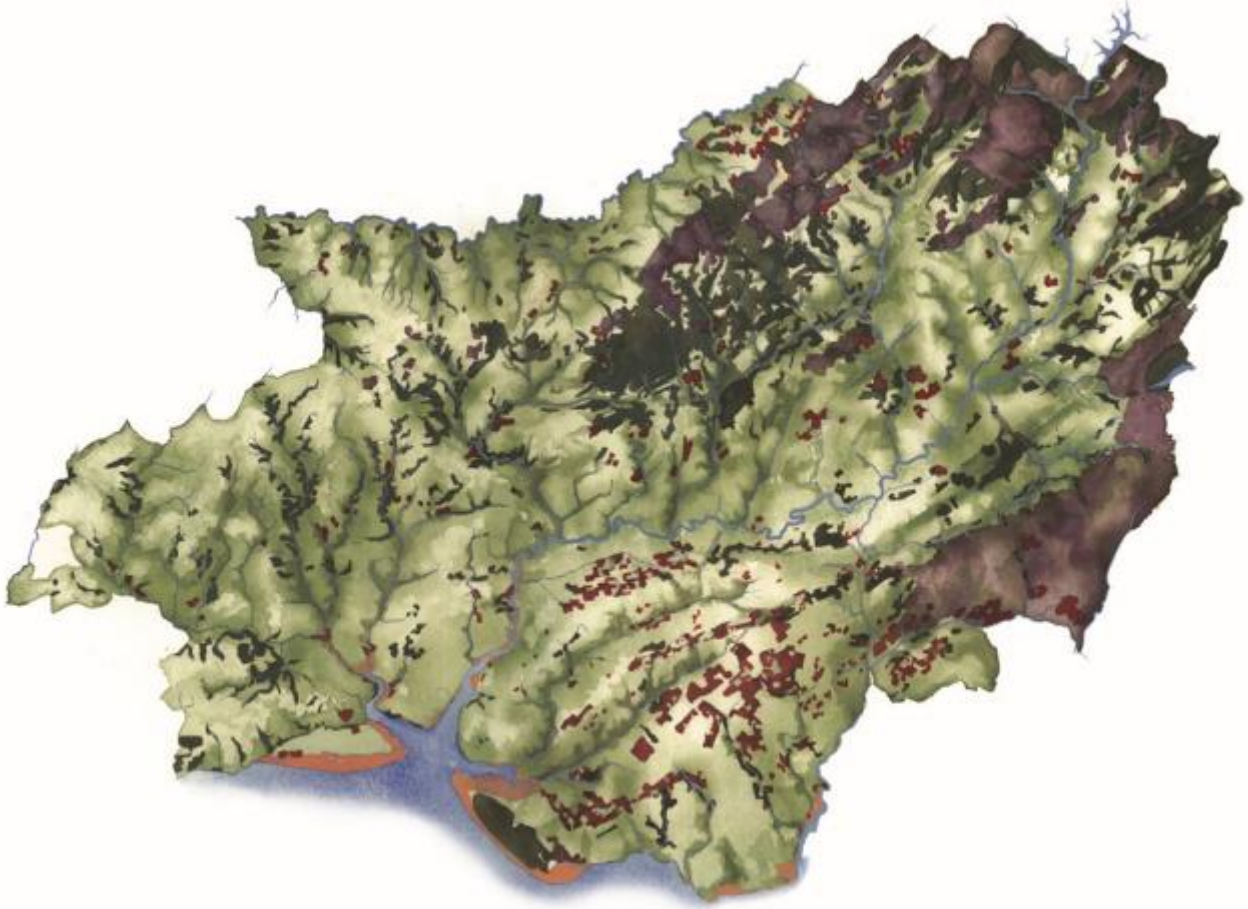
CARMARTHENSHIRE

# Nature Notes

Partneriaeth Natur
SIR GÂR • CARMARTHENSHIRE
Nature Partnership

## OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2025

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

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


## Ballerina waxcap

The **Ballerina waxcap** (*Porpolomopsis calyptriformis*) is a striking pink mushroom. This species thrives in nutrient-poor soils, often indicating healthy, traditionally managed meadows, still grazed and with little or no fertilizers. It has become rare due to habitat loss from intensive agriculture and development but is often under recorded. The Ballerina waxcap is a priority species for conservation and a useful indicator of 'ancient' grasslands now so rare in our landscape.

## Wood Mice

Wood Mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) often occupy dormouse boxes. They use the boxes for breeding and as safe shelters for resting and storing food, such as seeds and nuts. Unlike Dormice, Wood Mice do not build elaborate nests; instead, they may line the box with leaves or grass for insulation. Their presence can sometimes indicate good habitat connectivity, as they rely on hedgerows and woodland edges. However, frequent use by Wood Mice can complicate Dormice monitoring because their nests can be mistaken for those of Dormice.

## Devil's Fingers Fungus

Devil's Fingers Fungus (*Clathrus archeri*), also called Octopus Stinkhorn, is certainly one of Nature's strangest sights. It starts as a white, egg-like sac before bursting open into bright red, finger-like arms that look like tentacles. These arms release a foul smell to attract flies, which help spread its spores. Originally from Australia and New Zealand, it's now found in parts of Europe, often in woodland, gardens or grasslands. Despite its spooky look and foul smell, it's harmless — but a fascinating example of how wonderful fungi are!

## Common Hawker Dragonfly

The male Common Hawker Dragonfly (*Aeshna juncea*) is a striking species found near moorland pools and bogs. It has a dark body marked with bright blue spots along the abdomen and greenish thorax stripes. Males patrol over water, defending territories and searching for females. They are agile hunters, catching insects in mid-air with powerful jaws. Common Hawkers are late-season flyers, often seen from July to October, and play an important role in controlling mosquito and midge populations.

## Ray egg case

Ray egg cases, often called “mermaid’s purses,” are protective capsules that contain the developing embryos of skates and rays. These tough, leathery cases are usually rectangular with horn-like projections at the corners, helping them anchor to seaweed or the seabed. Inside, the embryo feeds on a yolk sac until fully developed, a process that can take several months. Empty cases often wash up on beaches, providing clues about species living offshore. Recording these finds helps monitor ray populations and contributes to marine conservation efforts

## Sea Holly

In winter, Sea Holly (*Eryngium maritimum*) reveals its skeletal beauty. The blue-green leaves of the plant dry into rigid, spiny structures, their intricate veins forming a delicate lattice that catches frost and light. Flower heads remain as brittle, papery bracts surrounding a central cone. These skeletal can survive coastal winds, offering shelter for insects and adding wintery interest to our dunescapes.

## Turkey Tail Fungi

Turkey Tail Fungi (*Trametes versicolor*) are among the most recognizable woodland fungi, thanks to their vivid, concentric bands of colour. These bracket-shaped fungi grow on dead logs and stumps, forming layered rosettes that resemble a Turkey's tail feathers. The bands range from cream and tan to rich browns, blues, and even purples, created by variations in pigment and age. This striking pattern isn't just decorative—it helps camouflage the fungus in its environment. Fungi play a vital ecological role by breaking down tough lignin in wood, recycling nutrients back into forest ecosystems.

## Bark on an old Oak tree

The bark on old Oak trees is a living archive. It can be deeply fissured, and its rugged surface can provide shelter for a range of organisms, from mosses and lichens to insects and spiders. These cracks and crevices create microhabitats that support biodiversity, while the bark itself protects the tree from harsh weather and pests. Over decades, the bark thickens and darkens, reflecting the tree's age and strength. Next time you see an old tree, why not take a closer look bark has a vital role in sustaining woodland ecosystems.

## Cowberry

Rarely recorded in Carmarthenshire (this photo was taken on the Blorenge near Abergavenny!) Cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*) is an evergreen shrub found in acidic soils of heathlands, moorlands, and upland woods. In late summer and autumn, it produces distinctive, bright red berries in. These are rich in antioxidants and traditionally used in jams and preserves. Cowberry provides food for wildlife, including birds and mammals providing a vital food source in nutrient-poor habitats.

## Harvestmen

Harvestmen are arachnids, but not true spiders. Unlike spiders, they have a fused body without a narrow waist and do not produce silk or venom. About 25 species live in the UK. Their extremely long, slender legs help them navigate leaf litter and vegetation. Harvestmen can be predators, eating smaller invertebrates which they catch using hooks at the ends of their legs, or scavengers, feeding on anything they can find. They play an important role in nutrient recycling. They are commonly found in damp habitats such as woodlands and gardens.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**Willow Tits and Bird Ringing**

The Willow Tit (*Poecile montanus*) is one of the UK's most threatened birds, declining sharply due to habitat loss and fragmentation. It prefers damp woodland with plenty of dead wood for nesting. Monitoring species by the use of bird ringing plays a key role in species conservation. By fitting lightweight, numbered rings, researchers can track movements, survival rates, and breeding success. This data informs habitat management and restoration efforts, helping reverse population declines. Ringing also reveals migration patterns and longevity, contributing to wider ecological understanding. A trained bird ringer caught this bird at Llyn Llech Owain. We are hoping to survey more sites for this important species.

## Carmarthenshire Nature Partnership