

Amman Valley

Wildlife Update: April 2023




MENTER AR GYFER
CADWRAETH NATUR CYMRU



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Spring finally sprung in April and some of our more familiar wildlife started showing, like these Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*).



As well as the woodland flowers, some colour has been returning to our grasslands, including these Red Deadnettles (*Lamium purpureum*).

One plant that you might have seen in April is Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*). I didn't see any this year in the Amman Valley - this specimen was found in the nearby Usk Valley.

Toothwort lacks chlorophyll meaning that it can't photosynthesise. Instead the plant is parasitic and takes its nutrients from trees such as Hazel (*Corylus avellana*). Toothwort hides out of sight for most of the year and then pops up in spring for a few short weeks.





As well as plants, our summer visiting birds also arrived back in April, including these House Martins (*Delichon urbicum*). Once common the bird is now a Red Listed species due to population declines. Some of the decline is down to people clearing nests from the eaves of their house, or placing netting around the eaves to stop them from nesting.



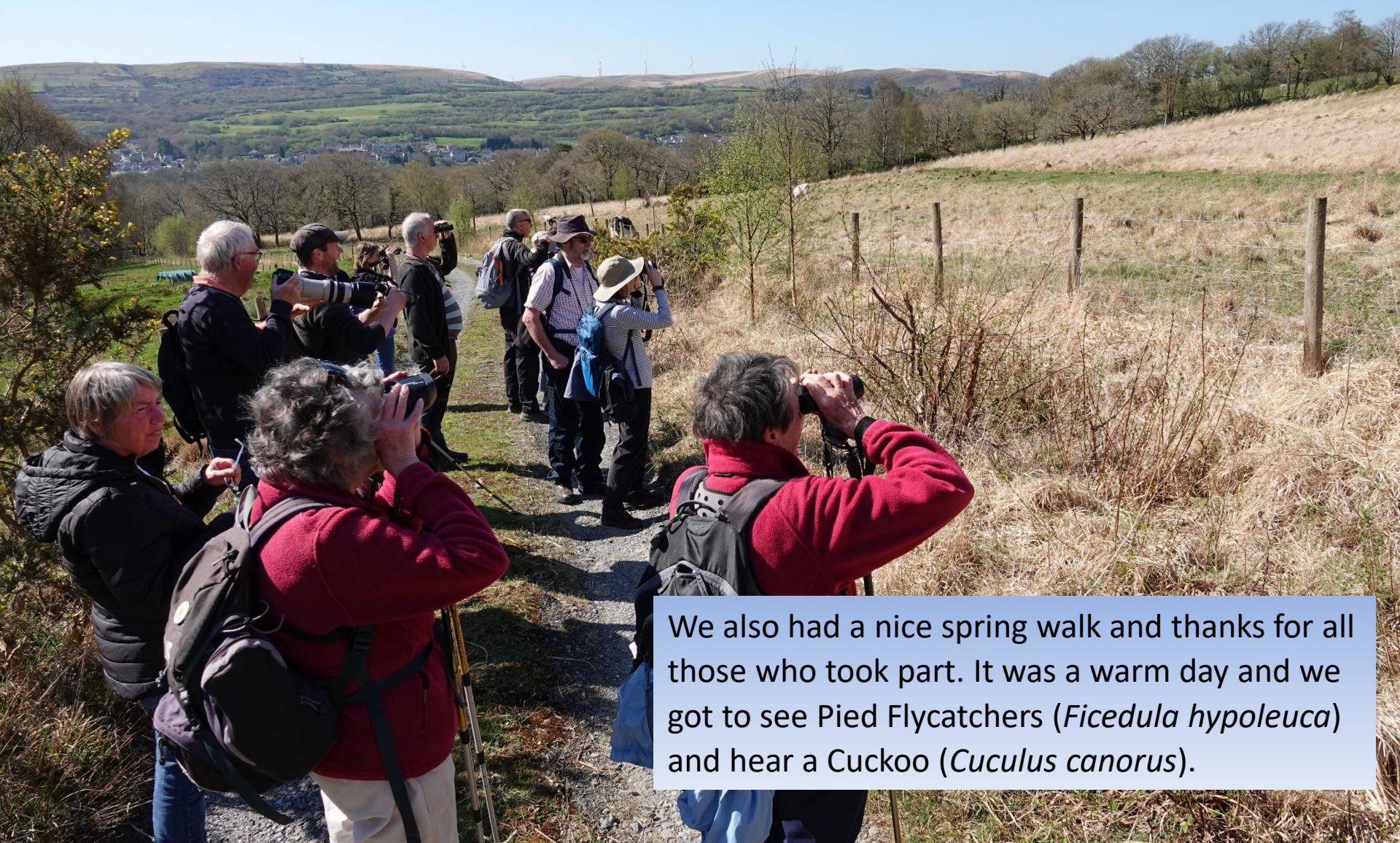
We think that having these beautiful birds and their nests on your house is a bonus. INCC have recently submitted a grant application that if successful will help us find out more about House Martins in the valley as well as build and install artificial nest boxes for them to use when they arrive back from their wintering grounds in Africa.



Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*)
and Swifts (*Apus apus*) have
also returned home to nest.



Its been a busy few weeks for events and volunteering. We had some great help from volunteers to install 50 of our Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) boxes in the Amman Valley. More will be going out this month.



We also had a nice spring walk and thanks for all those who took part. It was a warm day and we got to see Pied Flycatchers (*Ficedula hypoleuca*) and hear a Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*).



Male Pied Flycatcher taken by David Brennan during the spring wildlife walk.



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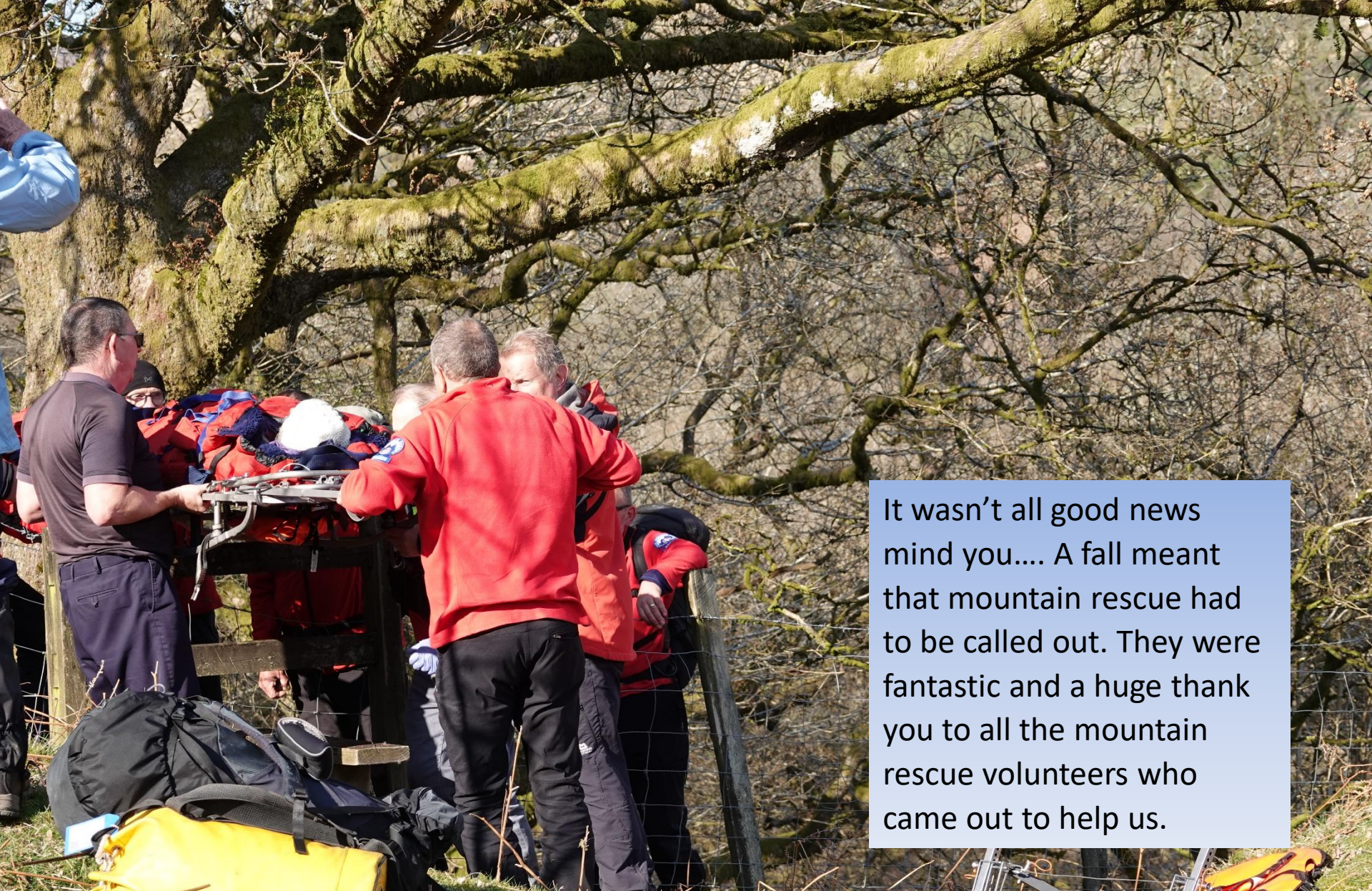


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Photo: Vaughn Matthews

We were also treated to this wonderful Green Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela campestris*). The beetle is predatory and feeds on spiders, ants and other invertebrates.



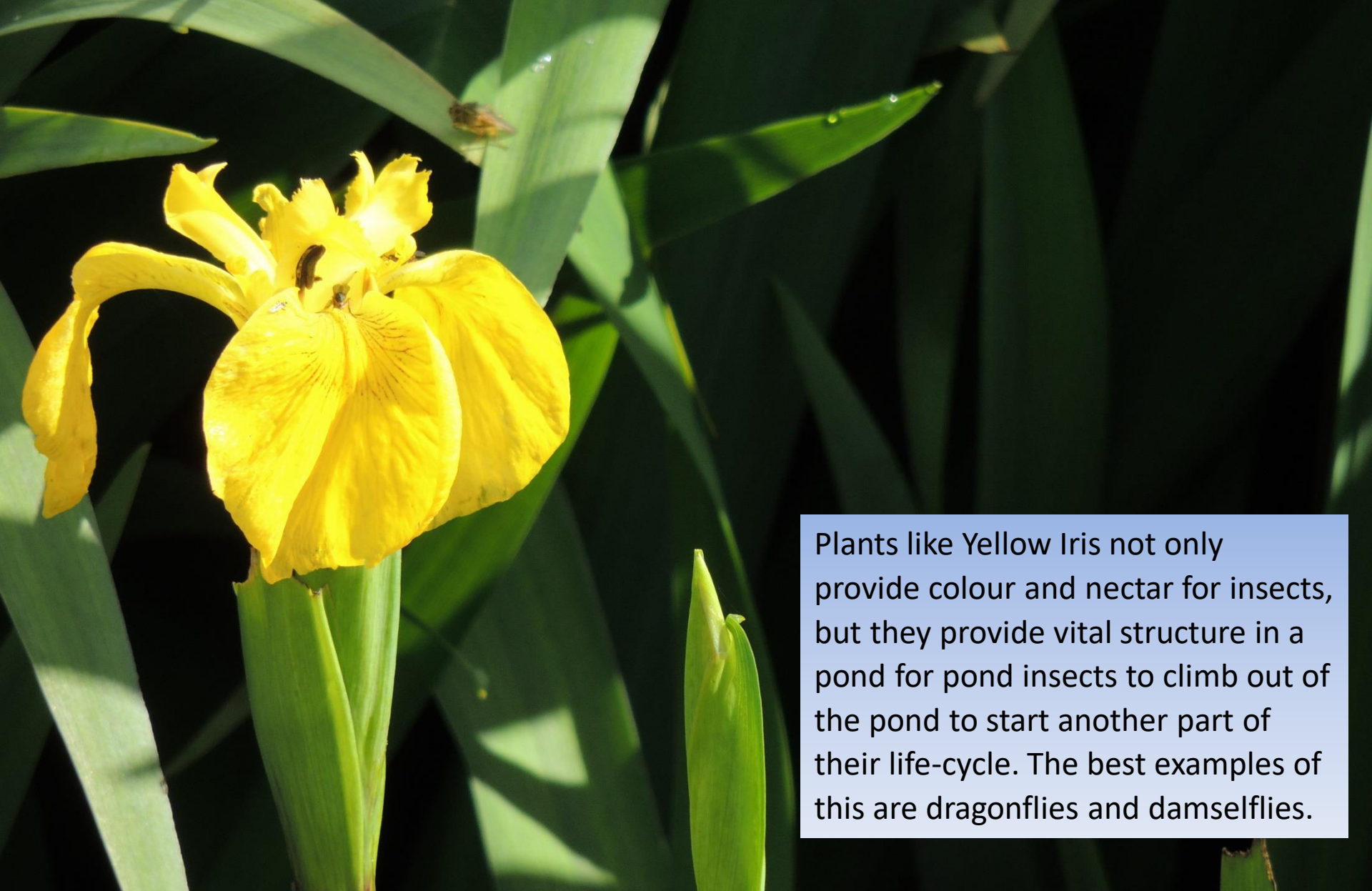
It wasn't all good news mind you.... A fall meant that mountain rescue had to be called out. They were fantastic and a huge thank you to all the mountain rescue volunteers who came out to help us.



Lots of work has been going on down at the Wildlife Garden in Garnant, thanks mainly to volunteers Carla and Jan. We were able to cut and bury the liner and then cover it with hessian to enable future plants to get a grip.



Once the hessian was in place, we used some peat-free compost to sprinkle around the edges. Then we seeded the compost with wildflower seeds and added a few water and wetland plants in such as Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*).



Plants like Yellow Iris not only provide colour and nectar for insects, but they provide vital structure in a pond for pond insects to climb out of the pond to start another part of their life-cycle. The best examples of this are dragonflies and damselflies.



We are hoping that with lots of native wildflowers in and around the pond, more wildlife including this Broad-bodied Chaser (*Libellula depressa*) will find the garden and set up home.



Log piles were added to around the pond edge to benefit invertebrates, newts, frogs and toads.

We had hundreds of wildflower plants to plant out. Thanks again to all the volunteers for helping out.





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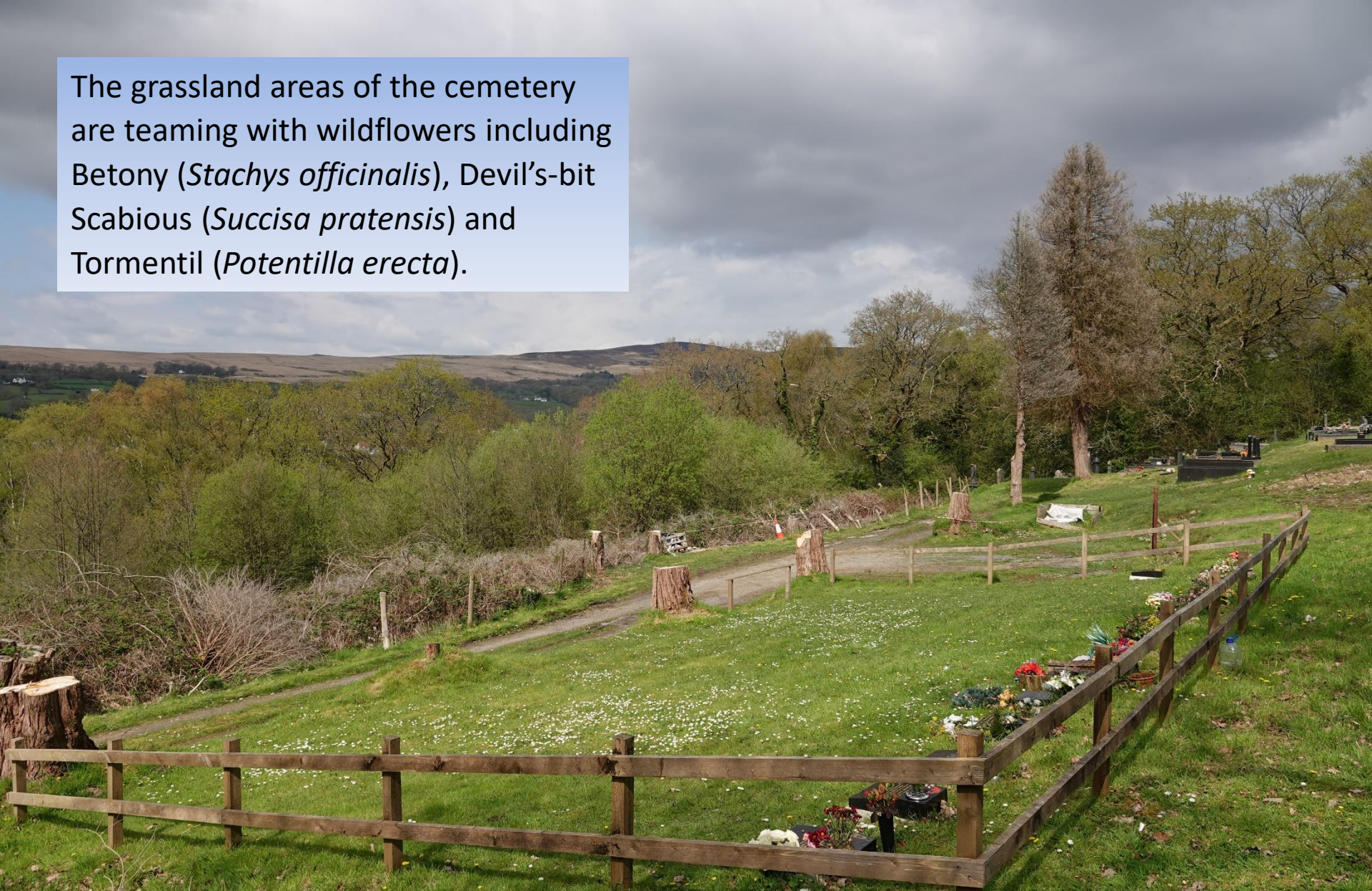
Whilst working down at the wildlife garden you can spot some local wildlife like this Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*) butterfly.



Photo: Vaughn Matthews

We were able to undertake a wildlife survey of Bethesda Cemetery in the Grennig Valley. It is only a small site but it is full of wildlife. Over 130 species of plant and animal were recorded during the survey.

The grassland areas of the cemetery are teaming with wildflowers including Betony (*Stachys officinalis*), Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and Tormential (*Potentilla erecta*).





The woodier areas of the cemetery provide the right conditions for different species, including.....



Scaphidium quadrimaculatum.
A beetle that is associated with
a fungi and decaying wood.

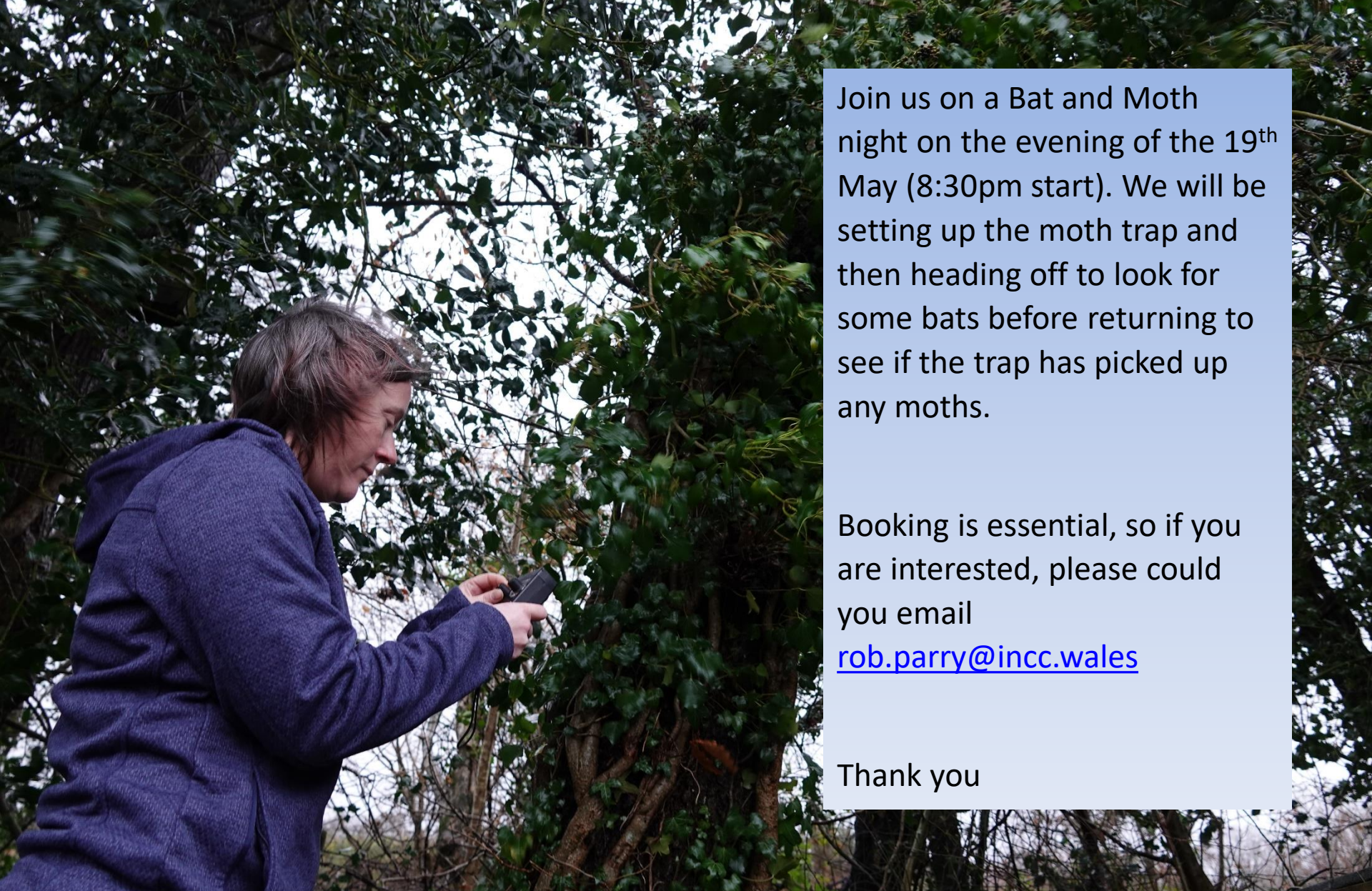


Photo: Vaughn Matthews

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Join us on a Bat and Moth night on the evening of the 19th May (8:30pm start). We will be setting up the moth trap and then heading off to look for some bats before returning to see if the trap has picked up any moths.

Booking is essential, so if you are interested, please could you email rob.parry@incc.wales

Thank you

Big thank you to
everyone for
volunteering and
coming on the events.

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

Rob.parry@incc.wales

Thank you, Rob.

