

Amman Valley Wildlife Update: March 2023



MENTER AR GYFER
CADWRAETH NATUR CYMRU



INITIATIVE FOR NATURE
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Come join us on our Spring Wildlife Walk this Thursday 20th April at 10am.



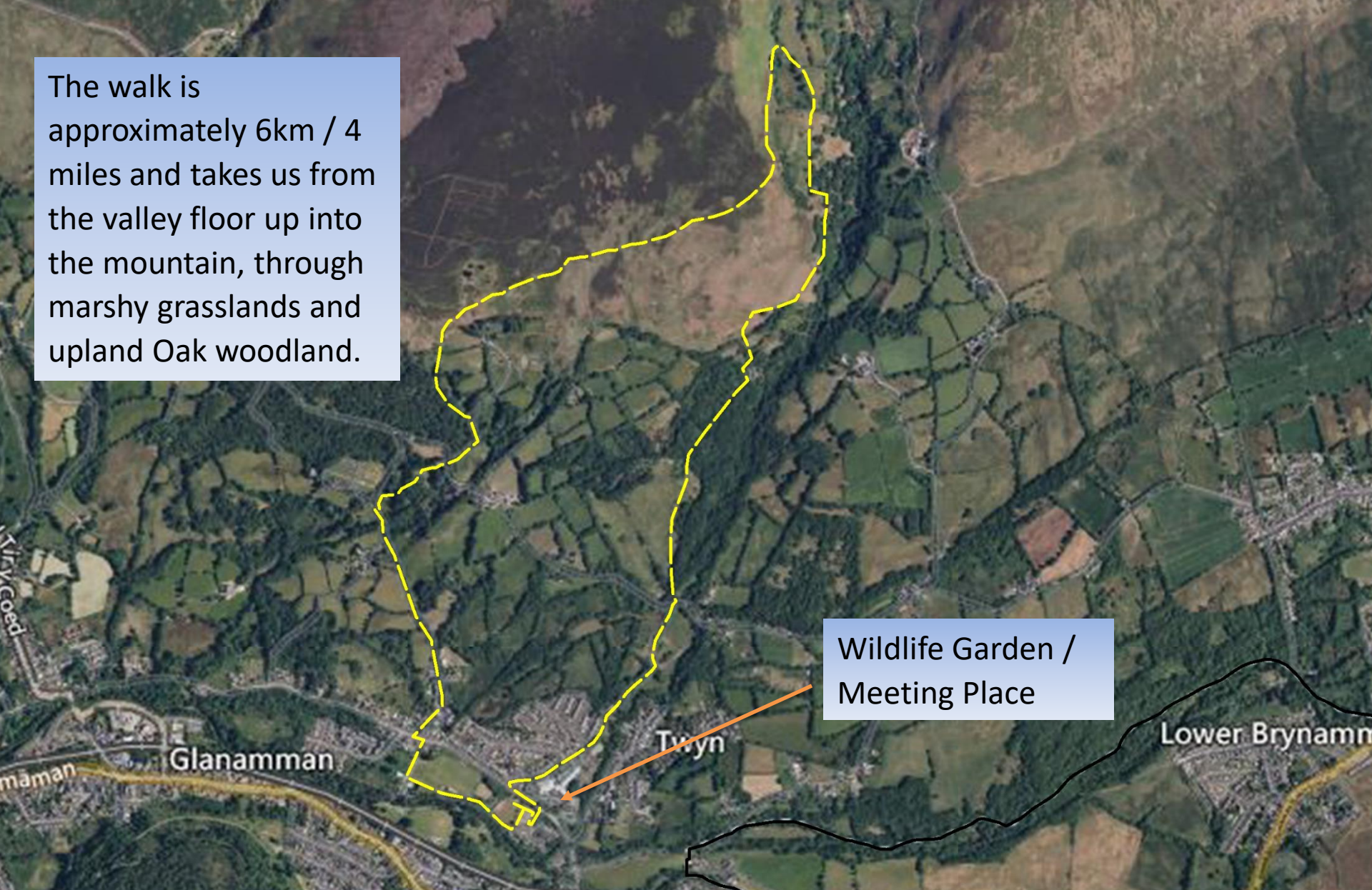
The walk starts and finishes at the wildlife garden in Garnant (by the Bowls Pavilion Car Park).

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The walk is approximately 6km / 4 miles and takes us from the valley floor up into the mountain, through marshy grasslands and upland Oak woodland.



There will be lots to see along the way,
including early spring flowers like
these Lesser Celandine (*Ficaria verna*).



Although not as colourful as Lesser Celandine, these Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) plants are important indicators of ancient woodland.





The beautiful Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*) is an indicator of wet woodland.

You may be noticing a lot of these tiny plants popping up lately, particularly in lawns. They are the seedlings of the Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) tree. Sycamore is not native tree to the UK but it has been with us since the Roman Times.





Another non-native species that is spreading across the UK is the Noble False-widow Spider (*Steatoda nobilis*). This specimen is a male and was found in Garnant. A big thank you to Richard Gallon for helping with the identification.




Thanks to the help of volunteers, we have recently started making our Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) Boxes. The boxes will be placed in different woodland in the Amman Valley so that we can survey for, and provide a home for these wonderful little mammals.



Dormice create tightly woven nests with scattered leaves inside the boxes. Hopefully we will find a few Dormice using the boxes when we check later in the year.



A close-up photograph of an Oak Beauty moth (Biston strataria) resting on a large green leaf. The moth's wings are dark brown with intricate white and light grey patterns. The leaf has several small holes, indicating it has been eaten. In the background, a tree trunk with rough, textured bark is visible.

March has been very wet and quite cold, so it hasn't been the best month for setting the moth trap. However, on the rare occasions we did put the moth trap out we were treated to some wonderful moths including this Oak Beauty (*Biston strataria*).

Other moths recorded this month include:

Hebrew Character
(*Orthosia gothica*)



Early Grey
(*Xylocampa areola*)



Brindled Beauty
(*Lycia hirtaria*)





The highlight was this
beautiful Early Thorn
(*Selenia dentaria*)

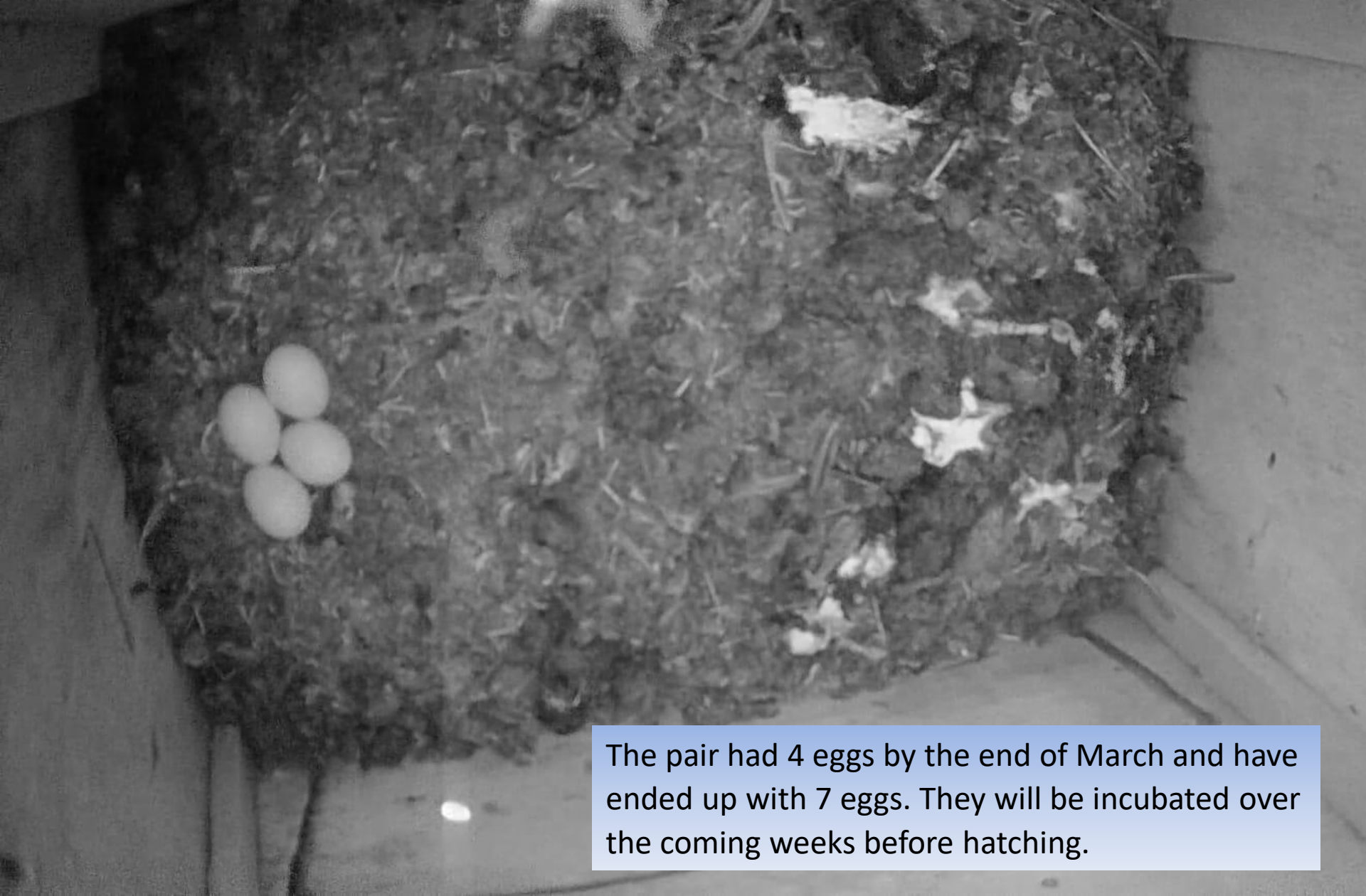


Spring is a great time to look out for some of our more shy species like Brown Hares (*Lepus europaeus*). Brown Hares were recently seen along the mountain edge within the Brecon Beacons National Park.



If you are out walking in the evenings, you may be lucky enough to spot a Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*). There is at least one pair of Barn Owls breeding in the Amman Valley.





The pair had 4 eggs by the end of March and have ended up with 7 eggs. They will be incubated over the coming weeks before hatching.



Lots has been happening down at the wildlife garden in March. We have now dug a large pond and intend having a pond and bog habitat.



As there was no clay in the ground, we had to use a pond liner which meant putting down sand between the ground and the liner.



Once the sand was in place, liner was used before filling with water.



As March has been so wet, the pond filled up in just a few days.



Our wildflowers have also emerged from their winter torpor in the polytunnel. The plants will be used to help create the bog garden element around the new pond.



As well as growing wildflowers for habitat restoration projects, the polytunnel is also where we grow lots of Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) plants to feed to our Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) Caterpillars.

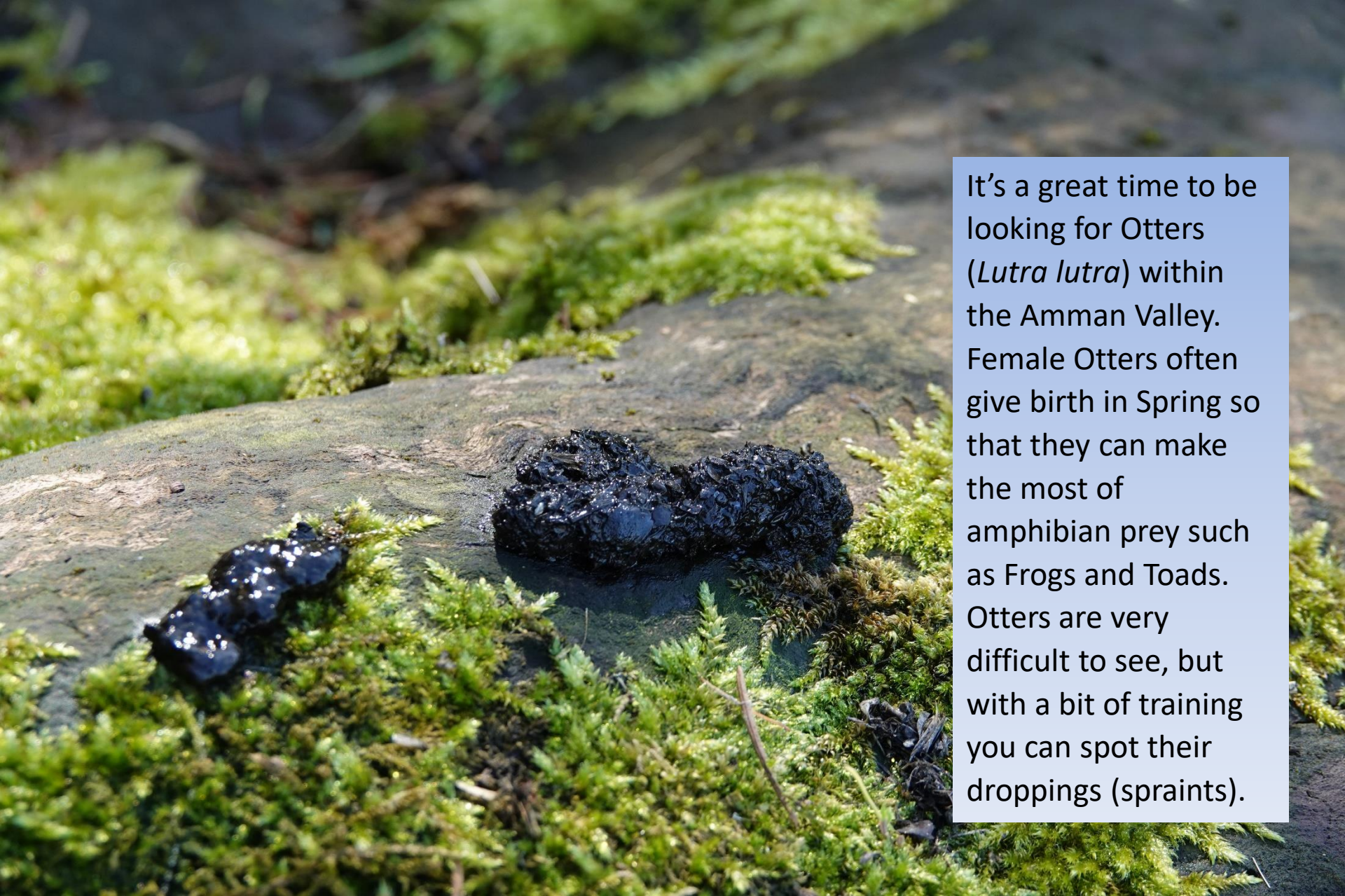
A photograph of a Nuthatch bird (Sitta europaea) sitting inside a circular hole in a tree trunk. The bird has a grey head with a white stripe, a black back, and a reddish-brown belly. The hole is surrounded by a thick, circular rim of mud. An orange arrow points from a text box to the hole. The background shows green foliage and a blurred tree trunk.

Mud to fill in bigger hole.

Spring is a great time to observe wildlife. This Nuthatch (*Sitta europaea*) has recently built a nest in this tree. Nuthatches cover large holes with mud to make smaller holes more suitable for the bird.



The pressure to breed and find a nest site is so great that many birds fight over the same nest site. This Great Tit (*Parus major*) tried its best to push out the Nuthatch after all his hard work blocking up the bigger hole.



It's a great time to be looking for Otters (*Lutra lutra*) within the Amman Valley. Female Otters often give birth in Spring so that they can make the most of amphibian prey such as Frogs and Toads. Otters are very difficult to see, but with a bit of training you can spot their droppings (spraints).

As well as spraints, you can sometimes see Otter footprints in sediment along river banks. These prints also show the Otter's tail being dragged along.



If you can join us for the Spring Walk, please do email me to book a place.

Please do keep sending in your wildlife queries, photos and sightings.

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Thank you, Rob.



Big thank you to everyone for volunteering and coming on walks to see local wildlife.

Please do keep sending in your wildlife queries, photos and sightings.

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Thank you, Rob.

