

Newsletter

July 2025

Supporting INCC helps us to stand up for nature by taking legal action as well as restoring habitats and species across Wales.

To remain impartial, we do not accept Government funding for any of our activities. Instead, we rely on the generous support from people like you, through regular giving, donations and bequests. Your contribution will help INCC fund important conservation work.



One of the best ways to support INCC is by signing up to our all-Wales conservation magazine *[Natur Cymru](#)*. For more information on how you can support INCC, scan the QR code or visit our [website](#).

The Initiative for Nature Conservation Cymru (INCC) is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Charity number 1180113.

INCC, c/o Science Centre, National Botanic Garden of Wales, Llanarthne, Carmarthenshire, SA32 8HG.

Welcome

Welcome to our second newsletter of 2025, celebrating some of the work and projects we have been involved in over the past few months. Our **Stop the War on Nature** campaign has raised an amazing £245,000 so far and we are very close to being able to establish the Investigations Unit. **Stop the War on Nature.** Its important to all of us at INCC to be able to undertake investigations and to campaign for wildlife at the same time as being actively involved in nature conservation delivery such as managing land and undertaking species specific nature recovery initiative. Thank you for your ongoing support to help us help wildlife in Wales.



INCC CEO Rob Parry (top) © *Lizzie Wilberforce*
Natur Cymru magazine, summer 2025 (bottom) © *Louise Waring*

Nature Investigations Unit

Over the past few months, the INCC team have been fundraising towards the establishment of a Nature Investigations Unit for Wales. We have raised over £245,000 toward the project costs so far, and we hope to start the project later in 2025.

The [Stop the War on Nature](#) campaign helped toward the fundraising efforts and produced a short animation to help explain why nature in Wales needs our help. To watch the full animation or to contribute to fundraising efforts please [click here](#). Over the next three years we want to pioneer a fundamental shift in the nature conservation sector that will see greater emphasis being placed on holding environmental decision makers to account. We want to achieve this by exposing and challenging attitudes, inaction, and decision making, where it has the potential to impact wildlife and nature conservation in Wales. The new team therefore will consist of Investigative Journalists, Campaigners and Communicators.





No More Wildfires

The spring of 2025 saw another extreme period of wildfires in Wales. The wildfires are now an annual event that causes the loss of habitat and wildlife on a vast scale. This year INCC has raised awareness of the impact of grassland fires on wildlife and have campaigned to get 'controlled burns' better regulated by the Welsh Government. This led to a lot of media coverage in Spring 2025 [Wildfires - What a Way to Go.](#)

To help combat the impacts of wildfires in Wales, INCC has recently applied to the Interim Environmental Protection Assessor (IEPA) to review the legislation around issuing controlled burn permits in Wales. We await the response from Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Clearly with so many fires over such large areas something has to be done.



Water Vole burrow and habitat burnt and exposed (left) © Rob Parry

Burnt reptiles found after recent wildfire (right) © ARC Trust



INCC's Upland Water Vole Project: Saving Welsh Wildlife

The Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* is Britain's largest vole species and has adapted to life in semi-aquatic habitats. Once common along rivers and wetlands, it has suffered a dramatic 94% decline in range since the 1970s, making it one of Wales' rarest mammals today. INCC's focus on upland Water Vole populations marks a shift from traditional lowland-based conservation approaches. This new direction began in 2014, when a small pile of droppings was discovered at Llyn Fach in the Glamorgan uplands.

Launched in May 2024 with support from the Pen y Cymoedd Community Fund, INCC's Upland Water Vole Project is surveying ditches, marshes, and peat bogs across the uplands of Rhondda, Afan, Cynon, and Neath. The project has already uncovered 20 new colonies, raising the total to over 40 known sites from previous recordings.

The greatest threat to upland Water Vole populations is the presence of non-native American Mink *Neovison vison*, which can devastate colonies. Recent site visits have confirmed multiple Mink sightings on the Rhigos Mountain, at Llyn Fach, and along the River Rhondda. Although some Mink control is already in place, significantly more is needed to safeguard the future of our upland Water Voles.

To better understand population connectivity, INCC is working with Aberystwyth University to analyse DNA from faecal samples collected across the project area. This research aims to determine whether upland Water Vole colonies are part of a single, interconnected population or exist as genetically isolated groups. So far, samples have been gathered from over 10 sites, with further collections planned in the coming months to improve spatial coverage across the uplands.

In July, INCC welcomed Laura Griffiths and Freya Smith to the project team as new Water Vole Assistants, joining project officers Eliza Chapman and Richard Bluck. Both Laura & Freya are currently studying Wildlife and Conservation at Bridgend College. They will both play an important role in expanding survey efforts and supporting community engagement across the project area.

The rest of 2025 will focus on locating more upland Water Vole colonies, collecting DNA samples, and engaging with local schools and communities about INCC's work to protect Wales's most important Water Vole population.





Beavers arrive at Cefn Garthenor

Since early 2021, INCC has been working closely with a Ceredigion landowner to help transform an 88ha sheep farm into a haven for wildlife. A baseline habitat survey of Cefn Garthenor was initially undertaken to help inform future habitat creation and restoration plans.

The main development at Cefn Garthenor in early 2025 has been the arrival of a pair of Beavers *Castor fiber*. The location for the Beaver release was carefully chosen to provide them suitable habitat: wet areas, broadleaf woodland, and wet ditches. An extensive enclosure was created prior to the Beavers' arrival, with specialist fencing that prevents them scaling it or burrowing under it.

In order to improve the receptor site for the Beavers, a number of ditches were blocked and a new pond excavated. We also worked with volunteers from Bridgend College to plant some Willow whips which will hopefully establish and become an extra source of food and damming material.

In April 2025 the Beavers (named Doris and Steve) travelled up from Devon where they were being kept. Steve is 3 and was born in Scotland and Doris (2) was born in captivity. The licencing process for this has been long but the Beavers are now in their new home and already getting to work by creating dams and ditches.



Beaver enclosure (bottom) © Rob Parry

Beaver release at Cefn Garthenor (top) © Vaughn Matthews

Beaver being transported to release location (right) © Vaughn Matthews

Marsh Fritillary Reinforcement Project

Since the last newsletter, the Marsh Fritillaries *Euphydryas aurinia* in the rearing pens have spent the winter in hibernation, with the first emerged larvae seen in early February. Subsequent surveys on Llantrisant Common found basking larvae on the 22nd of February, a relief given the storms and heavy rain of winter.

The butterflies in the rearing pens were monitored as they developed and began to pupate (1st pupa seen 14/04/25), with the first butterfly seen on 05/05/25. Butterflies were recorded on Llantrisant Common the day before, the earliest that ecologists had recorded them in the wild. The flight season ended early with the first larva seen on 23/06/25. New rearing pens were erected for their development, with larval webs beginning to expand at the time of writing. Releases of caterpillars on to Llantrisant Common are scheduled for late August/early September.



Marsh Fritillaries mating in rearing pen 15/05/25 (left) © Vaughn Matthews
Larvae on Llantrisant Common 22/02/25 (right) © Vaughn Matthews

Himalayan Balsam

One could be forgiven for admiring the beautiful pink flower, vibrant green leaves and fresh smelling aroma of what is now the scourge of the countryside: Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*. No clemency can be afforded though. This invasive species cut loose from the Victorian gardens of yester-year and has been steadily outcompeting our native flora ever since.

At our Llwyndewi Nature Reserve our wardens, contractors and army of volunteers have been working tirelessly to protect our precious habitats around the Llwchr source and those downstream that rely on it.

Since INCC acquired the tenancy for the site, noticeable improvements can be seen, as areas once dominated by Balsam are slowly showing signs of recovery.



Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* (left) © Matthew Brown
Monthly volunteer group fighting the good fight (right) © Matthew Brown