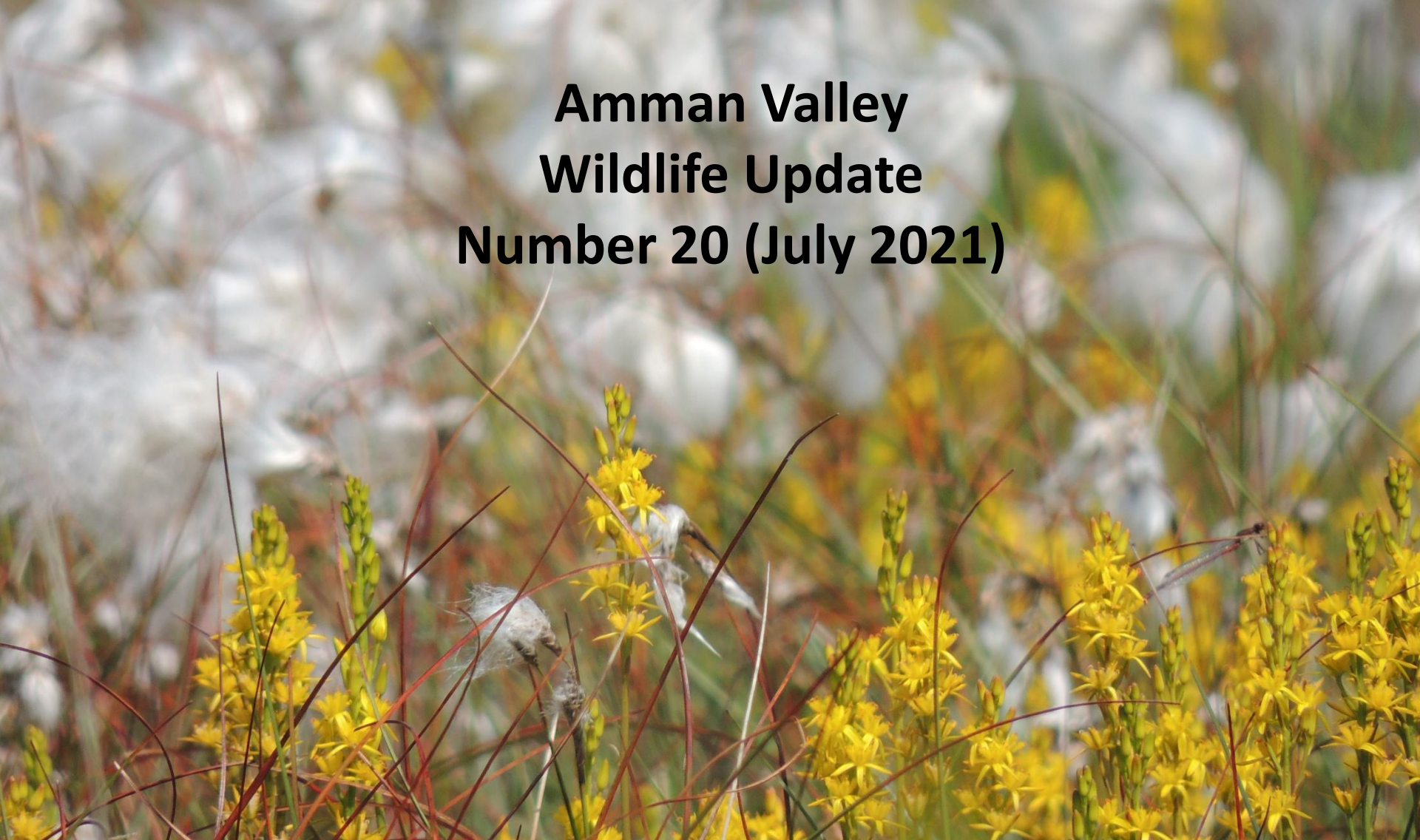


Amman Valley Wildlife Update Number 20 (July 2021)



**MENTER AR GYFER
CADWRAETH NATUR CYMRU**




**INITIATIVE FOR NATURE
CONSERVATION CYMRU**

July is the best month to see the wonderful wildflower meadows of the Amman Valley.

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Our damper wildflower pastures are also a haven for wildlife at this time of year. They are currently full of Whorled Caraway (*Carum verticillatum*) which is the plant of Carmarthenshire.

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Wildflower pastures like these are best managed by cattle grazing.

Meadows on the other hand need to be cut at this time of year to produce hay and to make sure that wildflowers have a chance of growing and flowering next year.

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Work has begun in the Valley this month to help restore marshy grassland pastures for wildlife. A partnership consisting of INCC, Brecon Beacons National Park and Carmarthen & Neat Port Talbot Nature Partnerships has secured funding to restore over 4 hectares of marshy grassland. This will include new fencing at one site so that cattle can be returned to the land to graze and help encourage more wildflowers, insects and birds.



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As part of the project a new permissive footpath will be installed in the new habitat so that we can all enjoy the wildlife that marshy grasslands can offer.



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A huge thank you to Jan, Carla and Li for creating this wonderful sign. It will hopefully be installed in a meadow habitat soon. Thanks.



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Late summer is also a good time to look out for dragonflies and damselflies like this Migrant Hawker (*Cordulegaster boltonii*). Or.....

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Common Darters (*Sympetrum striolatum*).
These are on the wing up until November.

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Golden-ringed Dragonfly
(*Cordulegaster boltonii*) can also
be seen at this time of year.

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Rhian spotted a Golden-ringed Dragonfly in her garden. They are normally a river species and very distinctive. Good spot.

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Another insect spotted by Rhian in the garden was this Dark Giant Horsefly (*Tabanus sudeticus*).

The Dark Giant Horsefly is one of our largest flies and can be up to 2.5cm long. It is **anautogenous** which means it requires a meal of blood to produce and lay eggs. It prefers to feed on animals like horses, cattle and deer, but it has been known to bite humans on occasion and it can be painful.

They start flying in June and reach peak abundance in mid to late July and continue flying throughout August where they are on the look out for boggy habitats to breed.

Dark Giant Horseflies are not to be confused with the European Hornet (*Vespa crabro*).

The Hornet is a relative of wasps and can often be spotted in woodlands and gardens between May and November. Despite their size (3.5cm) they are much less aggressive than wasps and aren't that common in Wales.



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August is one of the saddest months for me as it's the month where we say goodbye to our Swifts (*Apus apus*) for another year. These beautiful birds light up our skyline in early summer with their high speed, screeching flights. We still don't know enough about Swifts in the Amman Valley – so if you have had any nesting in your roof this year, please do let us know.

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We have installed a Swift nest box to try and encourage them, but so far, we have only had House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*).

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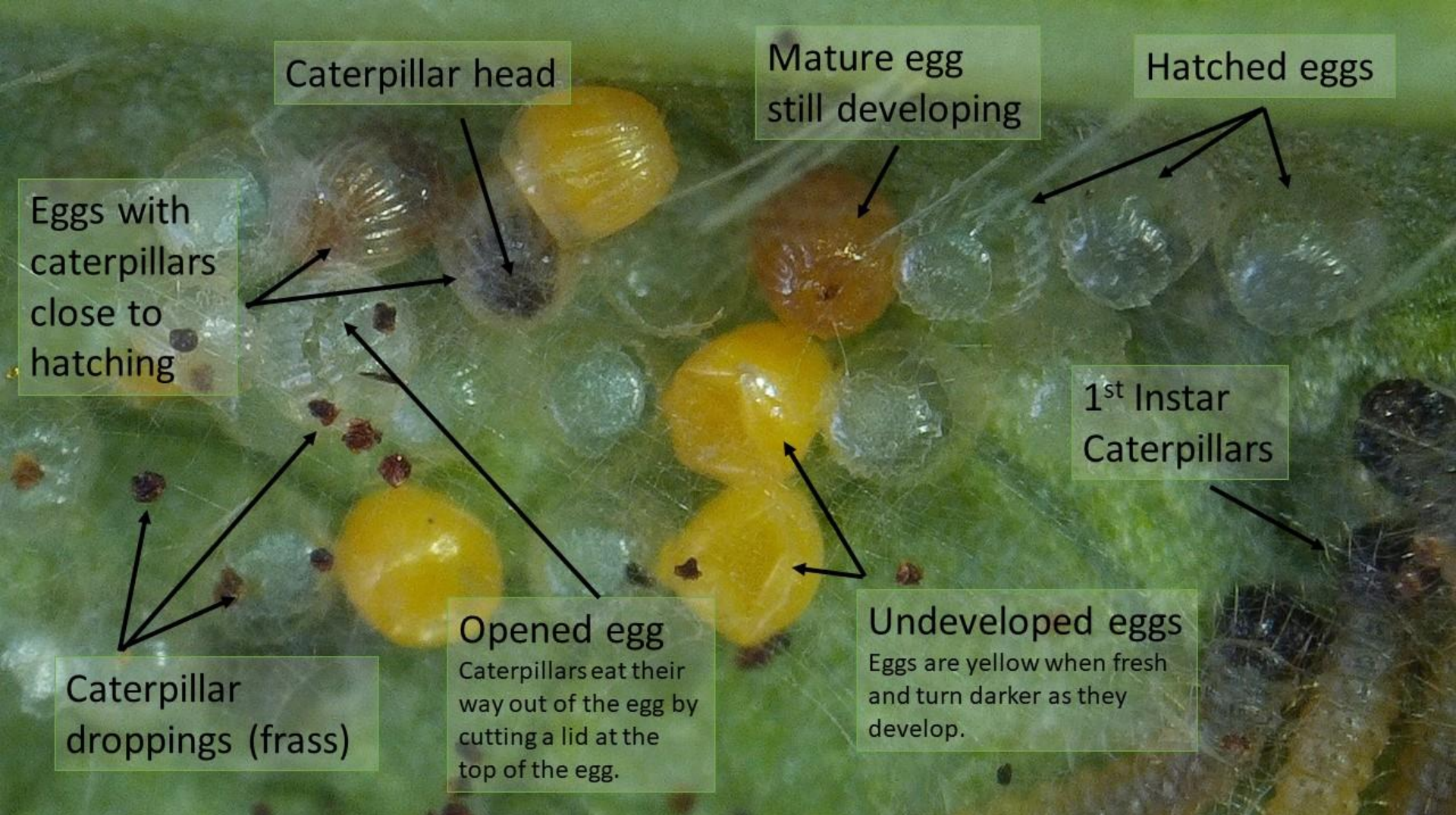
July and August is a good time to start looking for Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) larval webs. All eggs have now hatched, and the larval webs created by the caterpillars help protect caterpillars as they feed on their Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) plants.



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A Guide to Marsh Fritillary Eggs

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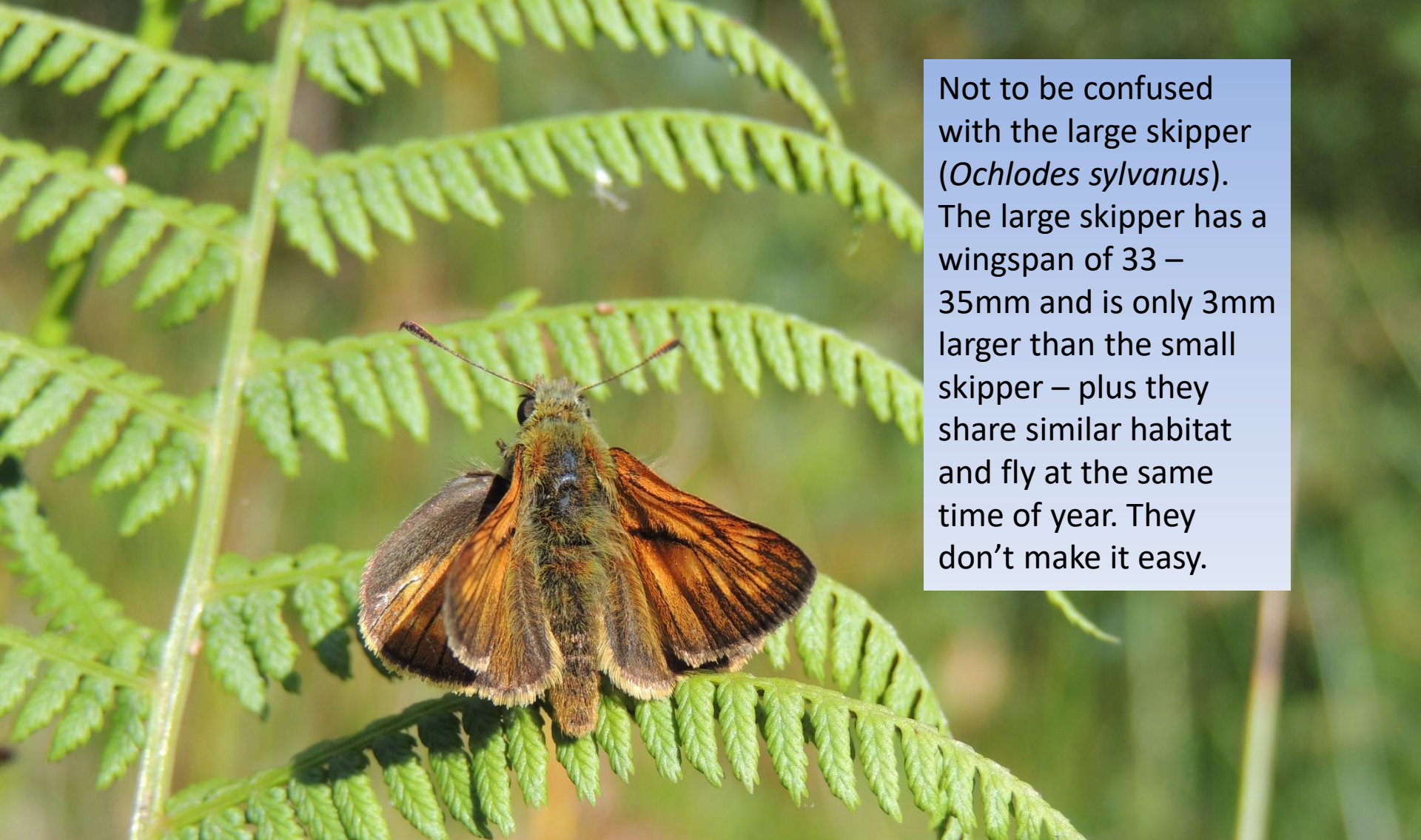
Late summer is a great time of year to spot butterflies in the Amman Valley.

This is a small skipper (*Thymelicus sylvestris*) and can often be found in long grassy habitats.

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Not to be confused with the large skipper (*Ochlodes sylvanus*). The large skipper has a wingspan of 33 – 35mm and is only 3mm larger than the small skipper – plus they share similar habitat and fly at the same time of year. They don't make it easy.

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Ringlets
(*Aphantopus
hyperantus*) are
often overlooked,
but when they
stop and rest like
this one did at
Hen Bethel, they
show themselves
to be quite
beautiful.



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Gatekeepers
(*Pyronia tithonus*)
are feisty little
butterflies that
defend their scrub
patch against all
other butterflies.
Scrub, such as
bramble is an
incredibly
important habitat
for butterflies.



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Small coppers
(*Lycaena phlaeas*)
are also on the
wing at the
moment and will
be with us right up
until October. They
are actually
members of the
blue family.

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This is a marbled white (*Melanargia galathea*). They are not that common in Wales, but one was spotted in Pantyffynnon recently. If you see this unmistakable butterfly during August, please do let me know. Thank you.

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Common Dolphin off the coast of Gower. If you see one of these in the Amman Valley – we are all in trouble.



Thanks again for all your feedback.

Any wildlife queries, please feel free to get in touch.

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

Thank You

Rob

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Cronfa Datblygu
Cynaliadwy

Sustainable
Development Fund