

# Amman Valley Wildlife Update Number 18 (May 2021)



Summer migrant birds like this Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*) have now arrived home to the Amman Valley and are establishing their territories.

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April and May are wonderful months of the year for wildlife. As the weather warms, we are treated to the blossoms of woodland flowers like our very special Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*).

Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

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The return of an Icon.  
The Amman Valley's Pied  
Flycatchers have now returned  
home from their winter break in  
Africa. Hopefully, they will have a  
good breeding season this year.

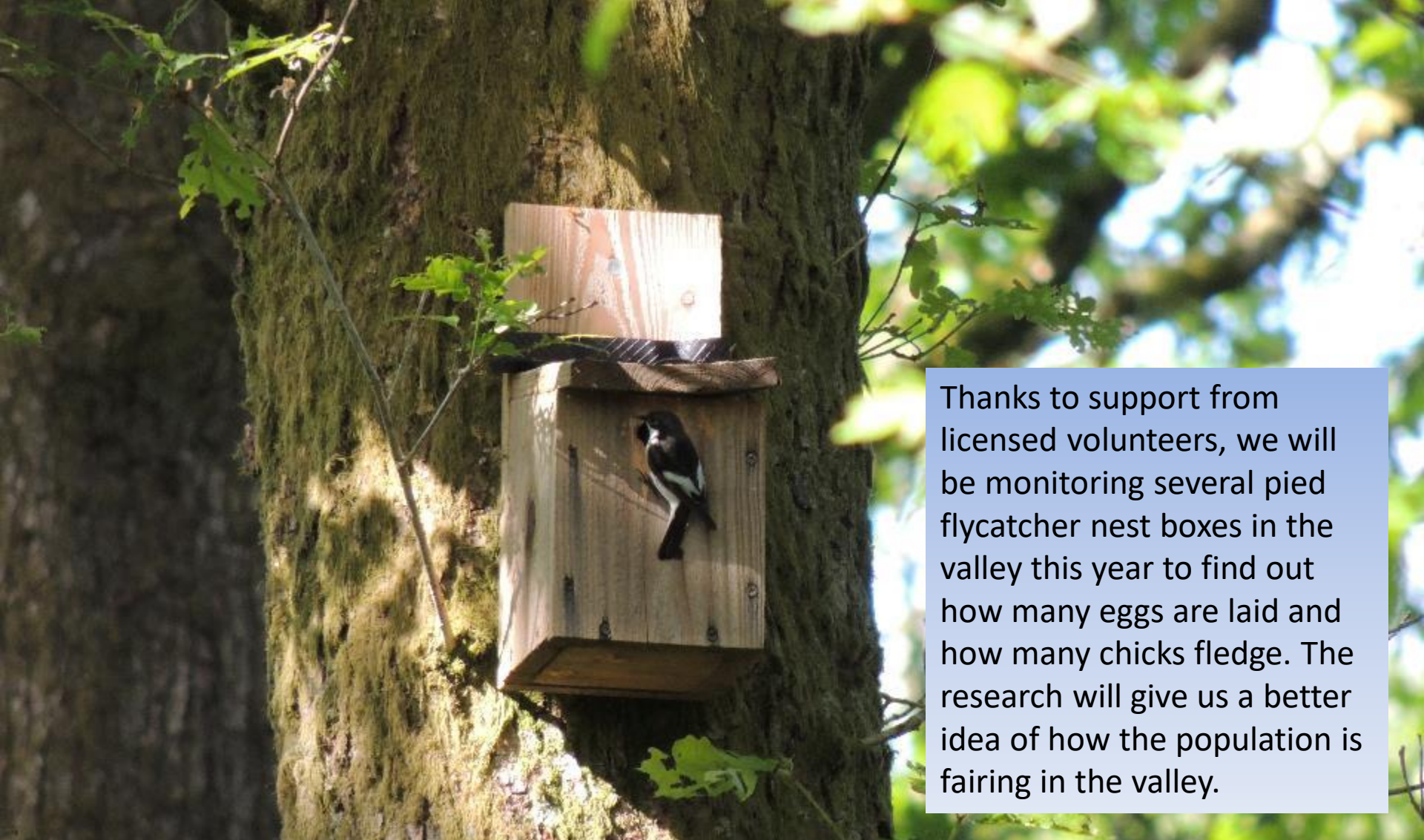


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Thanks to support from licensed volunteers, we will be monitoring several pied flycatcher nest boxes in the valley this year to find out how many eggs are laid and how many chicks fledge. The research will give us a better idea of how the population is fairing in the valley.

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Back in 2019 you may remember that we made 20 Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) nest boxes. 17 boxes have been installed and we are now making a start on monitoring them. Some have only been up a few weeks, so we are not expecting too much. However.....



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We do have a family of Tawny Owls (*Strix aluco*) using one of the boxes on the southern side of the valley. Not quite a Kestrel, but its still lovely to see. Thank you to Julian for the photos.



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There have been some excellent records and photos of other birds of prey in the valley also, like this Buzzard (*Buteo buteo*).



Photo: Jenifer Thomas

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And this Sparrow Hawk  
(*Accipiter nisus*).



Photo: Jenifer Thomas

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Speaking of Sparrows.  
We have at least one pair  
of House Sparrow (*Passer  
domesticus*) nesting in  
the garden.



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Lizzie has been out and about recording evidence of house sparrow nests in the Amman Valley. So far, she has recorded 150 pairs of House Sparrow nesting in the area and there is plenty more time to go.

If you have House Sparrows nesting in your shed or house roof – please do let me know and we can add it to the list - Thank you.

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It has been a strange few weeks for moths in the garden. Too warm during the days and too cold at night. We are now starting to see some new moths to the moth trap, including this Muslin Moth (*Diaphora mendica*).





We have however managed to set the moth trap up in a few different gardens across the Amman Valley.



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The weather was a little cold on both occasions, but we did manage to see a few different species, including.....



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One of my favourites,  
a Brindled Beauty  
(*Lycia hirtaria*).

Thank you for all  
those for taking  
part. When the  
weather warms  
up a bit more, we  
can hopefully visit  
some more  
gardens in the  
valley.



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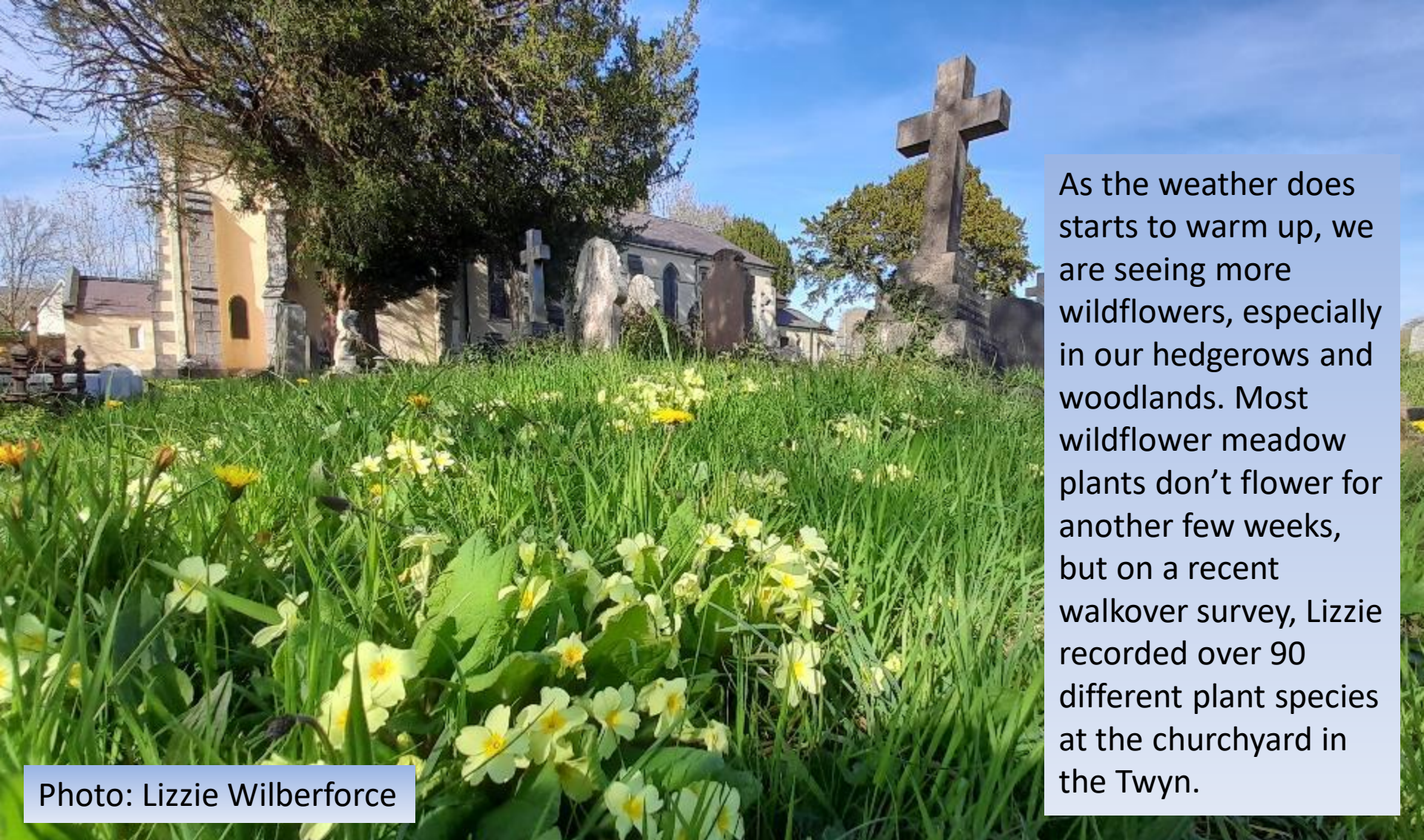


Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

As the weather does starts to warm up, we are seeing more wildflowers, especially in our hedgerows and woodlands. Most wildflower meadow plants don't flower for another few weeks, but on a recent walkover survey, Lizzie recorded over 90 different plant species at the churchyard in the Twyn.

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Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

Some of the species recorded include these beautiful Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*).

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Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

And Cuckoo Flower (*Cardamine pratensis*). Cuckoo Flower is a very important early nectar plant and its also the food plant for Orange-tip (*Anthocharis cardamines*) butterfly caterpillars.

The close association between the two species can be seen in their scientific name.

Female Orange-tip butterflies do not have the orange wing tips like this male. They can be seen throughout spring visiting Cuckoo Flowers and laying a single egg on the plant. The caterpillars are cannibalistic, so only one egg is laid per plant.



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Join us this Friday (14<sup>th</sup> May) to plant out wildflower plants at Parc Golwg yr Aman in. Cwmaman Town Council, INCC and the National Botanic Garden have come together to give the wildflower meadow at Golwg yr Aman a bit of a wildflower boost. Places are limited because of Covid-19, so if you can make it, please contact me first – [rob.parry@incc.wales](mailto:rob.parry@incc.wales).

Thank you.

Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

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Justin Driver sent in this wonderful photo of a bumblebee nest that he found at home.

The bumblebee is a White-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lucorum*).

In the photo you can clearly see the very large queen bee and several smaller workers. The chambers are used for storing food and rearing the next generation of bees.

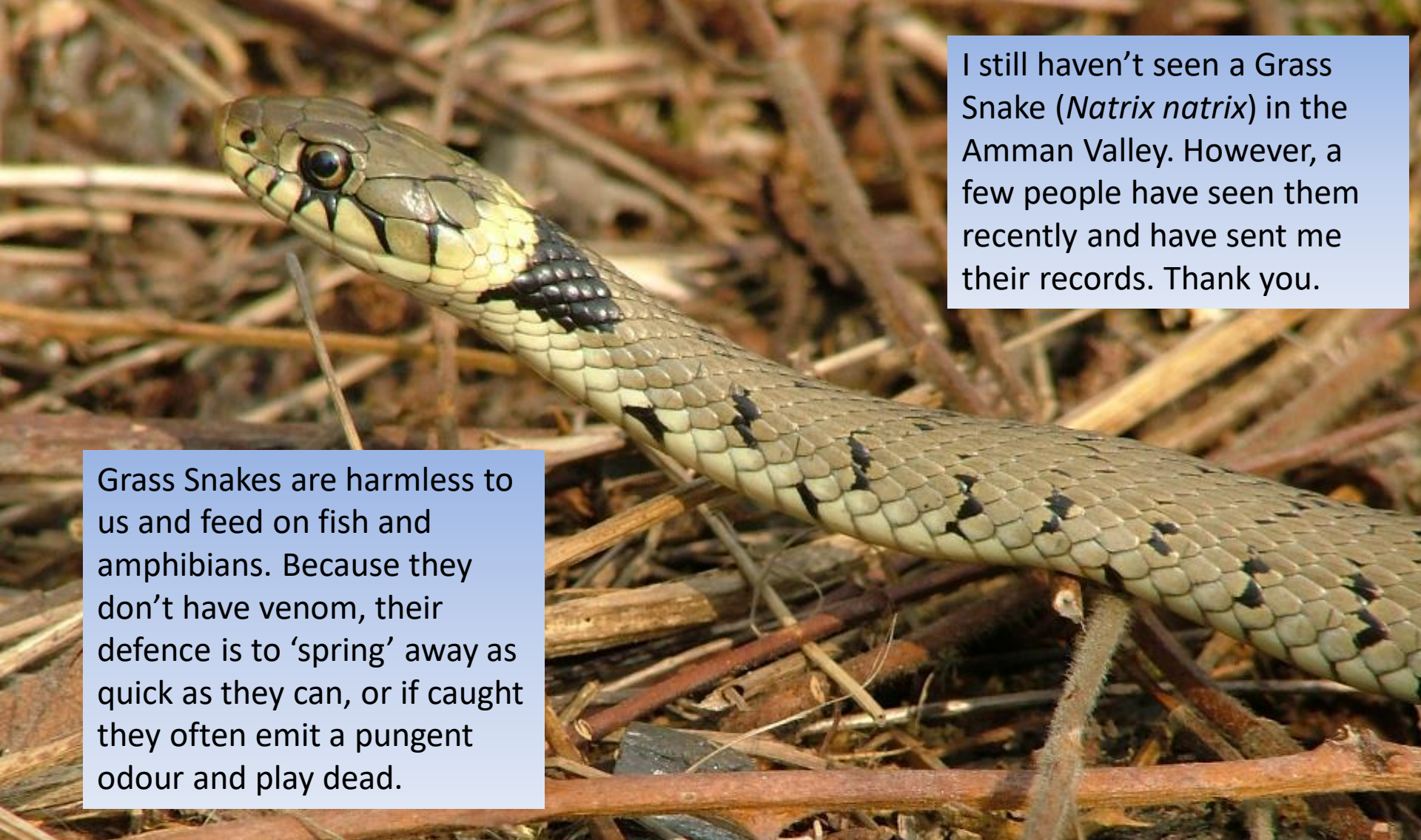
Thanks Justin – I've never seen that before.

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I still haven't seen a Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*) in the Amman Valley. However, a few people have seen them recently and have sent me their records. Thank you.

Grass Snakes are harmless to us and feed on fish and amphibians. Because they don't have venom, their defence is to 'spring' away as quick as they can, or if caught they often emit a pungent odour and play dead.

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Whilst down at the polytunnel, I managed to spot this Scarlet Tiger (*Callimorpha dominula*) moth caterpillar feeding on the wildflowers. He seemed quite happy where he was, so I left him be. In the next few weeks, the caterpillar will pupate and transform into an adult moth.



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The Marsh Fritillary in the Amman Valley should now be entering into their pupation. Adults should be emerging from their pupa in the next few weeks.

Can't wait.



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Please keep sending in your photos and wildlife records – they are very much appreciated.

If you have any queries or would like to join us at Parc Golwg yr Aman on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May – please do get in touch.

Thank You

Rob

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