

# Amman Valley

## Wildlife Update: August 2023



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CADWRAETH NATUR CYMRU



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The Amman Valley in late summer is looking at its best (on sunny days). The heathland on the north of the Valley is in full flower.





There are 3 species of heather present in the valley. The two most common species are the brighter coloured heather called Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*).





And, the paler pink colours come from  
Heather or Ling (*Calluna vulgaris*).







It's a great time of year for some of our late flowering plants and the wonderful species rich grasslands they create. These flowers are from the Great Burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*). Although not rare, the plant is a bit of a Carmarthenshire specialty as they prefer damp meadows.





Photo: Grainne Connolly

Not only are Great Burnet wonderful for wildlife, they are also good fun to walk through too.

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Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*) can also be found in damper grasslands in late summer. The plant gets its name from its historic medicinal use. Parts of the plant were used to induce sneezing to clear the sinuses.





Late summer is also the best time to see Devil's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*). Its another wetland and damp grassland loving species that can keep flowering well into October and sometimes beyond. It's a great plant for insects as its often one of the last nectar sources of the year. Its also the only food plant of the caterpillars of the Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) butterfly.





Marsh Fritillary butterfly. The butterfly only flies in May and June so can't be seen at this time of year. However, late summer is the best time to look for caterpillars and their webs.





Dense webs appear on and around the leaves of Devil's-bit Scabious plants and can be seen up to the end of September. The webs act as a place of shelter and safety for the caterpillars when foraging. Toward the end of September and into October, the caterpillars will prepare for hibernation.







We have been out surveying for Marsh Fritillary larval webs over the past few weeks and will hopefully fit a few more sites in before the caterpillars go into hibernation.





Big thank you to everyone for coming along to the bat walk a few weeks ago. It was an excellent turn out and we were treated to a Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*) bat flying over the wildlife garden as well as Common and Soprano Pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) during the walk.



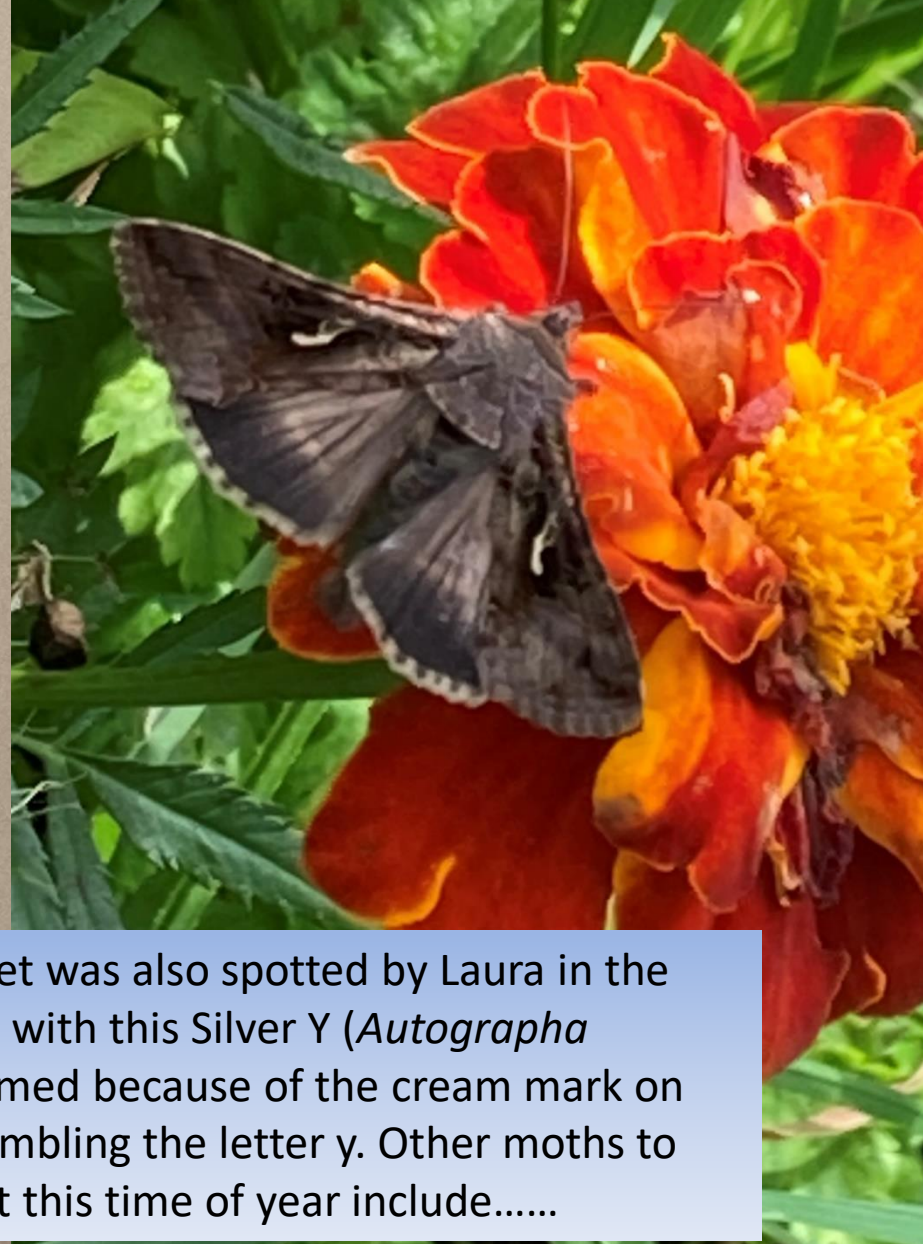
After the walk, we were treated to the moth trap. The cold evening meant that there weren't too many moths, but we did have a few, including several Green Carpet (*Colostygia pectinataria*).







Photos: Laura Paulssen



A Green Carpet was also spotted by Laura in the garden, along with this Silver Y (*Autographa gamma*) – named because of the cream mark on the wing resembling the letter y. Other moths to look out for at this time of year include.....





Beautiful Snout



September Thorn



Pebble Hooktip



Lesser Swallow Prominent



Rosy Rustic



Beautiful Hooktip

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Angle Shades



Square Spot



Spectacle



Canary Shouldered Thorn



Silver Y



Purple Bar

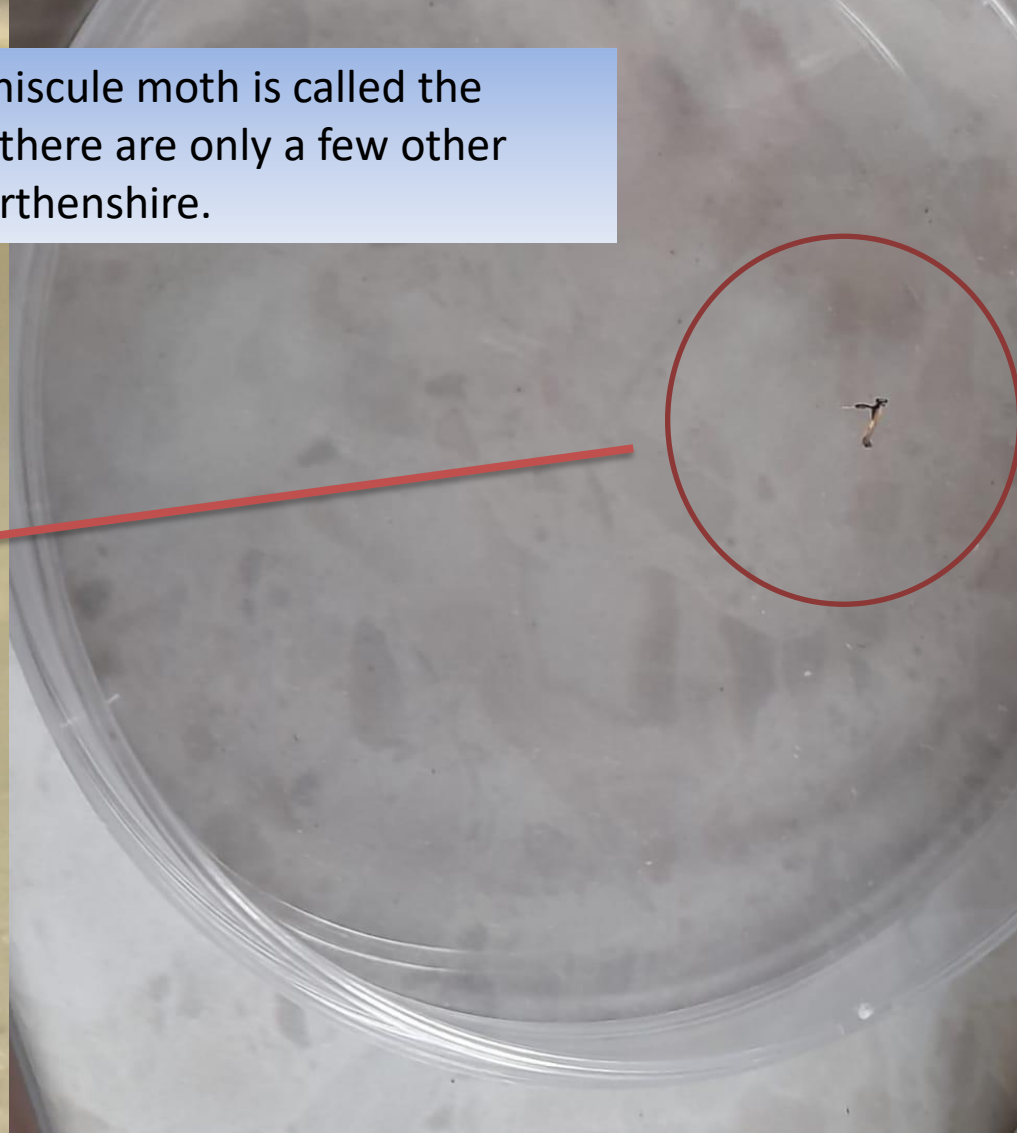
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Moths come in all shapes and sizes. This miniscule moth is called the Azalea Leaf Miner (*Caloptilia azaleella*) and there are only a few other records of the moth for the whole of Carmarthenshire.



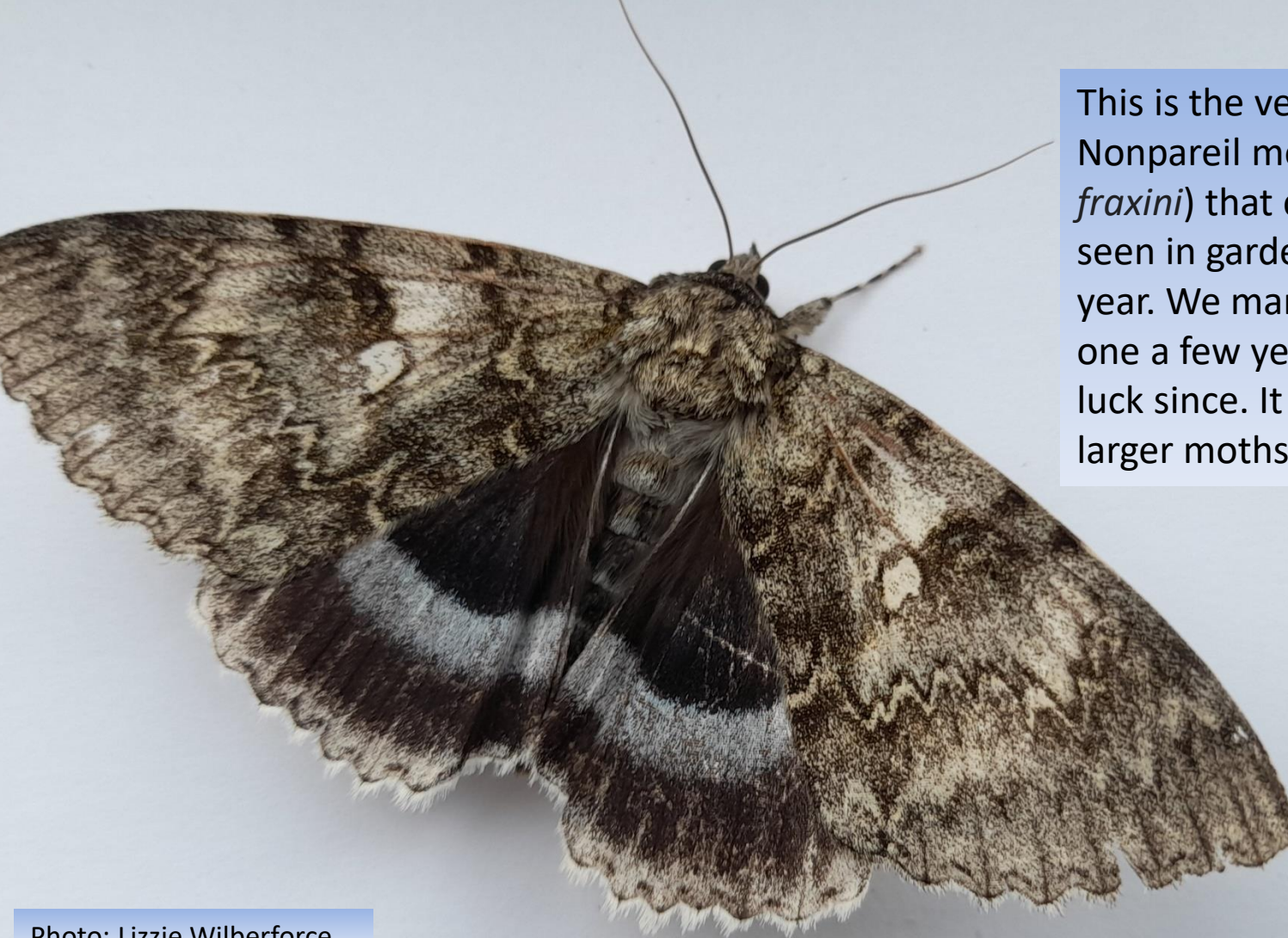
Photos: Lizzie Wilberforce

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This is the very rare Clifden Nonpareil moth (*Catocala fraxini*) that can sometimes be seen in gardens at this time of year. We managed to catch one a few years ago, but no luck since. It is one of our larger moths.

Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

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It is also a good time to look out for butterflies on sunnier days. Peacock (*Aglais io*) butterflies are making the most of the late flowering nectar rich wildflowers in the Valley.




A less common butterfly species that can be seen in the Valley throughout late summer is the Dark Green Fritillary (*Speyeria aglaja*).





We found the fritillary in a hidden little wildflower meadow behind Ysgol y Bedol in Garnant. The meadow was full of wildflowers and insects. These wildflower rich meadows and damp grassland pastures are some of the most important and special habitats in the whole of Wales. We are so very lucky to have them. They are often lost through sheep grazing, housing developments or tree planting schemes. We need to save them.





Some of our rarer woodland flowers are also flowering in late summer. This delicate flower is called Common Cow Wheat (*Melampyrum pratense*). Because it is slow to grow and spread it is an indicator of ancient woodland.



Although our population of Swifts (*Apus apus*) are on their way back to Africa in August, we still have other migratory birds such as Swallows and these House Martins (*Delichon urbica*) that will make their way back toward the end of September.



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We will soon be starting a House Martin conservation project in the Valley.

If you have seen any nests of House Martins near you – please do let us know.



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There is lots that we can do for House Martins and other wildlife in our homes, gardens and villages. We will keep you posted on how to get involved in helping House Martins in the Valley.



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Also – please look out for Lesser Stag Beetles (*Dorcus parallelipedus*) at this time of year. The adults can be found in and around deadwood. The eggs are laid on dead and decaying trees and the larvae can take several years to develop inside the dead tree.

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Deadwood, and in particular standing deadwood is one of the most important habitats we have for wildlife.

A single Oak tree of a thousand years old supports more biodiversity than a thousand 100-year-old Oak trees.

Most of our ancient trees have now been felled and many trees are cut down before they are allowed die naturally. This Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) tree in the Grenig Valley is one of the largest trees we have.

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Photo: Vaughn Matthews

Late summer is an excellent time of year to find Grass Snakes (*Natrix natrix*) basking in the sun, or under refugia.



One of the strangest things to look out for at this time of year is Alder Tongue (*Taphrina alni*). It is caused by a fungus that effects the catkins of Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) trees making them produce these 'tongues' in a similar way that wasps create galls in oaks.



Photo: Vaughn Matthews



Big thank you to everyone for volunteering and supporting INCC over the past few weeks – and for sending in your photos and wildlife queries.

If you have any information about House Martins in the valley, or would like to know more and to get involved, please do get in touch.

Thank you – Rob  
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