

CARMARTHENSHIRE

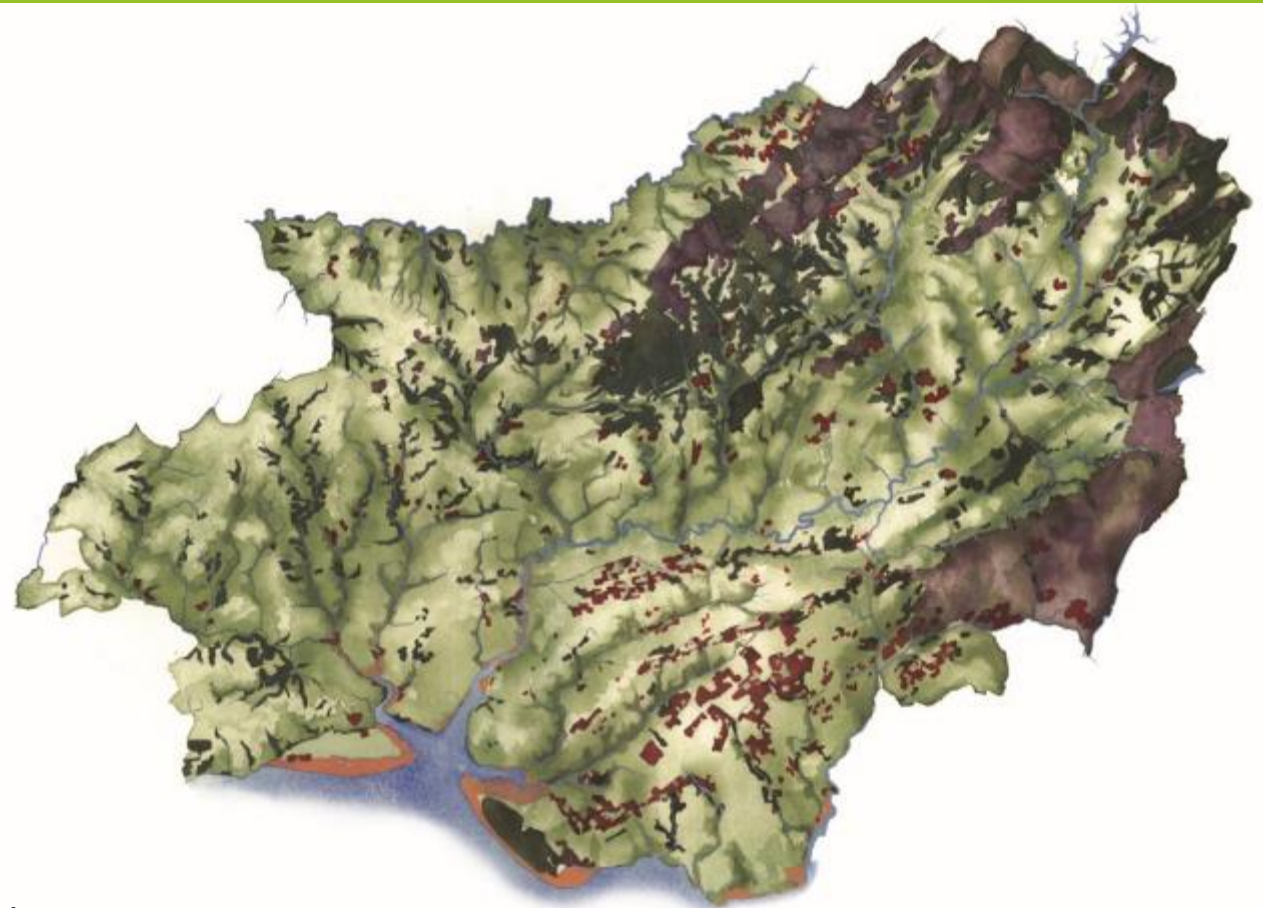
Nature Notes

SEPT-OCT 2020

Partneriaeth Natur
SIR GÂR • CARMARTHENSHIRE
Nature Partnership



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 then read our Nature Recovery Plan:
carmarthenshire.gov.wales/biodiversity

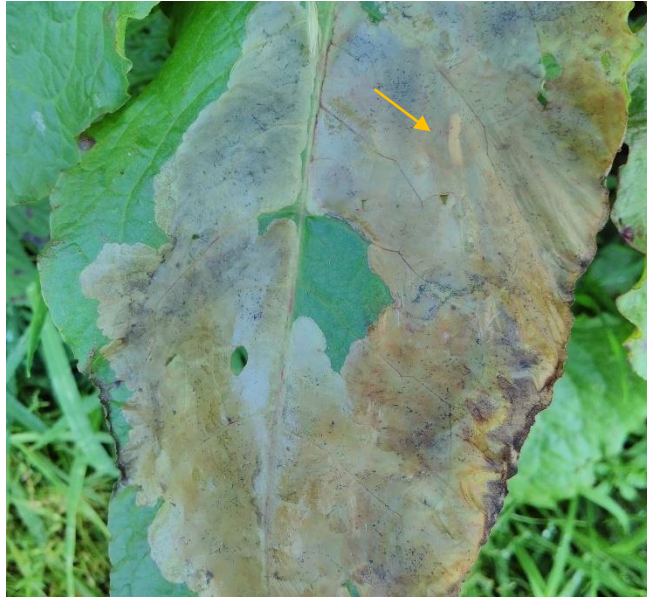
Send your photos to: Biodiversity@carmarthenshire.gov.uk



Oak mast

Mast is the term used to describe the fruit of trees such as acorns and beech seeds. A mast year is when the trees that produce these fruits have a bumper crop and produce much more fruit than they normally would.

Trees such as oak and beech fluctuate massively year on year in the fruit they produce - in some years no fruit will be seen and in others, they have an exceptional crop. Many animals, including mammals and birds, feed on this woodland fruit.



Leaf miners

There are many species of leaf miner flies in the UK. Adults are usually small, dark-coloured flies around 5mm long. The flies lay eggs on or into the leaf and the larvae feed on the leaf tissue between the two surfaces.

The emerging larvae initially work shoulder to shoulder in making a broad corridor. Later they split up, making a large blotch that often is enlarged even more by fusion with other mines. Pupation takes place outside the mine, when the larva transforms into the fly.



© Ann Collier

Magpie (*Pica pica*)

This amazing photo was taken at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust reserve at Penclacwydd. A magpie is attacking grass snake. This is an unusual sighting, magpies will mob grass snakes if they see them, but they aren't specialist predators on them (though might take small ones casually and are known to eat lizards on occasion). When caught, grass snakes hiss and release a foul-smelling substance from their anal gland – but that hasn't put off this magpie.



Bark

Wrapped tightly around a tree, the bark is its protective covering. Just underneath the bark are the delicate vessels that transport food and water through the trunk to the roots and leaves.

Take a look at the trees around you - notice how the bark of different trees has individual colours, textures and patterns. The cracks, bumps and scars of bark are home to a world of tiny, scurrying, burrowing wildlife. Bark can be as thin as paper and, as with an old giant redwood tree, as thick as the wall of house!

- Bark helps us as well - the main ingredient of aspirin comes from willow tree bark.
- Tannin from bark has been used to treat animal skins to produce leather since Roman times.
- Bark has been used to make cloth, canoes, ropes, paper and maps.
- When you celebrate with a glass of bubbly remember that the cork comes from the bark of the cork oak tree.



Mole (*Talpa europaea*)

The mole is an adaptable species, recorded in woodlands and grassland. They are solitary, living underground in a network of tunnels and feed on invertebrates in the soil, especially worms. The males are highly territorial. This recently deceased mole was found on some boggy heathland. You can see from its amazing spade-like claws that digging tunnels is no problem. Also the sensitive whiskers, which you can see here, help it to find its way about and detect food. Often its presence is only noticeable because of the mole hills we can see - in medieval times it was called a moldewarp (earth thrower).



Cobwebs

Cobwebs are often best seen in autumn when morning dew and rainy droplets reveal their beauty. Spiders use webs to catch dinner. The choice of location is key to their success. Some webs are built across potential insect flight paths. Other spider species construct webs low down where crawling invertebrates are likely pass by. Webs built horizontally can catch insects falling from the plant they were feeding on. Here a species of orb spider has constructed a web with radial threads that function as a scaffold. The spider then lays down sticky threads to create a spiral.



Haws

Haws are the fruits of the hawthorn tree and are rich in antioxidants. They are enjoyed by migrating birds, such as redwings, fieldfares and thrushes, as well as small mammals. If you have the patience, they can be made into a jelly rich in vitamin C. In Carmarthenshire hawthorn is a common hedgerow plant. When land was enclosed in the 18th century hawthorns were planted in their thousands in the hedges when fields were created.



Ivy

It is often overlooked today but ivy helps lots of our local wildlife, especially during the long months of winter. It flowers in early autumn, and the ivy's nectar is a valuable food source for many insects before the winter, particularly bees and butterflies, including the ivy mining bee – only fairly recently recorded in the UK.

In addition its black berries provide many birds with a supply of vital food during the winter, when there is less food available to them. Dense ivy provides cosy hiding, roosting, hibernating and nesting places for various animals, birds and insects during the long months of winter.



Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

Camera traps have been around for a long time, but in recent years have become more available and better quality – offering an easy way to get a glimpse into the night-time activity of wildlife in your garden. Here a pair of hedgehogs are carrying out a pest-control service in this garden by eating slugs. You can also see here the surprisingly long legs of a hedgehog, which are usually concealed under a hedgehog's spines.

Another clip showed a rather bad-tempered encounter between two males that 'squared up' to one another with some head-butting. These males were fighting over a female that must have been nearby.



Dune cup fungus .© Val Roberts



An Inkcap Fungi



A Bolete Fungi



White Spindles



Earthball Fungus



Violet Coral Fungus



Wrinkled Club Fungus

Take a closer look... fantastic fungi

Fungi are colourful, mysterious, complex, varied - and we would not be here without them. Now is the perfect time to go out and explore your local area – grasslands, woodlands and even sand dunes. Don't worry about trying to name them (there are thousands of species in the UK) but just take a closer look and discover the range of fungi around us. The fruiting bodies we see now are just the tip of the iceberg. The thread-like mycelia underground link to the roots of different plants sharing nutrients, water and even information – research has shown that when plants are attacked by harmful fungi, they release chemical signals into the mycelia that warn their neighbours.



Cockchafer in garden at Five Roads © Wayne Jones



Juvenile gull with starfish at Burry Port © Wayne Jones



Marbled White butterfly © Wayne Jones

Carmarthenshire's wildlife

These are a lovely photos were sent into the Nature Notes. They show a range of wildlife spotted in the county this summer. We have a range of habitats and the diversity of species we have reflects this. The Nature Notes hope to show some of this, and these photos help to reveal the special county we live in.



Sandwich tern and fish prey © Wayne Jones



Autumn

Autumn still has plenty for us to look out for – skeins of Canada geese, flocks of redwings and fieldfares arriving and the range of autumn colours as the trees move towards leaf drop – even on the dankest of days.



Carmarthenshire Nature Partnership



WEST WALES
BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION CENTRE
CANOLIAN WYBODAETH BIGAMFYAETH
GOILLWYN CYMRU



LLANELLI NATURALISTS
NATURIAETHWYR LLANELLI



Clwb Adar Sir Gaerfyrddin
Carmarthenshire Bird Club

