

AVON MEADOWS COMMUNITY WETLAND

Newsletter of the Friends of Avon Meadows

Newsletter No.9



Fig. 1 The Wetland on 4 Oct 2012 as autumn colours begin to emerge. The water level on that day was 16.28m. *(R D E Stott)*

HRH The Duke of Gloucester Visit

As many of you will know HRH the Duke of Gloucester did us the honour of visiting the Wetland on 3rd October. He was able to see what we have been doing over the last 2-3 years and his visit provided some much needed publicity. He met a number of volunteers and saw for himself the work necessary to maintain the Wetland. I would like to thank all the volunteers who helped before and during His Royal Highness' visit to make the whole event a great success.



Fig. 2 The Deputy Lord Lieutenant, HRH Duke of Gloucester and our own Jim Burgin during the visit. *(J M Stott ARPS)*

Avon Meadows HLF Project - Access For All

A Red Letter Day for the Wetlands! We are immensely excited and grateful for our success in obtaining a grant of £240,000 (donated as follows; £230,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, £7,500 from Wychavon DC and £2,500 from Pershore Town Partnership) to complete an "Access for All" project. This is a 3-year project to improve knowledge of the Wetland in the community particularly among young people through schools. A Wetlands-for-all Project Officer will be appointed to carry out the necessary work in conjunction with the Friends of Avon Meadows. Disabled access will be provided to the boardwalk and the website will be greatly improved.

Review of our progress

The cattle (see below) have been and gone and with a big effort from our volunteers the paths have been put back in reasonable order in time for the visit of the Duke of Gloucester. The start of this work had to be delayed until the cattle had gone and the weather had improved sufficiently to allow the ground to dry out. We were very grateful for Dave and John Keen who used their machinery to level off the south bund. Thanks too to the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Tiddesley Wood, for giving us a considerable amount of woodchip to put down on the paths.

Residents of Cherry Orchard may have noticed 2 or 3 people wandering about the Wetland wearing binoculars on Thursday mornings. This is when we make our weekly bird survey and those carrying it out are quite harmless!

Following our appeal at the AGM we now have 24 Supporting Members to whom we are very grateful. We try to keep our running costs to a minimum there are costs non-the-less such as insurance and fuel for the strimmer to clear the paths. If any more of you would like to make a small annual donation to support our efforts there is an application form at the end of this Newsletter. It is worth noting that the big grants we receive can only be spent on the projects for which they are intended and we rely on donations and small grants to cover our running costs.

Recent Sightings

One of the more interesting sightings on the Wetland of the year was that of a Common Cuckoo chick in the nest of a pair of Reed Warblers photographed by Nick Ruff in early July. Later in the month Alistair Lawson saw a young Cuckoo on the Wetland, which was almost certainly the same bird, so we can be fairly confident that our cuckoo chick survived the cold, wet summer weather.

Common Kingfishers are seen on the Wetland from time to time. It is believed that they are not seen more often because there are no suitable fish in the Wetland pools at present (we need a flood to bring small fish in!) They have been confirmed to be breeding not far from the Wetland.



Fig. 3 Reed Warbler feeding a Common Cuckoo chick on the Wetland in July. (N Ruff)

During our regular bird surveys on 23 September 4 Eurasian Wigeon were recorded on the main pool. This is a new species for the Wetland, making the current total 102.

Visiting warblers all nested with us this summer including; Blackcap, Common Whitethroat, Chiffchaff, Sedge Warbler and Reed Warbler. Grey Herons too have bred locally and can occasionally be found searching the fields for frogs and toads!

From late August to mid-September we saw quite a few Willow Warblers passing through. We know that Sparrowhawks have bred locally but once more we don't know where the nest was. Generally chick numbers for our common water birds Mallard, Coot and Moorhen were all well down in number although all did produce some young that survived.

Mute Swans: The resident pair of **Mute Swans** (orange leg ring numbers **41B** male and **X60** female) still have 4 cygnets numbered **45D-48D**. There is another pair of swans that clearly nested near the Wetland **T52 & R84** which hatched 3 cygnets only 2 of which survive now.

In recent weeks Common Snipe have been recorded in small numbers. These will be migratory birds moving south from their breeding grounds. On 16 August a pair of Common Sandpipers was seen flying along the river and in July a pair of Common Terns flew past on at least two occasions.

Owls are not often recorded over the Wetlands but recently Charles Tucker found an owl pellet there. Owls swallow their prey whole but cannot digest fur, feathers or bones. They regurgitate this waste matter in the form of a pellet. The pellet Charles found was that of a Tawny Owl, identified by its size and shape.

We have started looking seriously at creating a shallow muddy pool or scrape just to the north of the present pools. Our bird counts indicate that wading birds and ducks (other than the resident Mallards) do visit the Wetland but only for brief periods.

The idea is to provide an undisturbed habitat that could tempt them to stay longer. Quite a lot of work has to go on before we can say that the project will definitely go ahead but we will keep you informed as things progress.



Fig. 4 Tawny Owl pellet. (R D E Stott)

Throughout the summer there have been regular reports of Otters on the River Avon and there was one report of an Otter cub leaving the Wetland. Clearly Otters breed on our section of the river although the site of their holt is not known.

Several Water Shrews have been found during the summer, sadly most of those found were dead but at least they are present. Field Voles are present in good numbers too.

Cattle Grazing

A hay cut was not possible this summer due to the wet condition of the ground. This meant that when the cattle were introduced in June the paths were soft and quite severely affected. You will be aware that the cattle were all removed by 2 August. Grazing animals on this land has been part of the traditional land use over the centuries and parts of Wetland benefit considerably from grazing. However if, when and how they will be reintroduced is under discussion with the land owners.

Flora & Fauna Surveys

Bird Survey: Weekly bird surveys continue and numbers seem to have been not too badly affected by the wet summer weather. So far 85 species have been recorded this year (81 in 2011). Our records show 22 species bred on the Wetland and an additional 12 bred close by.

Butterfly Transect: Not so butterflies and the total summer count was down by 50% due entirely to the cool, wet summer and only 18 species were recorded (22 in 2011). This poor showing is a countrywide effect.

Bat Survey: In early September I was approached by Wes Fisher from Cherry Orchard House who gave me a dead bat which turned out to be a Brown Long-eared Bat. It was one of 3 he had found in the garden there, possibly killed by a cat. These bats have large ears to listen for their insect prey rather than echo-locate as most bats do making them difficult to detect with a bat detector.



Fig. 5 A dead Brown Long-eared Bat from Cherry Orchard House. (R D E Stott)

A careful sound analysis carried out by Graham Davison has confirmed that Leisler's Bats occur on the Wetland. This brings the total species count for the Wetland to 6.

Moth Nights: We are all too well aware how cold and wet the summer was. This is bad for insects which are cold blooded and need the warmth of the sun to become active. The upshot of this is that our moth count was delayed this year to a cool evening in mid-September. We caught only 24 species of moth on the night but 8 of these were new to the Wetland bringing our

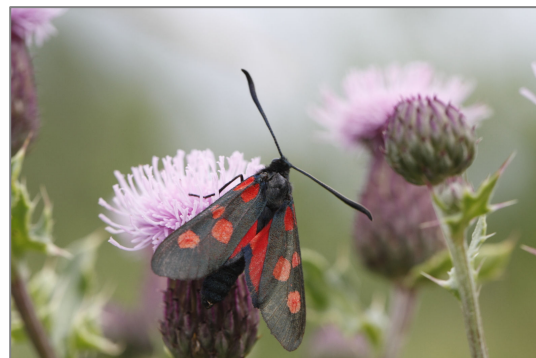


Fig. 6 Six-spot Burnet moth photographed on the Wetland in early July. (R D E Stott)

overall total species count to 198. You do not have to stay up all night to see moths as several attractive ones fly in daytime (Fig. 6).

Dragonfly Survey: As with other insects dragonfly counts were down. 11 species were recorded during the year and all species emerged comparatively late, the first, a Broad-bodied Chaser, being seen on 24 May. They still are hanging on; Southern Hawkers and Common Darters can be seen on sunny days even now.

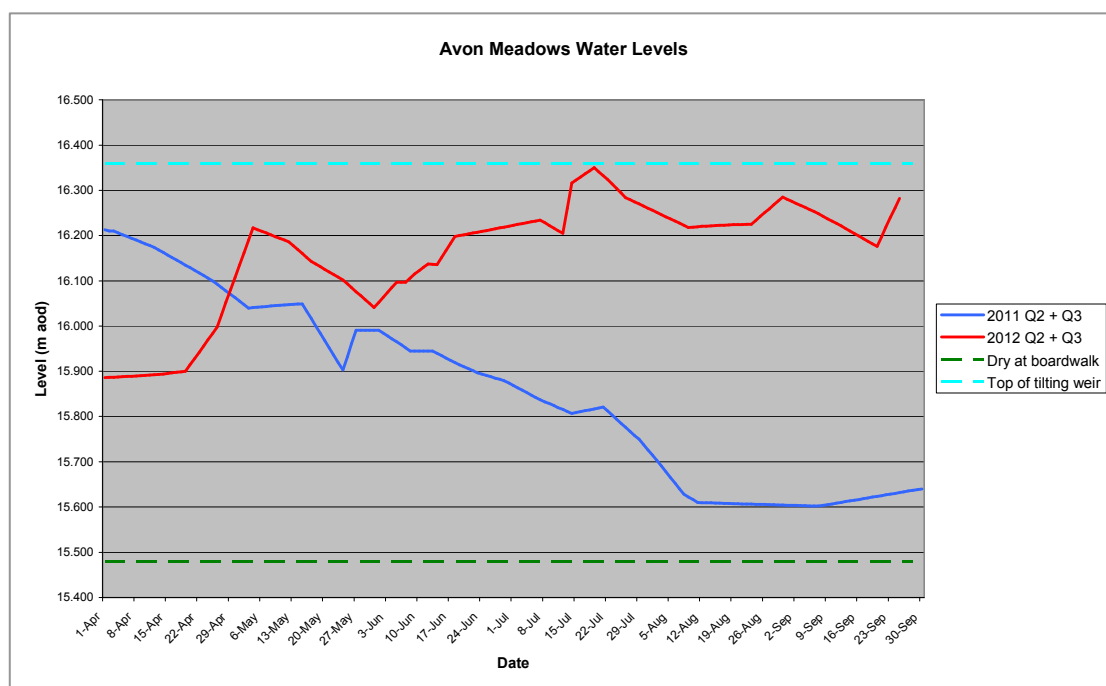
The Flowers of Avon Meadows by The Duffer

The Duffer is taking a winter break and will be back again when the flowers arrive next year.

Following the previous article in this series one of the Friends warned of **Blackthorn synovitis** which might something to be aware of when working with or around thorny shrubs such as blackthorn, but including roses and cacti. It is an inflammation of a joint caused by a thorn penetrating the joint causing infection leading to swelling and stiffness. This often does not occur until some weeks after the incident with the thorn. It does not spread to other joints but can be very painful. If you think you have got this you should see your doctor as soon as possible.

Water Levels

It is not a surprise, given the weather, that the water level on the main pool has continued to be considerably higher than last year.



The levels shown on the graph above relate to those shown on the gauge boards as described below. The Environment Agency has installed the boards so that they match the Ordnance Survey map datum. So zero on our boards is equivalent to 16.0m above sea level. The exact level shown in Fig.7 is close to 16.38m. I hope this helps!

The rainfall data for the period is set out below with mean figures in brackets as usual.

June	117.6 mm (58 mm)
July	112.2 mm (43 mm)
August	84.2 mm (59 mm)
September	65.0 mm (63.5 mm)

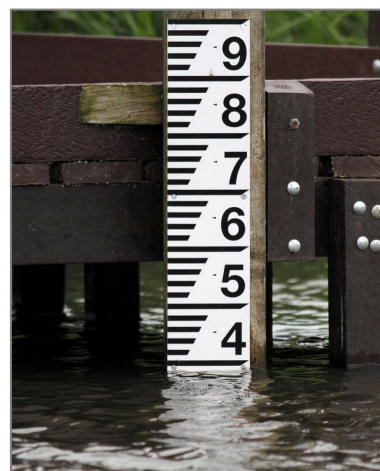


Fig. 7 Gauge board showing a level just below 16.4m.
(R D E Stott)

How you can help us

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

We are considering putting together a calendar of photographs taken by Friends on the Wetland to represent each month of the year. We will take this forward if enough people are interested, please get in touch by eMail if you are interested.

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

New Project: If you are interested in local history then we are looking for someone to lead or take part in a project to look into the history of the Wetland area. Contact Richard Stott if you are interested in helping.

The Wetland has been a water meadow for hundreds of years and the land layout is much unchanged since the first map of the area was prepared in 1811. However long before this, there was no bridge and before that the river did not even take its present course. We would like to put together a timeline to track the changes in this area as far back as it is possible to go.

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.

6 October	5 January 2013*
3 November	2 February
1 December	2 March

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.

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

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

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

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

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