

Amman Valley

Wildlife Update: May 2026

It's that wonderful time of year where the Amman Valley is full of Wildlife. Everyday can be an exciting new discovery, whether it is a new species or a new encounter with a familiar friend.



When walking on paths and tracks in the uplands above the Amman Valley, keep an eye out of one of Wales' most ferocious predators – the Green Tiger Beetle.





The valley is looking at its best at this time of year with the Bluebells now gradually fading away but are being replaced with a range of wildflowers. Thanks to Gill and Peter Mudd for photos of the valley taken in May. The white flowers are Cotton Grass.

A fantastic display of orchids
popping up on former coal spoil.



Photo: Gill and Peter Mudd

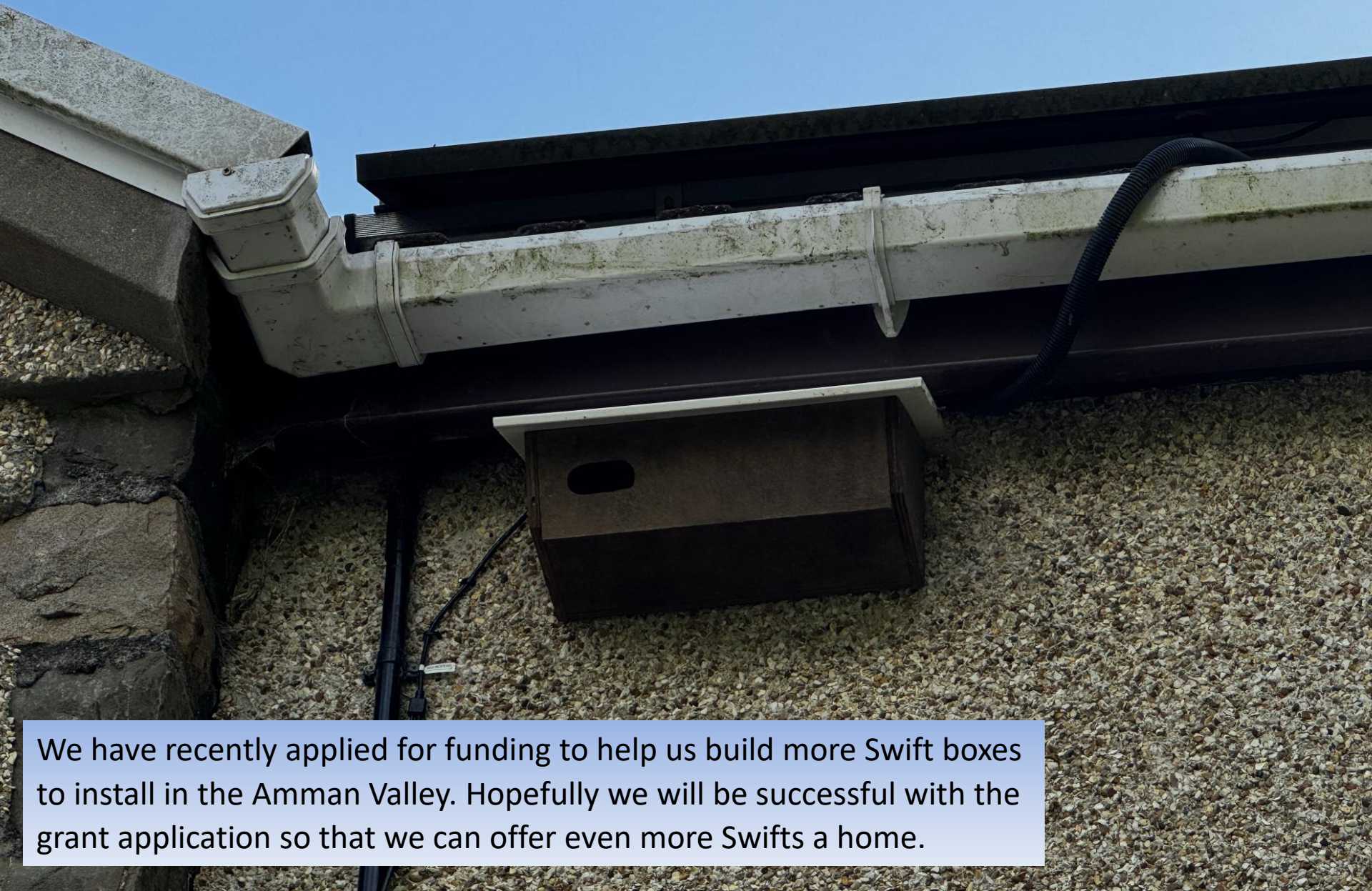


As well as Marsh Orchids, keep an eye out for Early Purple Orchids along woodland edges, glades and rides.

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May sees the last of our summer migrants arrive – Swifts are only here for a few short months before returning south. The Amman Valley is lucky to have a number of nesting sites, in roof cavities usually but also in specialist boxes. Our colleague Loz was thrilled to see Swifts return to the box on his box and even more thrilled when they subsequently laid eggs!

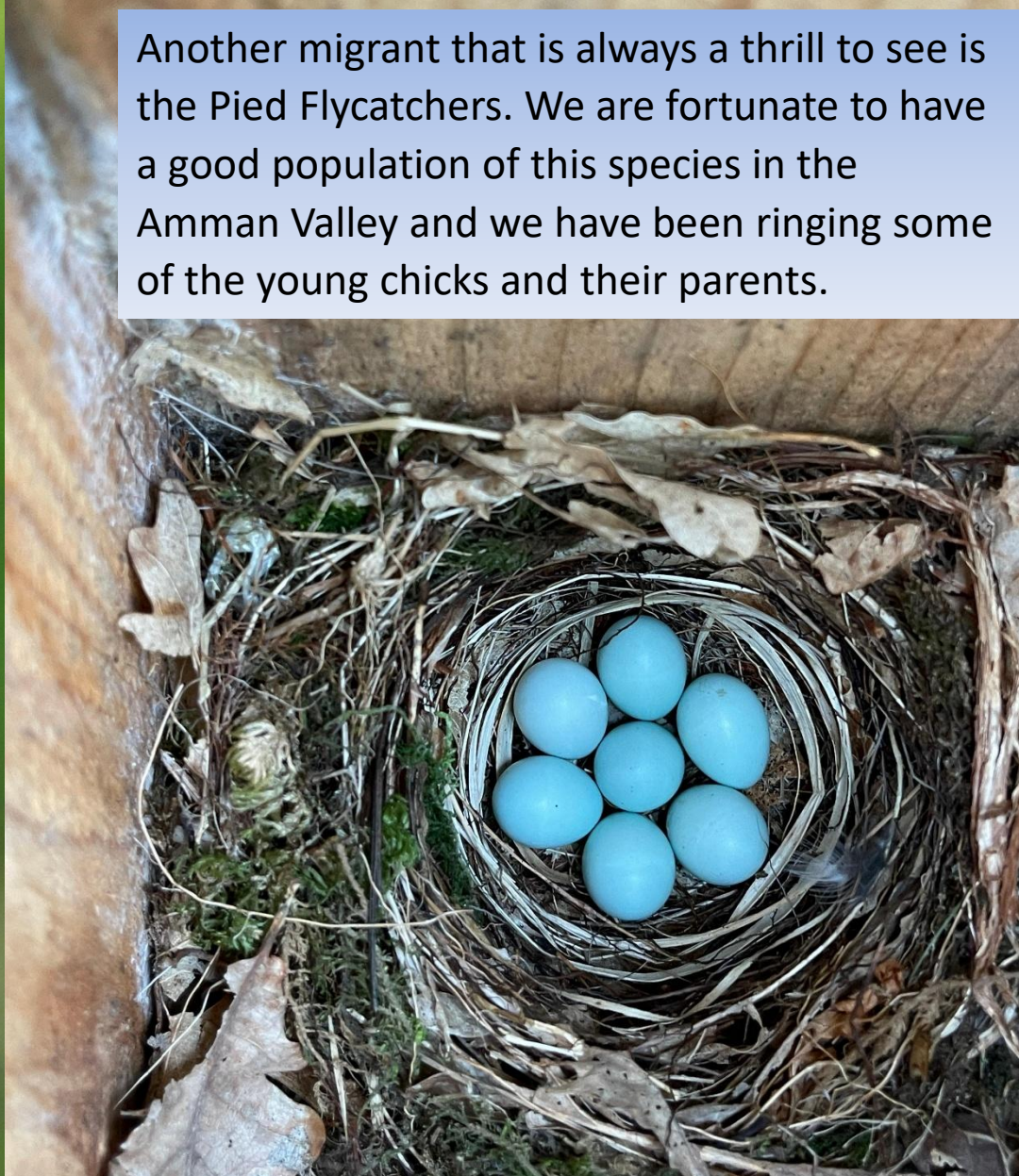
Photo: Loz Whitaker



We have recently applied for funding to help us build more Swift boxes to install in the Amman Valley. Hopefully we will be successful with the grant application so that we can offer even more Swifts a home.



Another migrant that is always a thrill to see is the Pied Flycatchers. We are fortunate to have a good population of this species in the Amman Valley and we have been ringing some of the young chicks and their parents.



This is done carefully and under licence and can give us important information on the species, their distribution and dispersal.



The bird ringers also monitor Dippers on the river (below). Grey Wagtail nests (left) are often found at the same time.



Pics: Ellyn Baker



One of the problems Pied Flycatchers face is that by the time they return from Africa a lot of their potential nesting sites have been taken by Blue Tits, Great Tits and Nuthatches.

Next year we will trial blocking up a selection of the nest boxes until they start returning.

We will be recycling some of these used shuttlecocks, donated by the local badminton club. They are just the right size to fill the entrance to the box. We'll report on their success next year.



At this time of year Tawny Owl chicks are often seen resting out in the open – this behaviour is known as ‘branching’ where they have left the nest but are still reliant on their parents for food. Thanks to Laura Paulssen for these lovely images.



Nightjars have returned from Africa to the nature reserve again this year. This photo shows one resting among the rocks (honestly, it does...). Subsequent visits have turned up at least 3 individuals including males churring and performing their wing-clapping display.



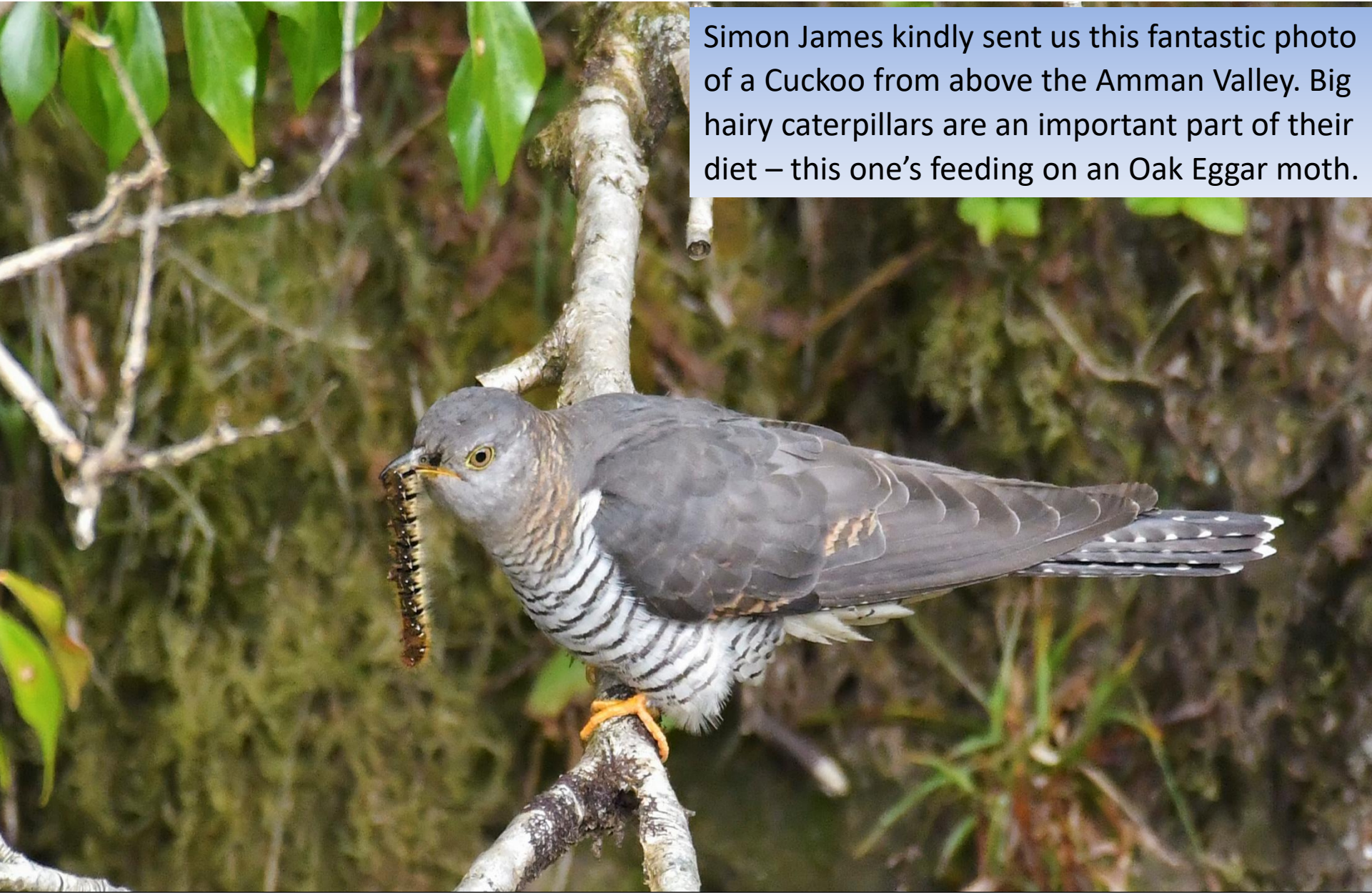


Here it is!

A slightly better photo from elsewhere
showing just how good their camouflage is.



Simon James kindly sent us this fantastic photo of a Cuckoo from above the Amman Valley. Big hairy caterpillars are an important part of their diet – this one's feeding on an Oak Eggar moth.



As well as migrant birds the unseasonably warm weather, combined with favourable winds, led to a huge influx of migrant species from Africa and Southern Europe.

One of the most spectacular is this Striped Hawkmoth found near Llandeilo and a couple of other locations across the county.



Hummingbird Hawkmoth



Diamond-back Moth



Plenty of commoner migrants turned up across the country too, including unprecedented numbers of Silver Y (below).

Rush Veneer



Sallow Kitten

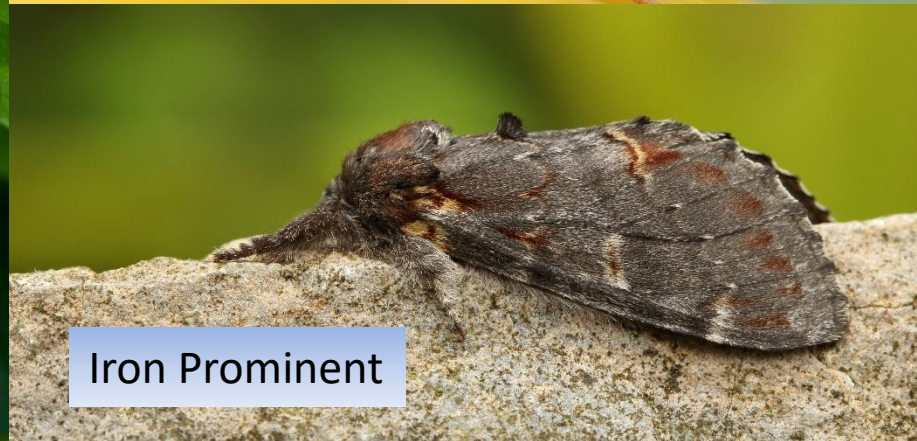


May is one of the best months for our resident species too with lots of colourful species found in traps. An evening trapping at the nature reserve turned up over 40 species in a couple of hours (plus lots of Cockchafers!).

Chinese Character



Pebble Hook-tip



Iron Prominent

A selection of Hawkmoths from a recent trap.
From left to right: Privet, Poplar and Elephant.



The wildlife garden is looking spectacular at the moment with the meadow area full of wildflowers. The ponds are also looking good with plenty of dragonflies and damselflies starting to be seen.



Thank you to Laura Paulssen for sending this photo of a Broad-bodied Chaser and Large-red Damselfly, seen around her pond.

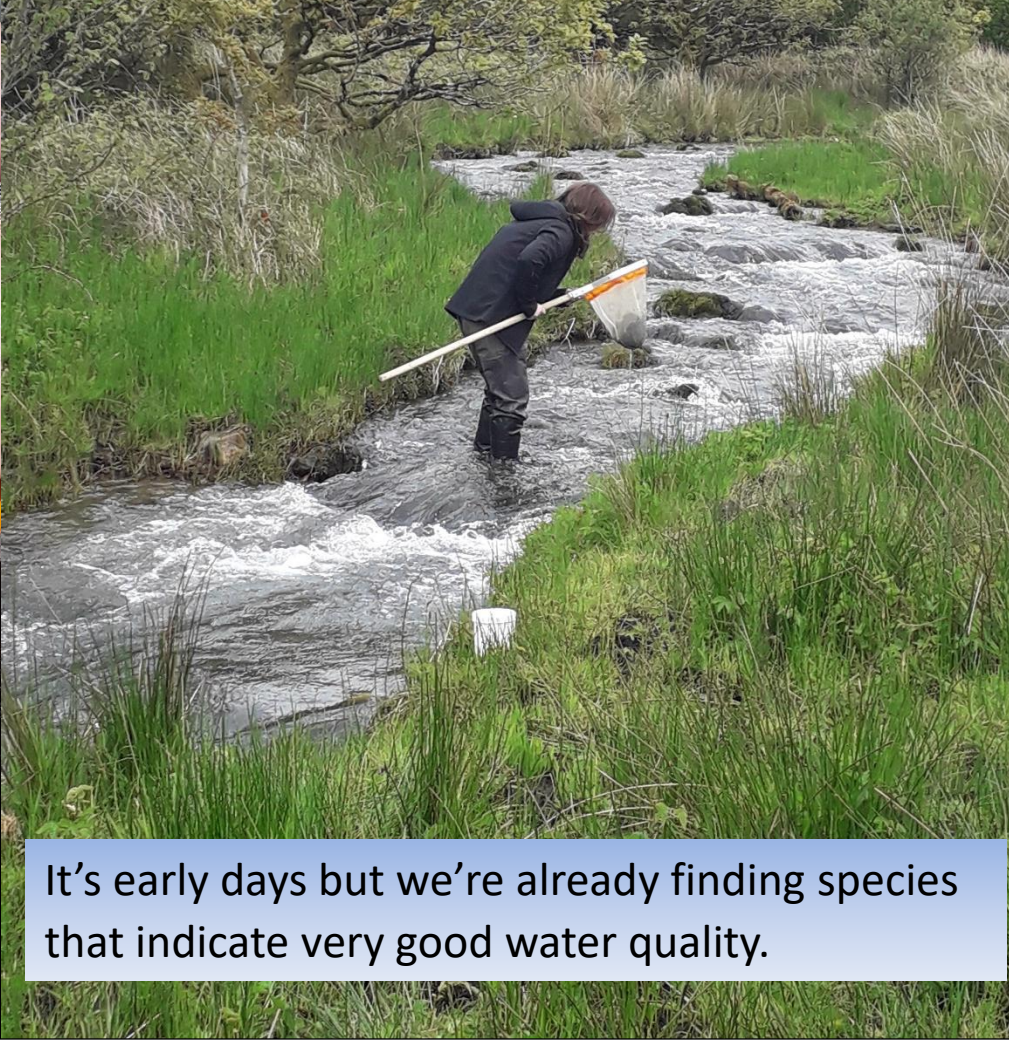


Wild Cymru's Marsh Fritillary population reinforcement project is continuing successfully, with the rearing pens now full of eggs and the last few adults.



Final stage caterpillar before pupation.

Aquatic surveys have been carried out at the nature reserve to see what invertebrates are present.



It's early days but we're already finding species that indicate very good water quality.



This time of year, the Oak Woodland in the Amman Valley are full of birds singing. This little Garden Warbler might not be much to look at, but they have a beautiful song.

Non-infected Red Campion



Infected Red Campion



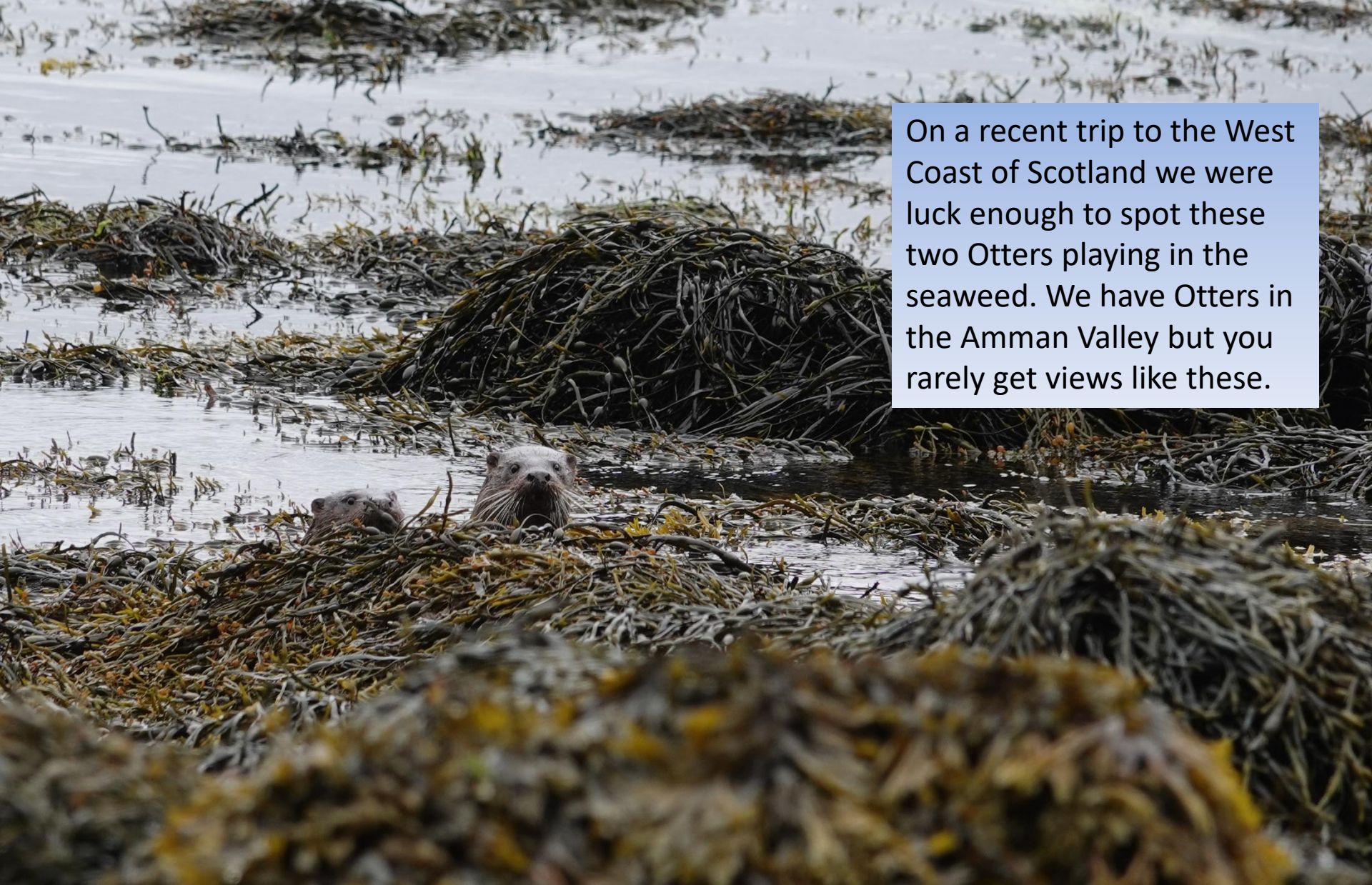
Although they look different, these two plants are Red Campion. Red Campion is highly susceptible to Campion Anther Smut (*Microbotryum silenes-dioicae*), a fungus that invades the stamens and replaces the plant's pollen with dark, dusty fungal spores. It tricks pollinating insects into spreading the spores to other Red Campion plants.



We have stepped up efforts to try and see some Brown Hares in the Amman Valley. I have lived here for 22 years now and I have never seen one here. If you do see one this year, please do let me know.

In less good news, this time of year is also the time for the first flush of wildfires. This year they have been particularly damaging because of the wet March. This means that many fires carried over into April and May and would have destroyed many ground nesting birds' nests and eggs. At Wild Cymru we have been fighting to get the regulations around controlled burns changed so that they are more sympathetic to the needs of wildlife.



A photograph of two otters swimming in shallow water, surrounded by large, tangled clumps of seaweed. The otters are partially submerged, with their heads and whiskers visible above the water. The water is calm, and the seaweed is a mix of brown and green. The background shows more seaweed and water, creating a natural, coastal environment.

On a recent trip to the West Coast of Scotland we were luck enough to spot these two Otters playing in the seaweed. We have Otters in the Amman Valley but you rarely get views like these.



We also came across lots of Seabirds like this Shag, which I think has the most beautiful eye in wildlife.



Lots of Razorbills and.....



Puffins too.



However the star of the show was this Corncrake. Corncrakes are now incredibly rare in the UK and are mainly found on Scottish islands. We used to have them in Wales only a few decades ago.

Thank you for all your photos and wildlife sightings. They are much appreciated.



If you have any wildlife queries or want to know more about Wild Cymru, please do email – rob.parry@wild.cymru