Derbyshire Mammal Group News

Autumn 2006 (Issue 8)

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Annual Membership £5

The Derbyshire Mammal Group is affiliated to The Mammal Society

In this issue:

The Derbyshire Mammal Atlas Project

In 2006 the Derbyshire Mammal Group, in partnership with the Sorby Mammal Group and the Derbyshire Biological Records Centre, is launching a Mammal Atlas Project. The aim of this project is to undertake a large-scale, comprehensive survey of the status and distribution of Derbyshire's mammals, and to bring together the results into a new 'Mammal Atlas of Derbyshire'.

We are hoping to involve as many people as possible in the project so why not become a mammal detective and help with the survey? You can take part in a number of different ways, including:

- Taking part in events such as 'nut hunts' and owl pellet analysis sessions;
- Letting us know about any mammals you see when you are out and about by filling in a Mammal Recording form;
- Sending us any records you have of mammals dating back to 1990.

To find out more about the project and how you can get involved, please visit the Derbyshire Mammal Group website at: http://www.derbyshiremammalgroup.com

or contact Anna Evans (e-mail benanna@adventures.fsworld.co.uk)

or Derek Whiteley, Beech Cottage, Wardlow, Derbyshire SK17 8SY.

Harvest Mouse Surveys in Derbyshire

Anna Evans

Background

Derbyshire's smallest rodent, the harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*), is also one of the county's least known mammals. Although a number of different methods can be utilised to survey for these tiny creatures, many of these methods have limitations. For example:

- Live sightings are rare as they are small and largely nocturnal.
- Live-trapping can be difficult as they spend much of their time above ground and due to their light weight, they may not trip traps unless they have been set very lightly.
- Hairs trapped in hair tubes can be easily identified as coming from a mouse, but it is much more difficult to identify which particular species of mouse they come from.
- Droppings and tracks, if they can be found, can also be difficult to distinguish from other small mammal species, especially for the amateur!
- Remains can be found in owl pellets, however traditionally they constitute a very small percentage of the total animal remains found in pellets.

Searching for abandoned summer nests is arguably the best way to survey for harvest mice presence at a site, as the harvest mouse is the only British mouse to build nests of woven grass well above ground. Looking for nests also requires less effort than live trapping the animals themselves and allows a number of sites to be surveyed in one day.

Harvest mouse nest
by Laura Berkeley

The Sheffield-based Sorby Natural History Society have undertaken harvest mouse surveys over a number of years in the north east of the county, with excellent results. These surveys have primarily been winter-based surveys looking for abandoned summer nests. As well as the obvious advantages of this survey method which were highlighted above, there are further advantages to undertaking surveys in the winter. In particular, by winter breeding is over and the mice have usually abandoned the stalk zone, so disturbance to them is minimised. Furthermore, surrounding vegetation dies back in the winter, meaning that the nests are usually easier to spot.

However despite the efforts of Sorby and others, there is still a general lack of information about the distribution & status of harvest mice in Derbyshire as a whole. As a result, Derbyshire Mammal Group, helped by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust volunteers, have been working over the past couple of years to increase information on the harvest mouse in Derbyshire.

The Surveys

The actual method of searching for abandoned summer nests involves nothing more scientific than delving around in clumps of suitable vegetation! – in particular areas and sites containing stiff-leaved plants. These include tussocky grasses such as cocksfoot and tufted hair grass, reed canary grass and common reed.

The height of the nest above the ground depends on the supporting vegetation. If the nest is built in reeds or cereals, for example reed canary-grass, they will tend to be built about halfway up the leafy stems and could be anything from 30cm to over a metre above ground level. If the nest is built in grasses which form tussocks of leaves, for example cocksfoot or tufted hair grass, the nest is usually located on top of the tussock between the flowering stems, or occasionally under the overhanging leaves of the tussock. In this case, the nest may only be about 10cm above the ground. Care is needed not to confuse field vole nests with harvest mouse nests. Luckily, however, they can be easily distinguished as field vole nests sit directly on the ground and are bigger than harvest mouse nests. They are also looser, being constructed from shredded pieces of grass and are not attached to the stalks of the vegetation.

Surveys undertaken so far by members of the Derbyshire Mammal Group have taken place in a range of locations across the centre, east and south of the county, particularly in areas of rough grassland and wetlands – with few records there is no shortage of areas to target!!

The Results

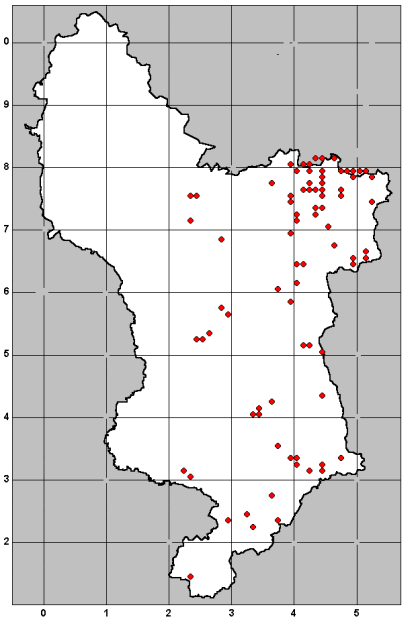
So what have we found out so far? The answer is lots!

The results show us that Harvest Mice appear to be much more widely distributed than previously thought,

with many new sites having been discovered over the past couple of years. These include:

- Severn Trent Water sites at Carsington Water, Ogston Reservoir and Foremark Reservoir
- Elvaston Castle Country Park
- Many sites along the Erewash Valley, in the east of the county
- On the Chatsworth Estate
- In former gravel extraction sites along the Trent Valley
- Within the National Forest in South Derbyshire.

However, they are not only rural dwellers, with recent populations having been discovered in Derby City, at Allestree Park and along the River Derwent Cycle track. Map 1 below shows the current knowledge of harvest mouse distribution across Derbyshire:



Map 1: Harvest Mouse records as of February 2006

Includes datasets from Sorby Mammal Group, Derbyshire Mammal Group, DBRC and DWT.

DMAP software provided by Alan Morton.

Each dot represents a 1km square in which harvest mouse has been recorded.

The results of surveys so far also indicate that:

- It seems certain that the species has previously been under-recorded in the County.
- Populations appear to be fairly small at most sites, although results at Ogston Reservoir in 2005 suggested a larger population than had been seen elsewhere.
- Favoured nest building species include cocksfoot grass, reed canary grass and tufted hair grass.

What is equally clear is that there is still a lot of work to be done in order to obtain a good picture of the status and distribution of the harvest mouse in Derbyshire. There can be no doubt that there are more sites out there waiting to be discovered whilst long term monitoring at known sites may provide improved information on populations and population dynamics.

Further information on the harvest mouse, as well as electronic copies of the survey handbook developed by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and survey form can be found on the DMG website. Don't forget, although you sometimes have to be patient (they aren't all easily found) its not difficult to go out and look for harvest mouse nests so I'd encourage you all to get looking! If anyone finds any nests or has any old harvest mouse records please let me know on benanna@adventures.fsworld.co.uk.

Alternatively, further DMG surveys are planned for next winter (see the 2006 DMG programme for details if you are interested in getting involved). I'm also looking to build up a list of suitable sites for survey so if you come across any potential sites in the meantime please let me know.

Photo by Anna Evans

This is the second harvest mouse article by Anna. "Introducing the Harvest Mouse" may be found on pages 8 and 9 of the Spring 2006 (Issue 7) edition of DMG News (ed).

"Of Birds and Men" Quiz

A written quiz sheet is now on sale raising funds for the Derby Local Group of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It features a mix of cryptic clues and puzzles and there are general knowledge questions on sport, television, music etc with answers referring to birds.

The closing date for entries is Saturday January 6th 2007. To obtain a copy send SAE and cheque for £1 payable to "RSPB" to Bird Quiz, 12 Chertsey Road, Mickleover, Derby DE3 0RA

Brown Hare Census 2006

Debbie Court

Brown Hares
by David Hands
(DWT)

Five intrepid members of DMG took part in the Brown hare census around Carsington on 5th May 2006. Only 3 brown hares were spotted this year on the eastern side of the reservoir. Other mammals recorded included rabbits, a badger sett and molehills.

Thanks to those who took part.

Far East - Norfolk!

Jo Bissell

When you think of Norfolk what comes into your mind? Windmills? Bitterns? Rivers? Elephants! OK, so elephants aren't a normal sight in Norfolk but that's what our DMG outing promised – Elephants and Chinese Water Deer.

On Saturday 6th May 2006, a warm but cloudy day, 8 DMG members met with Nigel Larkin, the curator of geology for Norfolk Museums, at Gressenhall Rural Life Museum.

Nigel took us behind the scenes to a workshop. In there we were greeted by this enormous skull which had one enormous tusk still attached – the West Runton Elephant. This mammal was huge. When it was roaming around Norfolk (and the rest of Europe) it would have weighed 10 tons and stood 4 metres high at the shoulder. It is hard to imagine something that size until you stand next to part of it, truly amazing.

DMG members inspect the West Runton Elephant skull
(Steve Docker)

Nigel went through all the details - where and how it was found, the excavation, how they moved the very brittle bones (as they were not old enough yet to be fossilised only 600,000-700,000 years!), the painstaking cleaning of them and the story of how the elephant came to its end.

This tale had been arrived at during the cleaning process, as it was uncovered that it had a diseased right knee and tooth marks of spotted hyaenas could be seen.

Nigel Larkin, curator of geology,
with elephant humerus
(Steve Docker)

The full story is on the website:
www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/default.asp?document

Whilst the story of the elephant was being told we moved out of the workshop into the storage sheds. The temperature in these buildings is monitored and kept at a constant level so that the bones do not crack with any expansion or contraction. In here the majority of the bones are kept, all very carefully stored and catalogued. It is thought that this is the fullest skeleton of *mammulthus trogontherii* in the world at 85% complete.

Not just the elephant skeleton was housed here but other bones and hyaena droppings that were at the site, and bones that fishing vessels have dragged out of the sea, along with other storage items from the museums. It was a fascinating insight into this mammal and Nigel really made it come alive.

We came out of the sheds and into the rain – perfect for our next stop – the pub!! We headed to Strumpshaw to enjoy a meal before our deer stalking expedition at the RSPB reserve.

The rain had stopped while we were eating, so when we met with Tim Strudwick at the visitor centre hide we enjoyed standing watching the Hobbies and the Marsh Harriers flying over the reserve. We had great views of the Hobby, and although they are not mammals, felt they deserved a mention as we were so close to them they were marvellous to see. Then the intrepid travellers went stalking, well it was a wander along the reserve path really.

Strumpshaw Fen is in the Broadland area of Norfolk. It boasts Swallowtail butterflies, Bearded Tits and Otters none of which we saw, but we did see the promised deer!

It wasn't too long after walking on the reserve path that we had the first glimpse of our quarry. As we continued Helen Perkins, quite appropriately, found some Water Vole droppings, but that was as close as we got to that!

Chinese Water Deer are relatively small being just over $^1/_2$ metre high and their most distinctive characteristic are the tusks that they have, as opposed to antlers. Our next sighting we could see these quite clearly, and we eventually had several deer sightings along the way.

Strumpshaw Fen, home to Chinese water deer
(Steve Docker)

As the evening became darker we saw a Barn Owl and when we were coming to the conclusion of our walk we could just about make out a Muntjac in a Field – added bonus!!

Back at the cars it was pitch black and we said our goodbyes and went our separate ways. We all had a great time our thanks to Steve Docker for another well-organised trip.

Last year, in June 2005, eleven DMG members enjoyed excellent views of European beaver (*Castor fiber*) whilst on a visit to Ham Fen, a Kent Wildlife Trust reserve. Indeed, this must rank as one of the rarest mammal sightings in the country! In addition, the group were treated to a guided tour of the Wildwood Discovery Park, see page 5 of the Autumn 2005 (Issue 6) edition of DMG News for the details. As a follow-up to these visits the following article is reproduced from the July Wildwood newsletter with the kind permission of the Wildwood Trust (ed).

Work Starts on New Beaver Wetland

The recent dry spell means that work can now finally get underway to make a terrific new beaver wetland. This fantastic new enclosure will mean you will be able to see European beaver all year around. The design will allow beaver to live as natural a life as possible and let scientist's study how our beaver help develop wildlife rich habitat along riverbanks and waterways.

This project is an essential part of our campaign to bring European beaver back to the UK where they belong. Beaver have been proved to make a huge difference to river banks helping them team with wildlife.

Wildwood Trust is involved in the ground breaking Beaver Project at Ham Fen Nature Reserve, with our partners at Kent Wildlife Trust, which received international praise for being a bold and innovative conservation project.

Wildwood aims to allow the public to learn about the natural behaviour of the beaver and run education programmes for local school children. The new exhibit will allow the public to see directly into the world of the beaver by being able to view the inside of their lodge, watch the building of dams and modification of the water levels of the ponds.

Courtesy of Wildwood Trust

We have come up with inspirational ideas for an exhibit that can educate the 85,000 visitors to Wildwood and teach them about this amazing animal and how in the past it formed an integral part of the British Countryside.

The exhibit itself has been designed to facilitate serious scientific study into the behaviour of the beaver and allow scientists to study the effects of the beaver if they were to be released back into the British Countryside.

The History of the Beaver in Britain

Once widespread across the British Isles, the beaver effectively became extinct in the twelfth century, but may well have survived in remote parts of Scotland until the sixteenth century. In Kent they probably disappeared well over a thousand years ago. Over-hunting in pursuit of their pelts and castoreum caused extinction. (This was obtained from the anal scent gland and used for medicinal purposes through the ages. The active ingredient is salicylic acid, which is the main active component of modern aspirin). From 1920 onwards, conservation measures across Europe have brought the Eurasian beaver back from the brink of extinction, largely through legal protection and re-introduction to about one hundred sites.

In October 2001 two Norwegian beaver families were released in to the Kent Wildlife Trust's Ham Fen Reserve in a project in partnership with Wildwood Trust. Although the beavers are being left to their own devices, this was not a reintroduction as the reserve has been fenced to keep the beavers in.

Ham Fen
(Helen Perkins)

Ham Fen Reserve is almost 4 hectares in area and lies between Sandwich and Deal in the parish of Worth in Kent. It is an old fen with a deep peat layer, which is being invaded by birch and alder trees, but it also supports interesting vegetation such as the marsh fern and the saw sedge, which have restricted distributions.

One way of preventing Ham Fen from becoming totally overgrown and desiccated would be to use volunteers to remove the scrub. However, Kent Wildlife Trust is aiming to use the concept of Near Natural Areas (NNAs) to manage its and neighbouring land. NNAs were first developed in the Netherlands and use large grazing and browsing mammals such as cattle and horses to manage sustainable areas of natural

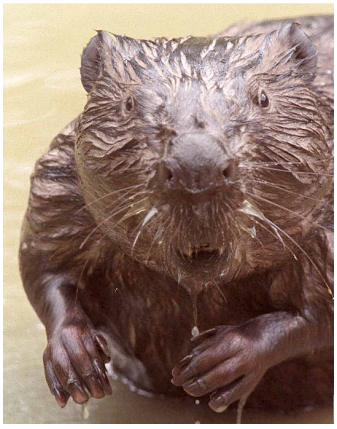
vegetation. The Kent Wildlife Trust and the Wildwood Trust are extending this idea to aquatic ecosystems by using beavers to try to sustainably manage the vegetation and increase the biodiversity of Ham Fen Reserve. The current trial will monitor the beavers and their effects on the fen.

The project, which involves the controlled experimental re-establishment of a beaver colony over a five-year period at a Nature Reserve in Kent, will assess the European beaver's effectiveness as a natural conservation management tool, as well as providing a focus for public awareness of wildlife and conservation issues. If successful, the project could help to revolutionise the management of wetland and rivers in conservation areas, and could lead to the re-establishment of beaver at sites across the UK.

Beaver Description

Globally there are two species of beaver; the Eurasian or European beaver, *Castor fiber* and the North American or Canadian beaver, *Castor canadensis*, the latter being restricted to North America. The Eurasian beaver was formally widely distributed across temperate Eurasia, from the British Isles to Kamchatka, but came perilously close to extinction over the past few hundred years due to over-hunting. By the nineteenth century the Eurasian beaver was restricted to several small strongholds: the Elbe Basin in Germany, the Rhone Basin in France, parts of southern Norway, Belarus, Russia and Mongolia. They are protected under the European Union's Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna ('Habitat Directive') and the Berne Convention.

The Eurasian beaver is Europe's largest rodent, weighing in at up to 30kg but more usually between 18-20kg, and measuring up to 130cm from nose to tail (head-body length 75-90cm and tail-length 25-40cm). They have a sleek waterproof brown coat (with considerable colour variation from pale to dark brown), broad flattened heads, large flat muscular tails and webbed hind feet to aid propulsion through and under water. The front feet have long strong claws adapted for digging and manipulating food and branches.



Courtesy of
Wildwood Trust

The beaver is a semi-aquatic herbivorous mammal. They do not feed on fish or any other animal life. They are mainly nocturnal, but will become crepuscular and even diurnal if freed from persecution and disturbance. They do not hibernate, but remain active throughout the winter.

Beaver Coppice
Courtesy of Wildwood

Beavers are herbivores feeding entirely on plant tissue, mainly on herbs and grasses, during the spring and summer, and resorting to woody tissue when winter conditions necessitate. They are 'central-place foragers', focusing their activity around the burrow or nest due to the limited distance they can travel, which is usually no more than 1mile away from water. Most of their foraging activity is concentrated within 60m of the nest site.

Mammal Symposium

The Sorby and Derbyshire Mammal Groups invite you to a Mammal Symposium.

Saturday 14th October 2006 10 am to 4.30 pm

At the Calver Village Hall, Calver, Derbyshire.

To help us to plan the event, please let us know if you are coming (by 6th Oct at the latest):

E-mail: hmperkins@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: 01457 864825/07788 522229

Otter Watching in Scotland

Tim Stenton

Following the recent article I thought I'd add my thoughts on otter watching in Scotland. First and foremost in order to be a good otter watching site you need both people and otters – hence frequently the identified 'best' sites are where there are lots of people. Other locations may be more frequently visited by otters and not people so may be better. Secondly whilst in suitable habitats otters may be common, their territorial nature ensures that they are not usually abundant. Though with patience and favourable weather (calm seas aid watching) sightings should be possible for all.

Most of my otter watching during the last 10 years has been on Mull and Skye where I normally reckon on sightings on approx half of all days. Less than half of these being a long way off, 50m+, but with luck you can get a lot closer!

Photo by Tim Stenton

I've been fortunate to see otters across Mull with the exception of the east coast around the Craignure and Fishnish areas though they are present there. Last year I found a dead dog otter on a verge, an unfortunate victim of road kill. Concurring with the previous authors Loch na Keal is a good site however my favourite has to be Loch Spelve a large, shallow sea loch with a narrow entrance. During my 10 or so visits I've only failed to see otters there on two occasions. The most memorable encounter being when my whole family, including my 16 month old niece, got within 5 metres of an otter feeding on a crab. I've also had excellent sightings on the west coast around Ulva and just outside of Tobermory. With its 300 miles of mostly readily accessible coastline Mull has a population of perhaps 200 animals.

Skye with its longer and remote coastline is more of a challenge. I tend to spend my time in the southern half of the island. First of all the otter sanctuary at Kylerhea worth a visit especially on a cold or wet day even if its just to get out of the weather or away from the wee midges. I've spent many hours in the hide and have seen one otter and one harbour porpoise however it offers a great view of the Sound of Sleat with an almost guaranteed view of seals.

Photo by Tim Stenton

If you've time, or even as an alternative route onto Skye try the Kylerhea ferry which runs from the mainland just north of Glenelg. This attractive village is infamous in otter terms as being the site where the legendary 'Mijbil' of 'Ring of Bright Water' fame was killed. A few miles down the road is Sandaig (Camusfearna) where the Scottish naturalist Gavin Maxwell lived from the late 40's until his death in 1969. Again it's well worth a visit with the chance of seeing an otter and to see the simple memorials there to both Edal his second otter and to the great man himself.

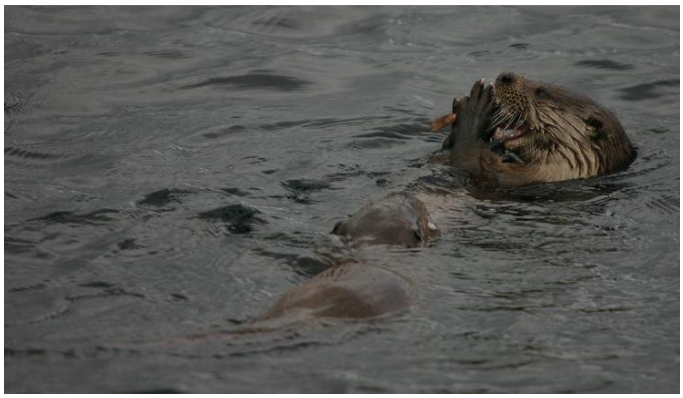


Photo by Tim Stenton

A favourite spot not least because its readily accessible and provides a great view, is on the road to Sleat just south of the Kinloch Hotel on Loch na Dal. I've had a couple of good sightings here with animals out of the water on off shore islands. Perhaps the most surprising encounter was a solitary animal that swam past me whilst I was crossing the Bad Step (a crack in the rock above

deep water that provides the only traversable route) on the way to the beautiful Loch Coruisk. Not the ideal place to be when fumbling with a camera but I did get a picture. My best ever ottery encounter, and again totally unexpected due to a sheepdog in the vicinity, was one afternoon at Dunringil, made famous(ish) by the Jethro Tull song of the same name. I was sitting there when a mother and two year old cubs came past. Due to the rocky terrain I was able to get within a few feet without disturbing them.

Finally a couple of my anecdotal observations. Firstly I've seen otters at all times of day, and at all states of tide in a variety of weather conditions. I've been surprised by generally how tolerant they are of people – even if you see one from afar it is possible with care to approach them as opposed to letting them come to you, but you do need to be upwind, move slowly and above all keep quiet. Like most people I've only ever seen otters in Scotland and in coastal environments. I'd love to see and get a photo of them on the Derwent or Dove.

Web links:
Otter Trust - www.ottertrust.org.uk
International Otter Survival Fund - www.otter.org
Otter Fan site - www.otterjoy.com
Otters and owls (inc. Chestnut Centre at Chapel) - www.ottersandowls.co.uk

Photo by Tim Stenton

As mentioned by Tim there have been other articles on otter watching in Scotland in previous editions of DMG News. An article by Derek and Sarah Whiteley appears on page 9 of the Spring 2006 (Issue 7) edition and also "N'otter nother day in paradise!" by Sue Crookes is on pages 4 and 5 of the Spring 2005 (Issue 5) edition.

Anyone else with otter watching experiences that they would like to share? (ed).

Useful Websites

Two websites, once fully established, may help individuals, groups and organisations to better share their conservation experiences. They offer the potential for "learning the lessons" (and thus reducing the chances of repeating past mistakes) and should promote the use of best practice. I've reproduced a summary of each website below:

Conservation Evidence

www.conservationevidence.com

This website collates information on the effectiveness of conservation practice. It provides two services. The main section gives hundreds of case studies on a range of subjects including habitat restoration, invasive species management, reintroduction, species management and habitat management. A separate section summarises reviews on various aspects of conservation practice.

The unique role of ConservationEvidence.com is collating studies that look at the effectiveness of conservation management. Thus every study included describes a management activity with some information on the consequences.

The Centre for Evidence-Based Conservation

www.cebc.bham.ac.uk/

The Centre for Evidence-Based Conservation was established in 2003 with the goal of supporting decision making in conservation and environmental management through the production and dissemination of systematic reviews on the effectiveness of management and policy interventions. With support from a wide range of organisations in the environmental and academic sectors the CEBC now acts as both a source of evidence and co-ordinator of a fast-growing collaborative network undertaking systematic reviews. This website acts as the primary gateway to reliable information on effectiveness based on the best available scientific evidence.

Have a browse and let me know if you find anything useful (ed).

2006 Small Mammal Trapping Sessions

Steve and Liz Lonsdale

We varied our sites this year – three at Carsington and three elsewhere. The results are summarised in the table below (results from previous years at the same sites are also included). For the last three sessions we had the benefit of the 'Awards For All' traps, which brought our total to 143. One aspect of the additional traps that needs to be factored in to future sessions is that it takes significantly longer to set, check, and wash up, especially when we had a small team, as at Jim Mart Nature Reserve.The six areas trapped:

Tail Bay: Silt ponds and a ditch, surrounded by shortish grassland and marginal vegetation; some trees along the Henmore Brook.

Upper Derwent Valley (Howden): Heather moorland / rough grassland.

Hopton Pond: Rough grassland, young plantation, and pond margin.

Hopton Meadow: Rough grassland with a hedgerow on one boundary and the reservoir on the other.

Ogston Reservoir: Rough grassland / woodland edge.

Jim Mart Nature Reserve (near Old Tupton): Rough grassland and hedgerow.

Traps were laid at dusk on the first evening, and left *in situ* for approx 36 hours; the traps were checked every 12 hours or so.

Animals caught were identified, weighed, sexed, aged, and their breeding condition noted; those caught on the first morning session, and the evening session, were also marked by clipping their fur; animals were released at or near the point of capture.

Despite a very poor start, catch rates this year were about the same as last year:

2004: 1146 trap nights, 289 catches (25%)
2005: 1380 trap nights, 255 catches (18%)
2006: 1436 trap nights, 269 catches (19%)

The early part of the year had very low catch rates. Interestingly, local ornithologists are reporting very low breeding success for many raptors (Barn Owl, Tawny Owl, Kestrel, etc), which could indicate very low populations of small mammals generally. Our improvement later in the year was mostly down to large numbers of Common and Pygmy Shrews being caught – mouse and vole numbers remained generally low.

Maurice the mountain hare stands guard over a captured common shrew

One less welcome aspect this year was an increase in trap deaths (we lost seven shrews this year, compared to one in 2005 and none in 2004).

We again tried the 'Harvest Mouse' platforms – this time we erected them at Ogston in April in the hope that the animals (known to be present as nests have been found) would familiarise themselves with them prior to our session in August. Again, we had no success with the platforms.

Water Shrews were again the highlight this year – with a new Carsington record at Hopton Pond, and also records from Ogston and Jim Mart.

Suggestions for potential sites for next year's programme are welcome.

The following table shows the total number of catches at each site (and the number of recaptures).

Location (number of traps used)	Common Shrew	Pygmy Shrew	Water Shrew	Wood Mouse	Bank Vole	Field Vole
Tail Bay – April 2006 (96 traps)	0	0	0	1	2	0
Tail Bay – April 2005 (96)	10 (0)	7 (0)	0	7 (3)	3 (2)	5 (1)
Tail Bay – July 2004 (98)	*5 (0)*	*2 (0)*	*0*	*22 (3)*	*32 (9)*	*9 (1)*
Howden – May 2006 (96)	12 (2)	1	0	0	2	4
Hopton Pond – June 2006 (98)	14 (1)	0	0	26 (7)	9 (1)	1
Hopton Pond – June 2005 (112)	*10 (1)*	*0*	*1 (0)*	*46 (15)*	*11 (0)*	*4 (0)*
Hopton Meadow – July 2006 (143)	41 (5)	0	2	12 (3)	12 (2)	4
Hopton Meadow – May 2005 (98)	*13 (4)*	*0*	*0*	*10 (3)*	*14 (3)*	*1 (0)*
Ogston Reservoir – August 2006 (143)	66 (22)	4	3 (1)	9 (1)	34 (10)	1
Jim Mart Reserve – Sept 2006 (143)	47 (10)	32 (9)	1	8 (1)	6 (2)	8 (2)

Roe Deer in South Derbyshire

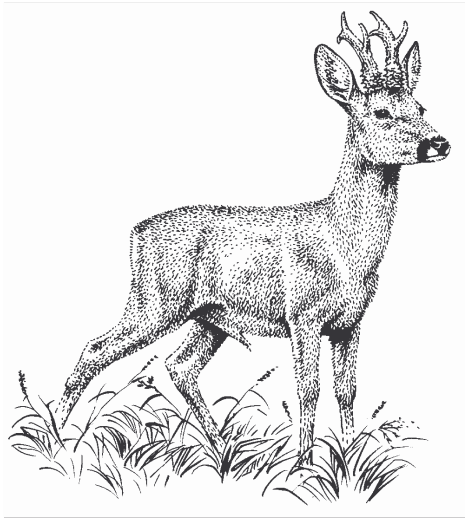
by Bill Cove, Head Warden, Calke Abbey (National Trust)

In November 2002 a local pest control man was out at night shooting foxes on the Calke Abbey National Trust estate near Ticknall. He briefly saw what he knew to be a roe deer standing in a field. On having the light shone on it, it turned and ran to the edge of the field and away. To my knowledge that was the first report of roe in the south of the county.

Despite having contact with deer control people around the area I have not heard of another sighting until this year.

On 5th May one of the Wardens at Calke was told of a 'small deer' that was running around in an area, near Staunton Harold reservoir. As this was adjoining the Calke Deer Park, the visitor thought it was an 'escapee' from within the fence. The warden went to look and saw that the deer was a roe. I came back from holiday the same evening and on being told the news I went to look. With the help of a volunteer we got a photo of the young roe buck as it ran from cover.

The area it was in is owned by Severn Trent and fenced with deer netting along one side and separated from the main deer park by a pond. The only way I could find that it may have got in was by following the path/board-walk around the reservoir, walking on the concrete spillway exiting the pond, and then wading or swimming around where the deer fencing is returned into the water. The buck stayed in the area for several weeks and despite the gates being left open on occasions it didn't leave.



Courtesy of English Nature

While looking around the deer in the park towards the end of June I noticed the roe buck grazing now inside the main deer park with the red deer. Again, its only entry point was via the water, either straight across the pond (through lots of lilies) or around the fencing (through deep silt). Since then the deer has been seen in both areas several times so obviously does not find water a problem. I have seen no interaction between it and the red and fallow deer within the enclosure and it has settled down to a point that it now stands and watches people walking on the footpath around the fence, and to be honest, I have only had two people who have contacted me having seen it, and they were both involved with deer stalking!

As to where they are spreading from, several years ago the National Forest Deer Management Group had a few reports of roe in the Cropston and Switherland area, between Leicester and Loughborough. In August I was told of one seen between Loughborough and Ashby. This seems the likely route into this end of the county and I am sure it will only be a matter of time before they are resident along with the fallow and muntjac in suitable areas south of Derby

Dear Deer

John Bland

In German "tier" is the word for animal and it seems reasonable that it should be transferred, with a slight change of pronunciation, to that most magnificent animal, the monarch of the glen. So deer really just means animal and they are red deer because they are red coloured and fallow deer because they are fallow coloured. Yes, fallow is defined as a pale brownish or reddish yellow. Roe also indicates the colour as it stems from the old Irish word "riach" which meant grey or spotted.

The scientific name of the fallow deer is *Cervus dama* and it is interesting to note that both Cervus and dama mean deer in Latin so it is the deer deer. A similar thing happens with the Sika deer. Its scientific name *Cervus nippon* indicates its origins in Japan where sika is the word for deer.

In Europe moose are known as elk, a name which has ancient origins, having been eolh or eola on Old English and elaho in Old High German. The scientific name Alces alces doubles the Latin name alces and the Greek name was alke.

Muntjac gets its name from the word " minchek" in the Sundanese language which is spoken in Borneo, Sumatra and Java but regret my lack of knowledge of Sundanese etymology leaves me unable to explain why it got that name in the first place.

Derbyshire Dormouse Update

Dave Mallon

As all the monitoring teams know, 2005-6 has been a generally unsatisfactory year at local sites. Only single animals were found in the nestboxes during monitoring checks in June 2006.

At the Chatsworth site, a dead dormouse was also found in one nestbox, presumably having emerged early from hibernation then been caught by the later cool and wet weather. The dormouse that was recorded there in June 2006 was found in a box at the NE end of the site. Like one recorded in 2005, it had moved 500-600m from the area where it was released. The reason for these movements is unclear: it could be related to a search for a mate, but it could also reflect habitat preference. The NE end of the wood is more open and sunnier, with a lower canopy and masses of hazelnuts. The centre and SW by contrast are denser and darker, and on the original nut hunt, carried out as preparation for the release, far fewer opened nuts were found here.

Results at the mid-Derwent site were similar, with only a single animal recorded in the 200 boxes checked. We had been hoping that the low numbers found on box checks here were a reflection of use of natural nest sites among the prolific bramble and bracken at the site, but this has not been confirmed so far by field evidence.

UK-wide, 2005 was also a bad year, with monitoring numbers much lower than usual. Nevertheless, our local results are worse than the national average, as measured by number of dormice per nest box.

It is clear that at both sites the released animals became established and bred successfully at the initial stage, but it remains to be seen whether dormice have really been re-established in the county in the long-term.

The Encyclopedia of Mammals

2nd edition

A completely revised edition of the 1999 reference work on mammals of the world, written by a team of experts and edited by David Macdonald. Should be available from mid October 2006 (rrp: £35).

(ed).

A *colour* copy of this newsletter may be downloaded from our website www.derbyshiremammalgroup.com

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Please send material, details of forthcoming events, comments etc to Steve Docker: Tel: 01335 345253 or email: steve@busypeople.force9.co.uk

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