - Bob Gillmor robert.gillmor@btinternet.com

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Please enjoy your Wetland!

Richard Stott