



A misty autumn morning. The pool at its summer level to make it easier for cutting reeds.

Photo: Richard Stott

Newsletter No: 25

October 2016

Progress on the Wetland

Site Management

Sheep have been introduced for grazing up to mid-December as part of our management plan. There is no reason for dog owners not to take their pets onto the Wetland provided they keep them on a lead.

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. Much of the scrape has been cleared of brush now. More needs to be done, particularly clearing young reeds from the pool and channel areas. At the time of writing the low autumn rainfall has meant that the scrape is as dry as a bone! This means easy access for maintenance but no water birds.

The water level of the main pool is being maintained at its late summer level to allow machine access to the reed beds. Work has started clearing a section of reeds. Even with machinery there is a large amount of work so any help you can give us will be very welcome. (see Diary Dates section)

The main drainage channel has been cleared between the tilting weir south to our boundary. This involves clearing just half of the channel, from its centre to the west bank. This is a standard technique which allows plants, invertebrates and amphibians to recolonise from undisturbed areas.

The Management Plan is awaiting approval by Natural England. Once this approval has been received the plan will be put up on the website. Note that it is quite a large, detailed document!

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.

Sarah's Success

Congratulations to Sarah Fowle who had one of her photographs selected for WWT calendar for 2017. She also has an exhibition at the Showell Gallery in the Civic Centre at present.

Photo Challenge!



An excellent photograph of a Water Rail taken on the main pool recently in late morning light.

Photo: Sarah Fowle

Water Rails

These are secretive birds related to Moorhens that spend most of their lives deep in reed beds. Very occasionally they can be found at the edge where they can be seen and even photographed.

The birds make a number of weird calls which can be used to identify them. The call heard most often is rather like a piglet squealing. This year they have been heard throughout the spring and summer for the first time, leading us to believe that they did indeed breed. Their chicks are small black balls of fluff but we did not manage to see any of these.

Wetland Events

Twin-town Visit

A group from our twin-town in Germany, Bad Neustadt, visited on 28 August. The morning was sunny and they were knowledgeable people, interested in Avon Meadows so the visit can be counted a great success.

Speakers for Avon Meadows

We are very grateful to the people who volunteered to provide short talks to local community groups on Avon Meadows. Liz will be holding briefing sessions in the near future to be sure people are comfortable with what to say.

Surveys and Sightings

Birds

Weekly Bird Count

A young Common Cuckoo was seen on 4 Aug showing that for the second year in a row cuckoos have bred on the Wetland.

No Swifts were reported after 11 Aug and no Sand Martins after 16 Aug. The last Sedge and Reed Warblers were seen on 25 Aug and House Martins were last seen on 29 Sep and Barn Swallows on 6 Oct. Unlike reports from other parts of the country these departure dates are not especially late.

Lower than average rainfall has allowed the scrape to dry out. While this has allowed essential management work to take place it has not encouraged waterbirds to visit. However a Green Sandpiper and Common Greenshank were seen on the scrape in the afternoon on 19 Aug before the scrape dried out completely.

Up to 2 Little Egrets remained on the main pool from 18 Aug to 1 Sep. There has been quite a number of Little Egrets in the county this summer.

Both Eurasian Treecreepers and Goldcrests have been recorded regularly during the last 3 months. Although we believe that Cetti's Warbler is resident on the Wetland it was not until 29 Sep one was heard this autumn, for the first time since 18 June!

We are confident that Water Rails have bred this year but no young have been seen as the birds keep to the depths of the reed beds.

The Common Snipe was the first of the wintering birds to arrive on 15 Sep closely followed by Meadow Pipits which arrived on 22 Sep. Fieldfare began to arrive on 13 Oct and the first Redwing on 19 Oct. The first Common Stonechat was reported on 11 Oct to complete our regular winter visitor list. There are 2 males and 1 female on the scrape at present.

The Northern Shoveler is an occasional visitor to the Wetland and one was reported from the main pool on 23 Oct.

Common Starlings began to gather for their murmuration at dusk on 24 Oct although the number at that time was below 1,000 birds. By the end of the month this number increased to ~5000 but not every evening. Check the website for the latest news.

Funding

Higher Level Stewardship scheme:

We have been successful in our application for the HLS scheme which is excellent news. The requirements imposed on us are quite specific and have been included in the new edition of our Management Plan (see website for the Management Plan). In essence we have specific tasks for the management of the site for wildlife and will be able to call in contractors for bigger jobs, e.g. clearing drainage channels. Happily Liz will be with us part-time for 2 years to manage this scheme.

"Wychavon's Wildlife Challenge" Lottery Funded Project

The news on this project is not good as we have been turned down for reasons that are not clear. This is a major disappointment and we shall have to think where we go next.

Butterflies

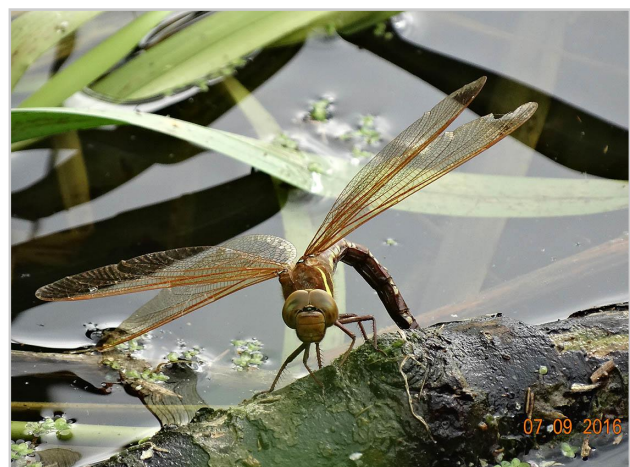
2016 has been a bad year for butterflies throughout the country and we are no exception. This can be seen by looking at our total butterfly counts over the 6 years we have been carrying out transect surveys.

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
808	426	1024	680	519	281

Dragonflies

Dragonfly counts have been low too. Counts are not carried out regularly so the table below shows average dragonfly counts per visit.

2013	2014	2015	2016
49	93	32	47



A Brown Hawker laying eggs taken on the Wetland in September 2016. This is a common dragonfly on the Wetlands which flies between July and September.

Photo: Paul Jenkins



This photograph was taken from a light aircraft in June 2016. It provides an excellent view of the Wetlands with the River Avon to the right, Pershore High Street to the left and Pershore Abbey bottom left. *Photo: Andy Young*

Moths

The last moth trapping night was on the 2 Sep making 5 sessions in all. This small number was mainly due to key people not being available and we are planning more for 2017. We usually begin towards the end of April.

In spite of this we increased our species list by 9 to a total of 344.

Mammals

The Bioblitz produced a new mammal for the Wetland, a Mole! Rather surprising one had not been recorded before but this brings the number of mammals recorded on the Wetland to date to 24.

In September there were two sightings of Otters on the River Avon alongside the Wetland, an adult and later two cubs.

A dead Water Shrew was found on the scrape during our work party on 8 Oct.

Bioblitz 2016

The Bioblitz results are in and produced a number of new records particularly among beetles and flies which are under-recorded on the Wetland.

In summary the total numbers of species was similar to last year; the main differences were fewer fly records and more moth records. In the end we totalled 348 species (vs. 400 in 2015).

The date for Bioblitz 2017 will be 1 July 17 and will tie in with a national event promoted by the Floodplain Meadows Partnership.

Survey Summaries

BIRDS: The survey work has been down a little again this quarter averaging 38 species with a best count of 47. So far **95** species have been recorded on the Wetlands in 2016. This is a new high count for a year.

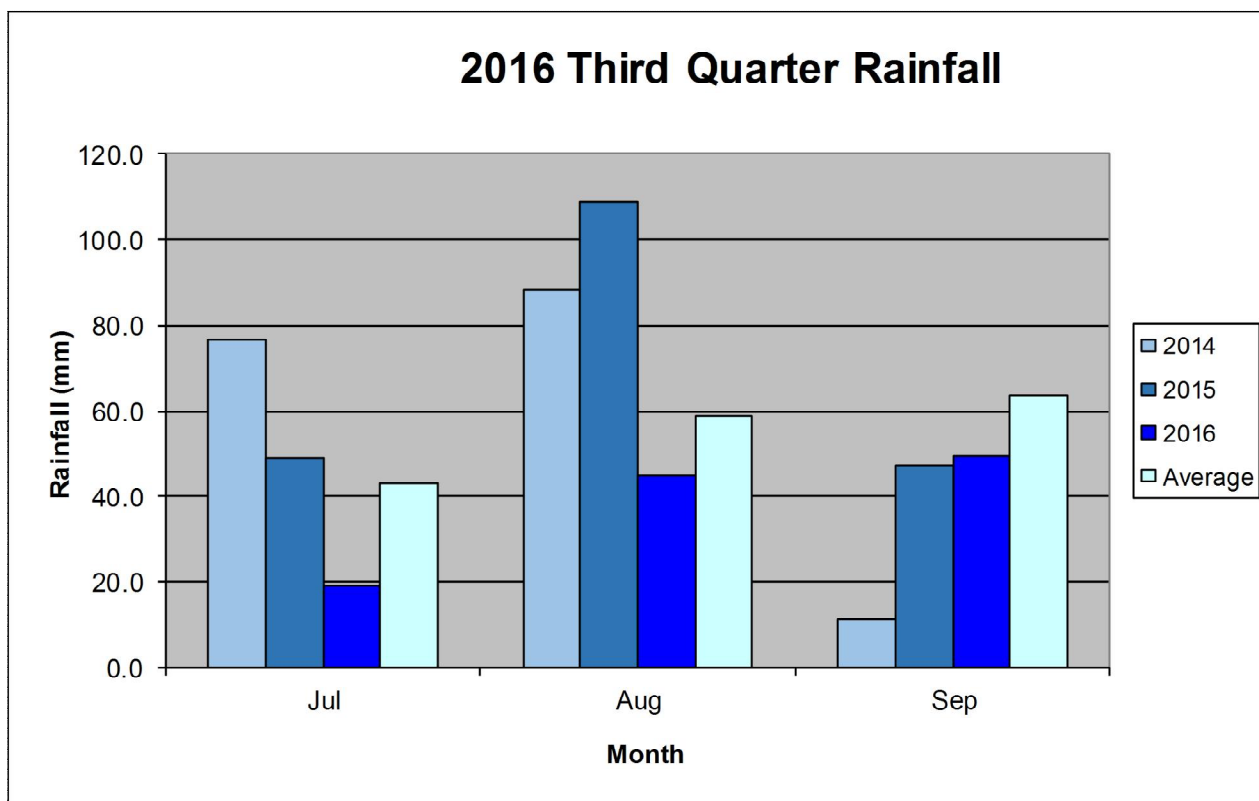
BUTTERFLIES: **19** species of butterfly have been recorded this summer.

DRAGONFLIES: **11** species have been recorded this summer.

MOTHS: **122** species have been recorded to date in 5 outings this year.

FLOWERS: Several new finds have raised the total species recorded on the Wetland to date to **232**.

Water Levels



This year's rainfall shows a consistent pattern which has been less than usual. There has been sufficient to maintain the desired level in the main pool but the scrape dried out during September. October rainfall continues this trend of lower than average rainfall. Similarly the water table remains at least 500mm below the surface.

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 12 Nov 16	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sat 10 Dec 16	Work Party 10h00-13h00
Tue 15 Nov 16	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sat 17 Dec 16	Work Party 10h00-13h00
Sat 19 Nov 16	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Tue 20 Dec 16	Committee Meeting 14h30-17h00
Sat 26 Nov 16	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sun 7 May 17	Tiddesley Wood Open Day
Sat 3 Dec 16	Work Party 10h00-13h00	Sat 1 Jul 17	Bioblitz 2017

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.