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Chairman's report – 2009.

Geoff Oxford

This year's Chairman's report comes from a different keyboard. Pressure from other commitments led to Jon Traill stepping down, and me taking over, in early 2009. I'd like to take this opportunity to officially thank Jon for his hard work, and chairmanship, over the past few years and wish him a happy 'retirement'.

This year has seen some very well-attended indoor meetings, with the library at the Wildlife Trust HQ positively groaning at the seams at times. Increased interest in the work of the YMG is most gratifying, especially as many of the new faces we've welcomed during 2009 are young. Many thanks to Delphine for organising on such a stimulating programme of talks.

The year also saw an increase in our exposure to the general public. As well as a number of 'open' trapping sessions, we put on our usual very successful stand at the Dalby '...ology' bash and were also represented at the first ever Wild about Wood extravaganza staged at the Arboretum, Castle Howard. The latter was a two-day event and involved not only explaining the work of the YMG to visitors but putting on owl-pellet dissection workshops six times a day. The hands-on sessions were fully booked throughout and, we hope, helped to enthuse at least a few budding mammalogists. Certainly many youngsters went home clutching small mammal skulls, which must be a good sign. I'd like to thank everyone who helped with all YMG events during the year - your contributions of expertise, time and equipment are much appreciated.

The YMG continued to pursue several long-term projects. The mapping programme is still under way and John Ray, our recorder, is keen to have as many records submitted over the next year as possible. At the end of 2010 we hope to produce high density distribution maps for all the terrestrial mammals in North Yorkshire. So PLEASE send your records off to John (for contact details, see the back of this *Imprint*). Our monitoring of two re-introduced dormouse populations (near Helmsley and near West Tanfield) proceeded as usual. At the former site, for the

first time, no dormice or signs of their presence were found. The West Tanfield population continues to thrive.

Ann Hanson and Rob Masheder once again put in sterling efforts keeping our programme of field visits on the road. This involves much time and travelling, for example in setting mammal traps the night before an event, and we are most grateful for their hard work. We had a good number of walks in various venues, looking for field signs of mammals to aid the mapping programme. These are great fun and I encourage new members to take advantage of them in the coming year.

Finally, my sincere thanks to all those who have contributed articles to this edition of *Imprint*. I'd especially like to thank Mary Youngman, our editor, for once again putting it all together. As an ex-editor, I know of the mild panic towards the end of the year when all the material to hand is a list of the YMG Committee and a book review! This year material has apparently flowed in very satisfactorily, so thank you all. Mary has expressed a wish to step down as editor, so if anyone with word processing skills is interested, do talk to Mary to find out what is involved.



Woodmouse: photo by Ann Hanson

Polecat-ferrets in the Doncaster region.

Colin Howes

The Herculean work of the Vincent Wildlife Trust in monitoring the re-colonisation of the English counties by native polecats (Birks & Kitchener 1999 and Birks 2008), showed that polecats are on the north-western and south-western boundaries of Yorkshire. The following information may provide evidence that 'true polecats' may have reached the eastern parts of Southern Yorkshire (VC63).

In recent years I have come across odd ferret road casualties on the A638 Bawtry to Doncaster road in the area of the railway bridge opposite Kings Wood (SK69). I had always regarded these off-white or cream animals as either a) escapee domestic animals that had gone AWOL from local rabbit-control work, b) escapees from the 'Ferret Unit' at the nearby Bawtry RSPCA Centre (SK/643961) or c) may, as an outside possibility, represent a feral ferret population.

In 2006, I began to think that there may indeed be a feral polecat-ferret population working the rabbit warrens of the Sherwood Sandstone ridge in the Bawtry Forest area and Sherwood sands and gravels through the Finningley area and up to Hatfield Woodhouse. This was based on records 1 & 2 (see table 1) that were both reported as being dark and having face patterns like the wild polecat,

Last year I examined (but didn't collect or photograph!!!) two road casualty specimens on the A638. Both had black tails, legs, paws and were generally very dark and had the pale cheeks and black 'face mask' patterns. I can't say whether they had pale under-parts, cream chin-patches or whether the black of the face mask reached the nose. One (initially reported as a pine marten!) was opposite Kings Wood Bawtry (see record 6), the other at the entrance to the new Rossington Park & Ride (see record 7).

On 22nd March 2009, again on the A638, I collected record 8 from opposite the entrance to the Bawtry RSPCA Centre. This was a surprisingly dark specimen and though covered in oily roadside filth, seemed to have many of the true polecat characteristics.

I went into the adjacent RSPCA centre to enquire if they'd lost any specimens from their 'Ferret Unit' and was told the Unit was no longer in operation. However, in chatting to the staff, they were aware from their own observations and from reports by members of the public, of the frequency of polecat-ferret casualties on the A638 (at least 4 in 2008). One of the staff had also seen corpses on the A614 Finningley road. Since this was where one of my correspondents had seen a live specimen back in 2006, I returned home to Doncaster via the Finningley road and immediately came across two corpses (!!)

(see records 8 and 9). All three specimens collected that day were very foul, filthy and flattened and the car is currently not fit for human consumption! Also the street is now mysteriously full of 'Blow-flies'. I hosed the specimens down and have taken some preliminary photographs (see fig.1).

These are the post 2005 records (see table 1) plotted on a Dmap map of South Yorkshire (note the cluster in SK69).

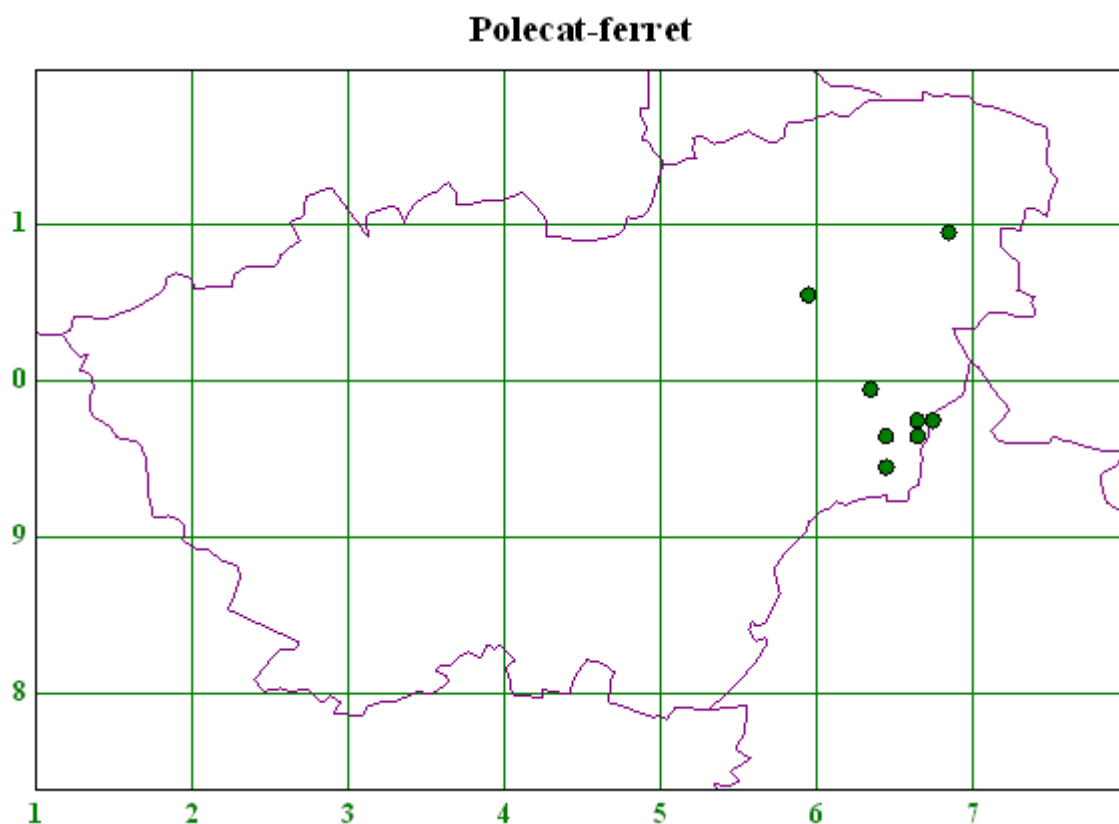


Table 1: Recent Polecat-ferret records from the Doncaster region.

Record No.	DATE of occurrence	NOTES	LOCALITY	GRID REF.	RECORDER
1	2006.07.10	Saw a polecat run across the A614 and into Crow Wood yesterday afternoon on my way home from work. time approx 5pm location was between Austerfield and Finningley village near Bancroft.	A614 Crow Wood , nr. Bancroft Farm, Finningley.	SK/6797	Richard Airey
2	2006.07.26	Seen crossing B road out of Hatfield Woodhouse.	Epworth Rd., Hatfield Woodhouse	SE/6809	Michael Jenkins
3	2007.10.03	Seen late at night Running along curb!	(Urban) Wheatley	SE/5905	Cliff Hampson
4	2008.--.--	RSPCA staff noted that members of the public had reported four different polecat-ferret RTA's during 2008	A638 from Rossington to Bawtry	SK/645967 to SK/648948	Bawtry RSPCA Centre Staff.
5	2008.--.--	RSPCA staff had seen 2 RTA's on the A614 Austerfield-Finningley Rd. during 2008	A614 Austerfield-Finningley Rd.	SK6696 to SK/6799	Bawtry RSPCA Centre Staff.
6	2008.05.09	RTA Adult very dark and masked Polecat-ferret.	A638 S. of railway bridge opposite Kings Wood SSI on the verge on the western side of the A638 just south of the railway bridge.	SK/648948	Russ. Newton & CAH
7	2008.08.--	RTA Adult very dark and masked Polecat-ferret.	A638 at entrance of Rossington Park & Ride	SK/630994	CAH & Cliff Hampson
8	2009.03.22	RTA Sub-adult very dark and masked Polecat-ferret. small yellow bib.	A638 Bawtry Rd. opposite Bawtry RSPCA Centre	SK/645967	CAH
9	2009.03.22	RTA Sub-adult very dark and masked Polecat-ferret. Spn. collected. Large yellow bib.	A614 by east side of road opposite Bancroft Farm , Finningley.	SK/669970	CAH
10	2009.03.22	RTA Sub-adult very dark and masked Polecat-ferret. Spn. Collected. Large yellow bib.	A614 on footpath by east side of road opposite Bancroft Farm , Finningley.	SK/666966	CAH



Fig 1. Specimen 10 **A614** opposite **Bancroft Farm**, Finningley (SK/666966).

[Editor note: this article is a copy of an email sent to me by Colin Howes and is reproduced here with his permission.]

Further Pine Marten Surveys in North East Yorkshire in 2009.

Derek Capes

I last reported my efforts to obtain evidence of pine marten presence in the northern part of the North York Moors in “Imprint” 2007. The work proved generally inconclusive due to a failure to obtain results from samples submitted to a DNA service provider, and the work was suspended.

Because the above work had raised intriguing questions centred around what animal was capable of carrying a large hens egg up or down a tree and away from the hair trap without leaving any trace of broken shell, there remained the need for more work. When the Vincent Wildlife Trust

then arranged with the Waterford Institute of Technology for DNA facilities for pine marten investigation, the way was open for further survey work to continue. This note describes the work carried out from March to November 2009.

Six traps using extended coil springs to grab hairs from any animal displacing the spring were set up in March, at sites on the North West part of the North York Moors, and were monitored at approximately monthly intervals excepting August. As before, cat or dog food together with a hens egg were used as bait. A description of the sites together with the results obtained is given below.

1) Ingleby Arncliffe (SE 455 997)

Set in mixed woodland below the prominent rocky outcrop at the north west corner of the North York moors, this site had given encouraging results in the first survey with 3 hairs being obtained, with the egg being taken on 2 of these occasions and 1 other time, in 13 visits. In the current work to date, there has been only 1 occasion, in May, where some disturbance ie, movement of the egg within the box has been found. The meat bait was usually taken both inside and outside the trap.

2) Scarth Nick (NZ 463 002)

A site not used before, it is set at higher levels in the same woodland as the first site.

The trap was placed in a conifer plantation above rocky crags and adjacent to mixed woodland below and open moorland beyond the plantation. Only the meat bait has been taken so far.

3) Clay Bank (NZ 577 034)

Not far from a site used in the earlier work, the trap site is in a conifer plantation above steep rocky slopes. The earlier results from the site were egg movement within the box in October, and the following month a single hair but with no disturbance to the egg. The only significant result this year was in July when the egg was moved in the box, the spring was detached from its hook but without obtaining a hair sample.

4) Below Botton Head, Greenhow Moor (NZ 599 022)

This was a new site for the survey. It is a remote site in thick conifer forest, adjacent to rough grass moorland and below rocky outcrops. In both June and July, the eggs were eaten in the box with the majority of the

shell intact and left remaining in the box. However, in neither case was the spring triggered, as was the case in November when the egg was taken without a trace of shell in the immediate vicinity of the trap.

5) Bank Foot (1), Ingleby Greenhow (NZ 599 052)

This site had not been used previously. It is on a steep hillside of mixed woodland including a good number of mature beech trees, but extensive forestry conifer felling operations had been carried out in recent years within a few hundred yards of the site. There are abundant natural rock exposures, as well as a long disused quarry with naturalised quarry spoil heaps close to hand. Only in September was there any indication of activity at the trap when the egg had been removed with a single small piece of shell left in the box, but the spring had not been triggered.

6) Bank Foot (2), (NZ 598 052)

This box is situated a little further down the hillside from the previous one. In May, a small number of fine hairs were obtained although neither baits were eaten. In September, the egg had been taken without trace but without triggering the spring, and in October the spring had been triggered but without taking a hair sample.

Comments

The lack of suitable denning and nesting sites is considered to be one factor affecting pine marten numbers in England, and after reading of their historical association with upland habitat (refs.1, 2), it was decided that for the current survey, sites which may offer rock crevices or underground shelter opportunities would be targeted. Furthermore, the area near to Ingleby Greenhow has relatively recent historical associations with pine martens (ref. 3).

In the earlier work, seven sites were selected based on their reasonable access, to permit monitoring in a limited time. They covered sites of coniferous, mixed and deciduous woodland. A total of 76 site visits yielded a total of 7 hair samples and on 8 occasions the egg had been taken from the trap. The current work has not yielded the same level of activity at this stage. To date, 42 site visits have been made which have resulted in just one hair sample and egg removal twice, and egg consumed in the box three times.

The precise identity of the animals still remains uncertain, because the result of the DNA on the hairs obtained came back as “definitely not pine marten”, which was not wholly unexpected. The eggshells left in the box were examined and showed the shell to be generally intact, but in each case, approximately halfway along the length of the eggs there was a 20-25mm wide section chewed away for about a half to two thirds of the circumference. The width of this absent section is not too far removed from the width of the skull of a stoat. The fact that they can get in and out of the box without triggering the spring suggests an animal smaller than that for which the trap was designed and successfully employed by the Vincent Wildlife Trust in Wales, also points to stoats. But carrying chicken eggs away without trace.....more evidence of that variant species – the Great Yorkshire Stoat perhaps!

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The Vincent Wildlife Trust Durham and North Yorkshire Pine Marten Surveys 2009

Derek Capes

A number of surveys by the Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) have been carried out over the last two years in different regions of England and Wales to establish the present status of the pine marten by searching for scats which were submitted for DNA testing.

I have obtained a summary of the results for the Durham and North Yorkshire surveys which were carried out in August this year. The Durham event was based on Hamsterly Forest, and that in Yorkshire covered a wide sweep of the wooded perimeter of the North York Moors

from Great Ayton west, then south as far as Wass and Ampleforth covering about a dozen locations.

Summary of Results

	Durham		North Yorkshire	
	No.	%	No.	%
No. of surveyors	19		24	
No. of scats found	44		52	
Fox	0	0	10	19
Pheasant	18	41	8	15
Dog	0	0	7	3
Bacteria	1	2	5	10
Waterfowl	0	0	2	4
Grouse	0	0	1	2
Corvus	0	0	1	2
Hedgehog	2	5	0	0
Stoat	1	2	0	0
Mixed	11	25	0	0
Not determined	11	25	18	35

The main conclusion to be drawn is that no evidence of pine marten presence was found at any of the sites surveyed when the work was being conducted. There are however, several queries and points of interest which arise, both from a comparison of the two localities and from the results within our own region. It is to be hoped that more details will be made available when the final results are published.

The VWT are intending to run a series of pine marten training workshops in the Spring of 2010, and 1 of the 4 is planned for North Yorkshire. The workshops will feature talks and displays on pine martens, and training in the necessary equipment used to detect and monitor them, including hair-tubes and den boxes.

Each workshop will be a one day event, at a weekend and free of charge. Final details have yet to be arranged at the time of writing, but to register an interest, contact the Vincent Wildlife Trust, Email elizabethcroose@vwt.org.uk or phone 01531 636441.

Do hedgehogs born to late litters gain weight faster than those born to early litters?

Toni Bunnell

In the world of hedgehog rehabilitation this is a question that has often been posed. Anecdotal evidence seemed to suggest that it might be true and the hypothesis was deemed to be worth testing.

There has been some deliberation about whether a late litter is a second litter born to the same female hedgehog or whether it results from the failure of an earlier pregnancy or death of an earlier litter (Reeve, 1994). For the purposes of this study this was not important as it was the possible difference in growth rates of young hedgehogs born at different times of the year that was under investigation.

Early litters are defined here as all young hedgehogs that arrived at the centre between June and the end of August in the same year, while late litters comprised all young hedgehogs that arrived between the beginning of September and the end of January in the following year.

Data were collected from all young hedgehogs that arrived at my rescue centre between 1998 and 2006 and that weighed no more than 275g on arrival. All animals were fed the same diet and allowed access to food and water at all times.



Young hedgehog being syringe-fed a milk-substitute

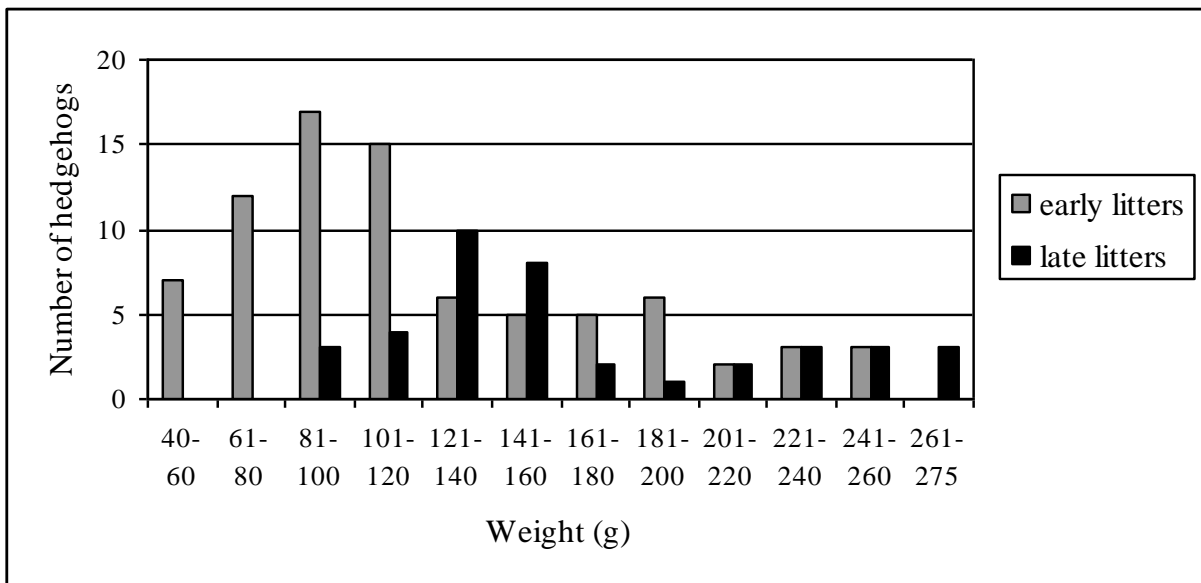


Figure 1. Weight of young hedgehogs from early and late litters on arrival at my sanctuary.

The data showed that there are indeed two distinct breeding periods in hedgehogs, the first in June and the second in October.

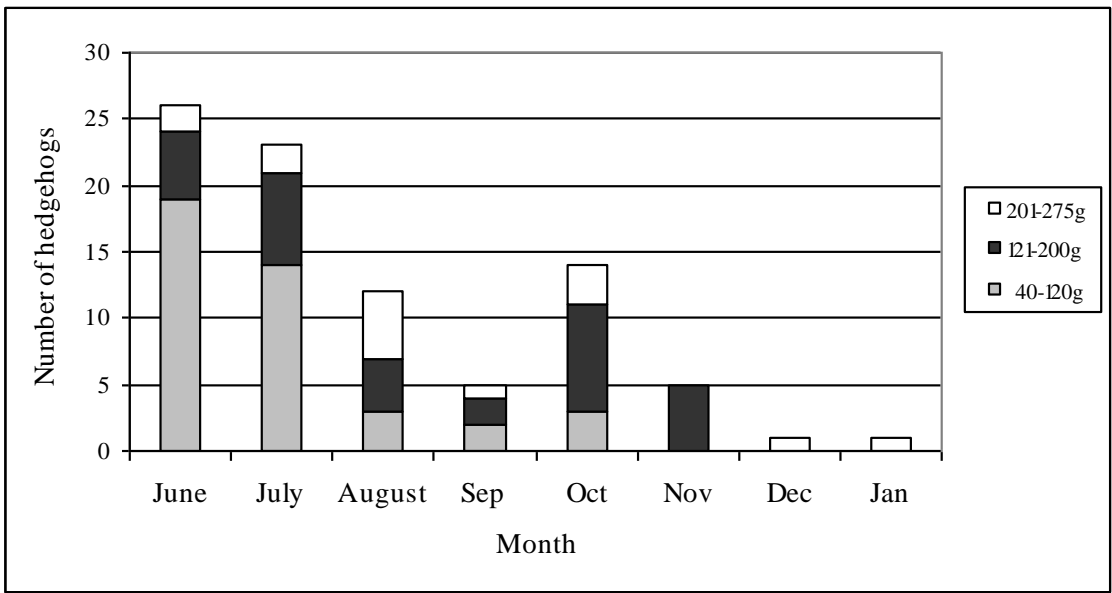


Figure 2. The number and weight of young hedgehogs on arrival, between 1998 and 2006.

Daily growth rates were determined but only data obtained from healthy animals were used in the analysis. This is because animals suffering ill health tend to have a reduced growth rate and I wanted to compare the rates between young from early and late litters without any effects caused by poor health status (Bunnell, 1998, 2001a, 2001b).

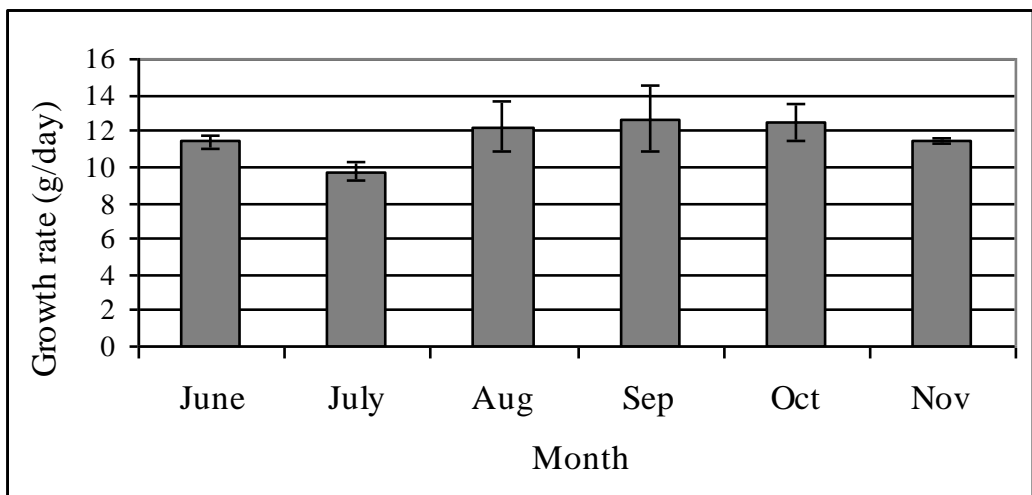


Figure 3. Mean growth rate from June until November, between 1998 and 2006.

Analysis of the growth rates of 87 healthy animals showed that the mean daily growth rate for early litters was 10.87g while for late litters it was 12.55g which was significantly greater ($0.05 > P > 0.01$). This means that young born to late litters take 51.8 days to reach a target weight of 650g compared with 59.8 days for those born to early litters. The ability of late litters to arrive at 650g eight days sooner than early litters will stand them in good stead for the winter months.

It has been suggested that second or late litters produced by hedgehogs have a poor chance of surviving the winter (Morris, 1984). As such it would be a decided advantage if young born to these late litters were able to gain weight at a faster rate than their early counterparts. This study showed that this is in fact the case.

As the hedgehog is a hibernating mammal its ability to gain sufficient weight to survive the winter is all-important. The weight generally recommended by hedgehog rescue centres in Britain, at which hedgehogs are thought to be most likely to survive hibernation, is 650g. The British Hedgehog Preservation Society gives 600g as the minimum weight and also saying that although hedgehogs weighing much less e.g. 450g will attempt to hibernate they will most likely die during hibernation.

In order to survive hibernation, in addition to achieving the recommended weight, juveniles need to obtain a satisfactory weight/size relationship. This relationship has been defined in terms of an index, which needs to be a minimum of 0.80, with an associated weight of at least 650 g, for an optimal chance of survival during the winter months (Bunnell, 2002). A hedgehog that arrived at my rescue centre weighing 495g did not reach a satisfactory weight/size relationship until it was over 850g. An adult male, he was named Pancake, due to being so thin and appearing to be almost flat when he stood up.



Emaciated, skeletal adult male hedgehog, weighing 495 g.



Healthy animal with rounded rear end

The time of year at which hedgehogs begin to hibernate is determined by factors such as decreasing day length and falling temperatures. Hedgehogs weighing 500g or more, that are found out and about in October when temperatures are generally mild, can be expected to have enough time to reach hibernating weight and should not be removed from the wild. As soon as the very cold weather begins it is important to over-winter those animals that are below 600g. The best way to help hedgehogs that are approaching hibernation is to build a hedgehog house and set up a feeding station with food and water in your garden.

These findings were originally published in *Lutra*, 2009, 52 (1): 15-22.
Website <http://www.zoogdiervereniging.nl/>
Toni Bunnell home page: <http://www.tonibunnell.co.uk>
Tales from the hedgehog sanctuary: <http://hedgehogsonline.blogspot.com/>

Acknowledgements:

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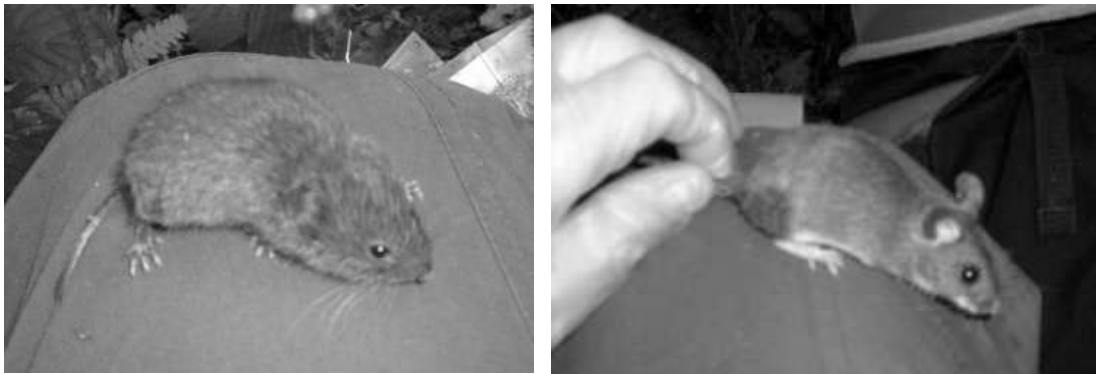
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The distribution and abundance of small mammals in two isolated woodlands in a National Nature Reserve and the possible effects of ground cover.

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As most members of the Yorkshire Mammal Group will be aware a large amount of studies have been conducted on various aspects of small mammal ecology in the UK and Europe over the past 70 years, including; population cycles, predator prey relationships, habitat selection, behaviour and genetics. In spite of this very little information is concerned with distribution and abundance of individual species and links to ground cover. However, some studies have reported the possible influence of ground cover on small mammal community briefly describing how some prefer thick cover and avoid open spaces. My study focused on describing the species assemblage of small mammals to provide baseline data in a site that had not been sampled. A secondary aim was to examine the possible role of ground cover on small mammal abundance.

The most common species of woodland small mammals are the bank vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*) and the wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) and were the main focus of my study.



Bank vole (left) and wood mouse (right)
Photos by Jonathan Spencer

Small mammals were sampled from May- July, 2008 in two woodlands; Mere Covert and Harper's Bank wood situated within the Rostherne Mere National Nature Reserve (N.N.R), Cheshire (National Grid Reference at centre of reserve SJ745840).

Total area of the site is 152 ha, which is then sub-divided into different habitat categories; woodlands, grasslands, reed beds and the actual lake itself. The total area of woodland is 23 ha and consists of six separate woods around the mere. Mere Covert is the largest wood of the two woods at 10.46 ha made up of oak (*Quercus* spp) and birch (*Betula pendula*). Harpers Bank Wood (8.82 ha) by contrast, contains sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and is situated to the west of the mere (Figure 1).

Ground cover in both woodlands consists of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), male fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) and rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) distributed throughout each of the sites with areas of bare ground and numerous fallen logs. Harper's Bank wood has particularly a low shrub layer but the ground cover was predominately the same species as those found in Mere Covert, with an abundance of an invasive species, Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens balsamifera*).

Traps were set out using a regular grid system. The grid consisted of five rows of six points, each point being ten metres apart (Gurnell and Flowerdew, 1990). A single trap provisioned with oats and blowfly pupae was placed at each point. Ten grids were placed in Mere Covert and six in Harper's Bank. The grid therefore enclosed an area of 0.2 hectares in size. As there are no records of small mammals at Rostherne I placed a number of grids in both of the study sites to maximise data collection. I placed ten grids in a transect from the southern - northern end of Mere Covert, equalling a total size of 1.8 ha. In Harper's Bank, however, I could only position six grids due to the nature of the landscape, but not in a transect, instead they were set in three sets of two, therefore sampling as much of the wood as possible (1.2 ha). In addition to that I collected a large amount of data on the surrounding environment, tree height, diameter, canopy cover, percentage of ground cover and species of percentage cover.

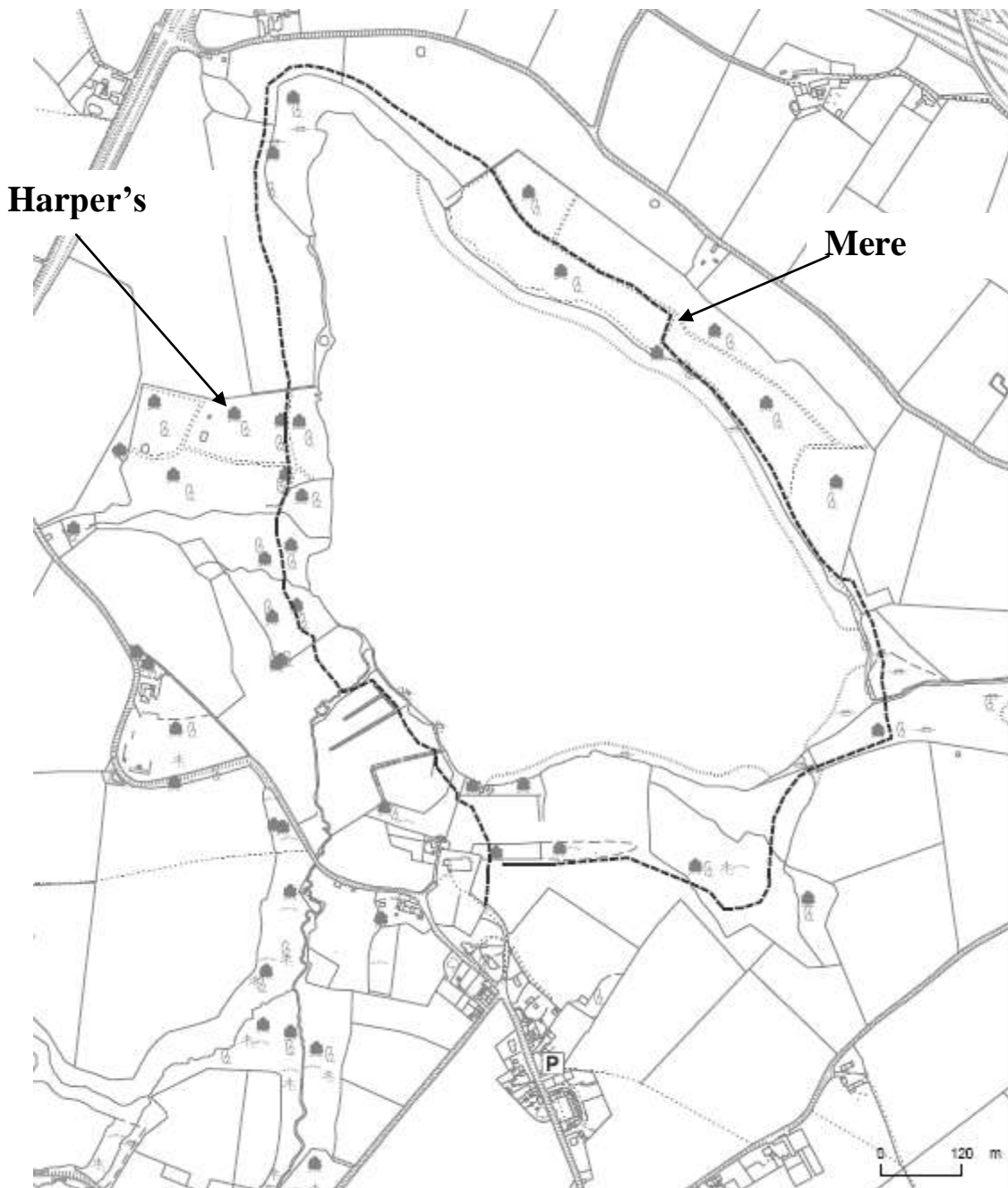


Figure 1 Map of Rostherne Mere National Nature Reserve Cheshire showing the location of the two woods sampled, Mere Covert and Harper's Bank. (Courtesy of Natural England).

There were four species of small mammals present in the two woodlands. These were the; wood mouse, bank vole, common shrew (*Sorex araneus*) and pygmy shrew (*Sorex minutus*). The wood mouse and bank vole were numerically more common in both woods, 51 bank voles and 60 wood mice were caught in Mere Covert and only 27 bank voles and 30 wood mice in Harpers bank, there were a small number of shrews captured at both of the sites with the pygmy shrew not captured in Harper's Bank (Figure 3).

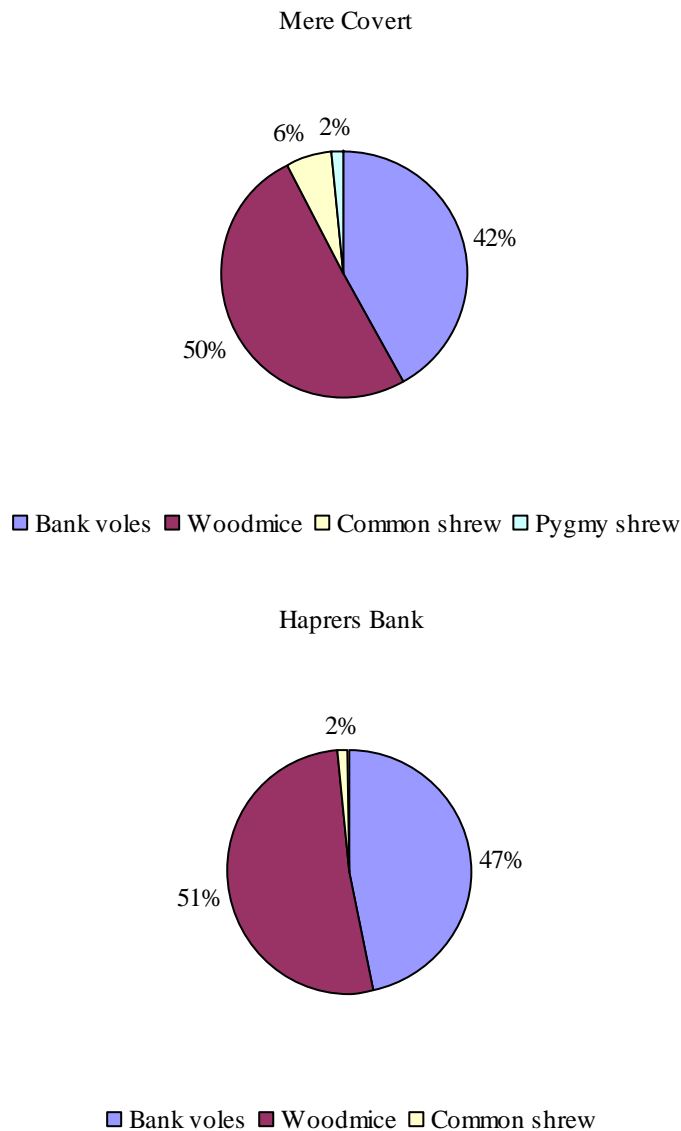


Figure 3 Numbers of small mammals expressed as percentages

Using multiple regression analysis I examined the habitat variables of canopy cover and ground cover and the numbers of bank voles and wood mice in each of the woods. Regression of bank voles in Mere Covert and Harper's Bank produced a significant result for the variable cover%, $F = 6.89, p = <0.000$ for the former and the latter $F = 2.68, p = <0.05$, I then analysed the different types of ground cover using multiple and stepwise regression with the number of wood mice and bank voles against the species of vegetation. I found that bank voles appeared to be linked to bramble in Mere Covert $t = 6.36, p 0.000$ and nettles in Harper's Bank = $5.75, p 0.000$, wood mice only showed an apparent relationship with rhododendron in Mere Covert = $5.75, p 0.000$

The results I gained showed a significant positive correlation between the number of bank voles and the presence of ground vegetation, especially with brambles as noted in past studies (Southern and Lowe, 1968; Smal and Fairley, 1982), as this is the basic requirement of habitat structure that governs numbers and abundance of bank voles (Brown, 1956), therefore the presence of ground cover will aid in their movements and also offer protection from predators (Southern and Lowe, 1968; Smal and Farley, 1982).

My results also indicated that wood mice did not appear to be linked to ground vegetation as they were frequently trapped away from areas of ground cover but in past studies it has been reported that there is a positive relationship with low levels of ground cover and so do not take advantage of cover unlike voles and shrews (Wilson *et al*, 1993).

In conclusion the small mammal species at Rostherne Mere is fairly typical of what I expected of a mixed deciduous woodland. Bank voles and wood mice were present in similar numbers in both woods and densities matched up to those stated in the literature for the time of year. However, the relative abundance was very dependent on the nature of the ground cover, as shown by the relationship between bank voles, brambles and nettles and it is possible that this could be applied to woodland management for predatory birds.

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An encounter with “woolly bears”.

Tony Lane

(East Yorkshire Bat Group)

In April 2009 I was directed to a bat roost by the Bat Conservation Trust Bat Helpline. The surveyor from a well know pest control business had carried out their routine pre-treatment check and the presence of recently voided bat droppings in the loft and a juvenile bat which had fallen victim to sticky-tape. The property concerned had a history of infestation by the variable carpet beetle (*Anthrenus verbasci*) with adult beetles accessing the living space. Control of the beetle usually involves cleaning away any affected materials and areas followed by insecticidal eradication treatment over at least two years for the cycle to be broken. Even then it is possible that fresh infestation can occur from external sources rather like the seasonal cluster fly (*Pollenia rudis*) with which bat workers are more familiar.

Having carried out roost visits on the behalf of the statutory conservation organisation since 1990 this was the first occasion I had encountered the creature. If the trend for climate warming continues it may well be more frequent in future.

Infestations are commonplace in the south of England, becoming more unusual as one goes further north and virtually unknown in Scotland. Female beetles lay up to 100 eggs in the spring on organic matter such as bird's nesting material and any dead chicks plus and woollen items present in the loft. The eggs hatch within a month and the larvae after undergoing six or more moults over a period of seven or eight months reach a length of 4 to 5mm by which time they attain their characteristic “woolly bear” appearance. The larvae have a bunch of special hairs at the tail that can be fanned out when disturbed and roll up into a golden ball. The larvae normally hibernate through the winter months and pupation occurs within the final larval skin. The adult beetle emerges in April and measures 1.5 to 0 4mm and has a strongly convex body like a ladybird beetle. The whole body has a pattern of yellow, black and whitish scales. On emergence the adult beetles seek the light and fly looking for light coloured flowers where they feed on nectar and pollen and find a mate

within a month. After mating the female enters a house where it restarts the life cycle.

The economic importance of the carpet beetle becomes apparent when the larvae respond positively to warmth permeating the loft and migrate downwards into living space where they infest carpets and cupboards and stored items. In the instance of my roost visit I found the presence of bird nests in the loft plus with the residents maintaining an unusually high ambient temperature in the living space (which was furnished with wall to wall woollen carpets) meant the *Anthrenus* larvae had found their ideal conditions.

Small mammal surveys with East Keswick Wildlife Trust.

Ann Hanson

Introduction

The village of East Keswick is located to the north-east of Leeds, near Harewood. East Keswick Wildlife Trust (a local group of wildlife enthusiasts) are currently carrying out a natural history survey of the parish in order to produce a book on the subject. As part of the survey, YMG were asked to carry out small mammal surveys at three sites within the parish in July 2009. The sites include Keswick Marsh, an area of wetland alongside Keswick Beck (SE 361441); Frank Shire's Quarry, a disused limestone quarry to the east of the village (SE 363447); and Ox Close Wood, an area of ancient woodland adjacent to the River Wharfe (SE 368465).

Methods

Forty-eight Longworth traps were placed in a variety of habitats at the three sites, baited with wheat, peanuts, sunflower seeds, carrots and blowfly pupae, and with a ball of hay for bedding.

Trap locations:

Site 1 – Keswick Marsh

1. Small pond surrounded by reed canary-grass and yellow iris (5 traps).
2. Wet woodland with large crack willow trees (5 traps).
3. Wet woodland (4 traps).
4. Tall fen with meadowsweet and marsh valerian (10 traps).

Site 2 – Frank Shire’s Quarry

1. Rough grassland with false oat grass and meadow cranesbill (10 traps).
2. Mature woodland on quarry edge (4 traps).
3. Fence line between limestone grassland and wooded quarry (10 traps).

Site 3 – Ox Close Wood

1. Limestone grassland and hawthorn scrub (7 traps).
2. Fence line between limestone grassland and woodland edge (10 traps).
3. Log pile alongside woodland ride (2 traps).
4. Brash pile alongside woodland ride (2 traps).
5. Log pile alongside woodland ride (2 traps).
6. Long grass between woodland ride and wood edge (14 traps).
7. Mature woodland on bank of River Wharfe (11 traps).

Traps were set on the evening of Friday 10 July at Keswick Marsh and Frank Shire’s Quarry, and checked on Saturday 11 July from 9.30am onwards. The traps were moved to Ox Close Wood and re-set on the evening of 11 July and checked on Sunday 12 July from 9.30am onwards.

Results

Summary of small mammals captured in East Keswick parish.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3
Wood mouse	3	8	2
Bank vole	1	1	3
Common shrew	2	0	0

Appendix I shows a comprehensive table of results for this trap.

Discussion and conclusions

Three different species of small mammal were caught at three sites in East Keswick parish, including wood mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), bank voles (*Clethrionomys glareolus*) and common shrews (*Sorex araneus*). The majority of captures were wood mice, which were found in a variety of habitats at all three sites, including wet woodland, fen, rough grassland, limestone grassland with scrub and a log pile. Common shrews were only caught in the tall fen at Keswick Marsh, whilst bank voles were caught in mature woodland in Ox Close Wood and in the woodland edge at Frank Shire's Quarry. Other mammals recorded during this survey include moles (*Talpa europaea*) at Keswick Marsh and a mink (*Mustela vison*) on the north bank of the River Wharfe opposite Ox Close Wood.

Thanks are due to the members of East Keswick Wildlife Trust for a really enjoyable weekend of mammal surveys, al fresco dining with a difference and coracle trips on the river! Thanks also to Rob Masheder and Mary Youngman of YMG for all their help.

Appendix I

Table of results: small mammal surveys in East Keswick parish, July 2009.

Weather: Friday night cool and dry. Saturday morning sunny, warm and dry. Saturday night heavy rain. Sunday morning sunny, warm and dry.

Site	Species	Sex M/F*	Age A/SA/J*	Weight (g)
11/07/09				
Keswick Marsh				
Wet woodland (2)	Bank vole	F	A	27.0
Wet woodland (3)	Wood mouse	M	SA	23.0
Tall fen (4)	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
	Wood mouse	M	A	22.0
	Wood mouse	M	A	21.0
	Common shrew	?	A	8.0

11/07/09				
Frank Shire's Quarry				
Rough grassland (1)	Wood mouse	M	A	22.0
	Wood mouse	F	J	16.0
	Wood mouse	M	A	18.0
	Wood mouse	M	A	20.0
	Wood mouse	M	A	25.0
	Wood mouse	M	SA	18.0
	Wood mouse	F	SA	18.0
Woodland edge (3)	Wood mouse	M	SA	19.0
	Bank vole	F	SA	18.0
12/07/09				
Ox Close Wood				
Grassland/scrub (1)	Wood mouse	F	J	13.0
Log pile (5)	Wood mouse **	?	SA	?
Mature woodland (7)	Bank vole	F	A	22.0
	Bank vole	M	SA	19.0
	Bank vole	F	SA	15.0

* M = male; F = female; A= adult; SA = subadult; J = juvenile

** Escaped during handling

A small mammal survey with the Studfold Community
Nature Group, Studfold Farm, Nidderdale.

Ann Hanson

Introduction

Studfold Community Nature Group are currently carrying out a study of the flora, fauna, archaeology and history of Studfold Farm, a hill farm in Nidderdale, North Yorkshire.

See www.communitynature.co.uk

The Yorkshire Mammal Group contributed to the project by carrying out a small mammal survey on the farm on Saturday 8 and Sunday 9 August 2009.

Studfold Farm is an upland farm with species-rich hay meadows, drystone walls, woodland and moorland. Grid reference SE 098732. The River Nidd flows through the farm and had several dry stretches at the time of the survey, where the river goes underground at times of low water flow.

Methods

Forty-eight Longworth traps were placed in a variety of habitats throughout the farm, baited with wheat, peanuts, sunflower seeds, carrots and blowfly pupae, and with a ball of hay for bedding.

Trap locations:

- 1 Long grass alongside a drystone wall with species-rich hay meadows on either side. NB: The meadows had recently been cut. (8 traps).
- 2 Long grass and nettles on a steep bank with mature trees, surrounded by semi-improved grassland (10 traps).
- 3 Banks of the River Nidd – river bed dry and banks shady with mature alder and hazel trees (5 traps).
- 4 Long grass on a steep bank adjacent to a newly created meadow (10 traps).
- 5 Banks of the River Nidd – river contains water and banks shady with mature alder and hazel trees (5 traps).
- 6 Rush bed alongside small stream in upland pasture (10 traps).

Traps were set on the evening of Saturday 8 August and checked on Sunday 9 August from 9.30am onwards.

Results

Summary of small mammals captured at Studfold Farm.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Site 6
Wood mouse	4	1	1	0	0	0
Bank vole	0	0	0	0	3	0
Common shrew	1	1	0	2	0	1

Appendix I shows a comprehensive table of results for this trap.

Discussion and conclusions

Three different species of small mammal were caught in a variety of habitats at Studfold Farm, including wood mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), bank voles (*Clethrionomys glareolus*) and common shrews (*Sorex araneus*). Wood mice were caught at three sites, but were most numerous alongside the drystone wall out in the fields. Wood mice are mainly nocturnal and are probably living inside the drystone wall during the day and coming out to forage in the meadows at night. Bank voles were only caught in the wooded area alongside the River Nidd, as their more diurnal habits may mean that they would not favour more open habitats. Common shrews were caught at four sites and were the only small mammal caught in the rush bed in the upland pasture at an altitude of about 250m. Common shrews are often recorded at higher altitudes than other small mammals and have even been recorded on open moorland. Other mammals recorded during this trapping session include moles (*Talpa europaea*) and rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*).

Thanks are due to Studfold Community Nature Group for helping with this survey, especially Nigel Heptinstall. Thanks also to Rob Masheder and Mary Youngman of the Yorkshire Mammal Group.

Appendix I

Table of results: small mammal survey at Studfold Farm, Nidderdale, August 2009.

Weather: Warm, dry and sunny.

Site	Species	Sex M/F*	Age A/SA/J*	Weight (g)
Drystone wall (1)	Wood mouse	F	A	27.0
	Wood mouse **	F	A	?
	Wood mouse	M	A	27.0
	Common shrew	?	A	9.0
	Wood mouse	M	A	24.0
Grassy bank (2)	Wood mouse	F	A	25.0
	Common shrew	?	A	9.0
Dry river bank (3)	Wood mouse	F	SA	21.0

Grassy bank (4)	Common shrew	?	A	9.0
	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
River bank (5)	Bank vole	F	SA	21.0
	Bank vole	M	A	23.0
	Bank vole	F	A	25.0
Upland rush bed (6)	Common shrew	?	A	8.0

* M = male; F = female; A= adult; SA = subadult; J = juvenile

** Escaped during handling

A small mammal survey at New Hall Farm, Ardsley, near Barnsley, with the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.

Ann Hanson

Introduction

New Hall Farm is located at Ardsley, near Barnsley, South Yorkshire, and is a mixed arable and grass farm. The farm has been in environmental stewardship for many years, initially with a Countryside Stewardship Scheme and more recently with a Higher Level Stewardship scheme. The schemes have included large amounts of hedgerow restoration and management, as well as woodland planting and meadow management, with additional buffer strips, wild bird seed mix and pollen and nectar mix on the arable land. Environmentally friendly land management such as this should be of great benefit to small mammals and also their predators, including barn owls, kestrels, stoats and weasels. The current survey was carried out in order to investigate the small mammals associated with some of the habitats located around the farm.

Methods

Forty-four Longworth traps were placed in a variety of habitats around the farm, baited with wheat, peanuts, sunflower seeds, carrots and blowfly pupae, and with a ball of hay for bedding.

Trap locations:

1. Grassy hedge bottom alongside bridle track (8 traps).
2. Grass/bramble hedge bottom alongside bridle track (19 traps).
3. Mature hedge with arable (cereal) on one side and wild bird mix on the other (7 traps).
4. Wet ditch with wide grass margin (cocksfoot and timothy) (10 traps).

Traps were set on the evening of Friday 4 September and checked on Saturday 5 September from 9.30am onwards.

Results

Summary of small mammals captured at New Hall Farm.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4
Wood mouse	3	0	3	0
Bank vole	3	6	1	1
Common shrew	0	0	0	1
Water shrew	0	0	0	1

Appendix I shows a comprehensive table of results for this trap.

Discussion and conclusions

Four different species of small mammal were caught at New Hall Farm, including several wood mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) and bank voles (*Clethrionomys glareolus*), one common shrew (*Sorex araneus*) and one water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*). Bank voles were recorded in all the habitats surveyed, with wood mice being found mainly in the habitats with slightly less ground cover, which would fit in with their mainly nocturnal habits. The long grass alongside the ditch yielded a common shrew and a very fine water shrew.

Thanks are due to Helen and David Rhodes of New Hall Farm and to Rob Masheder who helped with this survey.

Appendix I

Table of results: small mammal survey at New Hall Farm, Ardsley, September 2009.

Weather: Warm and dry.

Site	Species	Sex M/F*	Age A/SA/J*	Weight (g)
Grassy hedge (1)	Wood mouse	F	J	12.0
	Bank vole	M	SA	15.0
	Bank vole	F	A	21.0
	Wood mouse	F	A	19.0
	Wood mouse	F	A	21.0
	Bank vole	F	A	19.0
Grass/brambles (2)	Bank vole	F	A	18.0
	Bank vole	M	SA	15.0
	Bank vole	M	A	19.0
	Bank vole	F	SA	13.0
	Bank vole	F	A	16.0
	Bank vole	F	A	19.0
Mature hedge (3)	Wood mouse	F	J	12.0
	Wood mouse	F	A	23.0
	Bank vole	F	A	18.0
	Wood mouse	M	A	22.0
Ditch/grass (4)	Water shrew	?	A	13.0
	Common shrew	?	A	7.0
	Bank vole	F	A	15.0

* M = male; F = female; A= adult; SA = subadult; J = juvenile

A return to Norton Ings, near Malton, with Norton Watch Group.

The Dennis Aspinall Memorial Trap 2009

Ann Hanson

Introduction

This joint event with Norton Watch Group found us once again in an area of rough grassland and marsh alongside the River Derwent at Norton-on-Derwent, grid reference SE 794716. The site used to flood regularly, but the flood banks were increased in size a few years ago and this no longer happens. One side-effect of the flood banks is that the site no longer drains into the river as effectively as it used to and the area of ponds and tall fen habitats has increased in recent years. YMG carried out a survey on the site with Norton Watch Group in September 2006, when five different species of small mammals were recorded, including wood mice, bank voles, common shrews, water shrews and harvest mice.

Methods

Fifty Longworth traps were placed in a variety of habitats throughout the ings, baited with wheat, peanuts, sunflower seeds, carrots and blowfly pupae, and with a ball of hay for bedding.

Trap locations:

1. Old railway embankment, rough grass (10 traps).
2. Fen edge, reed sweet-grass (5 traps).
3. Fen with reed sweet-grass, tussock sedge and reed canary-grass (15 traps).
4. Fen dominated by reed sweet-grass (5 traps).
5. Rush bed (5 traps).
6. Long grass dominated by cocksfoot (5 traps).
7. Reed canary-grass clumps (5 traps).

Traps were set on the evening of Friday 9 October and checked on Saturday 10 October from 9.30am onwards.

Results

Summary of small mammals captured at Norton Ings.

	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Site 6	Site 7
Common shrew	1	2	1	0	0	2
Wood mouse	0	0	0	0	1	0
Bank vole	1	2	2	2	0	0
Field vole	0	1	0	1	0	0
Water shrew	0	0	0	0	0	1

Appendix I shows a comprehensive table of results for this trap.

Discussion and conclusions

Five different species of small mammal were caught at Norton Ings on this occasion, including several common shrews (*Sorex araneus*) and bank voles (*Clethrionomys glareolus*), two field voles (*Microtus agrestis*), one wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) and one water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*). Animals were found in several different habitats spread across the ings, with only the old railway embankment having no successful catches, possibly due to poor ground cover compared with the rest of the site. The field voles were a new small mammal record for the site. Unfortunately we caught no harvest mice on this occasion, but a water shrew at the last trap location was a welcome find. A couple of the common shrews once again had white ear tufts and we were also treated to a lovely pale ginger common shrew (another strange coat colour variation).

Thanks are due to Sue Holmes and Norton Watch Group and to Rob Masheder and Mary Youngman of YMG who helped with this survey.

Appendix I

Table of results: small mammal survey at Norton Ings, October 2009.

Weather: Rain overnight, followed by a warm, dry morning.

Site	Species	Sex M/F*	Age A/SA/J*	Weight (g)
Fen edge (2)	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
	Bank vole	F	A	17.0
Fen (3)	Bank vole	F	A	18.0
	Common shrew	?	A	9.0
	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
	Bank vole	M	SA	17.0
	Field vole	M	A	22.0
Fen (4)	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
	Bank vole	F	A	18.0
	Bank vole	F	A	25.0
Rush bed (5)	Bank vole	M	SA	13.0
	Bank vole	F	SA	14.0
	Field vole	M	SA	18.0
Long grass (6)	Wood mouse**	?	J	?
Reed canary-grass (7)	Water shrew	?	A	12.0
	Common shrew	?	A	9.0
	Common shrew	?	A	8.0

* M = male; F = female; A= adult; SA = subadult; J = juvenile

** Escaped during handling

Mammals of the Moors – a small mammal survey on Hatfield Moor, near Doncaster.

Ann Hanson

Introduction

In 2009 YMG were asked by Thorne and Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum to carry out a wildlife workshop on Hatfield Moor, near Doncaster, entitled Mammals of the Moors. The workshop included small mammal live-trapping on the moor, as well as an indoor mammal ID session and barn owl pellet analysis.

Hatfield Moor is a SSSI and forms part of the Humberhead Peatlands National Nature Reserve. Habitats on the moor include lowland heath, birch woodland and areas of lowland mire. Much of the area has suffered from peat extraction for horticulture and the moor has been de-vegetated and drained in recent decades. However, peat extraction has now largely ceased and the area is being allowed to re-wet and hopefully recover, although this could be a very long process. YMG previously carried out a small mammal survey on Lindholme Island, Hatfield Moor, in September 1996 with Doncaster Naturalists' Society and Lindholme Island Research Group (see Imprint No. 24, 1997), which yielded only wood mice! The survey site on this occasion is an area known as Poor Piece, which is located on the western edge of Hatfield Moor – grid reference SE 690040.

Methods

Fifty Longworth traps were placed in a variety of habitats across the moor, baited with wheat, peanuts, sunflower seeds, carrots and blowfly pupae, and with a ball of hay for bedding.

Trap locations:

1. Birch woodland with bracken (10 traps).
2. Heather moor/birch woodland interface (10 traps).
3. Heather moor with scattered pine trees (10 traps).
4. Open heather moor (10 traps).
5. Reedbed edge (10 traps).

Traps were set on the evening of Saturday 24 October and checked on Sunday 25 October from 9.30am onwards.

Results

Summary of small mammals captured on Poor Piece, Hatfield Moor.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5
Wood mouse	6	3	7	4	6
Common shrew	0	0	0	0	1

Appendix I shows a comprehensive table of results for this trap.

Discussion and conclusions

Once again, Poor Piece, like Lindholme Island in 1996, yielded predominantly wood mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) in all the habitats surveyed. However, a single common shrew (*Sorex araneus*) was captured in the reedbed edge just to break the mouse-induced monotony. It is interesting to note that the barn owl pellets analysed later that day, which were collected from the local owl population, also contained a fairly high proportion of wood mouse skulls, although they also revealed a fair number of field voles and other small mammals. It should also be noted that most of the wood mice captured were classed as sub-adult and were not in breeding condition, indicating a successful breeding season and a healthy population going into the winter.

Thanks are due to Helen Kirk of Thorne and Hatfield Moors Conservation Forum for organising the weekend workshop, to Rob Masheder for being my partner in crime and to all the workshop participants for remaining so positive when faced by yet another wood mouse...

Appendix I

Table of results: small mammal survey on Poor Piece, Hatfield Moor, October 2009.

Weather: Rain overnight, followed by a cool, breezy morning.

Site	Species	Sex M/F*	Age A/SA/J*	Weight (g)
Birch wood (1)	Wood mouse	M	SA	17.0
	Wood mouse	F	SA	18.0
	Wood mouse	M	SA	20.0
	Wood mouse	F	A	24.0
	Wood mouse	F	SA	18.0
	Wood mouse**	?	?	?
Heather/birch (2)	Wood mouse	F	SA	18.0
	Wood mouse	F	SA	17.0
	Wood mouse	M	SA	18.0
Heather/pine (3)	Wood mouse	F	SA	19.0
	Wood mouse	F	SA	21.0
	Wood mouse**	?	?	?
	Wood mouse	M	A	19.0
	Wood mouse	M	A	20.0
	Wood mouse**	?	?	?
Heather (4)	Wood mouse	F	SA	15.0
	Wood mouse	M	SA	15.0
	Wood mouse	F	SA	19.0
	Wood mouse	M	SA	20.0
Reedbed edge (5)	Common shrew	?	A	7.0
	Wood mouse**	F	SA	?
	Wood mouse	F	SA	17.0
	Wood mouse	F	SA	17.0
	Wood mouse	M	SA	16.0
	Wood mouse	F	SA	19.0
	Wood mouse	F	SA	15.0

* M = male; F = female; A= adult; SA = subadult; J = juvenile

** Escaped during handling

Wild About Wood Festival.

Sian Abbey



The Wild About Wood Festival took place in the arboretum at Castle Howard, near Malton on Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th September 2009. On Saturday some lovely late summer sunshine shone on the crowds and even the slightly more breezy weather on Sunday didn't put visitors off.

The YMG had a stall that displayed skulls, droppings, nests and footprints. There was also a constant stream of children and adults who came to dissect owl pellets to investigate the bird's diet to illustrate the importance of mammals in food webs.

Fun also came from other activities such as chainsaw sculpture, furniture-making, willow-weaving, clog-making, pond dipping, lichen hunting, coracle paddling and woodland wonder trails. Visitors could also see a wide range of traditional woodcrafts being demonstrated, including pole lathe turning and heavy horse logging.

Many thanks to Geoff Oxford for organising the mammal activities and to Gordon Woodroff, Mary Youngman and Naomi Fox for their help during the weekend. Thanks also to Copmanthorpe scout group for the loan of some tables.

For more information about the Arboretum Trust, visit www.kewatch.co.uk

Wheatland's Small Mammal Survey Report 2009. Friday 2nd - Saturday 3rd October.

Dave Tanner

Introduction

This was the fourth trapping session to be held at the woodland and it was held over one night with 45 traps laid out in groups of 3 and 4. The trees (mostly native to Britain), are becoming quite mature after 10yrs of growth and this is having a remarked effect on the ground vegetation. The restriction of light in many places has reduced the grass levels to almost nil. In the more open aspects and verges of the wood the grasses, plantains, thistles and nettles are abundant. With this in mind we were surprised at the result of the trap having tried to cover all types of habitat. Prior to the day there had been a month of practically no rainfall, but on the morning of the trapping it had been drizzling for around 6 hours. The other significant change from previous years is that a pair of barn owls took up residence in the owl nest box and successfully reared three young.

	Oct 2006	Aug 2007	Aug 2008	Oct 2009
Common shrew	4	0	0	0
Pygmy shrew	0	1	3	0
Bank vole	5	1	2	0
Short tail field vole	0	8	1	0
Wood mouse	15	10	3	12

A more in depth record of this can be found on the following pages along a map showing whereabouts in the woodland the various mammals were caught.

Methods

Forty-five Longworth traps were placed in a variety of habitats around the woodland, baited with blowfly pupae, crushed peanut, mixed seed, carrot and a ball of hay for bedding.

These were set out on Friday evening commencing at 6.30 pm and were inspected on Saturday morning at 8 am.

Conditions for the event can be found on the detailed report.

WHEATLAND'S SMALL MAMMAL SURVEY RECORDING SHEET

Date: Fri 2nd / Sat 3rd October 2009

Conditions: Previous days approx. 12°C Dry weather with intermittent sun, cloud and light winds. Drizzle on the morning of the traps being laid. Ground reasonably dry; Evening: cloud cover and winds strengthening.

45 traps laid down in groups of 3 or 4 over 14 sites. Baited with blow fly pupae, seed, carrot & hay

Site	Trap No.	Species
1 Corner plot near hedging /trees/nettles/Min grass	1 to 3	Empty
2 Glade within young trees/Long-grass/Plantain	4 to 6	Empty
3 Tussicky grass amid young small trees	7	Empty
	8	Woodmouse
	9	Empty
4 Woodpile/trash at base of Conifers. Little grass	10	Empty
	11	Empty
	12	Woodmouse
	13	Woodmouse
5 Open area / Long Grass / Plantain / Thistles	14	Empty
	15	Empty
	16	Woodmouse
	17	Woodmouse
6 Long grass / Plantain / Open aspect near trees	18	Woodmouse
	19	Woodmouse
	20	Woodmouse
7 By feeder station / Open between hedge & trees	21	Tripped / Empty
	22	Woodmouse
	23	Empty
	24	Empty
8 Short grass by path / trees	25 to 26	Empty
9 Strip between field edge and wood. Medium grass	27 to 29	Empty
10 Middle of meadow patch Open aspect / Long grass Thistles / Plantain	30 to 33	Empty
11 Medium grass / Thistles / Wood-pile / Tree edge	34	Woodmouse
	35	Empty
	36	Empty
12 Dense grass at edge of Wooded area	37 to 39	Empty
13 Short grass at base of medium trees Semi shade	40	Empty
	41	Woodmouse
	42	Empty
14 Short/medium grass at base of trees Semi shade	43	Empty
	44	Empty
	45	Woodmouse

No attempt at sexing No scales to weigh

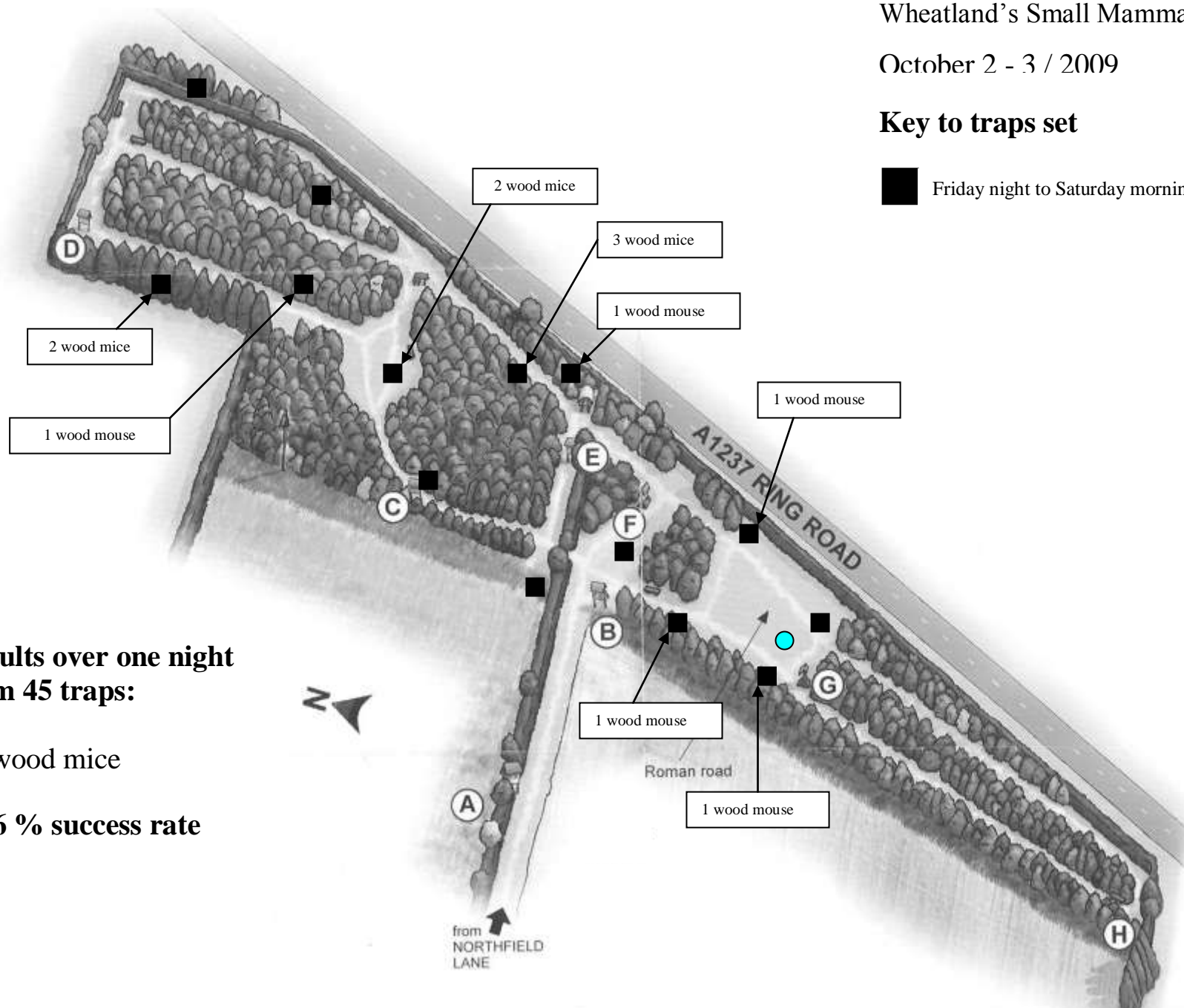
Success rate – 12 out of 45 = 26%

Wheatland's Small Mammal Survey

October 2 - 3 / 2009

Key to traps set

■ Friday night to Saturday morning



**Results over one night
from 45 traps:**

12 wood mice

= **26 % success rate**

The Original Dormouse Reintroduction – update for 2009.

Geoff Oxford

Last year marked the tenth anniversary of the first Yorkshire hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) release, in a wood near Helmsley. However, there has been a saddening decline in the numbers of dormice recorded in nest boxes during this period, and particularly so since 2005 (Oxford 2008). This trend has unfortunately continued into 2009 with no dormice, or any sign of them, found during the monthly May to October box checks. This is the first year in which evidence for dormice has been totally lacking.

Ironically, 2009 saw a major attempt to improve the habitat for dormice in the wood. Funded by the North York Moors National Park Authority, several areas were coppiced during mid-March in order to open up the wood and encourage the growth of additional dormouse food sources, such as bramble. By October, these areas had established a good ground flora (Figure 1). It is hoped that additional funding can be found to extend this work in 2010.



Figure 1. One of the newly-created glades showing the re-establishment of the open-ground flora.

This year also saw the deployment of 46 dormouse tubes (supplied by the PTES) in adjacent woodland and connecting hedgerows, with a view to determining whether mice had moved out of the release wood into the surrounding habitat. Tubes (Figures 2) were put up in mid-April and re-examined at the October box check. Tubes are not used as a regular monitoring device, but merely to gauge the presence or absence of dormice in an area. They are easier to put up than boxes and can be fixed to thinner branches. Dormice often use the tubes as feeding stations, leaving characteristically gnawed hazel nuts behind, or as temporary nesting sites. We found neither of these indications of dormouse presence in any of the tubes. There were droppings in some tubes but these may have been left by woodmice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) or bank voles (*Myodes glareolus*); some were certainly bird. Woodlice and millipedes were common occupants at the time of the survey.



Figure 2. Dormouse tube from the back (left) and the front (right). The numbered, wooded, L-shaped section can be slid out for inspection.

In terms of other box inhabitants, the numbers of nesting birds was lower than in the previous few years. May is the main nesting month with a few stragglers in June. The total numbers of nests (in c. 142 boxes) in 2007, 2008 and 2009 were, respectively, 39, 40 and 19. The drop between 2008 and 2009 was statistically significant ($\chi^2_{(1)} = 9.44$, $0.01 > P > 0.001$). It is not clear why this year was a poorer one for nesting. In September one box yielded a rather belligerent brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*).

So 2009 was a very disappointing year from the dormouse point of view and it is difficult not to be a little despondent about the fate of this re-introduction. However, we will carry on checking boxes and tubes for another year or two – and keep fingers crossed.

Acknowledgements:

Many thanks to Zoë Austin, Sal Hobbs, Cat Lutton and Meija Marsh (all from the Environment Department, University of York) for their invaluable help through the year. Roma Oxford kindly commented on a draft of the article.

Reference:

Oxford, G. S. (2008) The original dormouse re-introduction – tenth anniversary. *Imprint* **35**: 19-24.

West Tanfield Dormouse update 2009.

The West Tanfield dormouse boxes were checked as usual three times during 2009. A few dormice were found on each trip: 4 in June, 2 in August & 3 in October. These finds plus several probable dormouse nests indicate that the dormouse population still survives in the woods. Also this year the site was assessed for potential future habitat improvements to benefit the dispersal of the dormice, and nesting tubes were installed in nearby hedgerows to monitor any dispersal activity. These tubes were checked during the October visit. Some of the tubes contained small mammal droppings but also a couple of dead young rats and a dead vole.

Anyone interested in coming along next year to help check the boxes and tubes should contact either Ann ann.hanson@fwag.org.uk or Amy amy@wildstory.co.uk , - an opportunity to see a Yorkshire dormouse ‘in the fur’ (no guarantee given).

Mary Youngman

“Is there anyone out there?” – a report of YMG mammal recording walks 2009.

Ann Hanson (Expedition Leader) and *Rob Mashedor* (Navigator)

The Howardian Hills at Hovingham – 30th January 2009

First record of the day was that old favourite – mole hills on Pickering Knoll in Hovingham Park (SE 665755). A bit further along, at Horse Coppice, we found a fox scat on a molehill and some roe deer slots (SE 656752). As we walked further into the wood we found numerous badger footprints and a badger latrine (SE 654750). Also within the wood were grey squirrel nibbled hazel nuts and some impressive bark stripping to a cypressus tree, along with rabbit burrows and droppings. Coming out of Horse Coppice into the open fields at Wool Knoll we found a huge mole “castle”, more badger footprints and another fox scat on a mole hill (SE 653755).



Mole 'castle' at Hovingham: photo by Ann Hanson



Badger footprint Horse Coppice Hovingham: photo by Ann Hanson

Further along on a muddy bridle track near Hovingham Lodge we recorded rabbit droppings, mole hills on the verge, fox tracks and brown rat tracks (SE 653738). As we turned to head back towards Hovingham we found another flurry of records on a bridle track crossing a stream near Bank Wood, including fox footprints, rabbit droppings, mole hills and badger footprints (SE 657739). Old hazel coppice beside the track also revealed hazel nuts nibbled by wood mice, bank voles and grey squirrels. Finally, in South Wood, we recorded badger tracks and runs through the wood, as well as bank vole holes and cached nibbled cherry stones (SE 659741).

An alternative walk by Steve and Oliver Abbey (seriously bad mobile phone reception preventing a meeting part way round the main walk!) also recorded roe deer tracks in Lodge Hag (SE 667743), Wath Wood (SE 674738) and Fryton West Wood (SE 683737). A bridle track to the south of Hollin Hill Plantation revealed badger and brown rat footprints (SE 676734), and the final record for Steve and Oliver was an inside out rat (possibly a sign of badger activity at SE 671738) on the way back to Hovingham for a well earned visit to a tea-shop with the rest of the YMG!

Hoping for harvest mice at Seamer Carr, near Middlesbrough – 14th February 2009

With a smattering of snow on the ground, a small group of intrepid YMG members set off from Seamer village to look for mammal records. First records were rabbit and fox footprints in the snow close to the village (NZ 497103). Two brown hares were spotted out in the fields (NZ 489097 and NZ 490100), keeping their ears down to escape the wind chill. As we headed off into the arable fields which now make up most of Seamer Carr, we recorded mole hills (NZ 487101) and fox scats beside a wet ditch (NZ 485098).



Frozen dew pond River Leven: photo by Ann Hanson

As we walked through Middleton Wood alongside the River Leven we spotted a brown hare, some squirrel dreys and mole hills (NZ 462098). Then in a grass field adjacent to the river we recorded roe deer tracks in the snow, a few rabbits and yet more mole hills (NZ 460099). Whilst fighting our way along a track of welly-removing mud back to the road, we managed to spot some bank vole holes in the woodland edge (NZ 458095). At Foxton Bridge, over the River Leven, a possible mink scat and some tracks were found along a small tributary called Fanny Bell's Gill (NZ 456093), whilst a brown rat and some rabbits were spotted on the river bank (NZ 455093). Further along at Middleton Grange, mole hills were recorded in the ridge and furrow grassland on both sides of the road (NZ 469086 and NZ 470086). After a quick detour into bird watching, with a small flock of yellowhammers (NZ 473087) and half a dozen reed buntings (NZ 477097), the final mammal record of the day was a flurry of rabbits at Carr House Farm (NZ 490092).

A wander in the Wolds at Millington Wood – 28th March 2009

A slim turn-out on a slightly soggy morning, but an excellent start with a sighting of a roe deer in the car park at Millington Wood (SE 838532). Not to be deterred, we headed off into the woods and quickly found badger tracks and badger fur on a wire fence, a brown hare bolting off into the undergrowth, a squirrel drey and some mole hills (SE 837532). At the top end of the wood we spotted three brown hares out in the fields, with mole hills and another squirrel drey in the edge of the wood (SE 834538). Finally, as we walked back through the wood, we had some excellent views of a pair of roe deer (a three prong buck and a doe), who seemed to be unaware of our existence (SE 835535) and it had even stopped raining!

A frolic to Falling Foss in Sneaton Forest, North York Moors NP – 16th May 2009

Another slightly soggy start and a bit short on records as well, with some grey squirrel nibbled hazel nuts (NZ 888034) followed by mole hills and roe deer damage to a small oak tree near Old May Beck (NZ 888030). We did however discover an excellent tea shop at Falling Foss, providing us with a plethora of tea and scones whilst we sat out another bout of rain. The weather finally improved and a quick stop at Ramsdale Beck near Robin Hood's Bay revealed a badger latrine and badger tracks over the wall of the road bridge, as well as otter spraint on a rock in the beck (NZ 942038).



Badger latrine Ramsdale Beck: photo by Ann Hanson

An evening walk along the Wharfe at Bolton Percy – 4th June 2009

A lovely June evening and, as we headed down towards the River Wharfe, an excellent first record of an otter spraint on a stone adjacent to a bridge over a small beck in the Great Marsh (SE 536403). Further along, two roe deer were spotted in a field near the river (SE 534402), followed by mole hills on the floodbank (SE 531401). At this point we were somewhat distracted by the amazing flood meadows at Bolton Ings, with swathes of meadowsweet and great burnet, so darkness was falling as we finally recorded rabbits in Scotland Wood (SE 529404) before a welcome visit to a local hostelry in Bolton Percy!

The Golden Great Nut Hunt at Bolton Abbey – 22nd November 2009

As dormice were recorded as “locally common” in Bolton Wood at Bolton Abbey in Victorian times, we thought this might be a good location for our part in the Golden Great Nut Hunt of 2009. Unfortunately, a lot of the woodland has been planted with conifers in recent years and hazel is no longer abundant in the woods alongside the River Wharfe at Bolton Abbey. We did however manage to find a couple of areas of hazel and a few nibbled nuts, but none nibbled by dormice. Nuts at Cat Crag had been nibbled by grey squirrels, wood mice and bank voles (SE 075543), whilst nuts in Strid Wood had only been nibbled by grey squirrels (SE 064565). We did however discover that the Pavillion tea shop alongside the river is well worth a visit after a morning of vigorous nut hunting.

Many thanks to everyone who came on this year's walks and kept us company through rain, snow, welly-sucking mud and even occasional sunshine!

Taxonomic name changes for Water vole and American mink.

The taxonomic name for the water vole has changed to *Arvicola amphibius* (formerly *Arvicola terrestris*). The reason for the name change is that Linnaeus described these two species of water vole on the same page of the same work. Those two forms are now universally considered the same species. Since *A amphibius* and *A. terrestris* are literally tied in when they were named, priority is determined on the basis of the decision of the first reviewer. This reviewer used *A amphibius* to refer to both forms. Thus *A. amphibius* (Linnaeus 1758) has priority over *terrestris*.

There are two other species of water vole found in Europe: *A. scherman* – the montane water vole recently recognized as being a species separate from *amphibius* and *A. sapidus* – the southern water vole found in the Iberian Peninsula. *A amphibius* – the northern water vole is currently the only species recorded in the UK, however recent research has suggested that there may be two races within our species.

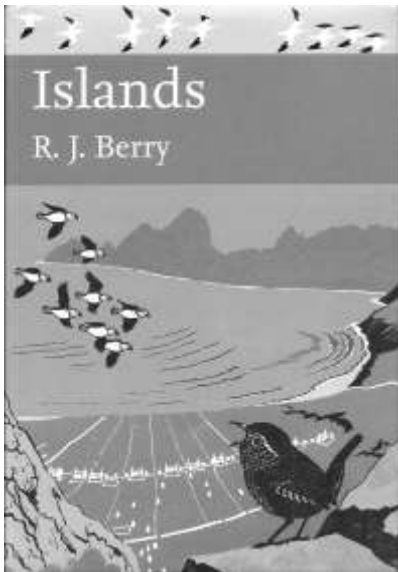
And finally the American mink has also had a name change, *Mustela vison* is now *Neovison vison*.

Mary Youngman



Greysquirrel & footprints in snow, Strensall. photo by Mary Youngman

Book reviews.



Islands (New Naturalist 109) by R.J. Berry

Collins 2009.

ISBN 978-0-00-726737 £50 hbk

ISBN 978-0-00-726738 £20 pbk

The New Naturalist books were the brainchild of William Collins, managing director of the family publishing business. As long ago as 1943, during World War II, Collins decided he needed a team of distinguished naturalists to draw up a list of titles and find the right authors for them so as to ensure the highest scientific and literary standards. This has proved to be a publishing phenomenon.

It says much for the success of the series that after all these years titles are still being added: Islands (NN 109) by R.J. ‘Sam’ Berry is one of the latest. Sam was Professor of Genetics at University College, London. He is a well established NN author having written such volumes as: Inheritance and Natural History (1977); The Natural History of Shetland (1980) with Laughton Johnston and The Natural History of Orkney (1985).

Islands, his fourth book, draws together studies on these and many other islands. Berry’s island research began with studying moths in 1959 and then a 10 year study of House Mice on Stokolm followed by more island research. There is little doubt that the author has been drawn to the excitement and magic of islands: “ islands have an ethos of their own but the infection of ‘islomania’ has never completely disappeared.” Nonetheless, this is a huge subject to cover in one volume, so inevitably some islands receive much more attention than others.

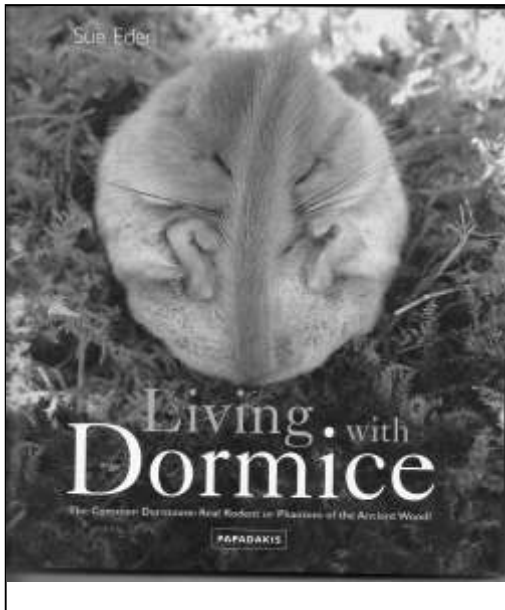
What constitutes an island and how they are formed make interesting opening chapters. Another, on island pressures, describes how island species have to 'make do' with a niche different to their normal one and that islands tend to have fewer species than mainlands. There is also a change in size of island mammal species when compared with their mainland relatives; apart from rodents they tend to be smaller than their counterparts. Island life brings with it an ecological frailty, 75% of all known extinctions have occurred on islands. Moreover, island biota are far more vulnerable than mainland ones, particularly to invasions by predators and competitors. Globally, islands have suffered enormously by introductions. The worst culprits are four rodent species: the ship or black rat, the common or brown rat, the house mouse and the Pacific rat (the last was intentionally spread to many Pacific islands). While feral goats although being a major pest on many oceanic islands do not seem to cause significant damage on British islands. Mink, on the other hand, have proved highly destructive on the Outer Hebrides and hedgehogs pose a serious threat to ground-nesting birds.

What are the consequences of life on islands? The key questions look comparatively simple; how and when did the inhabitants of a particular island get there? Are they just managing to hang on or are they are a significant part of the biota. Mammologists will find that these factors have been most studied in small mammals. Often island populations of small mammals (eg., rodents) show an increase in average size; frequently they have higher and more stable densities than on mainlands; they may show behavioural differences. These topics are well covered and lead to the theory of island biogeography and genetics. The differentiation of British and Irish island forms of field mice and house mice receive comprehensive treatment based on the author's own research.

Some prominent islands receive detailed attention. However, in the Shetland section otters hardly get a mention which is most surprising as the Shetland otter population was rigorously studied and has provided a baseline to our present understanding of otter ecology.

The final chapters: *Island Naturalists* and *Facts, Fancies and Fragilities* make an interesting conclusion to a worthy addition to the 'New Naturalist phenomenon.'

Gordon L. Woodroffe



**Living with Dormice
by Sue Eden (2009).**

**Papadakis Publishers,
Winterbourne, Berks.
ISBN 978 1901092 790.
Price: £14.99.**

The author, Sue Eden, is a plant taxonomist by training but became fascinated by dormice when she moved to West Bexington, Dorset in 1988. She and her husband, Roy, discovered that they were sharing their garden with hazel dormice, despite the fact that it seemed totally unsuitable without a hazel in sight. Thus began a long-term study of the species, not only in the coastal, blackthorn scrub in their garden, but also at a number of other sites nearby exhibiting more ‘traditional’ dormouse habitats. This delightful, and beautiful book summarises their results and conclusions.

Sue’s real purpose behind ‘... yet another publication ...’ on dormice is to draw attention to the shortcomings she perceives in the information upon which laws and conservation efforts on dormice are based. Specifically, she argues that (a) their apparent rarity is an illusion and a result of imperfect, and biased, survey methods, and (b), the habitat in which they thrive, and to which conservation efforts aspire, has been drawn much too narrowly. To give a flavour, with regards to their rarity and their historical decline in Britain, she suggests that traditional country crafts, such as hedge laying and coppicing, which brought people into contact with dormice, have also declined, and that there might be a connection. She also thinks that all survey methods are flawed to some extent. Searching for characteristically nibbled hazel nuts is not always successful even in habitats where dormice are known to occur and, of course, not all dormouse populations are associated with hazel. Overall, this book is highly controversial and, as such, satisfyingly thought-provoking. Sue disagrees with almost everything that has emerged from the Pat Morris and

Paul Bright group at Royal Holloway College. For example, she questions the conduct of, and rationale behind, the Great Nut Hunts, and the use of nest boxes to monitor dormouse populations and their numerical trajectories, the idealised dormouse habitat conservationists and land managers should aim to recreate, and the animals' reliance on hazel nuts to fatten up on prior to hibernation. Maybe she is right. My worry is that her contrary data almost all derive from West Dorset, a stronghold for dormice in Britain, yet her conclusions are extrapolated to dormouse populations everywhere.

Now to the book itself. After a foreword by Chris Perrins and a brief introduction, the text consists of five main sections: The common dormouse (a very nice summary of basic dormouse biology), Surveying for dormice, Other studies of dormice in Britain, Conclusions and an Appendix. The latter details the author's study sites in West Dorset together with a good bibliography, explanation of footnotes and acknowledgements. The layout is excellent and draws the reader in with short sub-sections interspersed with wonderful photographs, mostly by the author. The standard of production and proofreading is exceptional. Overall, this is a sound, extremely well written introduction to the hazel dormice in Britain, and very good value.

Geoff Oxford