



NEWSLETTER

5 May 2024 shows the duckweed is still absent although there is some creeping in along the banks. Following the wet weather the water level is still quite high. *Photo: Richard Stott*

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From the Chairman

Many congratulations to Liz Etheridge who has recently been promoted to Senior Environmental Officer. Just as importantly, a new Wildlife Sites and Project Officer has been appointed who will start on 8 July. This additional manpower can only bring good things for Avon Meadows.

Other news is that our excellent and efficient Membership Secretary, Tim Hutton, is moving away from the district. He has done an excellent job in this role over recent years and we shall miss him and his bird watching expertise! We wish him well in his new home and hope to keep in touch.

Many of you will have seen on Facebook news of the shocking event discovered during a recent Thursday bird count. An injured Mute Swan was discovered on the main pool suffering from gunshot wounds. Due to prompt action by one of our members it was collected by the Vale Wildlife Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre but sadly it died shortly afterwards. It is almost exactly a year since the previous shooting incident injuring a Mute Swan. (more information below).

Members' Photographs

Here is another photograph by **Jeff Steady ARPS**, This time one of a common bird on Avon Meadows, a Reed Bunting. The image shows a male bird moulting into his smart summer plumage. Although common, when looked at carefully, even common birds can be rather handsome as demonstrated here. Shots of birds in reeds are not easy to get, the camera autofocus always wants to focus on the wrong thing! So you can get brilliant background reeds and a wholly blurred bird.

Reed Buntings move off in winter to surrounding farmland to find food returning in late winter.





This photograph, taken on the 5th May, shows the considerable growth that has taken place since January. The plants have benefitted from the wet weather! *Photo: Richard Stott*

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Progress on the Wetland

WYCHAVON'S ACTIVITIES

The unprecedented wet weather continues to hamper the contractor's work on Avon Meadows. It is important to avoid compaction of the soil that would occur if heavy vehicles were driven onto the

meadows while the soil is sodden. Be assured, all parties want to see the work begin!

Some work has started and very recently, most of the main paths have been mown to greet the arrival of spring.

VOLUNTEERS' ACTIVITIES

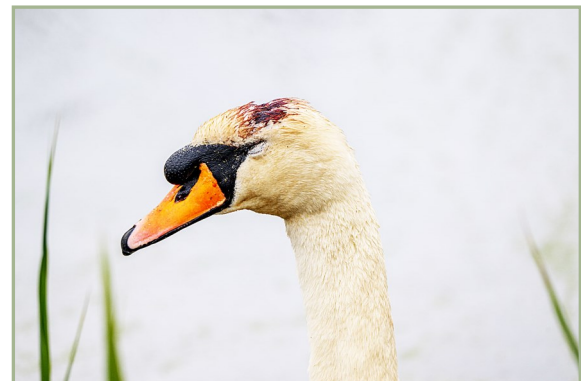
Volunteer activity continues to be restricted by the wet weather. We had planned to cut scrub around the Marsh Marigolds but more rain arrived

preventing access to the area. Happily the marigolds flourished without our input.

This is all rather frustrating but it can only get better!

Mute Swan Incident

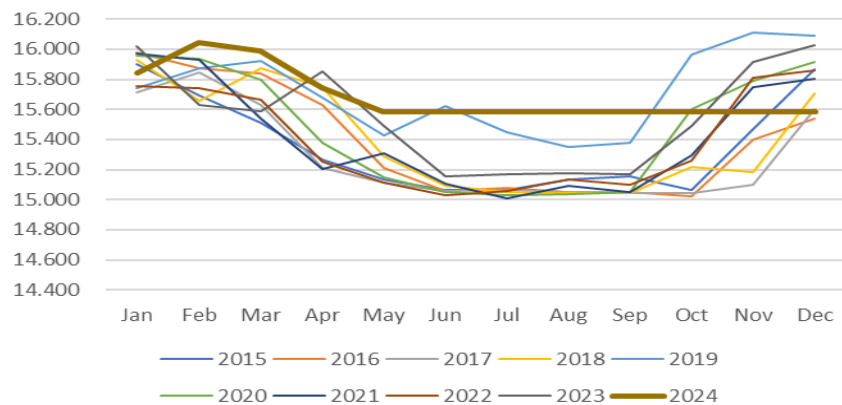
It is almost exactly a year since the last shooting incident involving a Mute Swan. This time a bird was found on Thursday 2 May 2024 during our regular bird count on Avon Meadows. It had a very obvious head injury. In response to this, one of our members called the Vale Wildlife Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre and a team from there arrived in a very short time. The bird was collected and taken to their hospital. Apparently the poor bird died on the journey. A subsequent x-ray at Vale Wildlife Hospital showed a number of pellets lodged in its body leading them to conclude that it was almost certain that a shotgun was used to inflict the injury. This would lead on to two tentative conclusions. One, that it was unlikely that it was caused by young lads on the meadows as a



Injured Mute Swan photographed on the Main Pool on 2 May 2024. *Photo: Jeff Steady FRPS*

firearms certificate is required to own such a weapon. Two, that it is less likely that the shot was fired on the meadows as the sound of the weapon discharging would have attracted attention of local residents. It is possible that the bird was injured nearby and managed to fly to the Main Pool as a refuge. This is all speculation of course

DW08



↑ Dipwell chart for the well near Piddle Brook showing higher water levels. This dip well is under water when the level is about 15.9 metres.

↑ A final look at our wounded Mute Swan. A very sad day. Photo: Jeff Steady ARPS



↑ A Strawberry Snail (*Trochulus stiolatus*) climbing the bird screen. One of 9 species of snail recorded so far on the meadows.

Snails are not the most exciting things to spot but they form part of Avon Meadows' records.

Photo: Richard Stott

Science Section

BUTTERFLIES

Butterfly Conservation has just published the results for the 2023 UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. This scheme is manned by volunteers who make weekly visits to sites across the UK counting the butterflies they see.

The results reflect Avon Meadows records. For example, Red Admiral butterflies seemed to be everywhere by the end of the summer and nationwide they have seen a 316% increase in numbers since 1976. (Avon Meadows +729%)

Conversely, Small Tortoiseshell butterflies were hard to find last year and nationwide have had their worst year since 1948 declining by 82% since 1976. (Avon Meadows -90%)

Surveys and Sightings

BIRDS

LITTLE BUNTING—No.137

A single **Little Bunting** was found on Avon Meadows at 7:30am on the morning of 12 April 2024 by one of Worcestershire's most experienced bird watchers. This sighting was particularly unusual because Little Buntings are vagrants to the UK regarded in bird watching circles as a 'one star' rarity. There are about 30 sightings a year over the whole UK occurring mainly on islands and in coastal counties. This record is only the 6th for Worcestershire. Most Little Buntings are recorded in the UK in September and October with just a few in spring. Increasingly a very small number spend

WATER POLLUTION

Recent research (March 2024) has shown that the systemic spot protection compounds against fleas and ticks in dogs and cats (e.g. Frontline) is getting into the water courses in sufficient quantities to damage wildlife. The active compounds in these treatments gets into every part of the animal's body including its urine and excrement. Everyone likes to stroke their pets and much of the contamination comes from people washing their hands! Pets swimming in rivers is another source. Some people leave out pet fur to help their garden birds line their nests, please do not do this as the contaminant levels are sufficient to kill the chicks! (For the original scientific paper see <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2024.170175>)

the winter here and it is quite possible that our bird was one of these heading north to breed.

They breed in northern Europe and Asia from Finland east continuously as far as Siberia and extreme NE China. The bulk of the population spends the winter between NE India east to the China coast, south of the Yangtze River.

At this time of year the birds are moving north to their breeding grounds rarely spending more than a day or so anywhere on the way. They breed in the taiga areas with dwarf birch and willows so it would recognise our willows.

Little Buntings are about 20mm (15%) shorter than



↑ Red Kites are becoming a more common sight over Avon Meadows. Although not taken on Avon Meadows this stunning photograph is worthy of inclusion.

Photo: Jeff Steady ARPS

UPCOMING EVENTS

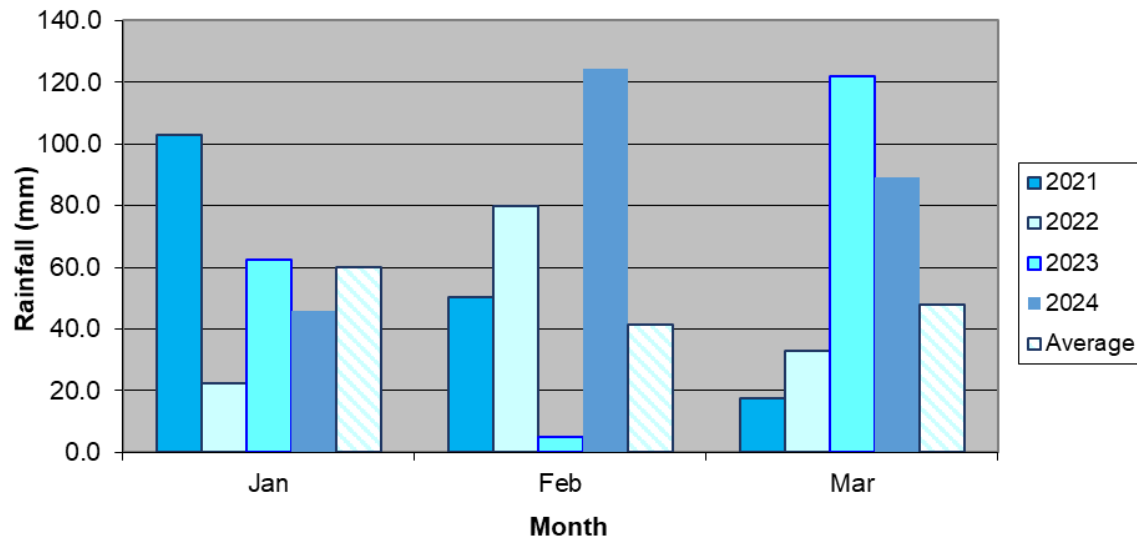
MEMBERS' FORUM

Set for **Friday, 27 September 2024** to start at **6:30pm** at **Pershore Civic Centre**. More details will be announced in the July Newsletter.

THURSDAY BIRD COUNT

Our Bird Count starts each Thursday morning (provided there are no floods!) outside Cherry Orchard House at 09:00am. All are welcome. Bring binoculars!

2024 First Quarter Rainfall



Although January was relatively dry, the overall wet theme continued through the first quarter of 2024. February had an astonishing three times the average rainfall, all the more amazing as there was almost no rain in February 2023. Our dipwell records show that it is certainly the wettest start to a year since our records began in 2016 (see graph on p.3).

Surveys and Sightings (continued)

the Reed Buntings, which breed on Avon Meadows, and have distinctive face colours and markings. It is a very surprising species to turn up on Avon Meadows and was a source of great excitement to the bird watching fraternity.

BIRD COUNT RESULTS

Less exciting but important none the less, the bird count continues although it has been interrupted occasionally this quarter by floodwater preventing access. So far this year we have recorded 82 species which is average. **Little Egrets** continue to pay occasional visits, a pair visited briefly in mid-April. **Tufted Ducks** have made a welcome reappearance. At least 9 **Cetti's Warblers** are holding territories this year, an increase of 2 on last year. **Red Kites** have taken to using the Throckmorton Tip recently and it seems that this means that their route to the tip takes them over Avon Meadows. One or two pairs nest on Bredon Hill. Last year Red Kites were recorded on just 9 Thursdays over the whole of 2023. This year we have recorded them on 9 Thursdays so far this year.

BREEDING BIRDS

As ever, **Mallards** are the first species to hatch young, 10 chicks were seen on the scrape in mid-April.

SUMMER VISITORS

It has been an odd year for summer visitors. **Willow Warblers** came through really early, 9 days earlier than ever before. **Cuckoos** were very much on time (two males are present on the meadows at the moment). **Sedge** and **Reed Warbler** numbers are normal. Only single individuals of other summer warblers have been recorded: these are **Garden Warbler**, **Lesser Whitethroat** and **Common Whitethroat**. Small numbers of **Swallows** and **Sand Martins** have arrived but no **House Martins**!

BUTTERFLIES

Some of our butterflies hibernate over the winter and it is these one can see on sunny January mornings. Eleven species of butterfly have been recorded so far this year, they are: **Comma**, **Brimstone**, **Peacock**, **Small Tortoiseshell**, **Green-veined White**, **Small & Large Whites**, **Orangetip**, **Red Admiral**, **Speckled Wood** and **Holly Blue**.

PERHAPS YOU CAN HELP?

If you have interesting photographs taken on Avon Meadows we may be able to use them in the Newsletter. 'A picture tells a thousand words' and they are an important part of the Newsletter. We are always looking for new photographers to send us photographs.

Please send the original, unedited, picture file, taken on Avon Meadows.

Send the date, time and approximate location of the image.

Contact: richarddestott@gmail.com

If you know anyone who would like to become a member of the Friends of Avon Meadows all we need is a name and eMail address.

Pershire's Community Wetland and Local Nature Reserve
www.avonmeadows.org.uk

Membership Application/Renewal

If you wish to join or renew by online banking, please use the following details:

SORT CODE 77-68-78 (TSB Bank), ACCOUNT NUMBER 01118468 and **QUOTE YOUR SURNAME AS THE PAYMENT REFERENCE**. Then **please** e-mail avonmeadowspershire@gmail.com with the details requested below. If you would like to set up a standing order (we prefer this), please use the same details and again let us know by e-mail. We cannot currently handle direct debits.

If you wish to join or renew by cheque, please print and complete this form and send it together with your cheque, payable to **The Friends of Avon Meadows** to:

Temporary Contact: avonmeadowspershire@gmail.com

Family subscription £10 per annum Individual subscription £5 per annum

Life Membership subscription a single payment of £50

FULL NAME: _____ TITLE (Mr, Mrs, Ms etc.): _____

ADDRESS: _____

TOWN: _____ POSTCODE: _____

E-MAIL: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

PLEASE TICK THIS BOX IF YOU WOULD LIKE US TO RECEIVE GIFT AID

Charity Governance/Fundraising standards and Data Protection (including GDPR)

I am happy to receive information from The Friends of Avon Meadows:
by e-mail please tick ✓ by post please tick ✓

We will never pass your details to any third party organisations.

OR: Please do not contact me if you tick this box we will delete you from our records.

If you are enjoying Avon Meadows please remember us in your will, it will be put to good use!