



CARDIFF NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

Founded 1867

NEWSLETTER No. 127

January 2023

Charity No. 1092496

LIST OF OFFICERS 2022

President

Position vacant

Secretary

Mike Dean

36 Rowan Way, Cardiff CF14 0TD

029 20756869

secretary@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

Treasurer

Rhian Kendall

treasurer@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

Membership Secretary

Elizabeth Morgan

membership@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

Indoor Meetings Secretary

Hilary Wicks

029 20257012

indoor@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

Field Meetings Coordinator

Position vacant

Newsletter Editor

Stephen Nottingham

stephen@cardiffnaturalists.org.uk

Also on Council

Mary Salter, Gill Barter, Marie Makepeace, Stephen Howe, Patrizia Donovan



<http://www.cardiffnaturalists.org.uk>

www.facebook.com/groups/CardiffNaturalists

Twitter: @CardiffNats

<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.com>

Cover photo: Fungi photographed locally by Linda Morris, including Birch Bolete, Fly Agaric, Pink Waxcap, Shaggy Inkcaps, Fly Agaric, Cordyceps, ?, Cep, Pestle Puffball, Blackening Waxcap, Orange Peel, WhiteSaddle.

Indoor meetings

We hope to restart Cardiff Naturalists' Society indoor meetings later this year.

Upcoming online or in-person meetings will include:

AGM

Volcanoes and gardening focusing on the La Palma eruption
Andy Kendal.

We are also looking to organise a number of outdoor meetings this summer.

Look out for all the latest information and additions to the programme in the next newsletter, via social media or on our website/blog:

<http://cardiffnaturalists.blogspot.co.uk/p/programme.html>

Morrey Salmon Collection

Cardiff Naturalists' Society has obtained funding from the Morrey Salmon family to digitise and make available the photographic slide collection of Col Morrey Salmon (photo below, from the Cardiff Naturalists' Society archive). Working with the National Museum Wales in Cardiff, volunteers will be needed in due course to clean the glass plates, carry out digitisation, and help with the wildlife identification, ahead of posting the images online. Look out for further details in the next newsletter.



Bioscience Prize

The winner of the 2023 Cardiff Naturalists' Society Bioscience prize will be announced in the next newsletter. The annual prize, set up in memory of Prof Ursula Henriques, is awarded to a second year student in the Cardiff University School of Biosciences for an outstanding fieldwork or research report.

Recent winners have included Cerys Vick (2022) for a field course report on the invasive plant Himalayan balsam along Cardiff's urban waterways; Lottie Moreland (2021) for a report on climate and the breeding success of passerine birds; and Francesca Rowlands (2020) for a pre-pandemic fieldwork study of parrot fish foraging on coral reefs in Tobago.

Wildlife Trust online talks

Cardiff Naturalists' Society members are invited to the series of online talks organised by the Cardiff Local Group of the Wildlife Trust for South and West Wales.

Thursday 16th February 2023. 7.30pm (online on Zoom).
Cemeteries: a haven for wildlife?

Speaker: Carmel Thomas, Strategic Implementation Director for Cardiff's Bereavement Services.

The Cardiff area may not be awash with nature reserves but it has many green spaces. This event will explore the contribution that cemeteries are making to enhance the city's biodiversity. There will also be an opportunity to discuss what the partnership between the Friends of Cathays Cemetery and the Cardiff Local Group are doing.

Register on Zoom in advance: <https://t.ly/oQC1h>

You will then be sent a link to join the meeting.

If you missed recent talks:

The Future of Farming and Wildlife in Wales

A recording of the talk given on Tuesday 22 November 2022 by Rachel Sharp, Director of Wildlife Trusts Wales, and Rhodri Irranca-Davies, Nature Recovery Manager of WTSWW, can be viewed at: <https://youtube/9AD2D1uzwM4>

Enhancing Biodiversity in Cardiff

A copy of the presentation by Chris Engel from Coed Caerdydd given on Thursday 27 October 2022 can be found here: <http://www.wtswwcardiff.org.uk/coed-caerdydd-board-meeting.pdf>

Cwm Colhuw - 8 October 2022

Report by Gill Barter

Holding a field meeting in October was inevitably something of a gamble, but as it turned out, it was one that paid off. The sun shone and as there was only a light breeze we were able to see a variety of insects, including five species of butterfly.

Ten people met at the seafront car park. We decided to start by making our way along the valley bottom and as we left the car park a Stonechat was spotted. At first the Afon Colhuw was bordered by tall vegetation and not very accessible, but further along the valley were several spots where we could get close to it and admire the clarity of the water. Several Pond Skaters on the surface cast distinctive shadows on the stream bed. A Water Rail was heard and a Kingfisher seen, but no fish!

Much of the stream was bordered by bushes of Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel and Sycamore, entangled with brambles still bearing blackberries good enough to eat. Among the insects that we saw were Common Darters and the 'Batman' Hoverfly (*Myathropa florea*). Butterflies were represented by Small Whites and a Small Copper. Looking across the stream to the north side of the valley we noticed an apple tree laden with fruit and spent some time watching a Kestrel.

As we approached the outskirts of Llantwit Major we had a choice to make – whether to return by the footpath along the northern edge of the valley or ascend through the wood on the southern side to reach the nature reserve managed by the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. We decided on the former route, which first involved crossing the stream by a small bridge and a short walk uphill. As we walked up the track and paused to watch a Linnet on the ground in front of us, a Clouded Yellow butterfly passed us at speed, heading downhill.



Photos of Cwm Colhuw by Gill Barter

Reaching the top of the slope we joined the well-surfaced footpath which forms part of the Valeways Millennium Heritage Trail. Some large field mushrooms were spotted and those who took some home subsequently confirmed that they were excellent!

Following the trail back towards the coast we were able to overlook the valley, with views across the channel to Somerset and Devon.

In view of the season few plants were in bloom, but beside the path we found several clumps of flowering Common Calamint (*Clinopodium ascendens*). This was unfamiliar to many of us, being a plant of dry limestone soils and absent from most of Glamorgan away from the coast. Another plant we saw here which is typical of the coastal Vale was Stinking Iris (*Iris foetidissima*), its striking orange seeds freshly emerged from their pods. Ivy flowers in the sheltered hedgerow were attracting Ivy Bees and a Red Admiral butterfly. Speckled Wood made up our total of five butterfly species.

A flight of steps took us down to the car park. Shrubs on both sides of the steps were draped with Wild Clematis (*Clematis vitalba*), its feathery seed heads demonstrating the reason for its alternative name of Old Man's Beard. At the foot of the steps, near the beach, were two typical coastal plants: Rock Samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*) and Sea Beet (*Beta vulgaris* ssp. *maritima*). Some of the group bought their lunch at the café and it was a pleasure, at this time of year, to be able to sit outside.

Four of us stayed after lunch to visit the Wildlife Trust reserve. Although flowering was long over, we could still identify the remains of plants such as Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and Red Bartsia (*Odontites vernus*). In the open fields were some large puffballs and at the wood edge we again saw Ivy Bees visiting Ivy flowers.

The descent to the car park, by a narrow path through tall scrub, rounded off the day.



Afon Colhuw in foreground with some wind-pruned trees.

Photo: Gill Barter.



CNS group by Colhuw stream



Common Calamint

Stinking Iris (Gladden) fruit



Myathropa florea (female); red admiral on ivy



Stonechat



Rose hips

Photos of Cwm Colhuw (pp. 10-11) by Linda and Rob Nottage.

Weather Summary for North Cardiff - 2022

Note: The attached weather summary for North Cardiff has been compiled from figures recorded in Thornhill, a location with observations going back to 1986.

Weather 2022 and the Delinquent Jetstream.

The existence of Jetstreams was established when aircraft developed for military use at high altitudes began to report unexpectedly strong winds in the upper atmosphere. These observations, confirmed by radio-sonde balloons, led to the development of the mathematical models which form the basis of weather forecasting as we know it today. Meteorologists have determined that Polar warming, an early consequence of global temperature rise, will cause Jetstreams to weaken and become more variable in their positions and movement. This tendency, which I like to describe as increased Jetstream delinquency, will become apparent in the following summary.

January began with exceptionally mild conditions and became dry and settled by mid-month with rising pressure as the Jetstream remained to the north of the UK. In Cardiff only 13.7 mm of rain were recorded after the 11th, despite storms crossing Scotland on the 29th (Malik) and the 31st (Corie). During February the Jetstream edged southwards and temporarily increased in strength (over 200 mph around mid-month) bringing a series of storms further south over much of the UK. resulting in copious rainfall and record river levels along the Teme, Vyrnwy and Severn (Newtown). Power supplies and travel were disrupted.

By early March the Jetstream had moved well clear of the UK and Cardiff recorded its driest March for 10 years. April was even drier (only 30.7 mm) and May not much wetter. Over the 3 months (March, April, May) only 142.3 mm was recorded, the driest Spring since 2011.

By June, temperatures were starting to rise reaching a very warm 29.5 °C on the 22nd (44 °C in Spain) followed by hail and thunderstorms on the 25th. By mid-July the Met. Office had issued Amber Heat Warnings for all of Wales, temperatures climbed above 35 °C on occasions, conditions which coupled with the lack of rainfall, resulted in stress on vegetation of all types. There was no relief during August with only brief periods of measurable rainfall. Total for the month was only 46.2 mm, the driest since 2003. The summer (June, July, August) was the driest since 1995 with less than half of normal rainfall. The whole of Europe suffered similar drought conditions causing major disruption to agricultural activities and widespread fires in Spain, Portugal and France.

The warm dry theme continued into September with a thundery spell around the 5th and a much-welcomed approach by the Jetstream, absent from our vicinity since February, powered an active Atlantic frontal system across the UK late in the month.

Normal rainfall patterns returned during October together with way-above normal temperatures thanks to southerly winds. Even more extreme temperatures were experienced in November, with Porthmadog recorded 21.2 °C on the 13th - the highest ever anywhere in the UK that late in the month. November was very wet. More rain fell in N. Cardiff during the month than the whole of the 51/2 months from 12th March to 2nd September (237.9 mm or 9.37 inches).

December saw an example of what an erratic Jetstream can do to the British weather. A major shift southward during the first half of the month allowed a plunge of Arctic air to spread across the UK. More air frosts were recorded in N. Cardiff in the first half of December than in the whole of the previous winter. The lowest minimum was -6.3 °C on the 16th, the lowest recorded since "The Beast from the East" in March 2018.

Weather Summary for

<u>Annual Weather for North Cardiff 2022</u>					
	<u>Jan.</u>	<u>Feb.</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>	
	1	2	3	4	
Total Rainfall in mm	71.1	162.3	57.2	30.7	
Highest in one day in mm	13.3	30.2	12.2	9.0	
Date of Highest Rainfall	7th	5th	11th	6th	
Highest Maximum Temperature Deg. C	14.6	13.0	19.6	22.3	
Date of Highest Temperature	1st	1st	23rd	16th	
Lowest Minimum Temperature Deg. C	-1.9	-0.2	1.4	0.3	
Date of Lowest Temperature	22nd/23rd	11th	31st	3rd	
Although exposures for both rainfall & temperatures are not Met. Office standard					
the above figures are reasonably representative of the suburban conditions.					

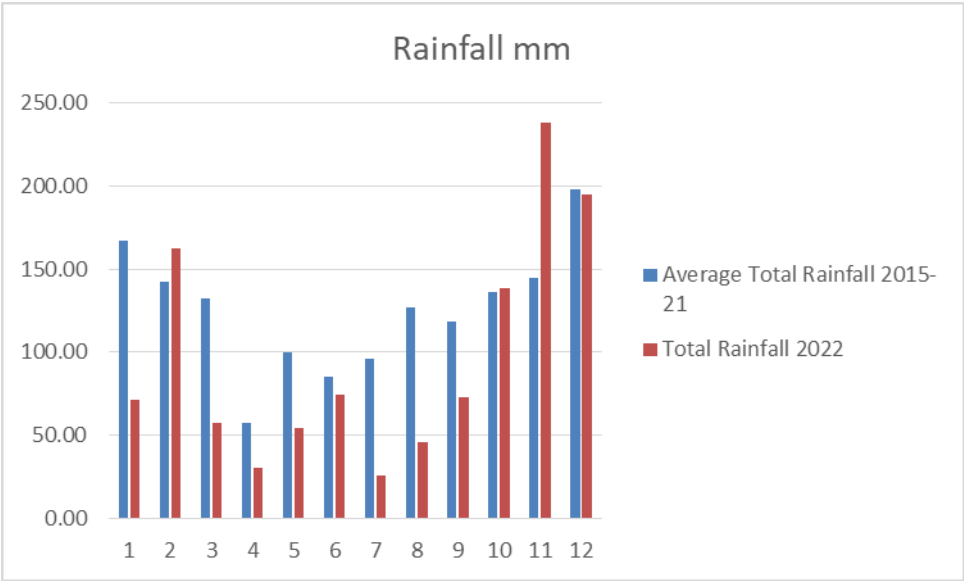
or North Cardiff 2022

<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Aug.</u>	<u>Sept.</u>	<u>Oct.</u>	<u>Nov.</u>	<u>Dec.</u>
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
54.4	74.6	26.0	46.2	72.8	138.3	237.9	194.9
10.9	19.3	10.0	20.2	21.0	22.0	26.2	31.4
18th	25th	30th	2nd	30th	22nd	2nd	18th
22.6	29.5	36.4	35.3	24.7	19.7	17.8	14.0
8th	22nd	18th	12th	2nd	3rd	11th	19th
7.5	8.3	10.2	10.9	6.6	4.7	1.8	-6.3
30th	2nd	5th	6th	25th	11th	19th	16th
			Total Rain fall			1166.4	mm
						45.9	inches
			Long Term Average			1447.0	mm
						57.0	inches

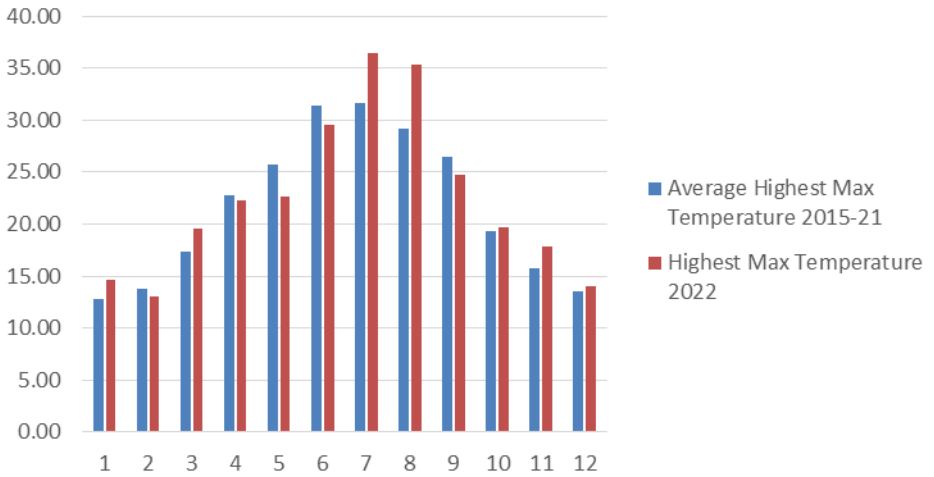
However, in the second half of December there was a major change in the disposition of the North Atlantic Jetstream. A plunge southward over Canada and part of the U.S.A. was eventually halted by sub-tropical air over the Gulf of Mexico. This caused the Jetstream to strengthen and propel developing depressions towards the UK, giving a very soggy end to the year. Rainfall during the second half of December was over 180 mm (7 inches), representing 16% of the total rainfall for the whole of 2022.

However, 2022 was a dry year overall. Total rainfall in North Cardiff was 1166.4 mm (45.9 inches), less than 80% of normal. The Met. Office also reported a very warm year, every month above average (apart from December) and the warmest for the whole UK since records began.

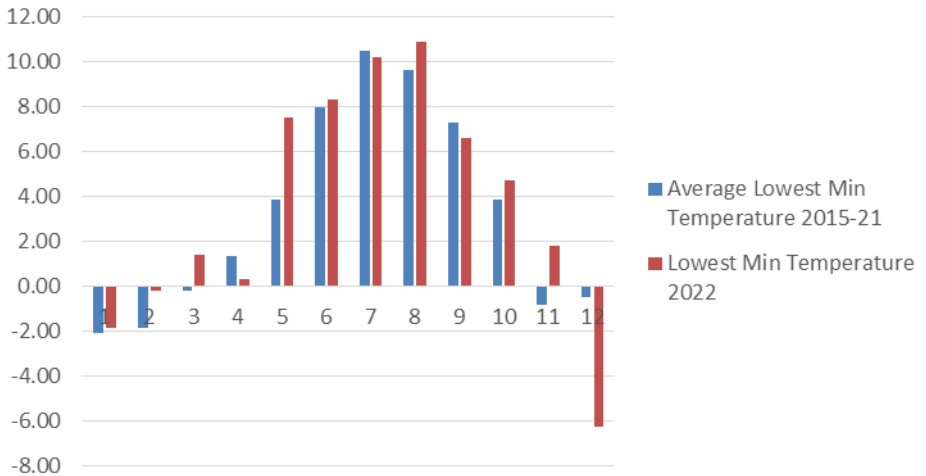
Report from a friend of the Society



Highest Maximum Temperature Deg. C



Lowest Minimum Temperature Deg C



Cardiff Birdwatch - 9th January 2023

Report by Rob Nottage

It was a grey cloudy day with a cool north-westerly and a heavy shower passing through when we gathered at the north end of Roath Park Lake for our annual New Year Birdwatch in conjunction with the Cardiff Group of the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales. The presence of a mobile drinks wagon near our starting point on Wild Gardens Road was noted – to be joined later by an Italian street food vendor. The party swelled to 18 folk as we proceeded to stroll in leisurely fashion for a circuit around the lake. Frequent stops to observe the birds gave opportunities for much missed face-to-face encounters, to exchange news and chat.

Around the lake there were scattered groups of geese, mostly Canadas with a few Greylags, and rather too many white domestic types along with some obvious hybrids with the former. Gulls and Feral Pigeons lining the railings or decorating the roof of the boat house soon descended en masse for any possibility of human-provided food. A handful of Cormorants adorned the island trees and branches, one standing in heraldic pose with wings outstretched. Mallard drakes in their finery and sporting glossy green heads paid close attention to their choice of the plainer plumaged females. Out in the middle of the lake smart black and white male Tufted Ducks dived or dozed, well outnumbering the few brown females. The sharper eyed amongst us picked out a male Shoveler lurking amongst the branches at the edge of one of the islands; both Great Crested and Little Grebes were noted. The bird identification information boards with illustrations captioned in English and Welsh were examined to see what we'd missed (not much).

Some physical features drew our attention. A couple of Weeping Willow trees had lost their grip on the bank edge and toppled into the water, but with probably enough root contact to generate re-growth, while adding habitat variety to the scene. The “grass” verges, saturated or running with water from the recent heavy rains, were churned into a soggy, muddy, leafy mess from the trampling of webbed feet. The outflow channel below the dam was an impressive tumbling cascade. The Council’s expensive flood prevention plans involving widening this and raising the dam drew scathing remarks, but clearly some dredging of the accumulated deposited silt is required.

Approaching midday, we made a quick tour of the Wild Gardens, primarily woodland, which proved to be almost devoid of birds apart from singing robins, a few tits and a Crow standing guard over an overflowing litter bin. This was the point when most of the group said their farewells.

So it was a reduced party of five that re-assembled on Longwood Drive for an exploration of Forest Farm Country Park. Water from the inlet pipe gushed into the canal, where Mallards dabbled and Moorhens flicked their white tails as they crept stealthily over the luxuriant vegetation. Feeding stations supplied with seed attracted a variety of small birds - Coal, Blue and Great Tits, Nuthatch, Robin, Dunnock, Chaffinch - with the inevitable Squirrels taking precedence. We had stayed largely dry so far, but a sharp heavy shower caught us unawares so we made our way to shelter in one of the metal hides replacing the earlier wooden structures that had been burnt down. This is where keen bird photographers with their cannon-like lenses strain to catch the definitive Kingfisher photo – but they, and we, were disappointed on this day. A more conservatively plumaged Reed Bunting proved to be the main attraction.

Our route alongside the Melingriffith Feeder canal took us to find the river in full flood at Radyr Weir. Black-headed Gulls operated on a continuous loop of drifting downstream until almost toppling over the weir, then dropping in again some distance upstream to repeat the search for a morsel. The regular thump and splash of one of the Archimedean Screw hydroelectricity generators, capable of producing 200kW, exemplified the power of the river's flow – but why wasn't its twin also taking advantage of this "green" energy source? The day was nicely rounded off by sightings of a Heron and an immaculate drake Goosander by the opposite bank below the weir.

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*Jay, Nuthatch, and Reed Buntings (pp. 20-21).
Birds photographed at Forest Farm in January 2023 (though not on the
birdwatch) by Phill Blanning..*

Lapwings

Note and photos by Mary Salter

On 16th and 17th December 2022, I was delighted to spot a flock of Lapwing in the fields below our garden - I counted about 20 plus a Mistle Thrush or two. This is the first time in over 20 years that I have seen Lapwing around here.



Slade Gardens in NGS

Gillian Barter notes the following event, which may be of interest to CNS members, from the National Garden Scheme website:

On Sunday 19 February, Slade Garden at Southerndown on the Heritage Coast is open for the National Garden Scheme, 14.00 to 17.00, entrance fee £6; home made teas available. This opening is for snowdrops - it happens every year but is easy to miss because it is before the NGS publicity booklets are published.

Located in Southerndown in the Vale of Glamorgan, Slade is protected from the coastal breezes by a native woodland and in early February the garden begins to emerge from its winter slumber. Garden owner and Glamorgan County Organiser, Rosamund Davies, walks us through the early spring flowers and hopes to welcome visitors in 2023 as part of the Snowdrop Festival on Sunday 19th February.

For further information: <https://ngs.org.uk/an-early-spring-garden-walk-in-Wales/>

Slade, Southerndown, Vale of Glamorgan, CF32 0RP.

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World Wetlands Day: LIFEquake

Stephen Nottingham notes that 2nd February 2023 is World Wetlands Day, an initiative of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Among the projects organising events to coincide with the day is the LIFEquake project. LIFEquake is an ambitious €5m project funded by the EU LIFE programme (60%), Welsh Government and a number of other partner organisations.

As the project information explains: senior LIFEquake project officer Gareth will be leading a guided walking tour of Crymlyn Bog, Swansea. You'll learn about these incredible habitats (technically called transition mires and quaking bogs) and also the plans the project has to restore them. Bring your wellies!

For further information and to register contact the project through its Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/LIFEQuakingBogs>

02 / 02 / 23



Diwrnod Gwlyptiroedd y Byd **World Wetlands Day**



EU LIFE projects continue to make major contributions to conserving important ecosystems, habitats and species in Wales.

For example, Sands of LIFE is a major conservation project to revitalise sand dunes across Wales, which finishes in 2024. It has recreated natural dynamic movement in the dunes and rejuvenated dune habitats, which are home to some of the country's rarest wildlife. The project's sites include Kenfig and Merthyr Mawr.

The Celtic Rainforests LIFE project, led by the Snowdonia National Park Authority and Coed Cadw (Welsh Woodland Trust) with other partners, is working to protect, restore and celebrate Snowdonia's Celtic temperate rainforests: the ancient Atlantic oak woodlands of mid and north Wales. This £7 million project is 60% funded by the EU LIFE programme. Concrete conservation actions include eradicating invasive non-native species, mainly Rhododendron and Himalayan Balsam.

Futurescapes was a LIFE project that pioneered landscape-level conservation in the UK ("bigger, better, more joined up"). One of the project sites was the Gwent Levels.

LIFE Welsh Raised Bogs was the first national restoration programme for raised bogs and other peatland habitat in Wales. The 4-year pioneering and ambitious project restored seven of the best examples of raised bogs in Wales, including its main site at Cors Caron, as well as at Cors Fochno National Nature Reserve and bogs near Trawsfynydd, Fishguard, Crosshands, Crickhowell and Builth Wells. The work is continuing in the follow-up New LIFE for Welsh Raised Bogs project until summer 2024.

Unfortunately, thanks to a hard Brexit, organisations in Wales can no longer apply for funding under LIFE, European's most important funding stream for nature conservation. However, the ongoing projects have their funding guaranteed to project end.

Celtic Rainforest LIFE will continue to July 2025, for instance, while LIFEquake will run to the end of 2026. Each LIFE project team also puts in place an After-LIFE plan to ensure the long-term sustainability of their conservation actions.



Hummingbird Moth. Photo: Mary Salter.



Goldfinch. Photo: Mary Salter.



Holloway, Casehill Woods, Dinas Powys. Photo by Stephen Nottingham.

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**Deadline for submissions to next newsletter:
Friday 26 May 2023**



Heron at Malham Tarn. Photo by Andy Kendall

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