

# **AVON MEADOWS COMMUNITY WETLAND**

## **Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows**

### **Newsletter No.8**



Fig. 1 The Wetland on 12 June 2012 on a typically dull afternoon. After two wet months the water level is 187mm higher than at the same time in 2011. (R D E Stott)

### **Annual General Meeting**

The officers and committee were re-elected for another year by unanimous vote at the AGM. There was an interesting talk by Ian Barber of Severn Waste Services which has provided grants for a number of environmental projects in Worcestershire and, who knows, maybe us too in the future!

Two new medium term projects were discussed, first to look into the creation of a large pool to the north of the present one with a view to encouraging wading birds and wildfowl to make long stays in the Wetland. The other project would be to develop a history of the Wetland perhaps as far back as the last Ice Age! While there has not been any permanent human habitation on the site it is an environment created by man. We are looking for someone to lead this project.

The matter of day-to-day funding was raised and it was approved by the meeting that a new category of Supporting Friend would be created available to anyone who subscribed £5 per person or £10 per family per annum. We have day-to-day running costs and the hope would be that these subscriptions would cover these costs. A simple application form is attached at the end of this Newsletter and we would be extremely grateful if those interested could complete it and return it to the Treasurer with their cheque.

### **Review of our progress**

Those of you that have been able to visit the Wetland recently will notice that the drainage channels to the south of the main pool have been cleared. This work is essential maintenance work necessary to keep these important drainage channels clear. There is no ideal time to carry out this work although it is necessary to undertake it in relatively dry conditions. There was some frog spawn in the channels at the time of the work which of course was lost but it should be remembered that the Common Frog is an extremely common species on the Wetland so the population will recover quickly.

More moth nights are being planned this year later in the summer although the dates are yet to be fixed. Please remember anyone is welcome to come along!

## Recent Sightings

The most significant sighting since the last Newsletter was that of an **Osprey** fishing along the river on 14 April which was our 100<sup>th</sup> bird species! The first **Cuckoo** of the spring was heard on 17 April followed by the first **Hobby** sighting on 28 April. The only **Willow Warbler** of the year to date was recorded by Dave Jeynes on the afternoon of the All Day Bird Watch. We are pleased to see that **Common Whitethroats** have returned this summer, first seen on 3 May, and are nesting. Since then we have had our first spring record of **Lesser Whitethroat** on 11 May. A **Red Kite** flew over in the middle of the day on 17 May. **Sparrowhawks** must be nesting locally as they are regular visitors to the Wetland.

We have erected nine nest boxes around the Wetland of which seven have shown some signs of activity, mostly by Blue Tits. We will inspect them all at the end of the breeding season and report back on those that we can confirm as having held nests.

**Mute Swans:** The resident pair of **Mute Swans** (orange leg ring numbers **41B** male and **X60** female) started nesting on 29 March and hatched 4 cygnets on 14 May. We lowered the tilting weir in early May to avoid the risk of their nest getting flooded although in actuality no water was lost. They were photographed last year on 19 May 2011 with cygnets of approximately the same size.

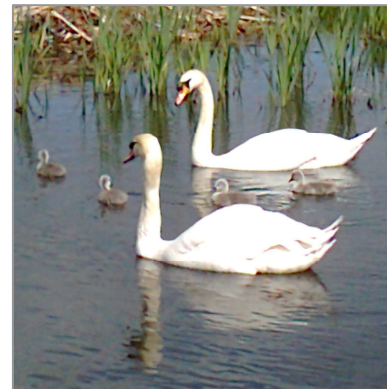


Fig. 2 Our cygnets in mid-May.  
(S Fowle)

If you see adult swans without cygnets do not worry as there has been another non-breeding pair of Mute Swans on the Wetland from time to time.

Kirstie Chippendale found a rare moth for Worcestershire, an **Emperor Moth**, on the Wetland on the afternoon of 8 May while walking her dog. She carefully carried it home to photograph before releasing it. There have only been 66 records of this species in Worcestershire since 1834! This is the 190<sup>th</sup> moth species recorded on the Wetland.



Fig. 3 Emperor Moth (male) *Saturnia pavonia* on 8 May. The males of this species fly in daytime and do not feed at all! (K Chippendale)

The first dragonflies appeared in hot weather in late May, in particular a female **Broad-bodied Chaser** was seen on 24 May.

An acquired taste perhaps but it was interesting to discover 2 **Horse Leeches** on 24 May. Apparently their teeth are not long enough to penetrate human flesh!



**Fig. 4 Horse Leech *Haemopsis sanguisuga* (R D E Stott)**

**Correction:** The report in Newsletter No.7 referring to good numbers of Water Voles having been recorded was incorrect and should have read **Field Voles**.

When conducting our regular check under our tin sheets we found a **Slow Worm** which was quite torpid in the cool weather. Many of you may know that the Slow Worm is neither slow nor a worm but a legless lizard.



**Fig. 5 Slow Worm *Aguis fragilis* about 30cm long, on 5 Apr 2012. (R D E Stott)**

## Cattle Grazing

Under the terms of his lease the tenant will be returning cattle to the southern part of the Wetland on 2 July. Parts of the Wetland have been fenced off to keep cattle off the main path running south from the Mayfield Road entrance. Later the cattle will be allowed to range more widely.

Lease conditions for the future are to be reviewed in order to make them more sympathetic to users and the wildlife.

It is planned to take a hay cut from the northern part of the Wetland before the cattle arrive but this will depend rather on the weather!

## Avon Meadows HLF Project – Access For All

Wychavon District Council has submitted our proposal to the Heritage Lottery Fund and we now wait for the outcome with bated breath! The result is due in the autumn.

## Flora & Fauna Surveys

**Bat Survey:** A survey was carried out on 19 May and showed that, as last year, **Noctule** and **Daubenton's Bats** are present, the former may roost in old woodpecker holes on the Wetland. Two new (although unsurprising) discoveries are that both **Common** and **Soprano Pipestrelles** are present. As you might guess the only easy way to separate these two species is by the frequency of their calls. (45kHz & 55kHz).

**Bird Survey:** This is proceeding well with 80 species recorded to date. **Reed Bunting** numbers have increased to last year's levels and **Sedge** and **Reed Warblers** are present



in good numbers chattering in the reeds. Survey counts are up this summer averaging between 30-40 species (best to date 41).

**Butterfly Transect:** Work started again for this year on 1 April. The variable weather has made counts difficult so far.

**Moth Nights:** We are in the process of planning one or two moth nights this year and will let you all know when dates have been set. Weather will be a determining factor!

**Dragonfly Survey:** We are going to set up a proper dragonfly survey this summer and would be very pleased if someone would help in carrying out the survey work. It would involve regular weekly visits to the Wetland to count dragonfly species. At present only five species have been recorded. Our sightings will be sent to Mike Averill, the County Recorder via <http://dragonfliesofworcestershires.weebly.com/index.html> which is an interesting site for those interested in these insects.

Anybody who is interested to taking part in any survey work or would like to find out what is involved please do get in touch.

### All Day Bird Watch:

The date for this event was not chosen at random but using 2011 survey data it is this time of year when we see the most species on the Wetland. However 28 April turned out to be a cold day but at least it was dry. Sadly few members of the general public turned up, doubtless put off by the weather. Otherwise the event was a huge success and many thanks for all of you who were able to take part.



Fig. 6 Richard and Kirstie checking the records on the All Day Bird Watch on 28 April. (V Wood)

Three of us gathered at the Mayfield Road gate at 05h00, it was still dark and there was drizzle! Happily the rain cleared, the day broke, a **Common Cuckoo** called, life was good! We recorded all the birds seen during each hour throughout the day using a rota of recorders who tramped off searching for birds until 20h00 in the evening. We kept separate bird lists for each hour of the day. Copies of this data can be sent out to you by eMail on request.

On the day we recorded a total of 53 species, one of which, a drake **Mandarin Duck**, was a first for the Wetland making the total since the Wetland was created 101 bird species.

Three species made their first appearance for the year on the Wetland, these were; **Green Woodpecker**, **Sand Martin** and **Willow Warbler**. We saw the first large flock of **Barn Swallows** of the year in mid-morning which was being followed by a **Hobby**, a small falcon, looking for an easy meal! Dave Jeynes did the 6pm to 7pm shift on his own and was rewarded with the only **Willow Warbler** and **Common Kingfisher** sightings of the day.

It is interesting to see from the information collected that bird species counts in the afternoon between 1pm and 5pm are 20% lower than at other times of day.

## The Flowers of Avon Meadows by The Duffer

EARLY SPRING 2012

### **BLACKTHORN** *Prunus spinosa*

A member of the Rose Family. A common enough shrub or small tree which has the Sloe as its fruit. One of the earliest flowering shrubs which unusually flowers in March/April on bare wood (i.e. before any leaves have appeared). Note that Common and Midland Hawthorn (also common) flowers after the leaves have appeared. Quite thorny and not much fun if one of its thorns gets into you as they can be quite difficult to get out.



Fig. 7 Sloe Berries on Blackthorn, note the leaf shape.

### **MISTLETOE** *Viscum album*

A plant everyone knows! It has male and female plants (technically - dioecious). The male plant flowers in early spring (Feb/Mar) but the flowers are inconspicuous small and green and the female plant bears white berries. It is a partial parasite taking nutrients from its host tree. During winter its large ball-like shape is quite obvious in trees on the Wetland.



Fig. 8 Mistletoe bushes.

### **COMMON MOUSE-EAR** *Cerastium fontanum*

This is a very common plant and a garden weed found here and there on the Wetland along path edges or in the grass. It is a member of the Campion family and flowers from April through to September.



Fig. 9 Common Mouse-ear.

### **IVY-LEAVED SPEEDWELL** *Veronica hederifolia*

As its name suggests a member of the Speedwell family flowering April/May. A not uncommon plant but I have only seen a few plants on the Wetland near the Pershore entrance. Its leaf shape and flower colour help to distinguish it from other Speedwells.



Fig. 10 Ivy-leaved Speedwell.

**Note:** There is an index of species covered by The Duffer to date on the next page.

## The Duffer's Species Index

Listed alphabetically by scientific genus (e.g. *Anthriscus*) with Newsletter number added.

Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* No.4  
 Trifid Bur-marigold *Bidens tripartite* No.6  
 Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris* No.4  
 Cuckooflower *Cardamine pratensis* No.4  
 Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum* No.8  
 Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum* No.6  
 Cut-leaved Crane's-bill *Geranium dissectum* No.5  
 White Dead-nettle *Lamium album* No.4  
 Red Dead-nettle *Lamium purpureum* No.4  
 Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* No.5  
 Common Mallow *Malva sylvestris* No.6  
 Silverweed *Potentilla anserina* No.5  
 Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* No.8  
 Lesser Celandine *Ranunculus ficaria* No.4  
 Thread-leaved Water Crowfoot *Ranunculus trichophyllus* No.4  
 Curled Dock *Rumex crispus* No.5  
 Hoary Ragwort *Senecio erucifolius* No.6  
 Bittersweet *Solanum dulcamara* No.6  
 Perennial Sow Thistle *Sonchus arvensis* No.5  
 Ivy-leaved Speedwell *Veronica hederifolia* No.8  
 Common Vetch *Vicia sativa* No.5  
 Mistletoe *Viscum album* No.8

## Species Mapping Project

We are mapping species as it seems appropriate. Clearly there is not much point in mapping species that occur all over the Wetland (eg Meadow Buttercups) or those that move about a lot (eg Wood Pigeon). Unusual sightings or plants that only occur in small areas and possibly birds' nests will be mapped. We have now started maps for the following species:

Marsh-marigold  
 Thread-leaved Water Crowfoot  
 Celery-leaved Buttercup  
 Emperor Moth  
 Field Vole

## Water Levels

As we are all too well aware late spring has been very wet indeed and we have endured much lower temperatures than average. The rainfall data for the period is set out below with mean figures in brackets as usual.

March	14.1 mm (48 mm)
April	111.0 mm (48.5 mm)
May	55.1 mm (51 mm)

At the time of writing (15 June) the rainfall for the month is already 43% above average for the month. All this rain has meant that after a dry start to the year the water level at present is significantly higher than at the same time last year (see chart below).

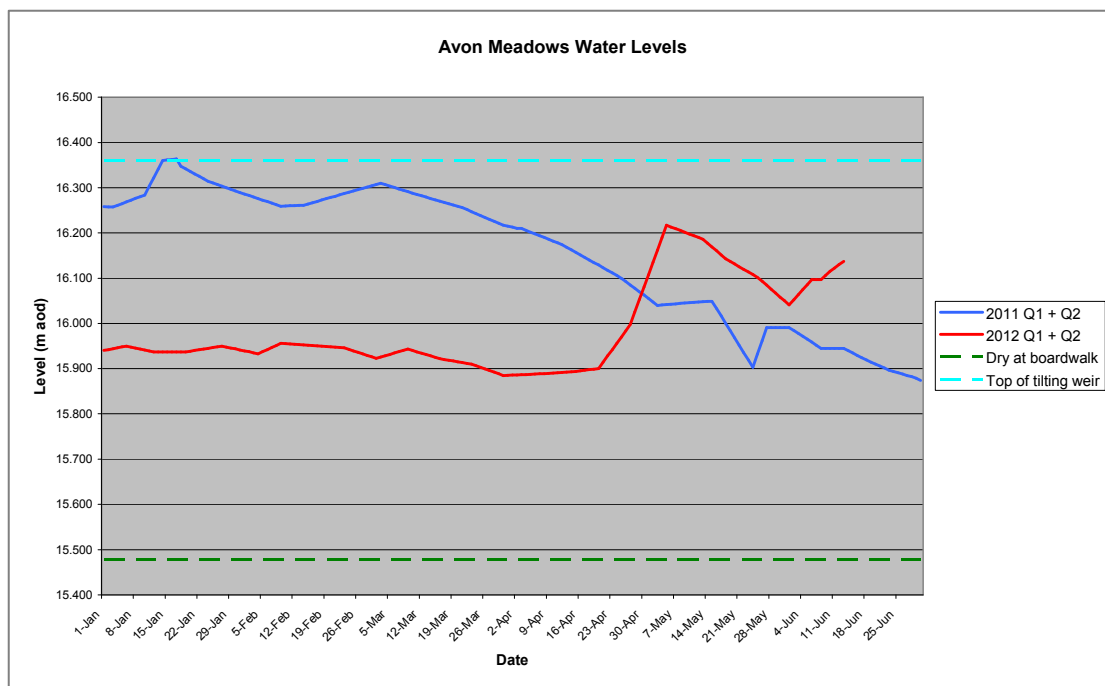


Fig. 11 Water level comparison for the Wetland main pool for 2011 and 2012.

## How you can help us

Please let us have any photographs or sightings that may be of interest. If you do see something interesting note the date and time and approximate location!

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

As set out above we are looking for someone who would like to survey dragonflies on a weekly basis through the summer - please get in touch.

If you are interested in local history then we are looking for you to lead a project to look into the history of the Wetland area. Contact us if you are interested.

If you want to find out more about volunteering please contact Jim Burgin at Wychavon District Council (see below).

## Diary Dates

The regular work party schedule for the next six months is set out below and we will be delighted to see you there. \* indicated dates adjusted to avoid Bank Holidays.

7 July	6 October
11 August*	3 November
1 September	1 December

Note that work parties are usually on the first Saturday of every month (adjusted to avoid public holidays) and start at 10:00am from the Mayfield Road car park. Occasionally we add additional work parties which you will be notified of separately but the start time and place are always the same unless otherwise notified.



Please 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.

## **Mammal Atlas**

You may be interested to know that the Worcestershire Recorders has produced an atlas of Worcestershire's Mammals. This is an A4 sized book containing a lot of very interesting information and particularly maps of the county with dots showing the 10km squares where individual mammal species have been recorded. It uses records from 1995 to 2007 and covers all 57 mammal species ever recorded in Worcestershire with maps for the 45 species recorded during the study period. The cut-off date was too early for any data from the Wetland to be included but we will be ready for the next edition! Note our 1km grid square SO9546.

It is for sale from Worcestershire Recorders, c/o Worcestershire Biological Records Centre, Lower Smite Farm, Smite Hill, Hindlip, Worcester WR3 8SZ at £15 + £2 p&p (you can collect a copy and avoid the postage).

## **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**

We are making some progress with this so have a look at let us know what you think!

Note the new web address: <http://www.avonmeadows.org.uk/> . This is very much work in progress so please do not hesitate to get in touch with suggestions.

## **Contacts**

Either directly by eMail to an officer of the Committee or by telephone to:

Mr Jim Burgin, Wychavon District Council.

Tel: 01386 565366

eMail: jim.burgin@wychavon.gov.uk

We hope that you all continue to enjoy, learn and take part in Wetland activities throughout the summer!

Richard Stott

NOTE: 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



***Friends of Avon Meadows***  
**Supporting Friend Application Form**

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