

CARMARTHENSHIRE

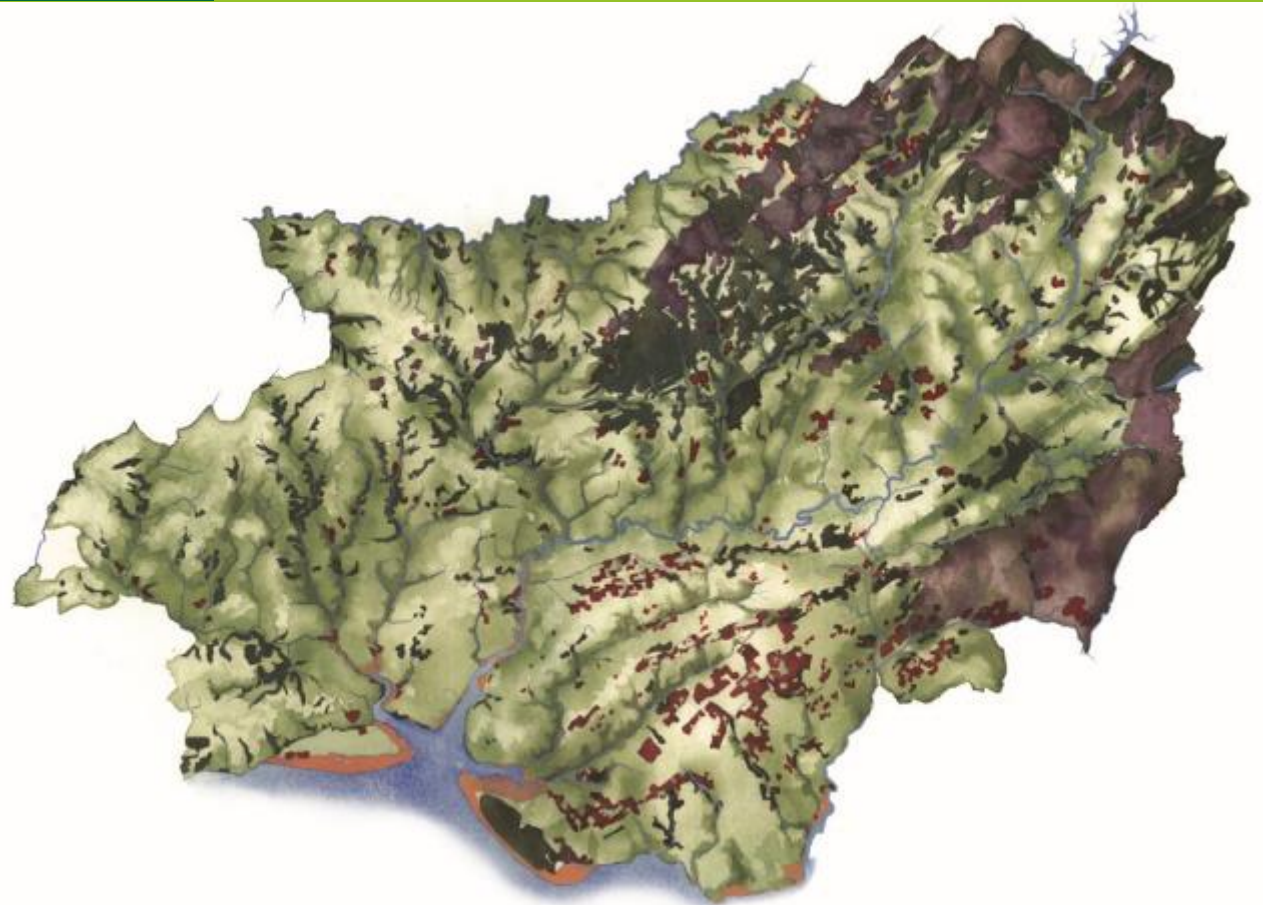
# Nature Notes

APRIL-JUNE 2025

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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](http://carmarthenshire.gov.wales/biodiversity)

Send your photos to: [Biodiversity@carmarthenshire.gov.uk](mailto:Biodiversity@carmarthenshire.gov.uk)



### Birch marble moth

This tightly curved Birch leaf might well contain the larva of the Birch Marbled moth (*Apotomis betuleтана*), which spin and roll Birch leaves together. This small moth has a distinctive marbled pattern on its wings, which helps it blend into birch trees. The adults are active from May to July and found where Birch occurs in open woodland, woodland rides and margins, scrub, birch stands on heathland and waste ground.



### Dandelion clocks

Dandelion seeds are fascinating little travellers. When the Dandelion flower matures, it transforms into a fluffy white seed head. Each seed is attached to a tiny parachute-like structure called a pappus, which allows it to be carried away by the wind. This clever design helps Dandelions spread far and wide, ensuring their survival in a variety of habitats. Despite being considered weeds by many, Dandelions play a vital role in ecosystems by providing food for insects and birds.



### Meadow Foxtail

Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) is an attractive native grass. It can grow up to 1.2 m tall and has broad, flat leaves with a dense, cigar-shaped flower head resembling a fox's tail. This grass is commonly found in meadows and verges – providing interesting texture and architecture to any grassland. Meadow Foxtail blooms from April to June and sheds a high amount of pollen. Meadow Foxtail plays a crucial role in supporting local biodiversity – it is a foodplant for over [30 species](#) of invertebrate, which in turn are prey for invertebrate eating birds.





## Zombie spider

*Engyodontium araneum* is a type of fungus that specifically targets spiders, particularly the Long-bodied Cellar Spider (*Pholcus phalangioides*). This fungus is known for its deadly impact on spiders. When a spider is infected, the fungus digests the tissue of the infected spider and bursts out to release spores. Studies have shown that this fungus can cause 100% mortality in infected spiders.



## Coastal vegetated shingle

Coastal vegetated shingle in Carmarthenshire is a rare and valuable habitat. Here Orache is just starting to take hold amongst the pebbles. This habitat is found in a small number of locations in the county: Penrhynwyn, Machynys to the south of Llanelli, probably being the best. These areas support specialized communities of plants and invertebrates, making them important habitats. Coastal vegetated shingle is characterized by its stability above the reach of wave action, allowing perennial vegetation to thrive. These unique ecosystems are vulnerable.





### Green Tiger Beetle

The Green Tiger Beetle is a vibrant and fascinating insect known for its striking metallic green colour and distinctive yellow spots. Found in sandy and heathland habitats, these beetles are agile predators, using their speed and sharp mandibles to catch prey such as ants and other small insects. They are most active during sunny days in spring and early summer. The larvae live in burrows, where they lie in wait to ambush passing prey. The Green Tiger Beetle plays a crucial role in the ecosystem by controlling insect populations and serving as a food source for birds and other predators.



### Conifer pollen

Unlike flowering plants, which produce seeds enclosed within fruits, conifers bear naked seeds on the surface of cone scales. Female cones protect developing seeds, while smaller male cones release pollen into the wind - the tiny grains are carried by the wind to female cones for fertilization. This wind pollination strategy eliminates reliance on animal pollinators, making reproduction efficient even in environments with limited insect activity.

Conifer pollen can be produced in large quantities – just tapping the male flowers can produce clouds of pollen.





### Great Prominent Moth

The Great Prominent Moth (*Peridea anceps*), is a large distinctive moth with antennae are almost half as long as the forewing. The caterpillars feed on oak leaves and have a unique behaviour of bending their bodies to scare predators. The adult moths are active from April to July and are easily attracted to light.



### Green Drake Mayfly

The Green Drake Mayfly (*Ephemera danica*) is a fascinating insect commonly found in the British Isles . These mayflies have a wingspan of about 15-25 mm, with males being slightly smaller than females. They are easily recognized by their translucent wings with dark veins and their three long tails. Green Drake mayflies spend most of their lives as nymphs in rivers and lakes, where they feed on organic debris. As adults, they have a very short lifespan of just a few days, during which they do not eat. These mayflies play a crucial role in the ecosystem, serving as food for fish, birds, and other predators.



### Poplar Leaf Beetle

The Poplar Leaf Beetle (*Chrysomela populi*) is a small, vibrant beetle that primarily feeds on the leaves of poplar and willow trees . These beetles are easily recognizable by their bright red wing cases and black-green bodies. Both adults and larvae feed on the leaves.. Poplar Leaf Beetles are found across the UK, particularly in woodlands, hedgerows, parks, and gardens.



## More fasciation

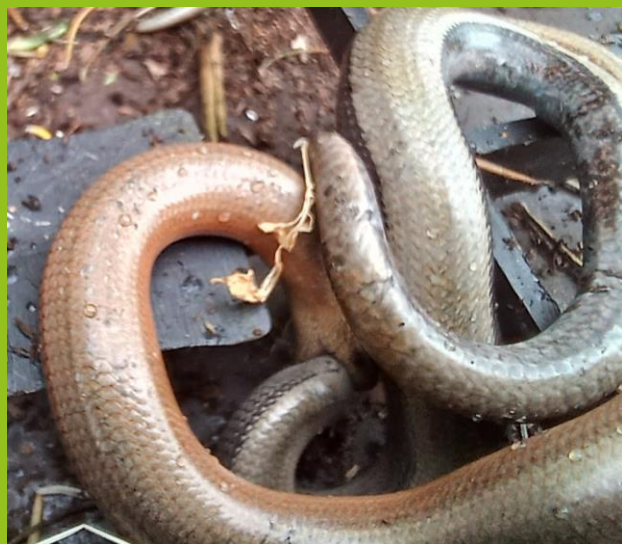
Fasciation is a fascinating phenomenon where the plant's stems become unusually flattened and elongated. This condition is caused by a genetic mutation or environmental factors such as damage or infection. Instead of growing in a typical cylindrical shape, the affected stems appear ribbon-like or fan-shaped. Despite this odd appearance, the fasciated Rosebay Willowherb here will continue to grow and bloom, producing its characteristic pink flowers.

The unusual forking of the Hart's-tongue Fern leaf is likely another example of fasciation. Take a closer look when you are out and about!

This condition does not harm the plant and adds to the diversity of shapes found in nature.







## Slow worms

Slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*)

mating typically occurs in the spring (May to June), with males becoming aggressive and competing for mates. During courtship, the male bites the female's head or neck and they intertwine their bodies, which can last for several hours. You can see this here. Slow worms are ovoviviparous, meaning they incubate eggs internally, and females give birth to live young in the summer.



## No Mow May

No Mow May encouraged us all to relax our mowing, take a closer look and see what happened when we allowed plants to grow and flower. Here is a good example. This is a Council managed site, now managed as a meadow, with the grass cut and collected later in the summer. The contrast between this and the heavily managed site next door is clearly evident.

Here allowing the plant species to flower has provided a vital source of pollen and nectar. Longer grass also provides shelter for wildlife and hopefully provides a pleasurable experience for people who use the areas where it is allowed to grow.

## Carmarthenshire Nature Partnership

