

# Amman Valley Wildlife Update

## March 2020

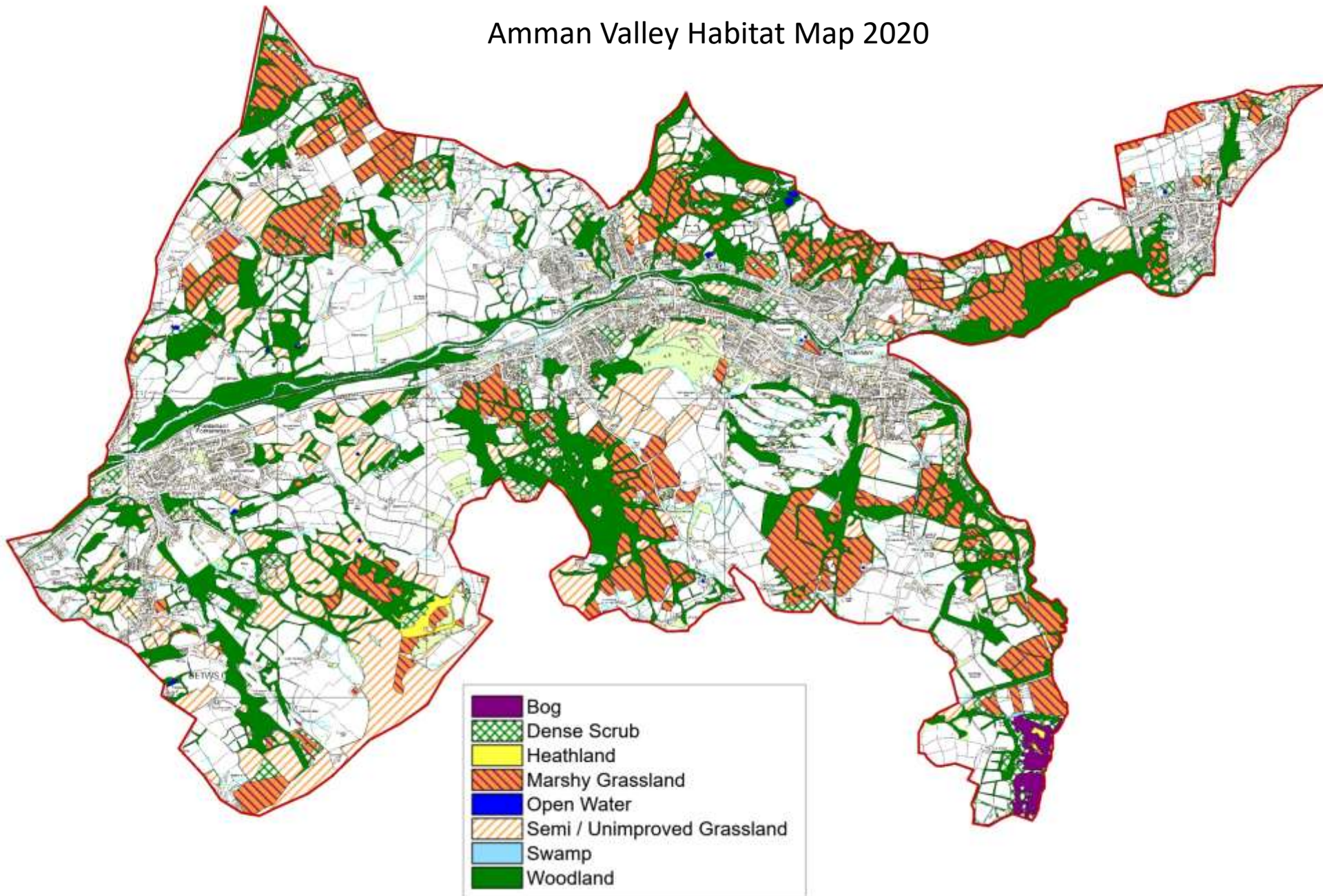
Over the past few months INCC have been working with Carmarthenshire Council to map the Important wildlife habitat in the Valley. Marshy Grassland and Bog Habitat are some of the most important habitats found in the area as they support the Marsh Fritillary butterfly and other rare wildlife. The survey didn't go further north than Llandeilo Road, but I am hoping to do this section later on in the year. The idea behind the survey is to find out where all our important habitat is so that we can design better nature conservation projects and wildlife surveys in future.

**MENTER AR GYFER**  
**CADWRAETH NATUR CYMRU**



**INITIATIVE FOR NATURE**  
**CONSERVATION CYMRU**

## Amman Valley Habitat Map 2020





Whilst undertaking the survey I found some wonderful new wildlife walks with lots of nature on show, including this very old Beech Tree and even a few Kestrels.



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There were also some wonderful views across the Valley to the Brecon Beacons National Park. Hopefully there will be time to fit the odd wildlife walk in later on in the year.



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Now that nobody can use the Polytunnel – its completed. Kitted out with staging, pots and compost. I will make a start at growing some wildflowers at home and then move them down when the situation improves.



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In early March, we checked some (but not all) of the pied Flycatcher nest boxes. We found two old nests which was very exciting.

A lot of the boxes need to be retrofitted with wire over the lids to help any future monitoring programme. A job for the Autumn now.

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It may not look much, but this is a Pied Flycatcher nest. Its very old so the nest has rotted down quite a bit, but you can still make out the tell-tale signs of Pied Flycatcher. The birds strip the bark off honeysuckle plants in the woodland to weave their nest. The broader bits of vegetation in the photo are bits of honeysuckle. We will check the boxes again in the Autumn.



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Another very important job once the breeding season is over is to fit the boxes with metal plates to stop woodpeckers from getting in. Ideally, I would have liked to had gotten this done by the end of March, but it will have to wait until after the breeding season now.

Blue Tits have already started building their nest in the garden.

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They have competition from our House Sparrows who have taken a fancy to the same box (and every other box in the garden it seems).

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One pair of House Sparrows look like they have settled on the 'Pole Box'. I call it the Pole box because.....

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They still like it though....

It's a bit wobbly in the wind but they don't seem to mind. It feels like its going to be a good year for House Sparrows. They are also looking at setting up nests in the Swift Box and a couple of the open fronted boxes.

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The best news is that we have Treecreepers nesting at the top of the garden in amongst the old Ivy vines. I normally associate Treecreepers nesting under peeled bark or cracks and crevices in the tree, but Ivy provides a similar habitat.

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If you ever see a nest box covered with mud its likely to be a Nuthatch, Nuthatches don't like light intruding in to their nest box so they block it up with mud.



Our garden pond tadpoles have  
not long emerged as well.



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Keep an eye out for Butterflies in  
the Garden. I have already  
seen.....

Small Tortoiseshells



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# Peacocks



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And a Brimstone



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I wanted to see whether Hedgehogs were out of hibernation so I put some food out in the Hedgehog box.

He or she is definitely back. Not only was half the food gone, but I was left with a little souvenir.....



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Hedgehog Poo

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Lastly..... I have just made this makeshift Leaf-cutter bee home. All I have done is taken a cross section of wood and drilled lots of holes in it - approximately 4mm wide and 4 or 5cm deep). If I can find

You can do the same with any bit of untreated hardwood. Once drilled put it in a nice sunny location off the ground and wait for the summer and the bees.

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This is a better photo of a Hedgehog dropping. If you check your garden hopefully you will find lots of these scattered around. I looked this morning and counted 7. They vary in size – this being about as big as they get.



Hedgehog Dropping



Given all the Hedgehog poo, I decided to put a camera on the Hedgehog box to get some footage.




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I now have some good footage @INCCymru of him going in and coming out. At this rate I may have to make the entrance a bit wider than the 10cm x10cm.



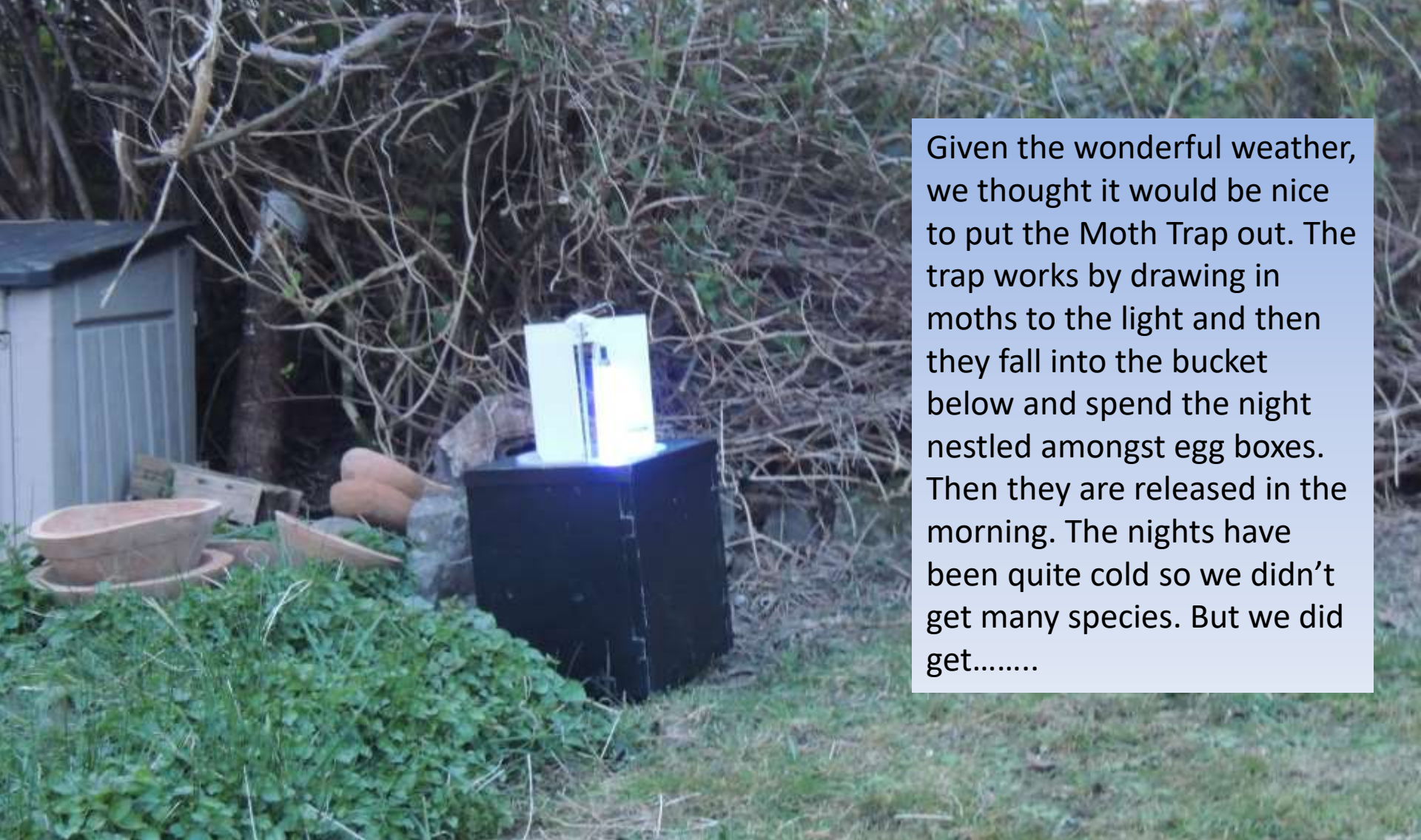
So then I decided to put the camera inside the box with him. The food I am using is just wet meaty cat food.

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Given the wonderful weather, we thought it would be nice to put the Moth Trap out. The trap works by drawing in moths to the light and then they fall into the bucket below and spend the night nestled amongst egg boxes. Then they are released in the morning. The nights have been quite cold so we didn't get many species. But we did get.....

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Early Grey



Hebrew Character



Brindled Beauty



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These giants are Poplar Hawk-moths, which are quite common and come to moth traps quite readily. Although I get these in the garden I won't see them until May and June.

I have just submitted a grant application to purchase more survey equipment like moth traps and bat detectors etc so we can try and record as much wildlife as possible in the Valley over the coming years.

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Tawny Mining  
Bee - Female



I am also experimenting by trying to create habitat for Mining Bees and solitary wasps who dig holes in soil for their nests. The design is the same as a bird box, but the front removed and replaced with some mesh. Then I've just put some soil in and compacted it down. I've placed it in a sunny spot in the garden for optimum chance of it working.

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I made this make shift feeder from two old misshapen bowls. I have hung the feeder in the trees and at the back of the garden to try and attract Dormice. Dormice are incredibly rare, but there are a few records in the valley. They don't like coming down to the ground and instead spend much of their activity in trees, hedgerows and scrub.



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I have a camera pointed at the feeder so if anything does go and for the seeds and nuts, I'll hopefully have some footage to show you. Nothing yet.

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This is what a Dormouse looks like. They are nocturnal and go into a deep torpor in the day time. When awake they feed on seeds, flowers, fruits and insects.

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I checked one of our nest boxes the other day and found this old and large wasp nest. Only 9 of 9,000 species of wasps in the UK build nests like this. This is a nest from the common wasp and its made of chewed wood, mixed with the wasps saliva to form a pulp.

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Please keep an eye out and let me know if you see Glow Worm Larvae like this one below. They are dark brown / black in colour with bright. They are out and about now.

Larvae are dark in colour and have pale spots at the rear edge of each segment. They can sometimes be seen in fields and gardens in Spring in search of their prey - snails.

INCC is working with Carmarthenshire Meadows Group and other partners to undertake a survey for glow worms this year, so please do report any you see.

Adult female Glow worms do all the glowing. They climb up on top of long grass to attract a mate and then glow. Hopefully we can go out in the evening to survey some sites this year – between May and September.

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