

Amman Valley Wildlife Update Number 11 (Mid July 2020)



Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

Carn Pen-y-Clogau near to source of the Pedol

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Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

The Amman Valley has some amazing scenery. On a clear day you get wonderful views of the Gower Peninsula from Tair Carn Isaf.



Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

You can even see Caldey Island and the smaller St Margaret's Island.





Tair Carn Isaf. The boulders and scree on top of our hills are great nest sites for summer migrant birds such as....

Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

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The Wheatear (*Oenanthe oenanthe*). Lots of birds have now stopped breeding for the year and species like the Wheatear will soon be flying back to Africa.

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This is the time of year where waste grounds and railway banks are bright pink with Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*).

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Willowherbs are the favoured foodplant of one of our most colourful and striking moths – the Elephant Hawk Moth (*Deilephila elpenor*).

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Elephant Hawkmoths are quite common in our gardens and as well as Willowherbs, the caterpillars can also feed on Fuchsias. It's the caterpillar that gives the moth its name.....



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The large caterpillar looks like it has big eyes and a trunk.

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July is a good time for moths in the moth trap and we are seeing Elephant Hawkmoths as well as Poplar Hawkmoths (*Laothoe populi*).

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Moths can be quite tricky to identify. Although these two are different colour, they are both Dark Arches (*Apamea monoglypha*).

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Male

We also get Earwigs (*Forficula auricularia*) in the moth trap. You can tell the difference between male and female Earwigs by their pincers (technical name Cerci). Males have curved pincers and females much straighter. The pincers are mainly used for battling with each other. Females are unusual in the insect world because they tend to their eggs and young until they are ready to disperse.

Female

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July is a good time of year for dragonflies like this Golden-ringed dragonfly (*Cordulegaster boltonii*), which was seen in Rhian Thomas' garden earlier in the month.

Photo: Rhian Thomas

This wonderful photo of a Leopard or Great Grey Slug (*Limax maximus*) was sent in by John Driver. They can grow up to 20cm in length and are a friend of the gardener because they feed on fungi and rotting vegetation – not growing plants.



Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

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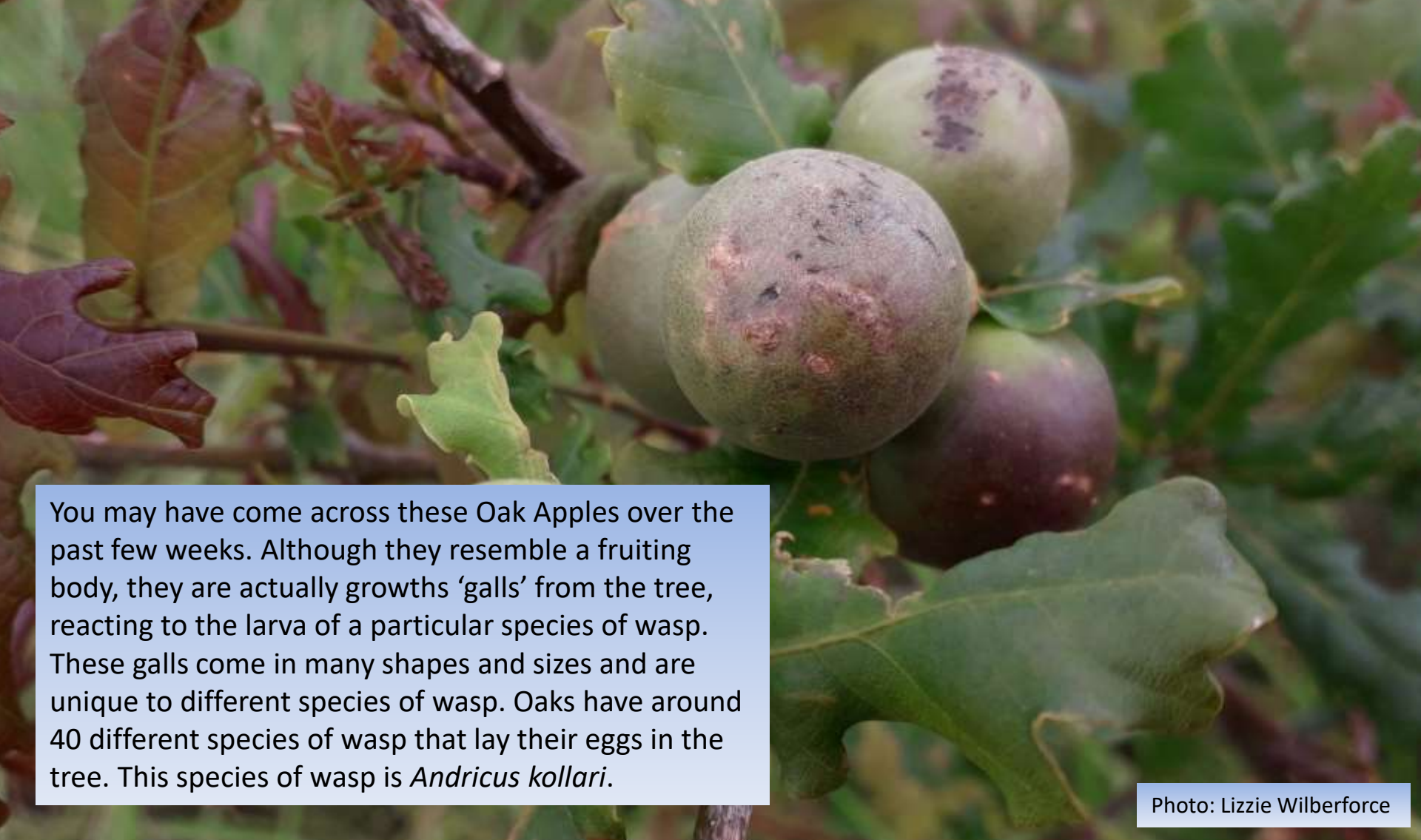
Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

One bizarre insect seen on top of the mountain during the past few weeks is *Tachina grosa* , a large bee-fly mimic. This colourful fly can reach up to 2cm in length. The adults feed on nectar and pollen. They lay their eggs in the larva of other insects and the fly larva develop inside their hosts and devour it from the inside out.

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You may have come across these Oak Apples over the past few weeks. Although they resemble a fruiting body, they are actually growths 'galls' from the tree, reacting to the larva of a particular species of wasp. These galls come in many shapes and sizes and are unique to different species of wasp. Oaks have around 40 different species of wasp that lay their eggs in the tree. This species of wasp is *Andricus kollari*.

Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce



This gall is called the Oak Artichoke Gall and is created by the wasp - *Andricus foecundatrix*

Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

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This colourful gall is the Robin's Pincushion Gall, created by the wasp – *Diplolepis rosae*. It can be seen on wild roses and even on some cultivated garden roses.

Photo: Lizzie Wilberforce

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The Wildflowers at the polytunnel are doing very well. All these are Devi's-bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) plants.

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Hopefully the plants will go toward marshy grassland restoration projects as well helping feed the Marsh Fritillary butterfly (*Euphydryas aurinia*).



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We have recently added some outdoor staging so that more wildflowers can be grown, like these Ragged Robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*).

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Even my Orchid seeds are starting to sprout.



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One unexpected visitor to the polytunnel this week was a sawfly called a Giant Wood Wasp (*Urocerus gigas*). It measures up to 4cm in length and despite its size, is quite harmless to humans. The sting-like projection at the rear is actually its ovipositor. They are attracted to pine forests..... and larch polytunnel staging.



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INCC has had some good news recently. We have been successful in a grant from the Brecon Beacons National Park to undertake more community based wildlife surveys over the coming year. The project will start in September and 'hopefully' we can find and see some of the wonderful wildlife of the Amman Valley landscape for ourselves. The more wildlife we find the better protected it can be.



The project will help us undertake more wildlife surveys and recording in the valley and even the chance to set up a moth trap in various gardens so we can see things like this – The Drinker moth (*Euthrix potatoria*)



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There will hopefully be lots of opportunities for training in wildlife surveying, including looking for evidence of otter along our rivers and streams.



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Otters are very elusive so when surveying for them, you are actually looking for their droppings called spraint. Spraints are territory markers so are often positioned in prominent places along a river.



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Thanks again for all the photos, feedback and records – they are much appreciated.

I will keep everyone up to date about the project as it develops and hopefully we can all go out and do some nature conservation and surveying.

Thank You

Rob

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