E. europaeus eradicated or hedgehog stamped out.

Ken Burden, Oak Cottage, 9, Primrose Vale, Knottingley.

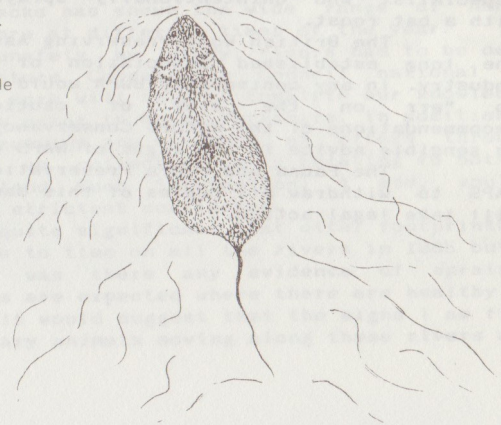
On the evening of the 14th November 1986, the dog owned by a family living in Ackworth, West Yorkshire, began to bark for no apparent reason. The date being what it was and, fearing mischief makers were at work, the lady of the house ran barefoot outside to investigate. Leaping from the path onto the lawn, a drop of almost a foot, the woman landed fair and square on an unfortunate hedgehog (Erinaceus europaeus). The beast died almost immediately and the woman, nursing a badly punctured foot which showed signs of going septic, had to attend hospital the next morning.

Microtine Dynamics

Population dynamics of voles and lemmings (subfamily Microtinae) is the subject of a feature article in New Scientist 10th July 1986 issue. Gipps, Alibhai, Gurnell and Krebs discuss cyclic dynamics and possible regulatory mechanisms.

In a review of work since Charles Elton's book Voles, Mice and Lemmings : Problems in Population Dynamics written in 1942, main influencing factors are examined. They conclude that food supply, predation, social behaviour and genetics all play important roles when trying to explain population ecology, but dismiss the 'multifactor model' devised by Nils Christian Stenseth and colleagues, because "while we acknowledge nature is rarely as simple as we might like, we fear that this current popular model is as operationally hazardous as it is intellectually satisfying." They argue that such a model cannot be tested experimentally and that this is the only way forward. They feel that whilst disunity of research has led to "healthy differences in opinion and to stimulating debate" - it is counter-productive. The bank vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*) is nominated as an ideal candidate for research and they are planning a co-operative European programme of parallel research into its population ecology. Let's hope these concerted efforts will help to unravel the facts and myths of vole and lemming population "plagues and crashes".

ED.



Water Vole

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