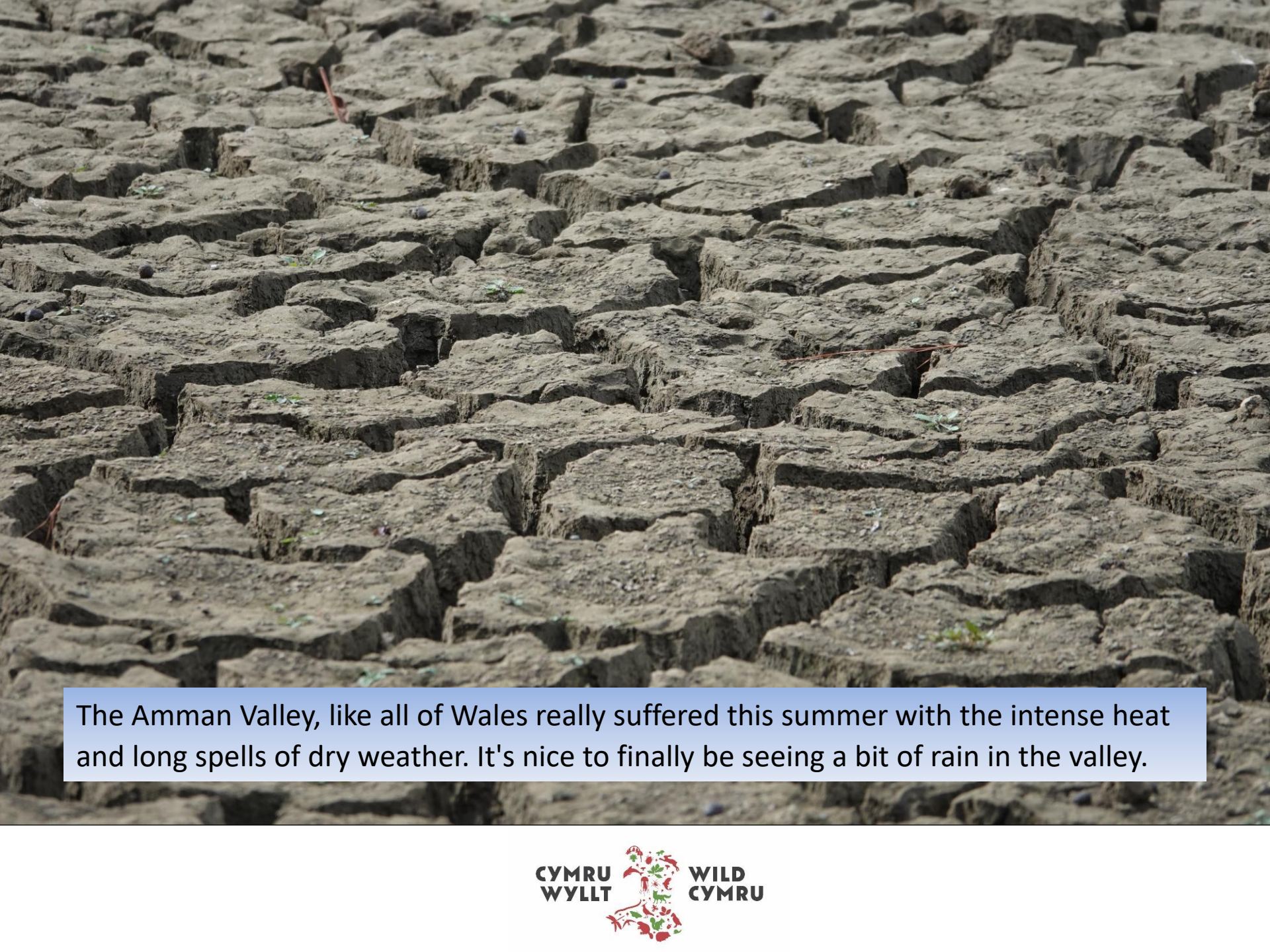


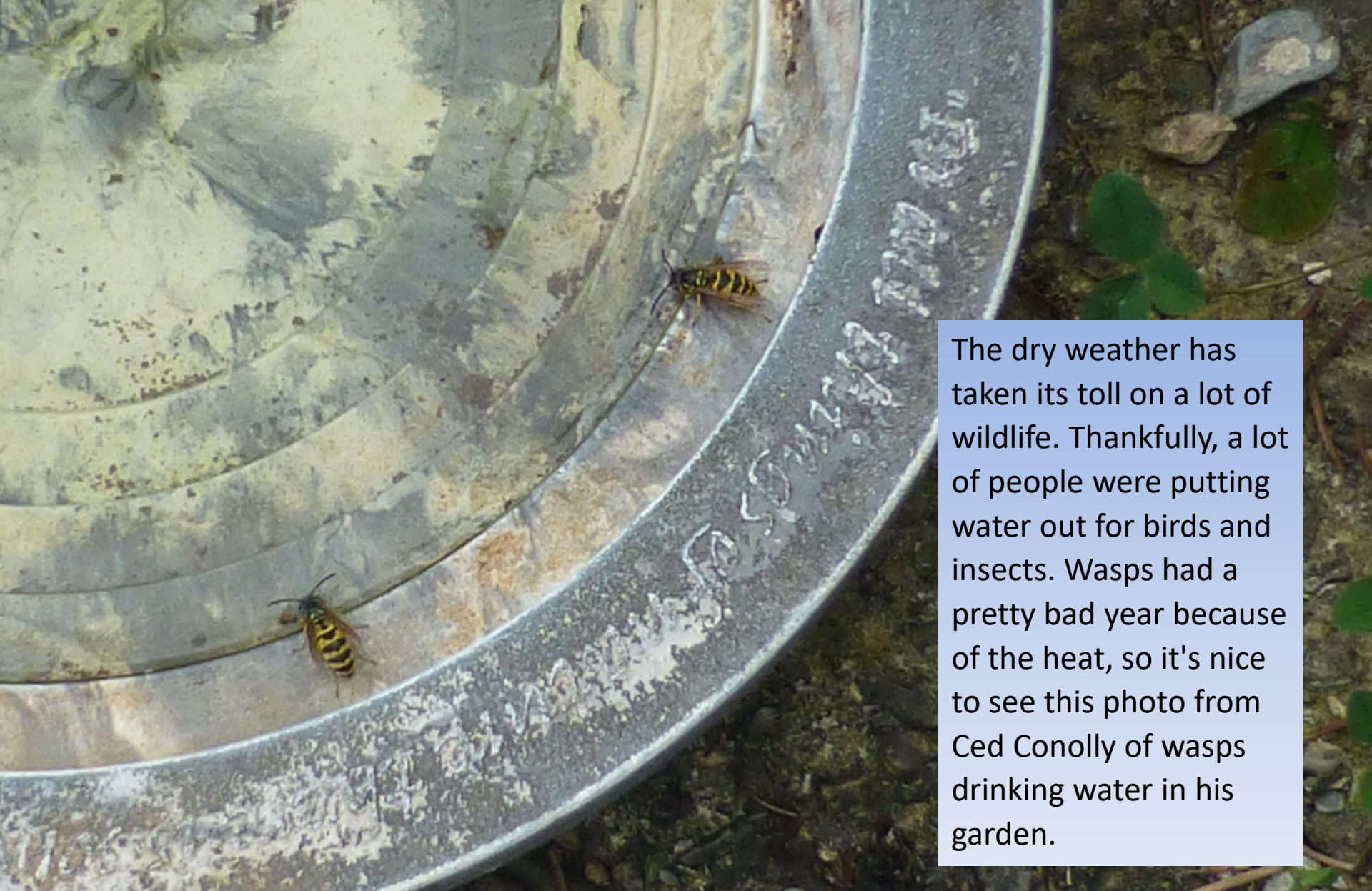
Amman Valley Wildlife Update: Summer 2026



Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary



The Amman Valley, like all of Wales really suffered this summer with the intense heat and long spells of dry weather. It's nice to finally be seeing a bit of rain in the valley.



The dry weather has taken its toll on a lot of wildlife. Thankfully, a lot of people were putting water out for birds and insects. Wasps had a pretty bad year because of the heat, so it's nice to see this photo from Ced Conolly of wasps drinking water in his garden.

Wildfires have dominated the headlines over summer, and for good reason. At Wild Cymru we have been investigating Wildfires in Wales. Our report can be viewed here. Link: [Wild Cymru's Wildfire Report – Wild Cymru](#)





It has been a great year for our Amman Valley Barn Owls. We had 7 of our nest boxes occupied by Barn Owl and they raised a huge total of 20 Owlets. Big thank you to Dafydd, Dionne and Alice for helping with ringing.



Part of the success for Barn Owls this year was the glut of acorns in the winter which led to a boom in small mammals like this young Wood Mouse.



We now have funding to build and install Swift nest boxes in the valley. We will be sending out more details in the coming weeks and we hope you can take part in the project. Laurence, Wild Cymru's Communications Officer had a pair of Swift in his nest box this year and they successfully raised two chicks.



The bane of the summer months for most are Horseflies. These black marks on the underside of this leaf are the eggs of Horseflies.

Weather conditions in 2026 have led to unprecedented levels of insect migration with Hummingbird Hawkmoths being seen across the country (including in our wildlife garden).



They don't breed here every year but their caterpillars feed on bedstraws so in warm conditions they can successfully rear offspring. These are now emerging and beginning their journey south.

Clouded Yellow butterflies have also migrated here in numbers not seen for a long time. This one was up at our nature reserve.



Some years they're not recorded in the country at all. It's been suggested that drought conditions in southern Europe have encouraged them north.

The polytunnel in the wildlife garden has recently been inundated by these beautiful Ivy Bees.

Only seen in the UK for the first time in 2001 they have continued their natural spread across the country.

They nest communally in dry soil with each female tending her offspring in her own burrow.

As the name suggests, they are often seen feeding on Ivy but also love the Devil's-bit Scabious.





We ran a couple of well-attended moth trap sessions at the wildlife garden in August. 75 different species were caught in the first night and 30 in the second.

2 other migrant species, Rush Veneer and Small Mottled Willow, were also caught, along with a lot of our resident species. Some of these have emerged earlier than normal as a result of the hot summer conditions.

September
Thorn



Small Mottled
Willow



Ruby Tiger



Rush Veneer





Poplar
Hawkmoth



Centre-barred Sallow

We will be running more moth trapping events in the wildlife garden in the spring.



Eyed Hawkmoth



Sallow Kitten



Another event this summer was a bat walk. It started in the wildlife garden and to be honest we didn't need to go anywhere else as we were treated to a real show with pipistrelles flying amongst us and over the pond. We did eventually leave and watched Daubenton's bats foraging over the Amman.



We also had a lovely walk around our Llwyndewi Nature Reserve back in the summer, this time with Cwmaman Gardening Club.

A lot of work has been happening up at our nature reserve over the summer, thanks to our wardens who were employed for 3 months thanks to a grant.





A lot of their time has been taken up in clearing huge amounts of Himalayan Balsam, a non-native species that is extremely invasive. It outcompetes our native vegetation and weakens river banks, leading to erosion.

It is best managed by pulling it up before the seedpods develop. We have then been piling it up under tarpaulin so it can rot down without setting seed.

Each plant can produce hundreds of seeds so every one pulled makes a big difference, and we have pulled thousands!

Bracken is another species that can become very dominant at the expense of less vigorous species, shading it out and becoming a dense monoculture.

In order to weaken it we have been using a tractor-mounted roller in certain areas to flatten it.



Another method we have used with some dedicated volunteers is by manually 'paddling' it with this handmade instruments – very effective in more rocky and uneven areas which the tractor can't access.



We have been fortunate to have run a few well-attended volunteer sessions up there this summer. It has allowed us to do far more Balsam removal, clearing of old fence material, and Bracken bashing than we would otherwise have been able to so thanks to everyone who came along.



A well deserved cup of tea and some biscuits.





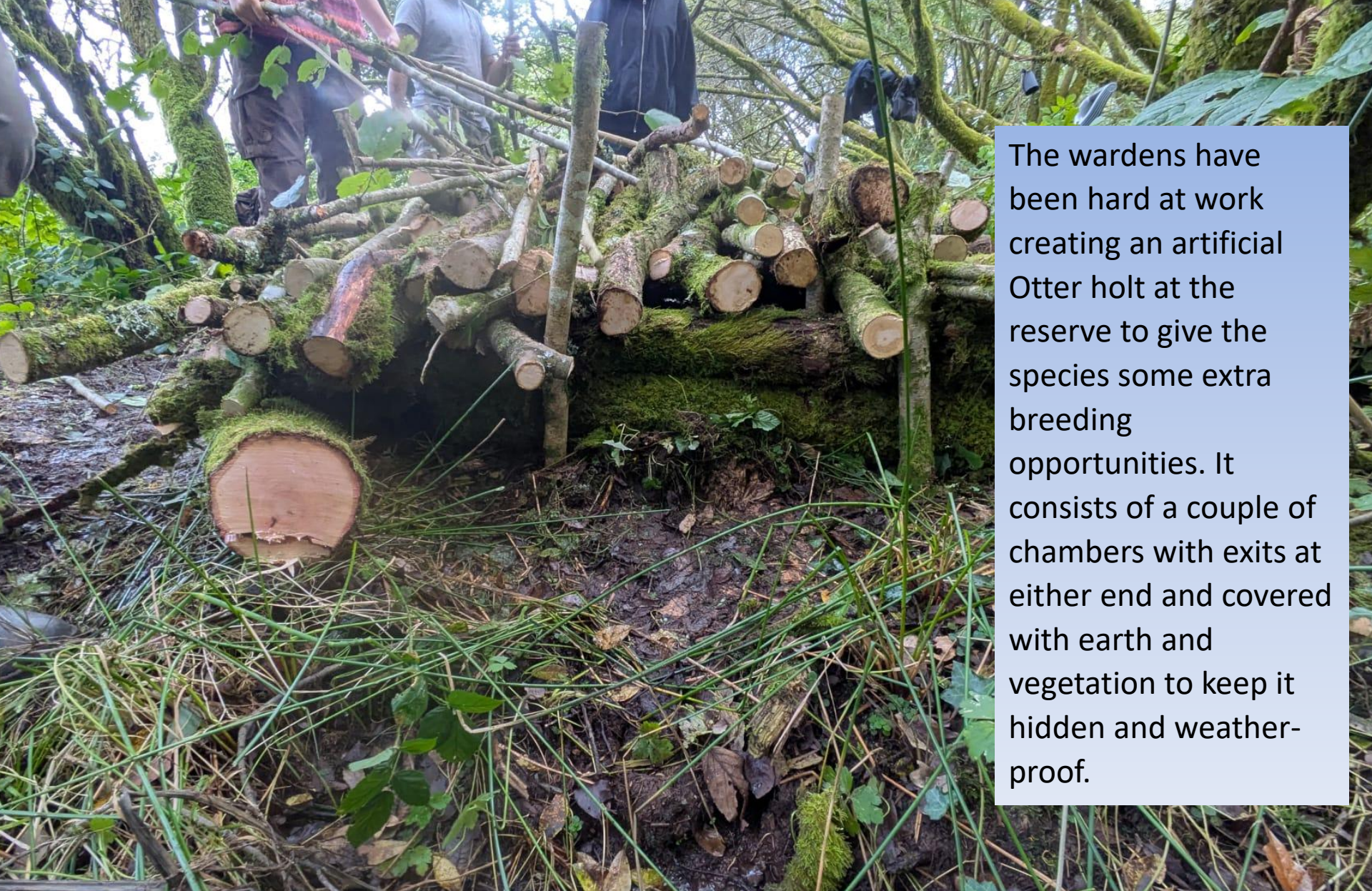
Lately we have been collecting Devil's-bit Scabious from the reserve to spread elsewhere on site. It is currently only present in a few scattered locations but now the cattle grazing has opened up some of the dense marshy grassland the plants will flourish more widely, and this gives them a helping hand.

This flower is a Devil's-bit Scabious, but unlike normal scabious plants that only has the one flower head, this one (found at the nature reserve) has multiple flower heads due to a rare mutation.





This is normal Devil's-bit Scabious. We are still growing lots of scabious to feed to our hungry Marsh Fritillary caterpillars.



The wardens have been hard at work creating an artificial Otter holt at the reserve to give the species some extra breeding opportunities. It consists of a couple of chambers with exits at either end and covered with earth and vegetation to keep it hidden and weather-proof.



We have carried out a large number of surveys at Llwyndewi, greatly increasing our knowledge of what species are using the reserve, which will in turn help us to direct our management there in the future. The Botanical Society of the British Isles (BSBI) visited in July.



Lastly, thanks to keen eyes of Natasha Rose Dodds who spotted another Golden Pheasant in her garden in Brynmanan. We do occasionally get these types of Pheasant in the valley. Although beautiful, Pheasants are not native to the UK and they have a devastating impact on wildlife as they eat whatever fits into their mouths.

Join us on Thursday 1st October at the Nature Reserve to help plant lots of wildflower plug plants in our Meadow. We are meeting at the Nature Reserve at 10:30 am. Hope you can join us.



Thank you for all your support and for sending in your sightings and photos – it is much appreciated.



If you have any questions, please do email Vaughn on Vaughn.matthews@wild.cymru