

CARMARTHENSHIRE

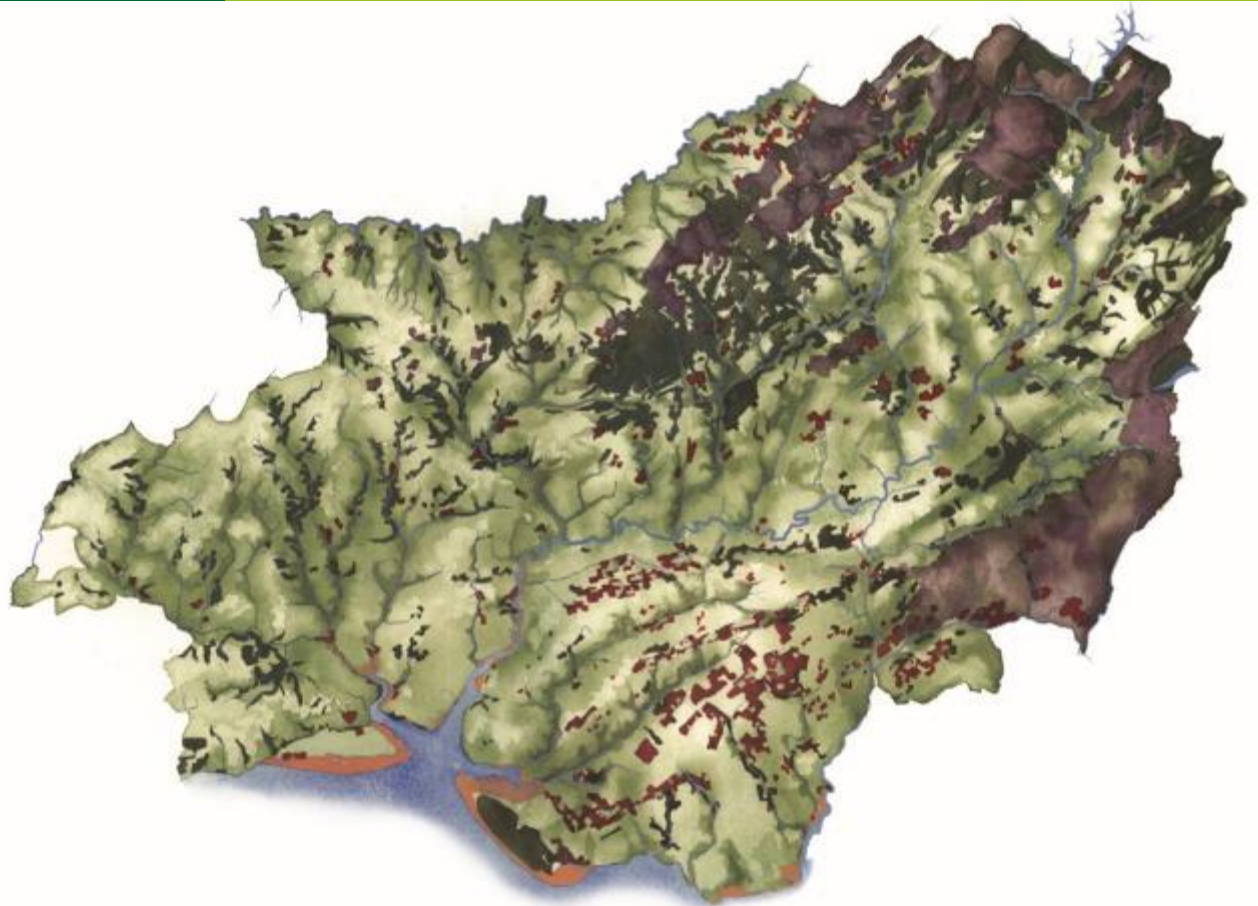
Nature Notes

Partneriaeth Natur
SIR GÂR • CARMARTHENSHIRE
Nature Partnership



JULY-SEPTEMBER 2023

Carmarthenshire has some wonderful wildlife. These 'Nature Notes' are some highlights to encourage us all to take a closer look around us – even the common is special. Seen anything interesting – then why not send us a photo?



For more information about nature in the county read our Nature Recovery Plan:
carmarthenshire.gov.wales/biodiversity

Send your photos to: Biodiversity@carmarthenshire.gov.uk



Orpine

In Carmarthenshire Orpine (*Hylotelephium telephium*) is most commonly seen in hedgebanks, flowering with a rose-red flush in late summer. It is a native species but has been widely introduced elsewhere, particularly North America where it is considered an invasive species.

In the past the plant was used by the Romans to treat wounds. The stems and leaves can store water, which helps it survive droughts – hence the common name *livelong*.



Burdock

Lesser Burdock (*Arctium minus*) is familiar to us as the plant that is used in games when the sticky flower heads or ‘burs’ are thrown at each other. It actually uses these hooked seed heads to help disperse its seeds by sticking to animal fur and clothing. It is a familiar plant of disturbed ground and roadsides. Traditionally burdock species had multiple uses in medicine – the seeds were prescribed for sciatica. Flowering from July to September it is attractive to a range of insects.



Dark Green Fritillary

The Dark Green Fritillary (*Speyeria aglaja*) is a large, orange-coloured butterfly, with dark green undersides to the hindwings, hence its name. It has declined in parts of central and eastern England but is still quite commonly recorded in Carmarthenshire. Favoured habitats include woodland rides and its caterpillars feed on Common Dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*). Adults can be hard to identify as they quickly fly from flower to flower, feeding on the nectar of knapweeds and thistles. You have to be nimble to keep up with them!



‘Rough’ grassland

Areas of what might be called ‘rough’ grasses of different heights with the taller ‘ruderal’ flowering plants provide shelter for insects. This in turn boosts the food supply for birds and bats, as well as being important habitat for many other species including small mammals, amphibians and reptiles.

As well as providing diversity in grassland structure, rough grassland and tall ruderal plants provide shelter and overwintering habitat – such as for insects in the base of tussocks, in hollow stems and seed heads. Flowering plants here can bloom late into the season.

Rough grassland during bird-nesting season provides a local supply of insects, allowing birds to feed close to the nest more easily. Tall herb and rough grassland is most valuable where it supports good quantities of flowers and a good flowering sequence from spring until late summer and can be vital pollen and nectar sources. Key flowers include cow parsley, hogweed, thistles, teasel and knapweeds.



Tortoise Beetle

There are many species of Tortoise beetles. Their larvae have their own unique protective mechanism – forming a protective coat of shed skin and droppings on their backs to camouflage themselves and deter predators.

When disturbed, the adults behave just like tortoises, retracting their antennae and feet, and pulling their 'shell' tight down around them as they grip tightly on to the leaf they are on.



Hazel nuts

Hazel nuts are popular with many small mammals. Here they have been brought to a safe dry place (probably a Wood Mouse) to eat. Wood Mice often create cache of nibbled nuts. They leave tooth marks on the surface of the nut and across the edge of the hole. The hole may be either circular or ragged in shape.



Eyed hawk-moth

This was a lucky record during the day from a marshy grassland in Carmarthenshire. The Eyed Hawk-moth (*Smerinthus ocellata*) is deceptive. When found at rest is a distinctive, but mostly brown, moth with prominent dark patch behind the head. Its name is revealed when it is disturbed and opens its wings to reveal large blue eyespots on pinkish hindwings. It has a large wingspan and the caterpillars feed on willows and apple trees but also Aspen and Poplar.



Forester Moth

The Forester (*Adscita statices*) is day-flying moth. Formerly widely distributed throughout Wales but its distribution has significantly declined. Despite its name, in Carmarthenshire it is found mainly in damp grassland. Females lay eggs in June and July on the caterpillar host plants - Common Sorrel and Sheep's Sorrel. It is a Butterfly Conservation Wales' High Priority moth.



© Emma Williams

Branched Shanklet fungus

The Branched Shanklet (*Dendrocollybia racemosa*) fungi usually grows on the decaying fruit bodies of other fungi. It is a rare find in Carmarthenshire – perhaps because it is due to its small size and inconspicuous appearance.

The species is characterized by its unusual stipe (stem), which is covered with short lateral branches. The branches often produce spherical slime heads on their swollen tips. It's always worth taking a closer look!



© Valerie Roberts

Hornet

The European Hornet (*Vespa crabro*), **not** to be confused with the invasive [Asian Hornet](#), is an important pollinator and a predator of species that feed on plants and crops, so can be a useful pest controller. Whilst they catch prey mainly to feed to their larvae; they feed themselves on high-energy substances like nectar and sap. Britain's largest native social wasp, they might look fearsome but are not aggressive if left alone.



Leafcutter bee

Have you seen leaves with neat holes cut into them? This may well be the action of a female of one the Leafcutter bee (Megachilidae). These solitary bees use the pieces to build the cells (up to 20) in the nest to raise her brood. Different species of leaf-cutters prefer different plant species.

They are important pollinators. Notably, female leafcutter bees collect and transport pollen in the hairlike structures on the underside of her abdomen instead of in "baskets" on the rear legs; a female leaf-cutter's abdomen may appear yellow or golden from the pollen.



Chlorosis

Despite it being high summer the leaf of this blackberry bush doesn't look well. It may well be suffering from Chlorosis, a condition where plant leaves lose their green colour and turn pale green or yellow starting from the edges or between the veins. It is a sign that the plant is unable to produce sufficient chlorophyll, the green pigment essential for photosynthesis. This means that the plant's ability to convert sunlight into energy is compromised. Deficiencies in key nutrients such as magnesium, zinc or iron and nitrogen can all cause Chlorosis.



Carmarthenshire Nature Partnership

