



Lye Valley Wildlife News

What to see in the valley in SPRING 2024

Judy Webb (Friends of Lye Valley)



Peak Cowslip flowering and Broom flowers at Lye Valley entrance in April

After another long, cold, wet spring, the valley is now bursting into life. Yellow is the spring theme: a wonderful display of Cowslip flowers and our first Broom flowers at the valley entrance is just coming to an end in early May. Spawning of the frogs went well and happened around 18 - 28 February, 5 or 6 days earlier than usual. This year ALL the frogs laid large quantities in one of the middle ponds. Apparently no other pond would do.



Our Brookes student volunteer, who has been studying the valley reptiles, gathered lots of data last year on Slow Worms, Viviparous Lizards and Grass Snake occurrences under strategically placed refuge mats. Already this spring we have been pleased to find lots of Slow Worms and juvenile Grass Snakes under some of the refuges; young ones are an indication of successful breeding, as eggs are probably laid in some of our many habitat/cuttings piles.

Throughout spring, the regular Wednesday volunteer group has been scything, raking and translocating clumps of plants to new fen restoration areas. The aim is to encourage a nectar- and pollen-rich flower 'highway' up and down the valley for all insects. By the time you get this newsletter, the Yellow Flag Iris flowers should be lighting up the valley in their new homes and our first orchids – the pink-flowered Early Marsh Orchids - will be doing better than ever. Last year we had 50 of these orchids in flower in a tufa-spring area that had been nothing except wall to wall 2m high reed in 2016, a remarkable success

story in fen flora restoration, thanks to the hard volunteer work in sometimes very inclement conditions. I wonder how many Early Marsh Orchids we will get this year.



A juvenile Grass Snake and some adult Slow Worms under mats in April



Yellow Flag Iris and a pale pink-flowered version of an Early Marsh Orchid, early May

Weeks of wet weather have meant very little opportunity for insect observations, but we were pleased to spot the spectacular Red-headed Cardinal Beetle below. These have larvae which breed in our deadwood piles.



A Red-headed Cardinal Beetle found in May and a reminder of our Cherry Plum flowers in March

Photos: Judy Webb and Tony Gillie **Contact:** friendsoflyealley@yahoo.co.uk Don't forget to look at our website <http://www.friendsoflyealley.org.uk/> where you can see weekly news of the work of the volunteer group and more wildlife in our **Facebook** and **Twitter**.