

CARMARTHENSHIRE

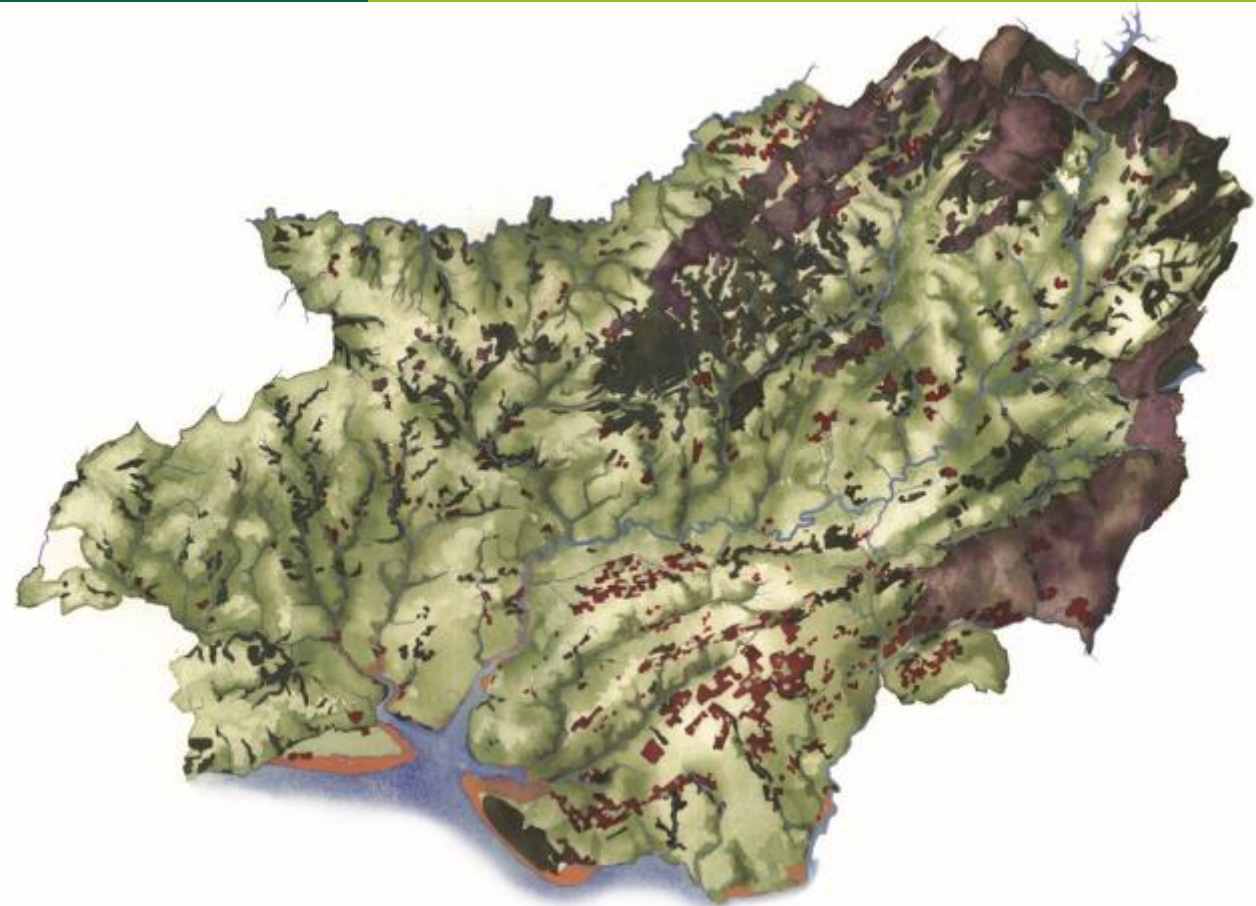
Nature Notes

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2026

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

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



Ichneumon wasp

Ichneumon wasps are remarkable insects. Despite looking rather intimidating, most species are completely harmless to people. They are parasitoids, laying their eggs in or on other insects such as caterpillars, beetle larvae and sawflies. The developing wasp larvae feed on their host, helping to naturally regulate insect populations. Over 2500 species occur in Britain, displaying a huge variety of colours and forms. Many can be seen visiting flowers for nectar during summer. They are a good example of the complex makeup of our ecosystems.



Monkey Flower

Monkey Flower (*Mimulus guttatus*), has a bright yellow flower commonly found beside streams, wet ditches and damp ground. Introduced from North America, it has become naturalised across much of Britain, including Wales. The bright yellow blooms, often marked with reddish spots, are said to resemble a monkey's face, giving rise to the plant's common name. It flowers from late spring into autumn, providing nectar for pollinating insects. Although not native, Monkey Flower has become a familiar feature of many wetland and riparian habitats.



Juvenile Robin

A juvenile Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) looks surprisingly different from the familiar red-breasted adult. Young birds emerge from the nest with mottled brown plumage. This provides excellent camouflage while they learn to forage independently. The characteristic orange-red breast does not develop until after their first moult later in the summer. Juveniles search gardens, hedgerows and woodland edges, searching for insects, worms and berries. During this vulnerable period they face threats from predators and poor weather.



Hazel/Holly

Is this bit of remnant hedgerow a Holly Hazel or a Hazel Holly? When a hazel tree grows directly out of a holly tree, it usually means a bird or squirrel hid a hazelnut in a crack, fork, or the base of the Holly, where it sprouted in accumulated leaf mould. Because both native UK species tolerate shade well, they can easily become tightly intertwined over time.

They are separate plants competing for the same space – from this photo they seem to be getting on OK!



Goat's Beard Seed Head

The seed head of Goat's Beard (*Tragopogon pratensis*) is one of the largest and most striking in the wildflower world. Superficially similar as the familiar dandelion 'clock', it forms a perfectly spherical globe of feathery seeds that can reach several centimetres across. Each seed is attached to a parachute-like structure, allowing it to be dispersed by the wind. Characteristically, Goat's Beard flowers open in the morning and often close before midday. Their impressive seed heads provide late summer interest and show us the many ways plants spread to new locations.



Roe Deer antler

This Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) antler was found on the ground in a Carmarthenshire woodland. Unlike animals with horns, antlers are shed and regrown every year. Male Roe Deer, known as bucks, cast their antlers during autumn and begin growing new ones almost immediately. The developing antlers are covered in a blood-rich velvet that nourishes growth until they harden. Shed antlers are quickly gnawed by rodents and other animals seeking valuable minerals. Who knows where the matching pair was shed!?



Cleavers

Cleavers (*Galium aparine*), often known as Goosegrass or Sticky Willy, is instantly recognisable by its clinging stems and leaves. Tiny, hooked hairs help the plant to climb over surrounding vegetation. Common in hedgerows, woodland edges and gardens, it grows rapidly during spring and summer. The plant's small white flowers are followed by burr-like seeds that readily hitch rides on passing animals. Cleavers provides cover for invertebrates and food for some wildlife. Although often regarded as a weed, it is a native species with an important ecological role.



Wild Thyme

Wild Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus*) is a low-growing aromatic plant of grasslands, rocky outcrops and coastal habitats. During summer it produces clusters of pinkish-purple flowers often covered in bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects. The leaves release a distinctive fragrance when crushed, a result of natural oils that help protect the plant from grazing and harsh environmental conditions. Wild Thyme thrives in nutrient-poor soils where competition from larger plants is limited.



Oak Bracket Fungus

Take a close look at the Oak Bracket fungus (*Pseudoinonotus dryadeus*) and you may see hundreds of tiny pores. Oak Bracket fungi grow on living and dead oak trees, playing an important role in the recycling of woody material. Guttation (weeping) occurs when the fungus is young and actively growing in late spring and summer, tiny pores on the upper surface ooze thick, amber-coloured or orange-brown liquid droplets that look like dripping honey. They belong to a group called butt rot fungi – no laughing!



Relieving Grazing Pressure in Upland Oak Woodland

Effective grazing management can be a key tool in long-term woodland conservation. Reducing grazing pressure is often essential for the restoration of upland oak woodland. Excessive browsing by sheep, deer and livestock can prevent young trees from establishing and suppress the growth of woodland flowers, shrubs and mosses. By lowering stocking densities or introducing carefully designed grazing management, woodland regeneration can occur naturally. Young Oak, Rowan, Holly and Birch seedlings gain the opportunity to develop, increasing structural diversity and habitat quality. Healthier ground vegetation also supports a greater variety of insects, birds and mammals.



Hare's-foot Clover

Hare's-foot Clover (*Trifolium arvense*) is a distinctive annual plant named for its soft, silky flower heads, which resemble the foot of a hare. Found on dry grasslands, sandy soils and coastal habitats, it thrives in open conditions with little competition from taller vegetation. Its pale pink to grey-white flower spikes are covered in fine hairs, giving the plant a fuzzy appearance. Hare's-foot Clover is a good example a plant adapted to nutrient-poor habitats.



Wildfires

The summer wildfires in Carmarthenshire have severely damaged local biodiversity by destroying fragile habitats, killing slow-moving animals, and degrading soil and water quality.

Fires leave soil prone to heavy erosion. Rain can then wash ash, soot, and loose dirt into local rivers and streams. Burning plants release large amounts of trapped carbon dioxide into the air.

It may take many, many years really for sensitive vegetation to come back in a similar way to what it was: monitoring these sites will be a really important whilst these habitats recover.

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