


Amman Valley Wildlife Update Number 6 (Early May 2020)



MENTER AR GYFER
CADWRAETH NATUR CYMRU



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Thank you to everyone for sending in their records of Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*). I have managed to map where some of the Cuckoo calls are coming from...

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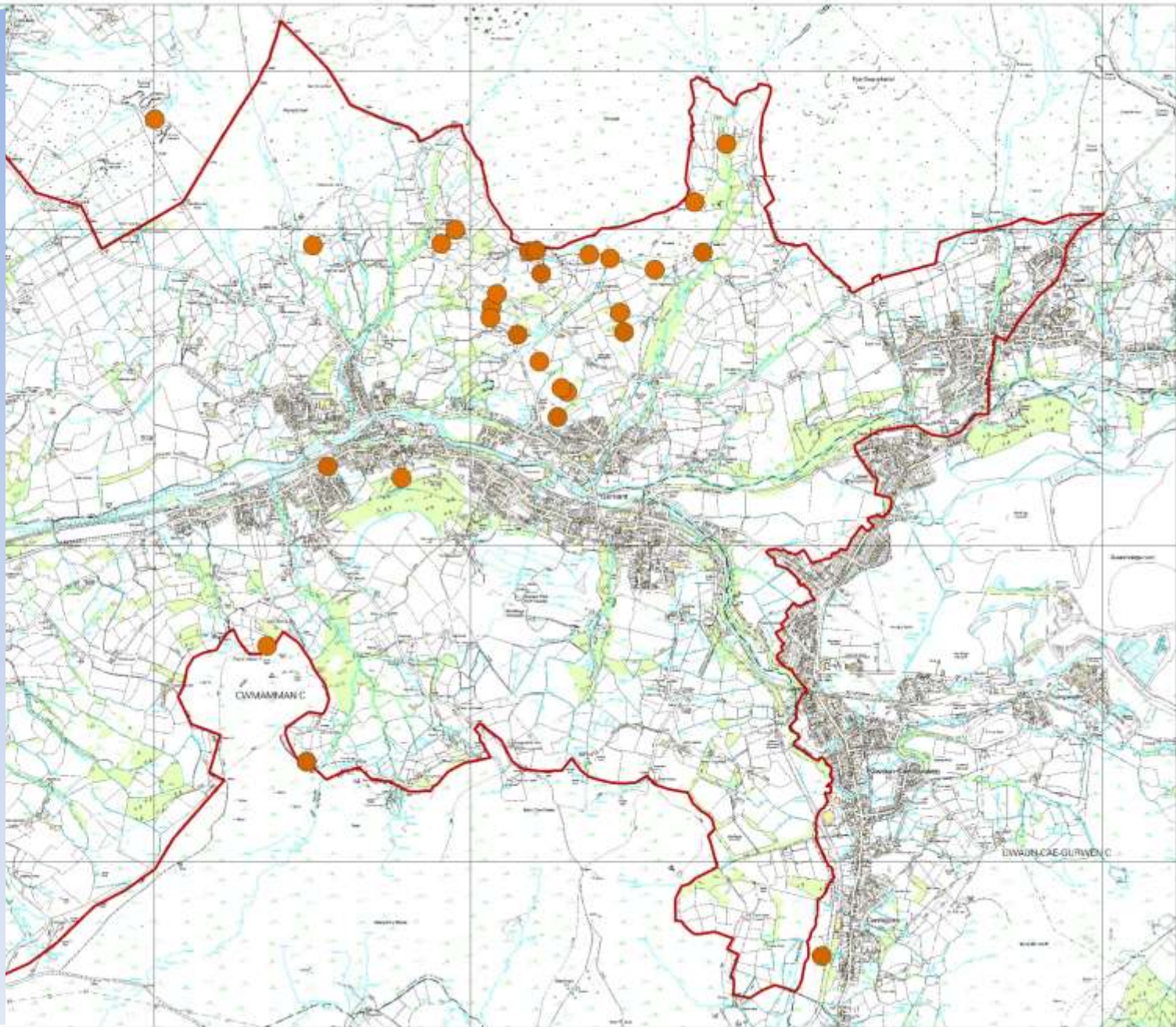


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This is the distribution map so far. Most of the records have been on the north of the valley among the mosaic of heather, grassland and woodland habitats.

Please do keep sending me your records.

Next year we can go out in groups to survey the whole of the valley.



This is what the Cuckoos are after. This is the nest of the Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*). The cuckoo will lay its egg in the nest and when the chick hatches, its first job is to eject all the other eggs in the nest.

I found this nest on the mountain so will keep an eye on it to see if the Cuckoos find it.



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Worried looking
Meadow Pipit



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Our House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) in the front of the house have been hard at work feeding their chicks.



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Both pairs (front house and pole box) are feeding chicks mainly on Craneflies (*Tipula oleracea*)



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To keep the nest clean and safe from predators, the adult birds remove the droppings of their chicks. The droppings come in 'faecal sacks' which the adults remove from the nest and deposit somewhere else -which in my case are on the front garden fence. We counted over 36 of these droppings before losing count.

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Photo – Doug Portman

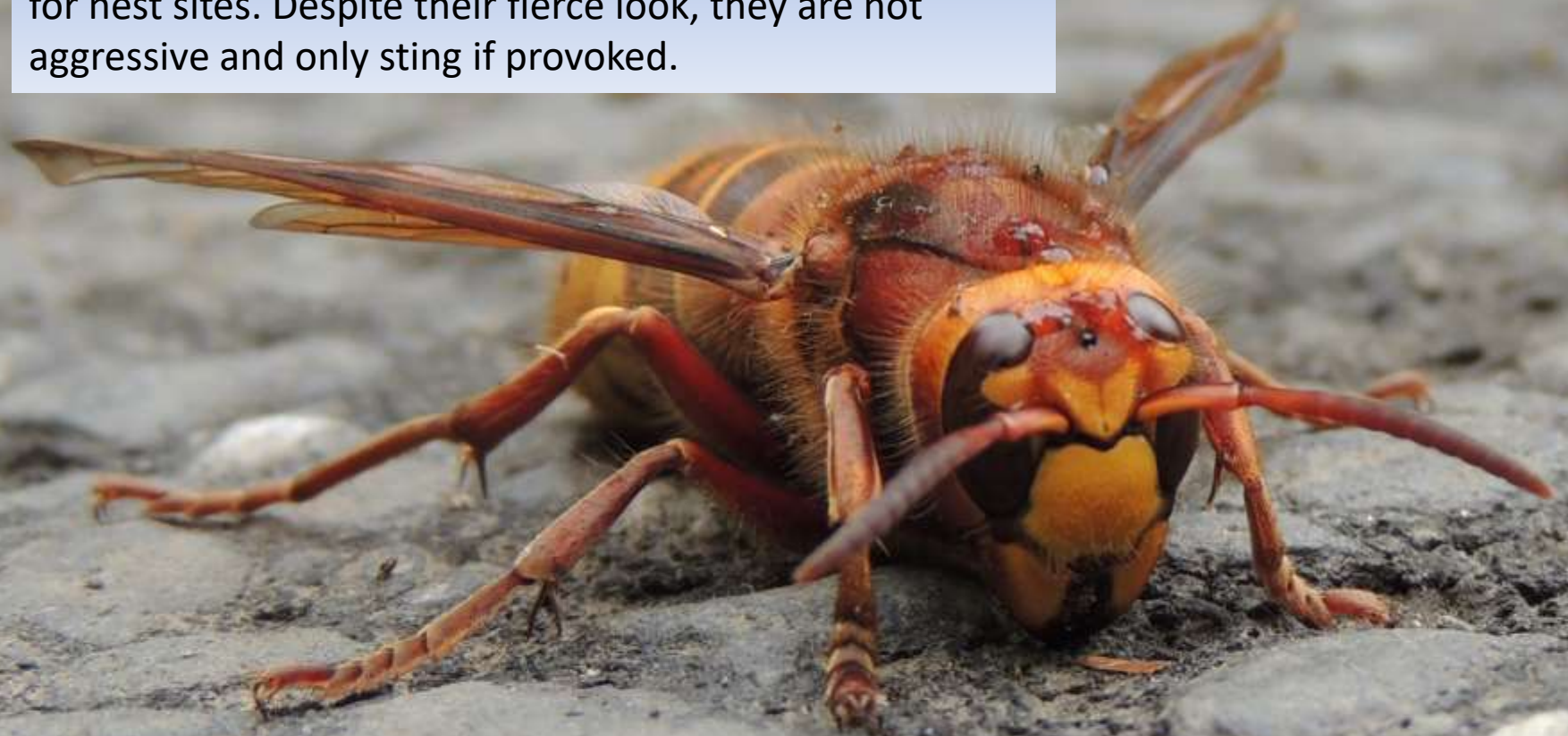
As well as faecal sacks, adult birds also remove discarded egg shell from the nests, like this House Sparrow shell.

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At this time of year keep an eye out for these beautiful Hornets (*Vespa crabro*) which are now flying and looking for nest sites. Despite their fierce look, they are not aggressive and only sting if provoked.



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Also seen out and about recently are the caterpillars of the Drinker Moth (*Euthrix potatoria*).



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And the Dingy Skipper (*Erynnis tages*) – a species of butterfly found in the valley.



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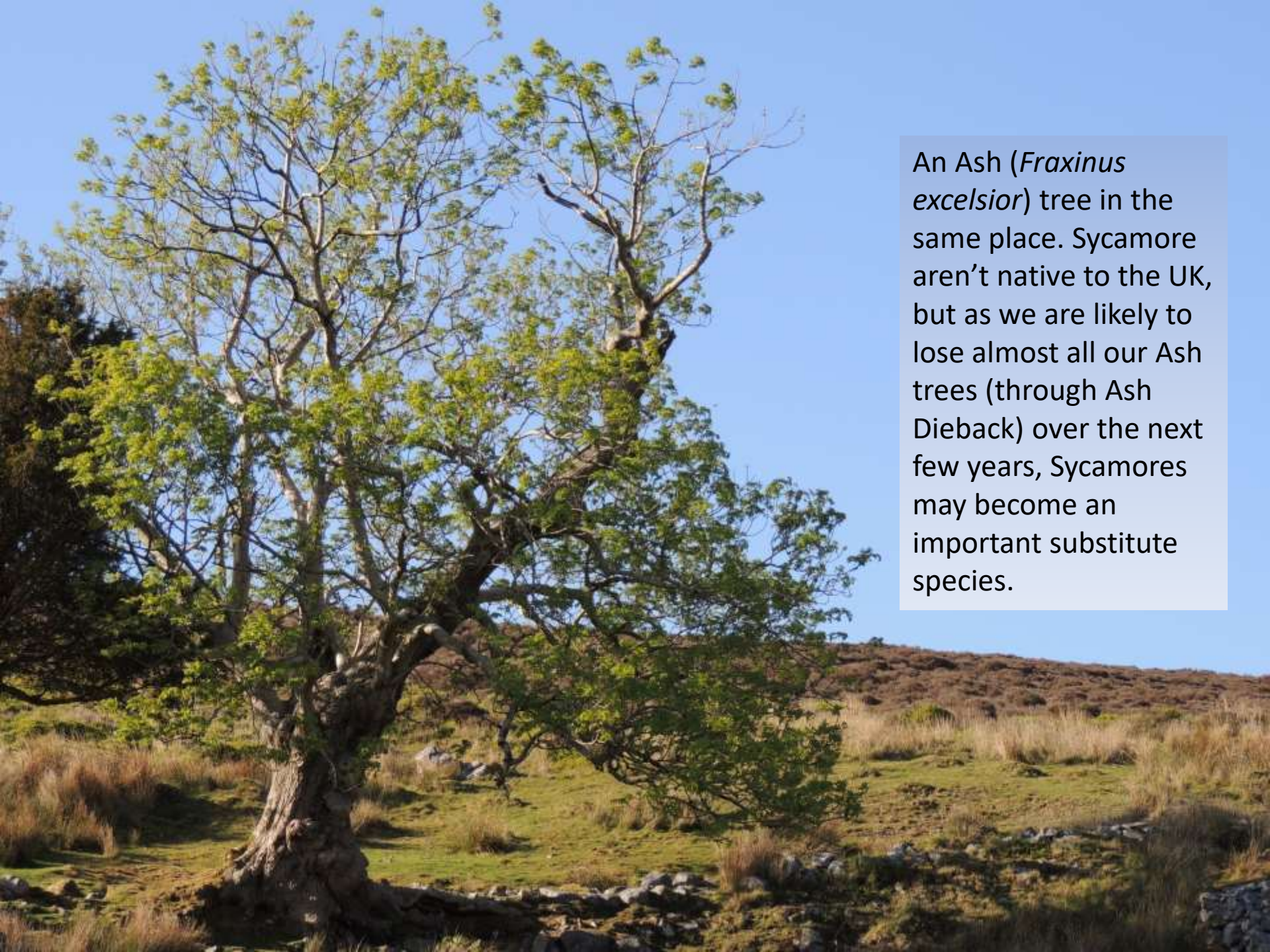
Thank you for all the suggestion for the remarkable trees of the Amman Valley. I am trying to take photos and map them. Your suggestions have been very welcome.

This is an old Sycamore tree to the north of the Valley.

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An Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) tree in the same place. Sycamores aren't native to the UK, but as we are likely to lose almost all our Ash trees (through Ash Dieback) over the next few years, Sycamores may become an important substitute species.



We are blessed with so many old and important trees in the Amman Valley so thank you for helping me to map them. Please do keep sending me your suggestions.

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A few people have also reported seeing Slow Worms (*Anguis fragilis*) in the garden over the past few weeks.

The Slow Worm is one of only three species of lizard found in the UK.



Like the newt's belly, a Slow Worm's chin pattern is unique to that individual – like our finger print.

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Photo – Hywel Gethin

More of our meadow flowers are starting to show now, like this Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*).

Yellow rattle are key to wildflower meadows because they actually parasitize grasses which reduces the vigour of grass and allows more wildflowers to take hold.

The more yellow rattle the better the health of our meadows.

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Garnant has some wonderful wildflower roadside verges. All meadows need to be cut to maintain their biodiversity value, but INCC is now working with Carmarthenshire County Council to see if the verges can be cut at more appropriate times of year.

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Orchids have now started growing again in the park thanks to the way it is being managed by Cwmaman Town Council.

Photo – Sarah Martin





If you are able to venture up to the mountain areas you will be able to see brilliant displays of Cotton Grass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*).

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Thank you again for helping with the update and for photos and records – it is very much appreciated. Stay safe and happy wildlife watching.
Rob

Any queries, please do contact me
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