

Amman Valley Wildlife Update Number 26 (February 2022)

As spring is starting to show itself, we are starting to see wildflowers appear in our woodlands.

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These are the tiny yellow flowers of the Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*). They carpet wet woodlands and are a great indicator species of healthy wet woodland habitats (aka Alluvial Forests).

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These green flowers of the Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) plant may not look very special, but they are incredibly important because they are often a sign of ancient woodland habitat. The plant itself is poisonous but is used as a food source for several invertebrate species.



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More colourful
wildflowers
flowering at this
time of year
include the
Marsh-marigold
(*Caltha palustris*)
which can be
found in marshy
areas and ponds.

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Lesser Celandine
(*Ficaria verna*) found
in woodlands and
hedgerows.

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Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*). It is named from the Latin *Prima rosa*, which means first rose of the year. Though its not a rose.

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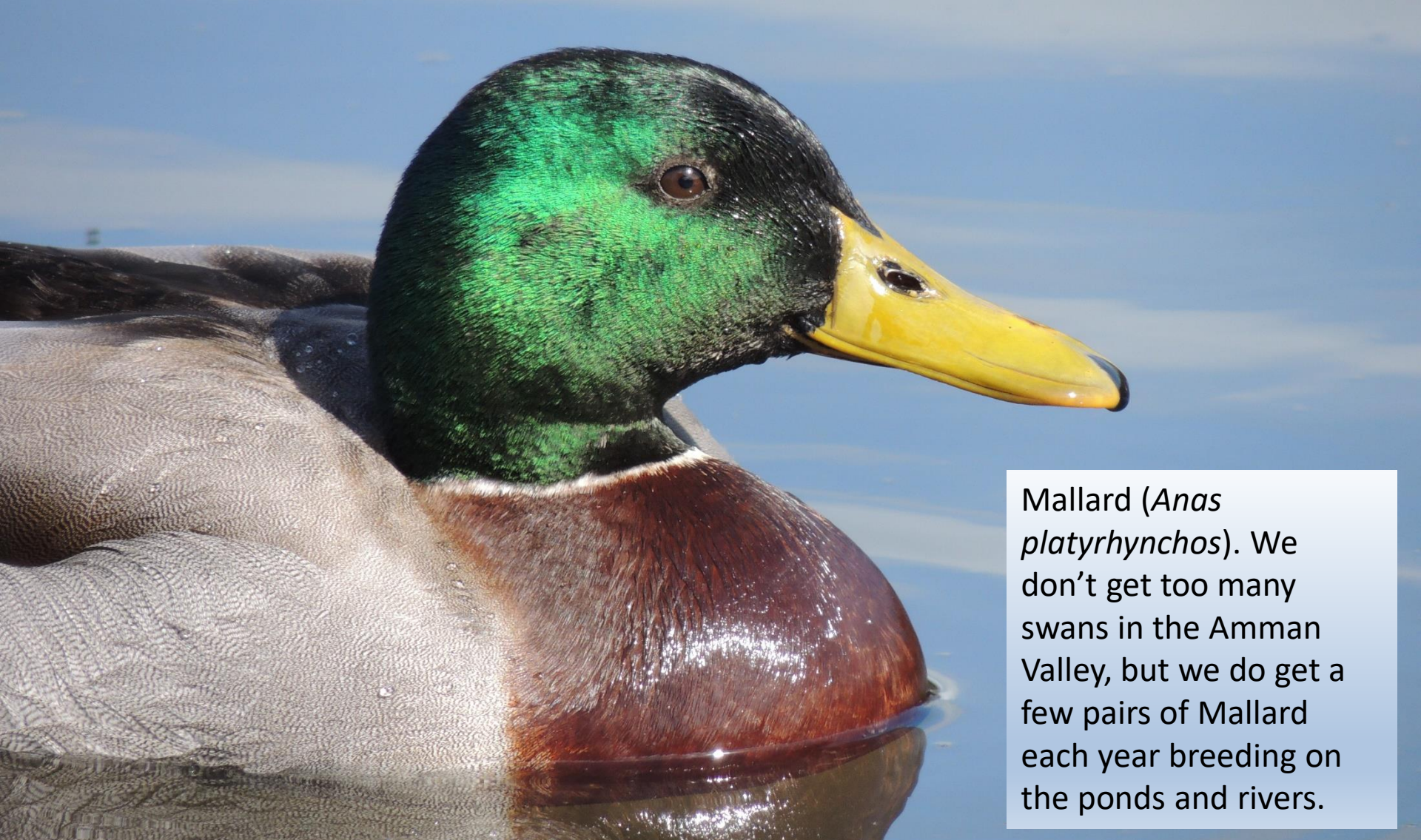
With all the rain in February
it's been a good few weeks
for wildfowl including Mute
Swans (*Cygnus olor*) and...



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Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*). We don't get too many swans in the Amman Valley, but we do get a few pairs of Mallard each year breeding on the ponds and rivers.

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We do get a several pairs of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) breeding in and around the Amman Valley and you can often hear them 'honking' in the morning and afternoon as the fly to and from their feeding grounds. Thanks to Margaret for letting us know she had 16 on her pond earlier this month.



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Spring is a great time of year to see wildlife like this weasel (*Mustela nivalis*). In spring they are often preoccupied with finding a mate or building a nest / den allowing you to get some excellent views and encounters. Thanks to John for these excellent photos.



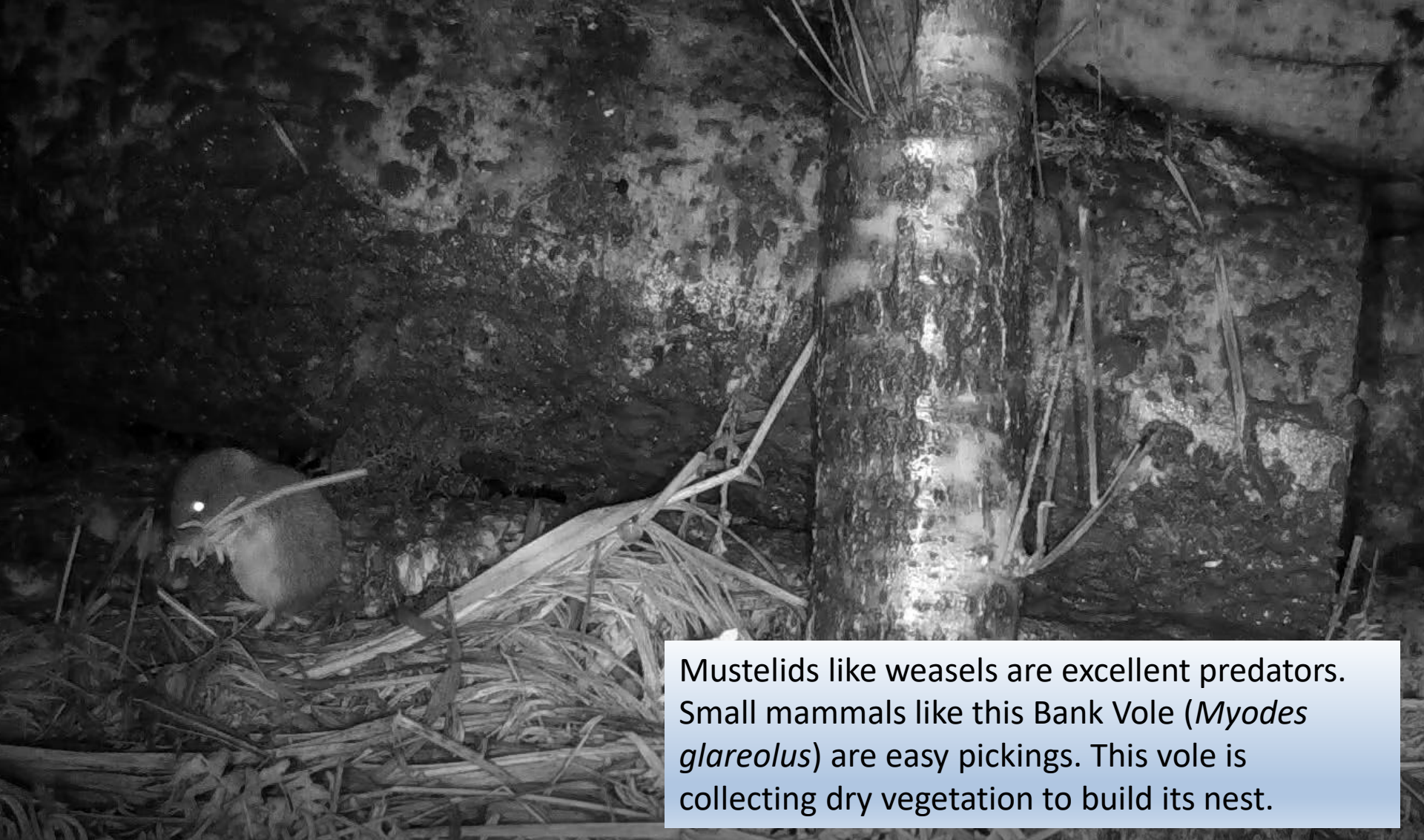
The best way to tell the difference between a weasel and a Stoat is that Stoats have a black tip to the tail, they have a cream coloured chest and the line between the two colours of fur is more defined.

Photo: John Driver

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Mustelids like weasels are excellent predators. Small mammals like this Bank Vole (*Myodes glareolus*) are easy pickings. This vole is collecting dry vegetation to build its nest.

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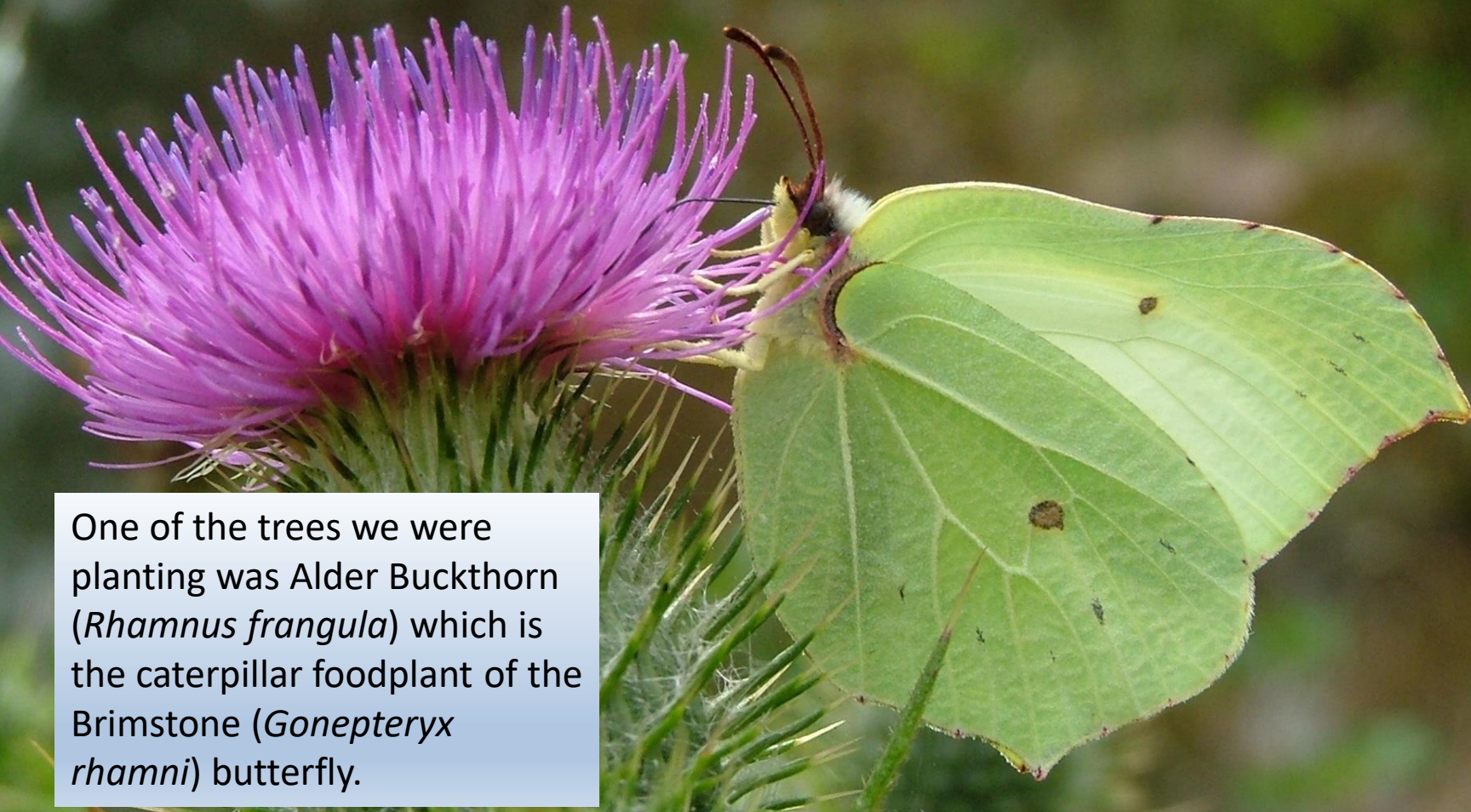


Thank you to all the volunteers who helped out with our hedgerow restoration project. They endured dreadful weather to plant hundreds of trees to create and restore hedgerow habitat in valley. Thank you.

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One of the trees we were planting was Alder Buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*) which is the caterpillar foodplant of the Brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni*) butterfly.

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Thanks to the landowners Mark and Sarah, the hedgerow planting morning was followed by the best cup of tea ever and a slice of home-made Banana Bread.



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The Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) population in Wales and UK is suffering, particularly in rural areas. So, conservation projects like hedgerow creation and restoration - and letting scrub do its thing are vitally important.



Photo: Vaughn Matthews

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This year, INCC will be doing more to help our Amman Valley Hedgehogs, so please stay tuned. One thing that can be done in gardens is putting in steps for hedgehogs to help them get up bigger steps.

The more of your garden and your neighbour's garden you can make available to hedgehogs the better.

If you see a
Hedgehog – please
do let us know as it
will help us identify
conservation
projects around
them – thank you.

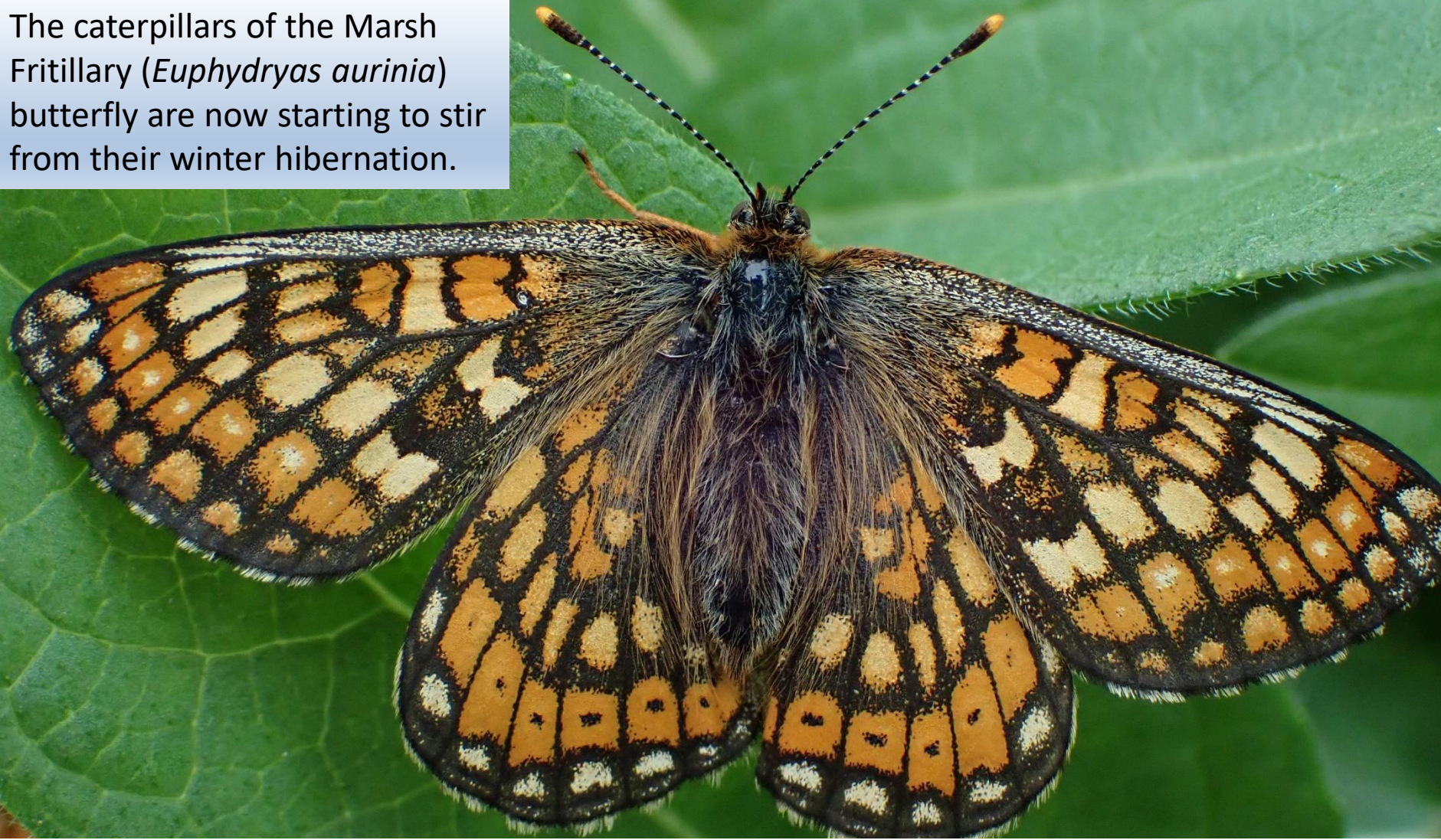


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The caterpillars of the Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) butterfly are now starting to stir from their winter hibernation.

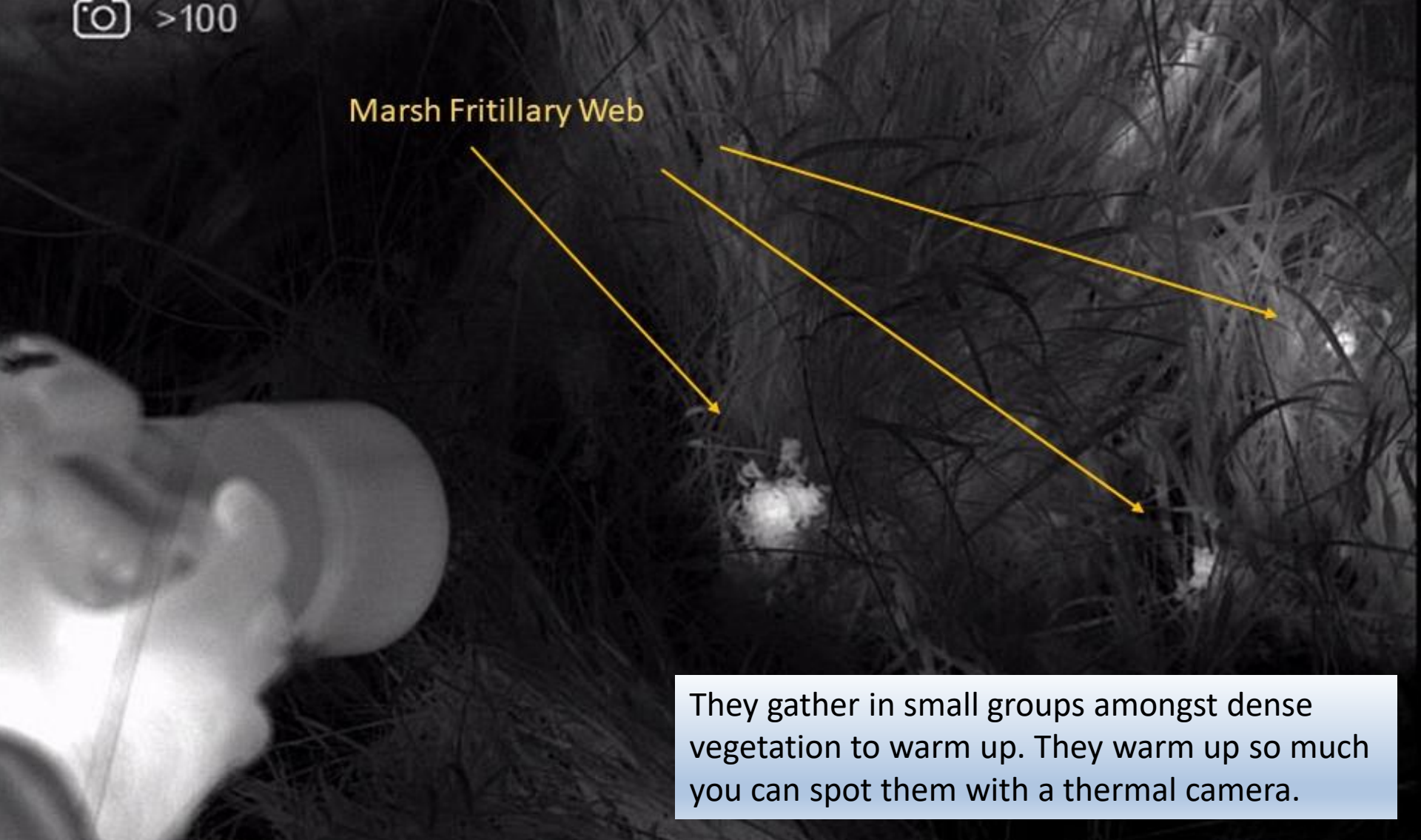


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Marsh Fritillary Web



They gather in small groups amongst dense vegetation to warm up. They warm up so much you can spot them with a thermal camera.



Our Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) Project will see the installation of 19 specially made nest boxes for Barn Owl in the Amman Valley.

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If you are a landowner or know of someone who has lots of rough farmland who may want a Barn Owl nest box – please do let us know, thank you.



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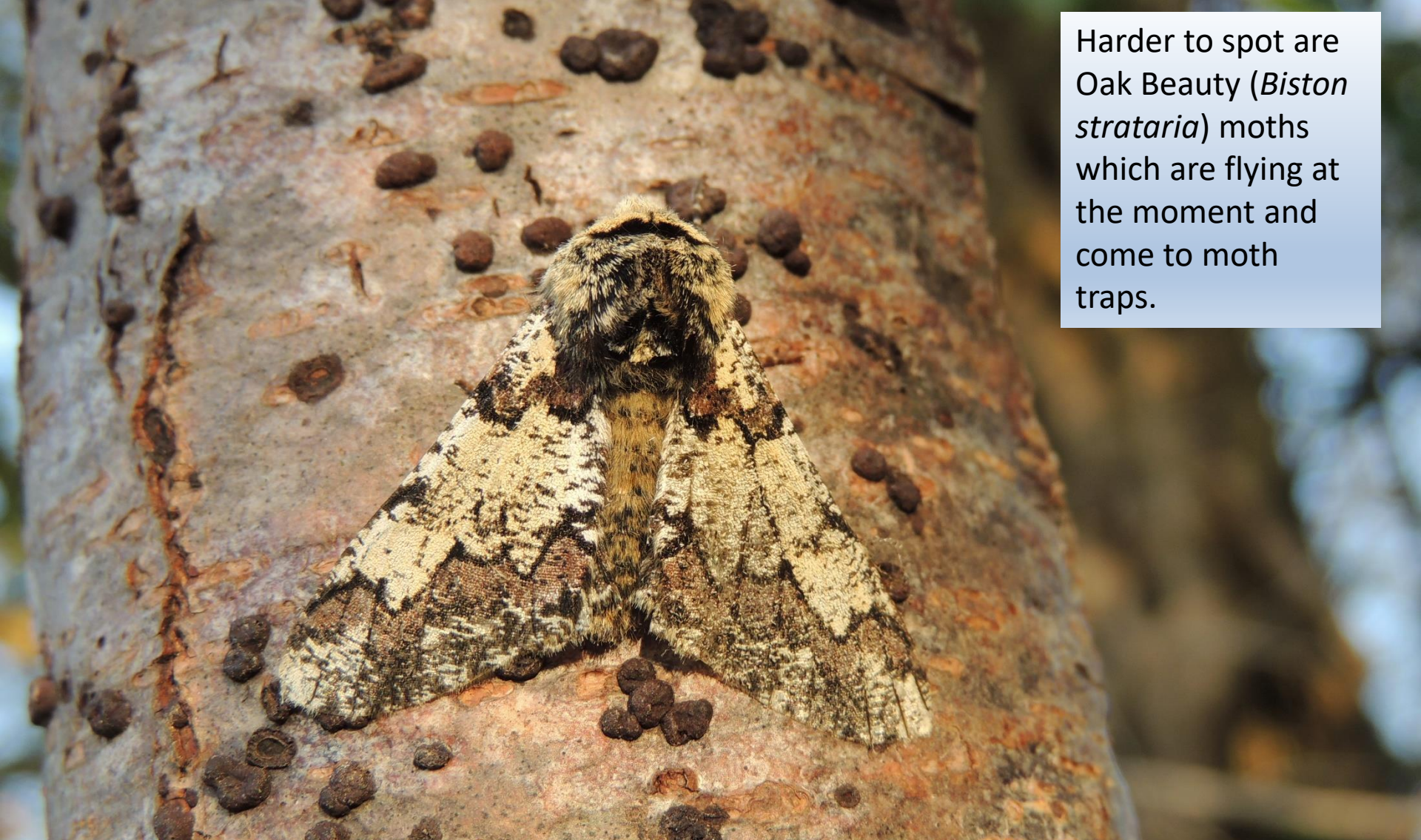
Queen Buff-tailed Bumblebees (*Bombus terrestris*) are out and about on warm days now and they are easy to spot in gardens where they are looking for suitable places to build a nest.

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Harder to spot are Oak Beauty (*Biston strataria*) moths which are flying at the moment and come to moth traps.



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Volunteer Day Join Us: Wildflower Planting Day Friday 11th March 2022



Join us on Friday 11th March 2022 to help plant wildflowers to help restore a marshy grassland habitat. If you are interested' please email rob.parry@incc.wales

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If you would like to join us on the 11th of March for the wildflower planting day – please do email me or phone rob.parry@incc.wales or 07821 397625

Please do keep sending me your wildlife sightings, photos and queries. Thank you.



Thank You
Rob
rob.parry@incc.wales

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