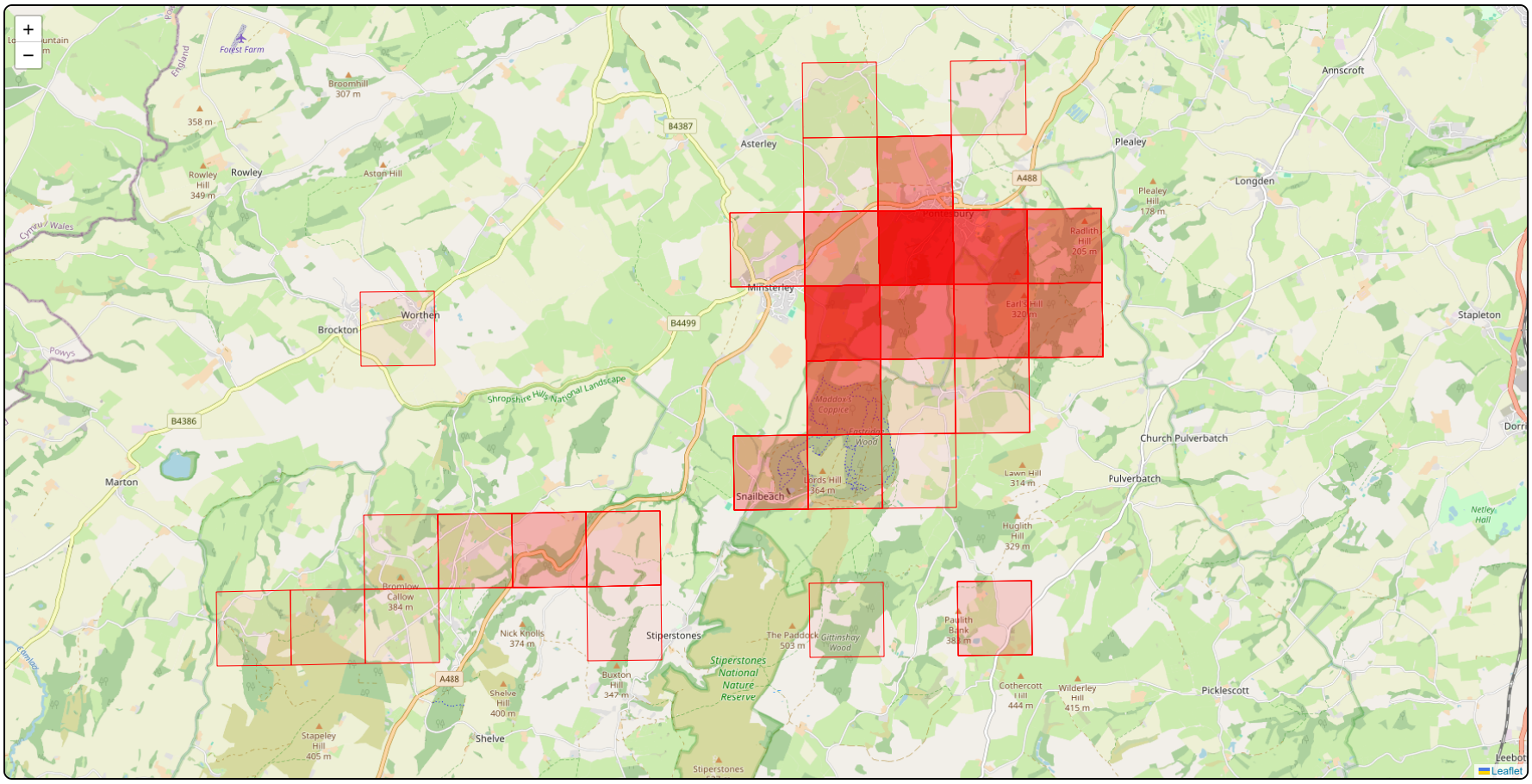
REA VALLEY
COMMUNITY WILDLIFE GROUP

iRecord results Q1 2024

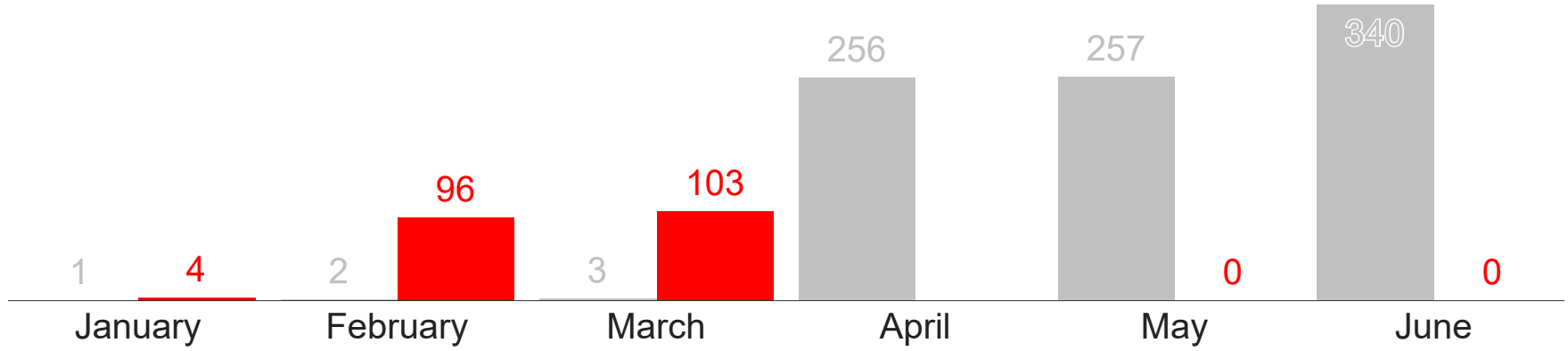
During January, February and March, 15 people braved the cold and wet weather to collect non-avian wildlife records within our Rea Valley survey area. From manicured lawns, through damp coniferous woodland, to windswept dolerite intrusions; the following heat map shows where we wandered in search of our local flora and fauna. Each square represents a monad (1km^2) meaning we visited 26 of the 104 squares that make up our survey area. Pontesbury Hill, Earl's Hill, Poles Coppice, Hope Valley and Callow Hill remain popular spots for recording.



Records by Month

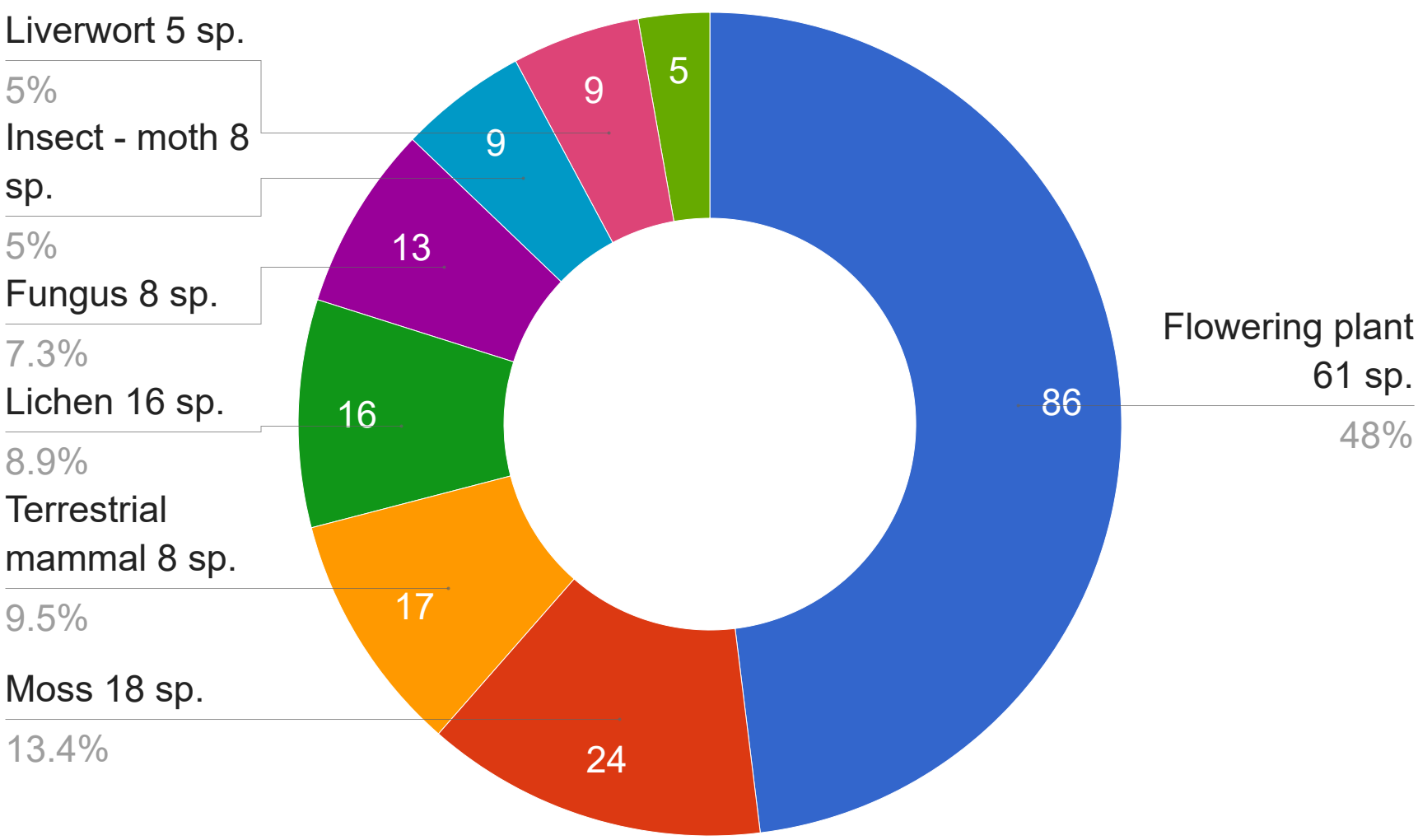
A total of 203 records were added in the first quarter of 2024, which is a huge increase on the 6 records that were made during the same period last year. These records from the early part of the year are interesting because they tell us a lot more about our winter wildlife. As you can see from the graph below, the vast majority of wildlife observations are collected during the summer months. This leads to a summer species bias when we review our year. But for January, February and March, the species we encounter are very different, as you will see below.

2023 2024



Most Common Wildlife Groups

Early plants, mosses, lichen and fungi made up the majority of records during the late winter and early spring of 2024 - species that can tolerate a dusting of snow or the occasional hard frost. We expect an influx of insect records as soon as the warmer spring days arrive, but until that happens, here are the wildlife groups that we encountered most often during the first three months of the year.

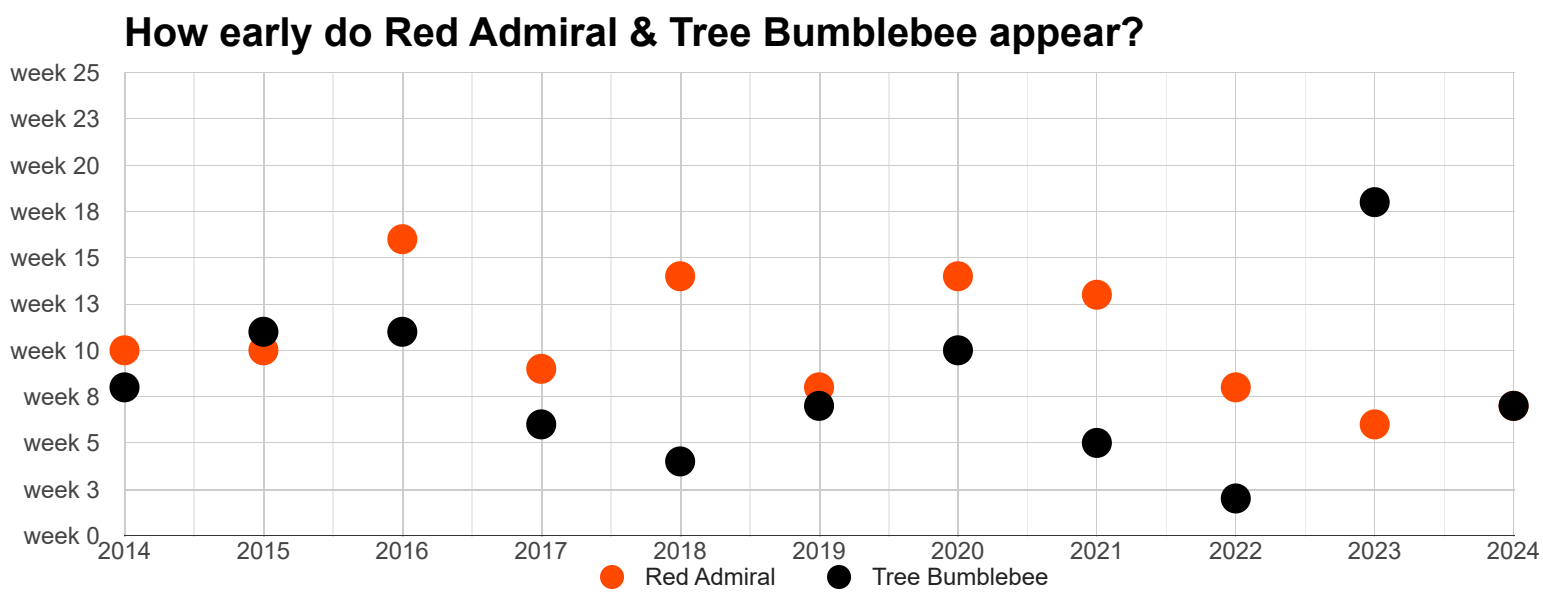


Individual Species

In the first three months of 2024 we recorded an impressive 149 different species. Wonderful to see records for all three newts we are likely to encounter in the Rea Valley: Palmate, Smooth and Great Crested. Preston Montford recorded an Alpine Newt back in 2014, so you never know.

Lutra lutra Eurasian Otter was recorded near Worthen on 7 February; our first from the Species Action Plan list! There were also reports of an Otter eating Coi Carp from someone's fish pond in Minsterley a few years ago, so we know they have been active in the area recently.

The first butterfly reported this year was *Vanessa atalanta* Red Admiral, and the first bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum* Tree Bumblebee; both on the same day, 18 February, in Minsterley. But how do these early records compare to previous years? Using data from Shropshire as a whole, the graph below shows when each species was first seen over the past decade. The late arrival of Tree Bumblebees last year will probably be corrected when Shropshire Ecological Data Network (SEDN) records are fed into The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) database.



Most Common Species

The following are the species we have most commonly recorded so far this year:

Wood Anemone
Anemone nemorosa
flowering plant

Roe Deer
Capreolus capreolus
terrestrial mammal

Scarlet Elfcup
Sarcoscypha austriaca var. austriaca
fungus

Moschatel
Adoxa moschatellina
flowering plant

Lesser Celandine
Ficaria verna
flowering plant

Yellow Archangel
Lamiastrum galeobdolon
flowering plant

Bifid Crestwort
Lophocolea bidentata
liverwort

European Rabbit
Oryctolagus cuniculus
terrestrial mammal

Primrose
Primula vulgaris
flowering plant

Greater Stitchwort
Stellaria holostea
flowering plant

14 Possible New Species!

Among our finds in 2024, 14 species may be first records for the Rea Valley. The NBN database holds records for approximately 4,500 different wildlife species in our survey area. At the time of writing, the following species (verified and unverified, correctly or incorrectly identified) are not among them. There will be records yet to be published from the past year or two, due to data latency. But until we hear otherwise, we may consider the following species possible new finds:

Wood-rush Dwarf Moth

Elachista regificella

This species was classified as Nationally Scarce B, which means it has been found in between 30 and 100 of the Britain's 2913 hectads, since 1980. There are 68 records showing on the NBN database.

Scarce outside the south of England, there is one previous Shropshire record in the north of the county in 2014. The adult moth has a wingspan of about 1cm.

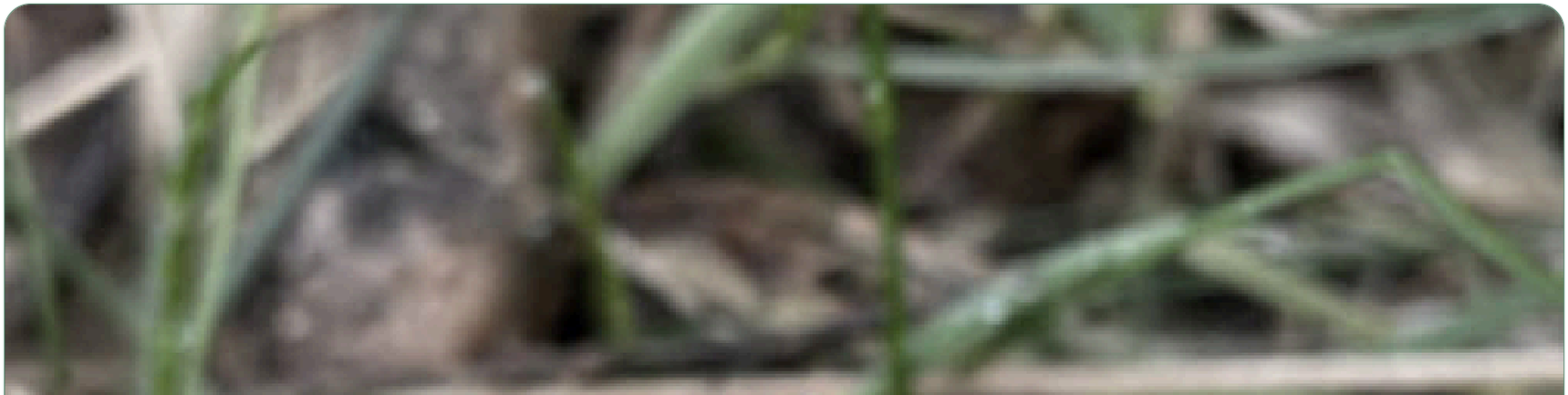
Slime mould

Hemitrichia decipiens

Hemitrichia decipiens (was Trichiida decipiens), sometimes referred to as Salmon-eggs, belongs to the taxonomic Order, Trichiida. A type of slime mould belonging to the Kingdom Protozoa. There are 660 historic records for the UK, and if the identification was confirmed as correct, it would be the 4th Shropshire record on NBN in the last 100 years.

Candelaria concolor

New Lichen species included *Candelaria concolor* a Candleflame Lichen and *Punctelia jeckeri* a Speckled Shield Lichen found side by side on the same branch, on Callow Hill. Both with less than ten historic Shropshire records on NBN. They are actually common species, though under recorded.



Ramalina fastigiata

A third new Lichen species *Ramalina fastigiata* a Fruticose Lichen was found on Earl's Hill. A possible first for us, but it is actaully quite a common species. Fruticose lichens form a coral-like structure that is very resilient to dry periods. They are often associated with winter forage for caribou, so keep your eyes peeled! Lichen may only grow a millimeter or two each year but some species can live for a thousand years!

Minute Pouncewort

Myriocoleopsis minutissima

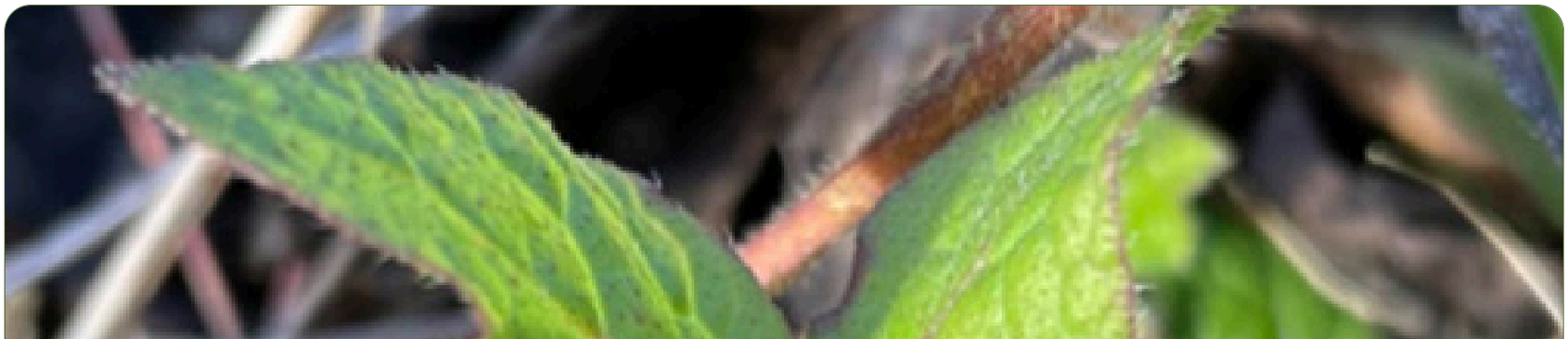
Myriocoleopsis minutissima Minute Pouncewort is a species of liverwort. These tiny plants, along with

mosses and hornworts, are known as bryophytes. They are early colonisers, and have outlived the dinosaurs by quite some distance! Minute Pouncewort is much more commonly found close to the sea in southern England, Cornwall and Wales. There are less than ten Shropshire records on NBN.

Scarlet Elfcup

Elachista regificella

Sarcoscypha austriaca var. austriaca Scarlet Elfcup. This winter seems to have been a good one for Elfcup fungus species. This specimen, recorded near Snailbeach Coppice, feeds off decaying hardwood like Hazel and Sycamore. You can tell Ruby and Scarlet Elfcups apart by looking at the hairs on the outside of the cup, though you may need a microscope.



Creeping Comfrey

Elachista regificella

Our first new vascular plant for 2024 was *Symphytum grandiflorum* Creeping Comfrey, a neophyte (plants introduced to the UK since 1492) which was introduced from the Caucuses in the late 1800s. Usually associate with garden escapes, this early flowering specimen was discovered in Nills Quarry. Comfrey is a great plant for early bees and butterflies.

Trentepohlia sp.

Algae and Bacteria species are difficult to identify and under recorded. This bright orange form of algae, caused by its strong carotenoid pigments, is actually common - keep an eye out for it on tree bark next time you are walking in the woods.

Cladonia ciliata

A reindeer moss species of branched lichen which forms large patches in heathland areas. This patch is located near the top of Pontesford Hill, growing on the exposed rock, alongside various species of moss.

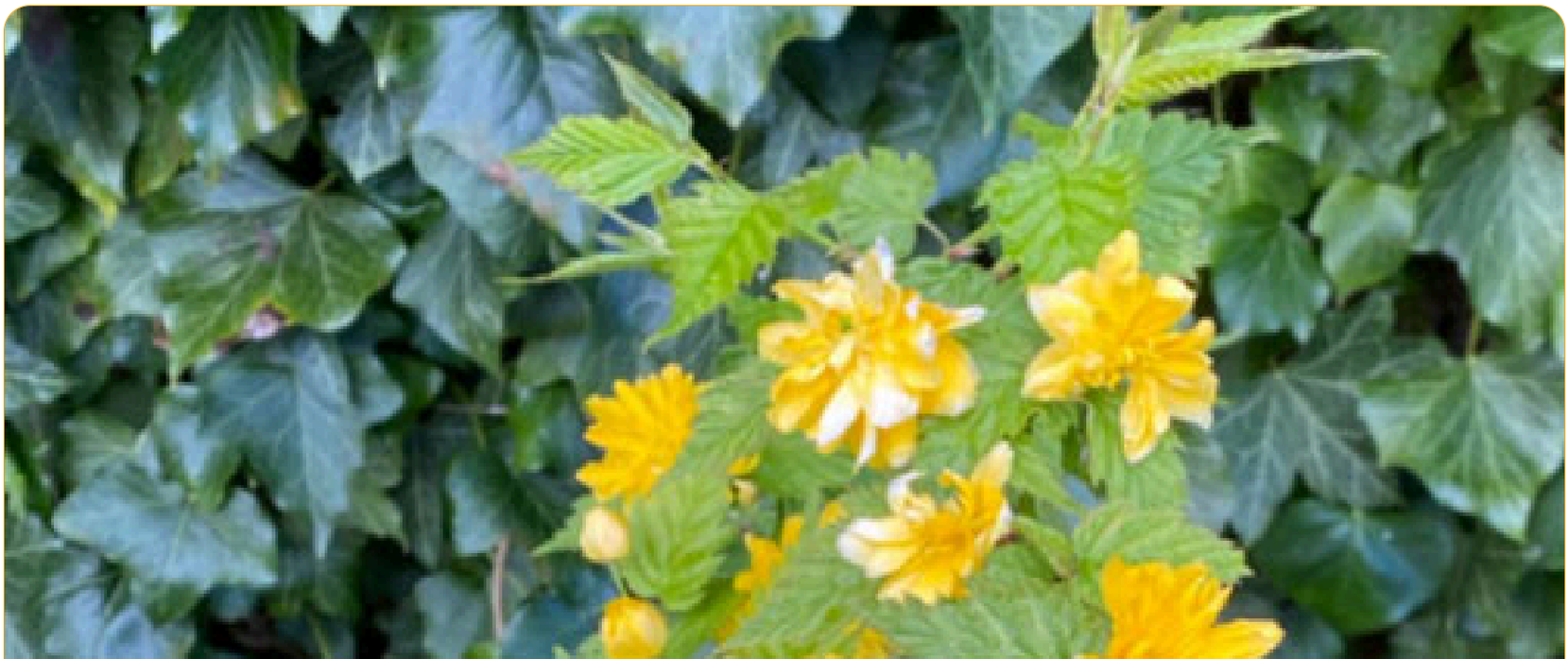
Tear Dropper

Cylindrobasidium laeve

Another fungi species that enjoys growing on dead deciduous wood. The name derives from the tear drop shaped spores.

Ambigolimax sp.

Impossible to reliably tell apart these rapidly spreading three-band slugs, without dissection. Although it was craftily eating my purple sprouting broccoli under the cover of darkness, I decided to leave it be.



Kerria japonica

This rose family plant, native to Asia, is not often recorded in the wild, and is usually associated with garden escapes. This one appears to have made its way out of a garden on Pontesbury Hill Road.

Pericoma sp.

This tiny moth fly is very distinctive, but incredibly difficult to identify the actual species from the 190 or so possible. They are often found near water, so a garden pond would be a good place to look.

Sometimes we find species that have been seen before in our area, but not for a good few years. To find a previous record of the species below, we have to go back at least 20 years!

Sweet Violet

Viola odorata

Last NBN record for our area 21 years ago.

White-legged Snake Millipede

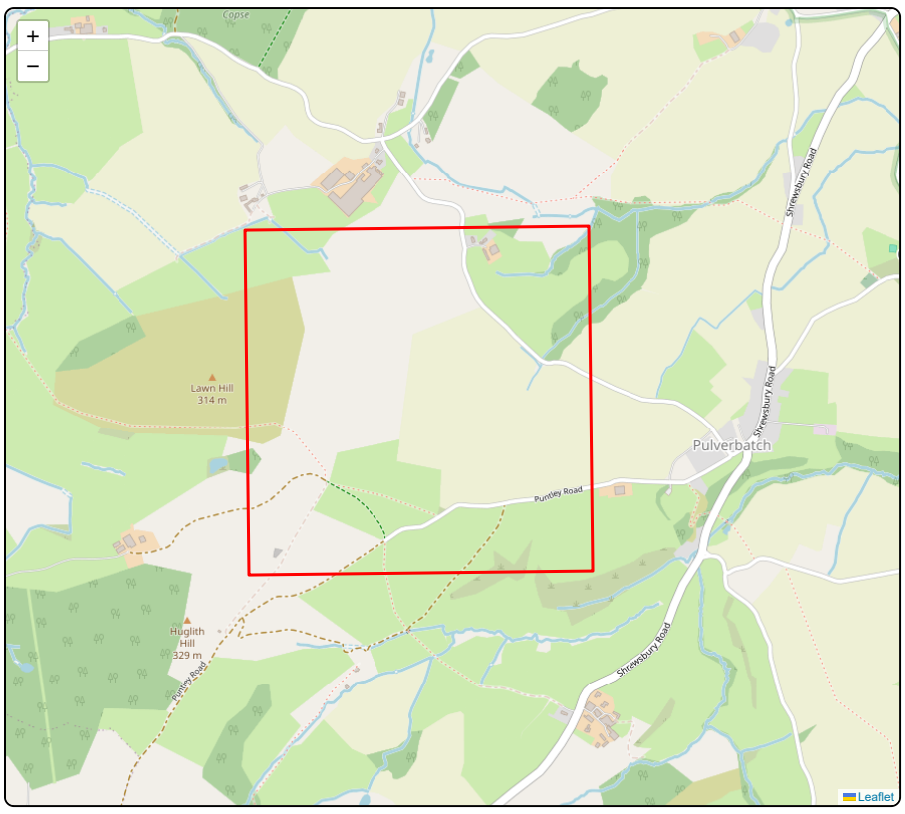
Tachypodoiulus niger

Last NBN record for our area 26 years ago.

Common Rough Woodlouse

Porcellio scaber

Last NBN record for our area 36 years ago.



Need Inspiration?

Survey square SJ4102 includes the old lane from Castle Pulverbatch to Huglith Hill, with plenty of footpaths and a bridleway to explore.

The land is a mix of agricultural, improved and unimproved grassland. We have no records so far this year, but it is definitely on my list of places to visit. In 2019 I found a nationally scarce *Cantharis obscura* soldier beetle in this monad. Over the years, 227 records have made their way to the NBN database for this square, relating to 198 different species. The most common species recorded in this square is *Coenagrion puella* Azure Damselfly.

Species found in our survey area, but only in this square, include:
Dioctria baumhaueri Stripe-legged Robberfly
Priocnemis perturbator - a spider wasp species

Who contributed

A big thank you to Katherine Edwards-White, Tony Legg, Dan Wrench, Julian Bromhead, Steve Oates, Laura Edwards-White, Andrew Law, Ronald Kinrade, Anne-Mari Gordon, Janet Walker, Martin George, Janet Radford, and Julian Livsey for submitting their records during January, February and March.

How to take part

To get involved in our 2024 iRecord Activity, visit: **https://irecord.org.uk** and search for Rea Valley in the Activities section. Hopefully we can inspire you to add your knowledge to our understanding of the Rea Valley. Your records will also feed into our iRecord Activity if you already use iNaturalist, iRecord Ladybirds, UKBMS or take part in various other national recording schemes.