



What to see in the valley in Spring 2025

Judy Webb (Friends of Lye Valley)



Frogs spawning in one of the ponds and a well marked frog showing excellent camouflage in grass

As predicted with Climate Change, we are now experiencing extremes. Last year, we had an incredibly wet spring, this year a dreadfully dry spring, with no significant rain since early March (writing now in May). Luckily, fen spring/seepages are still flowing in most areas due to being fed from the limestone porous rock aquifer underground. This water reservoir in the rock filled up well in the autumn and winter rains and enables enough flow the fen to keep wet for some months. However, we need rain soon as the dry banks around the fen have wilting flowers. The ponds had plenty of water in early spring and spawning of the frogs went well and happened at the usual time, around 8th March. This year, the quantity of spawn was a bit lower at just over 100 clumps, but all hatched successfully, giving large numbers of tadpoles. Spring is the time to see the spectacular show of yellow Celandine flowers, followed by the pale lilac Cuckoo Flowers (Lady's Smock) and Blackthorn blossom, enjoyed by early insects like the furry, long-tongued Dark-edged Beeflies.



Cuckoo flower (Lady's Smock) after a shower and Blackthorn flowering with a furry Dark-edged Beewolf sipping nectar with its very long tongue

Through April yellow Brimstone butterflies were on the wing and we were pleased to encounter this strange small beetle, the Cramp Ball Weevil, which breeds in the black round knob-like fungi known as Cramp balls (or King Alfred's Cakes) on dead Ash logs. The weevil is an excellent mimic of a bird dropping, helping it to avoid predators.



*A Brimstone butterfly resting and a Cramp Ball Weevil *Platyrhinus resinosus* seen in April*

In early May pink is the theme. We were pleased to note increasing numbers of the tiny pink Marsh Valerian flowers and by the 7th May it was apparent that it will be another very good year for the Early Marsh Orchids (assuming the deer will not find and eat too many).



*One of our first Early Marsh Orchids, *Dactylorhiza incarnata* (left) and the neat round flowerhead of small Marsh Valerian *Valeriana dioica* (right)*

Read more about the Valley birds in Tom Bedford's ebird observations. For Lye Valley and Warneford Meadow, go to <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L8899589>

Don't forget to look at the website <http://www.friendsoflyealley.org.uk/> where you can always see weekly news of the work of the volunteer group and more wildlife in our Facebook pages <https://www.facebook.com/friendsoflyealley/> and on Blue Sky at: @friendlyealley.bsky.social.