

Amman Valley Wildlife Update Number 13 (October 2020)

New Wildlife
Projects for the
Amman Valley

Canary-shouldered Thorn
(*Ennomos alniaria*)

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Knowing Your Neighbours Project.

This project has been funded by the Brecon Beacons National Park to help us better understand what wildlife and habitats we share the valley with.

Over the coming months, INCC will be helping volunteers in the community record the wildlife they see so that we can build up a better picture of the diversity of wildlife in the area. Online training guides, survey forms and a garden wildlife survey will be making their way to you soon.



White-clawed crayfish
(*Austropotamobius pallipes*) survey

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White-clawed crayfish are incredibly rare in Wales and are restricted to just a few streams and rivers. These juvenile crayfish were found on a tributary of the river Wye.

Habitat loss and a fungal disease (crayfish plague) introduced by the non native American Signal crayfish has almost wiped out the Welsh population.

As part of the project it will be nice to do some freshwater invertebrate surveys – though I don't think we will find any crayfish unfortunately.



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But hopefully we should find plenty of these.

These tiny grains of gravel are caddisfly cases. Caddisfly larva which live in streams, rivers and ponds encase themselves in pieces of vegetation or gravel, depending on the species. When they are ready to emerge as adults you will often find their discarded cases on stones and rocks out of the water.



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The spectacular landscape of Tair Carn and Carn Pen-y-clogau. Around 100 Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) were recorded in the area earlier on in October.

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Golden Plover are beautiful birds that breed in upland heathland habitat. In autumn and winter they come together to form large flocks like the one seen at Tair Carn.

This Golden Plover is still in its breeding plumage. In winter the black turns to a greyish buff colour.



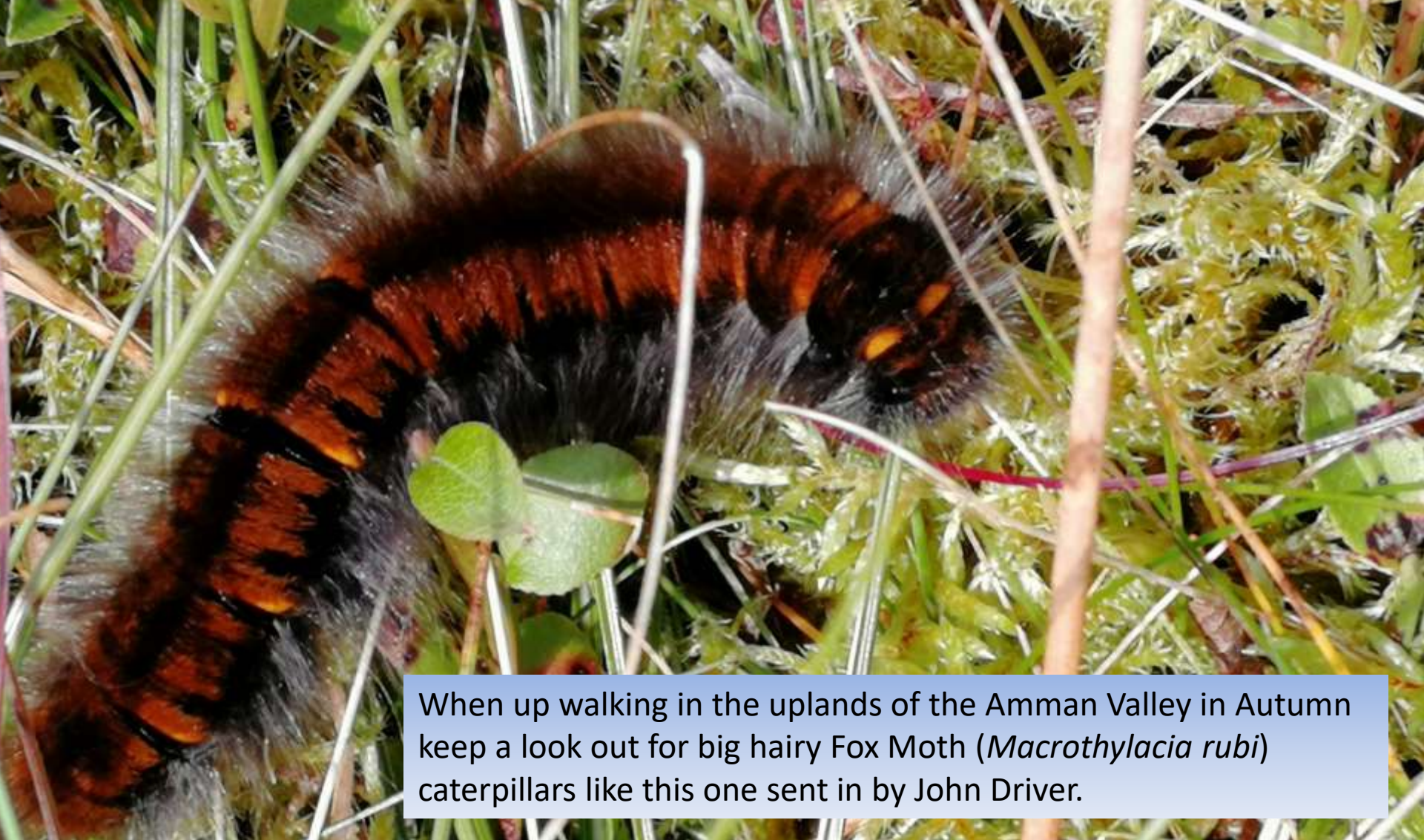


Our upland habitats are wonderful places for all sorts of wildlife including this bright vivid sedge.

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When up walking in the uplands of the Amman Valley in Autumn keep a look out for big hairy Fox Moth (*Macrothylacia rubi*) caterpillars like this one sent in by John Driver.

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Other things to look out for at this time of year are Devil's Coach-horse (*Ocypus olens*) beetles. They are quite common in gardens and feed on invertebrates such as spiders, woodlice and snails. They also emit a repellent odour to deter predators.



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After the success of Burrow Cam – we tried the survey technique on top of a mountain in South Wales to see what small mammals we would find up there. We had lots more Wood Mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*).

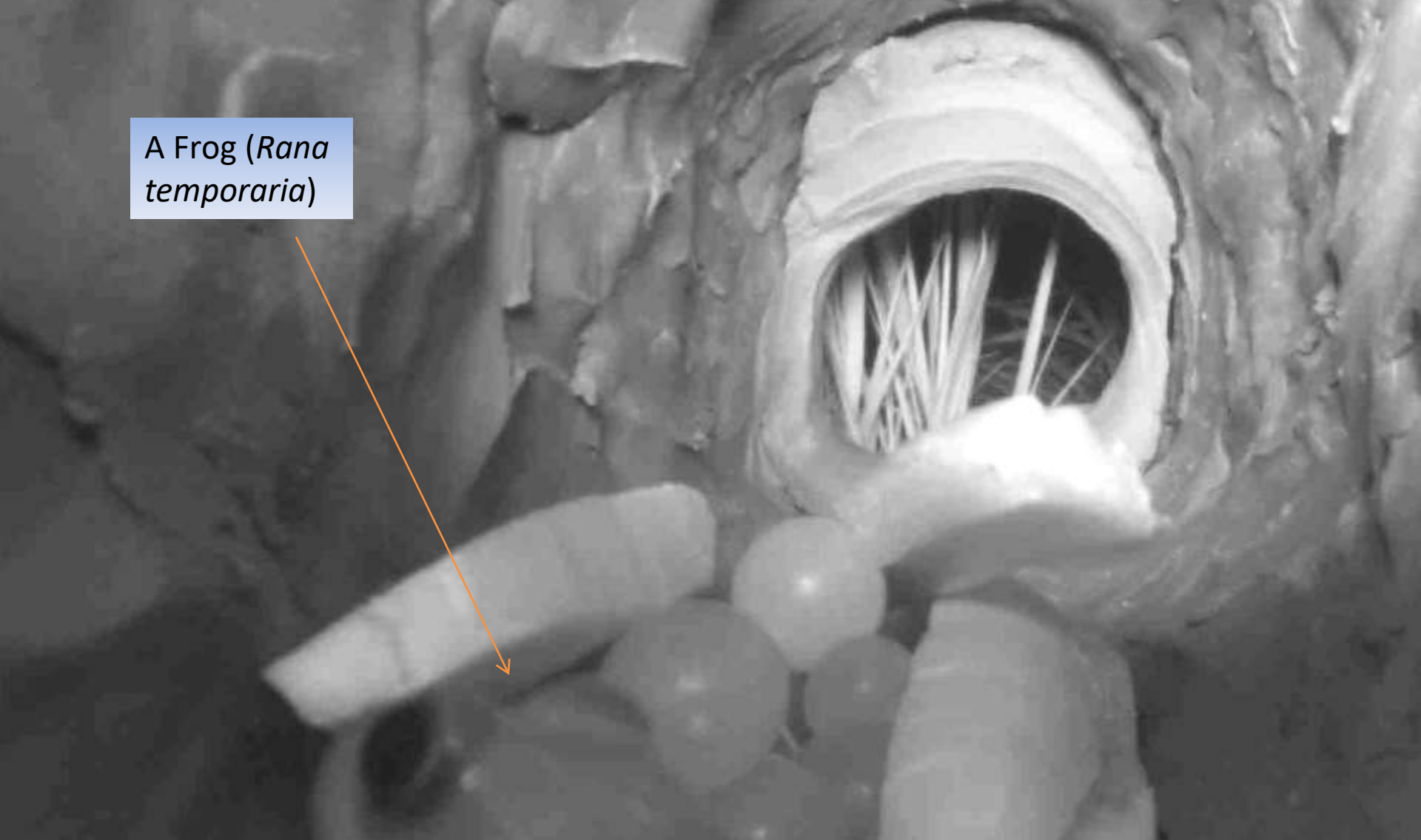
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And we also
filmed all three
species of
mainland Shrew,
including this
Pygmy Shrew
(*Sorex minutus*).

A Frog (*Rana*
temporaria)



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And eventually, one of the UK's most endangered mammal species, the Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*).

You can see the full footage by following INCC on Twitter [@INCCymru](https://twitter.com/INCCymru)



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I still don't know whether we have Water Voles in the Amman Valley, but hopefully with the cameras we can start looking a bit more. The more we look the more we can find.

One less-glamorous species that has recently been recorded in the Amman Valley is this lichen *Usnea articulata*, which is also known as the String-of-Sausages Lichen and the Sausage Beard Lichen.

Lichens such as *U. articulata* are very important indicators for our environment's health. They are often very susceptible to atmospheric pollution such as ammonia, nitrogen and sulphur. As well as looking out for animals, its important to keep an eye out for plants, fungi and lichens also.

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Moles are one of the most fascinating mammal species in the UK. They can dig up to 20m in a day and loose earth is pushed up to create the molehills we see around the landscape.



They are perfectly adapted to life underground (Fossorial). They are cylindrical in shape and have velvety fur that moves both ways, enabling the mole to travel forward and backward along their burrows.

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To help with the **Knowing Your Neighbours Project** –
Please could you send in records of **Mole Hills** in the Amman Valley?
You will need to send me the following details: Name, Location,
roughly how many and the date you saw them. Thank you.



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Despite the weather turning colder, we are still getting moths to the moth trap, including this Merveille de Jour (*Dichonia aprilina*).



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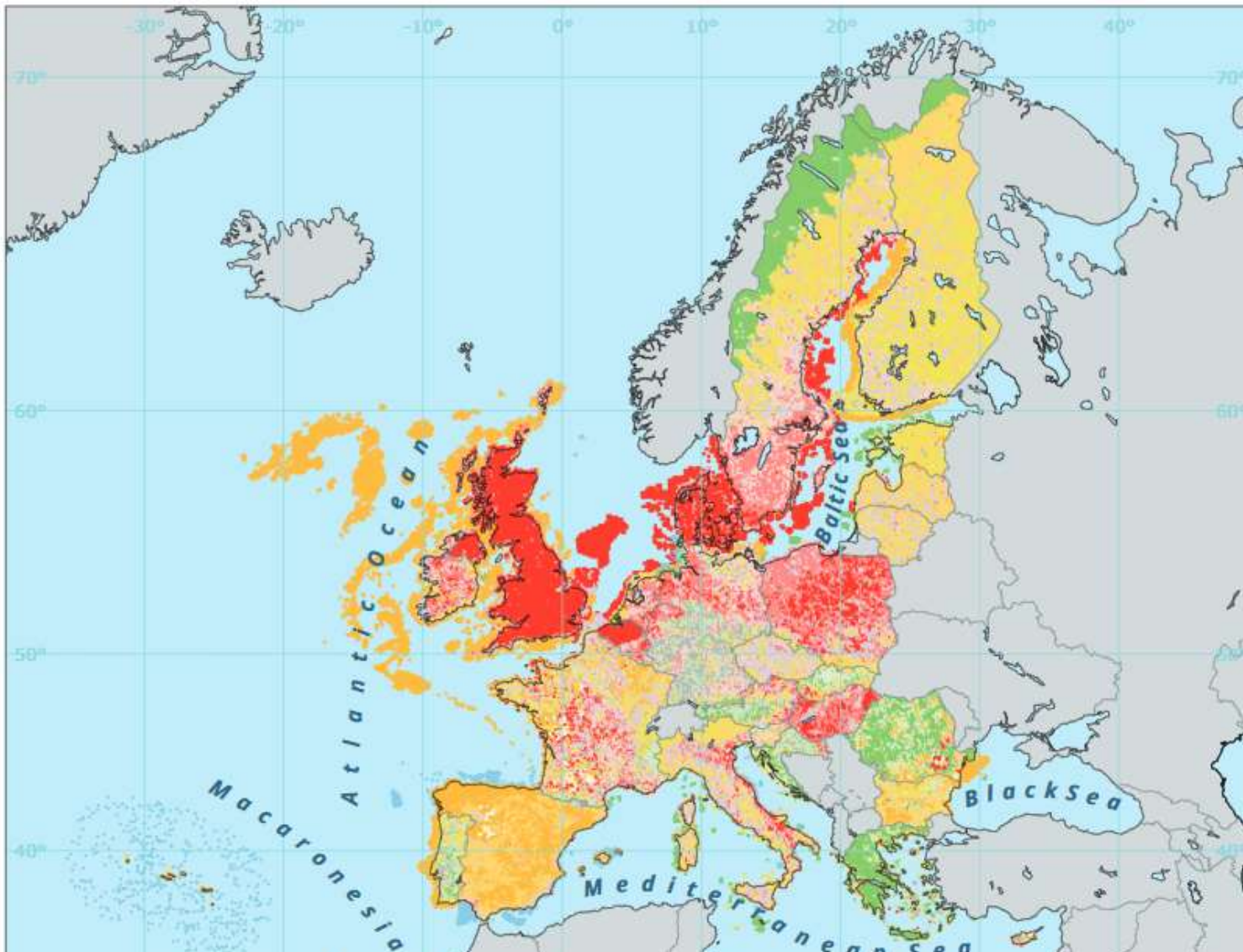


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We are blessed with a huge array of biodiversity in the Amman Valley. But unfortunately wildlife in Wales is struggling more now than it ever has done in the past.

The next map is a stark reminder of how badly Wales and the UK are doing when it comes to conserving nature and the habitats they depend on.





Conservation Status of Habitats in European Member States 2020.

Green = Good

Amber = Poor

Red = Bad

The deeper the colour the more intense, so Wales and the UK in general are very bad.

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The good news is that we can all make a difference and by working together we can still change the fortunes of wildlife in Wales.



Volunteers mapping the habitat as part of our marsh fritillary reinforcement project.



Volunteers creating and monitoring Pied Flycatcher nest boxes in the Amman Valley.



Volunteers surveying for Dormice and Marsh Fritillaries in the Amman Valley.



Volunteers making bat boxes.



Volunteers helping to build the polytunnel so we can grow wildflowers to restore meadows and help feed bees, butterflies, moths and lots more...



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Thanks to volunteers like Kate and Jan, we managed to grow hundreds of wildflowers in the polytunnel this year.

We even managed to grow some lovely tomatoes.

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Our next project will help the conservation of our iconic Marsh Fritillary butterfly in the Amman Valley. The project, which is funded by the Carmarthenshire Local Nature Partnership will enable us to produce habitat management plans and habitat advice for marshy grassland habitats throughout the Amman Valley.

The management plans will be designed to help landowners of marshy grasslands in the valley to provide even better quality habitat for the Marsh Fritillary.

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If you are a landowner
or know someone
who is, and who may
want to take part in
the project, please do
get in touch.

Thank you



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Happy Autumn





Thanks again for all the photos, feedback and species records – they are much appreciated.

Please send in records of the wildlife you see (including Mole Hills), and please get in touch if you want more land management advice for Marsh Fritillary.

Any wildlife queries, please let me know.

Rob

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Female Adder (*Vipera berus*)

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