



What to see in the valley in Summer 2025

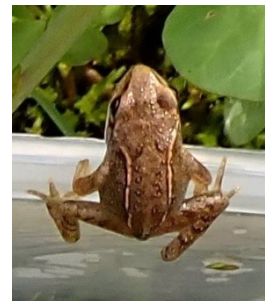
Judy Webb (Friends of Lye Valley)



A view looking up the valley in late summer with our rare Eared Willow bush centre by the brook

What a contrast for the last year! After the wettest year on record in 2024, we have just had a very serious drought from March to the end of August 2025. All our ponds dried down to mud and some spring areas ceased to flow. Luckily good numbers of juvenile frogs made the change from the tadpole stage to adult form before the ponds completely dried up

The warmth and sunshine made good flying conditions for butterflies and, as elsewhere, adult butterflies were frequently seen, having a much better year than the last two wet ones. We have abundant nettles but this is the first time we have seen a group of the black spiky caterpillars of Peacock butterfly for some years. Meadow Browns were particularly abundant.



Peacock caterpillars on nettle leaves, a Meadow Brown Butterfly and a newly metamorphosed tiny froglet



Mint moth, a Buff-tailed Bumble bee foraging on Devil's bit Scabious in August and a Common Carder Bumble on mint flowers

As Water Mint steadily increases in the valley, so do the numbers of mint moths. All types of bees had a much better year with the warmth and the increasing flower resource available. It's very pleasing to see the increase in Bumble Bees. All our orchids did well, but this time we are highlighting some flowers we don't normally mention. The Common Cotton-grass (which is not common these days) is doing spectacularly well (we translocated small tufts from the east side to west side of the fen). Tall spires of yellow flowers of Dark Mullein grow on the dry banks above the fen. Individual flowers are very attractive. When seen close up the yellow flowers have surprising red-maroon fluff on the anthers.



Common Cotton-grass and a single Dark Mullein flower



A basking Viviparous Lizard on a grass pile

Common (viviparous) Lizards did not do so well in the last two wet and cold years; we are delighted to see more this year and, in particular, tiny black babies on log piles, indicating successful breeding. They really need warm sunny conditions to thrive.

All photographs here by Judy Webb. Do look at the group's 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 (<https://www.facebook.com/friendsoflyealley/>) and on Blue Sky at: @friendlyealley.bsky.social