



Derbyshire Mammal Group News

Spring
2014

(Issue 24)

Forthcoming Events:

Wednesday 16th April:
DMG Annual General Meeting
The Bell, Cromford, 19:30

Sunday 25th May:
Pleasley Pit Wildlife Day
DMG will have a stall - Contact: Jo Bissell

Saturday 12th July:
DMG Barbeque, Wessington
Contact: Mike Ashford (Mikeashford1@aol.com)

Sunday 31st August
Autumn Social - Details TBD
Contact Liz Lonsdale

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www.derbyshiremammalgroup.com

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- Jo Bissell

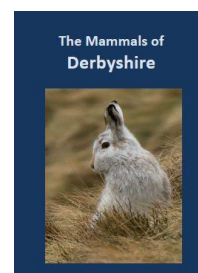
- SNH
- John Bland
- Liz Lonsdale
- Bill Cove

- Liz Lonsdale

The Mammals of Derbyshire

The mammal group have now sold some 360 copies of 'The Mammals of Derbyshire'. It will continue to be sold at many DWT and other local natural history events over the coming months for £10.

If you wish to have a copy posted to you, please send a cheque (payable to 'Derbyshire Mammal Group') for £12.50 (includes P&P) and your full postal address to: Steve Lonsdale, 31 Caroline Close, Alvaston, Derby DE24 0QX



Pine Marten Recovery Project

The following is from the Vincent Wildlife Trust E-Newsletter of February 2014.

The VWT has just embarked on a two year study to assess the feasibility of reinforcing Pine Marten numbers at specific locations in England and Wales. In the initial stage we are using GIS methods at a broad landscape scale to determine where there is suitable habitat of sufficient size and connectivity to support a viable self-sustaining population of Pine Martens.

Once these areas have been identified, there will be further analyses to evaluate the risks of accidental mortality to Pine Martens, from density of roads and other infrastructure, and also to identify potential areas of conflict with local economic interests. Once this is completed we will be able to shortlist a number of potential release areas for more detailed field surveys and fine scale habitat assessment.

In the second phase of the project, which will begin in the summer of this year, we will be carrying out field surveys to determine if adequate prey and other food sources are present at the shortlisted sites to support a healthy Pine Marten population. In addition to this, we will be collecting baseline data at potential release sites to enable long-term monitoring of potential impacts of increased Pine Marten numbers on other species present, including Grey Squirrel.

We will also be working to identify local stakeholders and co-operators and engaging with them to raise awareness of Pine Martens and answer any queries, and also to discuss the potential impacts and benefits of an increased Pine Marten population in their area. With this in mind we have already started a dialogue with the National Gamekeepers' Organisation and have an article in their members' magazine to be published shortly.

By the end of 2015, we will have a prioritised list of the most biologically suitable release sites that have minimal potential conflict and high levels of local support for the project. During 2015, we will be drawing on all the available data to determine the most genetically appropriate source population(s) for animals and preparing a detailed plan for translocation and release of animals at the first sites.

Jenny MacPherson

The Effects of Flooding on Mammals

A report in The Times in February highlighted the problems caused to wildlife by the extreme and sudden flooding that has occurred this winter.

Water Voles, whilst they live by the water, are not strong swimmers and have little chance of escape if their burrows are inundated by a sudden surge of high water. There has been a report of Water Voles in Essex being spread wider afield by floods in 2012.

Rising rivers can force Otters to move overland and onto roads exposing them to the danger of traffic. Mothers and cubs maybe separated by fast flowing water. In Stockton-on-Tees an Otter cub was found alive at a caravan park.

No doubt many Grey Seal pups born in the winter will have been separated from their mothers as they are not sea worthy until about 6 weeks and have moulted their white fur. It was reported on the BBC Countryfile program that the RSPCA centre at East Winch had rescued about 50 pups and are releasing them back into The Wash.

Waterlogged ground will have killed many small mammals but recolonisation will eventually occur if suitable reservoirs of unaffected animals are nearby. We have noted this in areas we have small mammal live-trapped alongside the River Trent near Willington.

An indirect effect of water lying on the land for extended periods means that many ground insects and worms will be killed off. This means less food for Hedgehogs, Badgers, mice and shrews. Re-colonisation of such devastated areas will take some time.

Liz Lonsdale

Dormouse Boxes

After a change in the weather, from the wet and slippery to the dry and sunny, we decided to go and put up the 10 replacement Dormouse boxes that DMG recently purchased.

Although it was very short notice, four of us managed to make it and scramble up the slope at the original release site. We replaced some boxes, repaired others (Dave Mallon showing us his legendary DIY skills below) and inserted some boxes where there were gaps in the numbering system.



Previously at the site, we have tried other types of boxes – some with sliding lids, some made of drainpipes and some with different wood – but we have found the original style of box to be the most effective over time.

A quick update regarding the drainpipe box which some of you helped to produce. So far, we have not had any success with signs of occupancy of Dormice. We are unsure if this is just down to the areas where they are located or if the mice do not like them, so we are going to move some into different areas of the wood where we usually get more frequent evidence of Dormice to see if the usage of these boxes improves.

At least the new boxes are up in time for the warm weather – as it might mean an early wake up for the Dormice!

Jo Bissell



2014 Otter Surveys in North Derbyshire

I will be carrying out a number of Otter surveys in north Derbyshire during June and July (dates tbc). Please contact me if you are interested.

Caroline Milson (carolinemilson@hotmail.co.uk)

Mink on the Brink

The following is from the Scottish Natural Heritage February 2014 E-Newsletter.

American Mink became established in the wild in Scotland following numerous escapes from fur farms. By the 1960s they were recorded in the Western Isles, where this non-native animal proved to be a proficient hunter and to have a severe effect on internationally important communities of ground-nesting wading birds.

Working with the local community, the Hebridean Mink project has achieved considerable success in removing Mink. Now computer-based studies by the University of Aberdeen (undertaken through a partnership project with SNH) predict the likely extinction of the Western Isles Mink population somewhere between 2014 and 2021.

Numbat

A DNHS member, Brian Gough, lent me a book called 'Nature Parade', which was first published in 1939. It quotes from earlier writings so some of the information seems a little odd by today's standards. One section is devoted to those animals which had not been exhibited in any British zoo, either because they were rare, difficult to catch, or impossible to keep alive.

One of these was the Numbat, or Banded Anteater, which was considered probably the rarest animal in Australia, being extinct in the south and very rare in the west. It is described as a charming little marsupial which looks handsome in a bright rust-red coat with creamy white bands on the back and loins. Its favourite food is white ants which are gathered up briskly with a long extensile tongue. It feeds during the daytime and if alarmed runs to the nearest hollow log or other shelter. However, instead of going at once to cover on reaching a log it may sit up and look around for a few moments, delay which sometimes proves fatal to the silly animal, which has no means of defence at all. Even when captured, it says, a Numbat is not disposed to bite. Inoffensive, helpless, a survival of an ancient type, it is doomed to early extinction. The author concludes that the world will lose another unique animal.

I decided to see if their pessimistic prediction came to pass and found that the Numbat is still with us. The deliberate release of Red Fox in the 19th century wiped out the entire population of Numbats in Victoria, NSW, South Australia, and Northern Territory. By the early 1980's the population was around 300 individuals concentrated in two small areas near Perth, the Dryandra Woodland and the Perup Nature Reserve. They may have been able to survive here as both areas have many hollow logs that may serve as refuge from predators. When the Western Australian Government started a programme of fox-baiting at Dryandra, Numbat sightings increased by a factor of 40.



Since 1980 the Numbat population has increased substantially as a result of a conservation program. Perth zoo is involved in captive breeding for release into the wild. Numbats have been reintroduced to fox-free areas including Yookamurra Sanctuary in South Australia and Scotia Sanctuary in NSW. Even so there are thought to be no more than 1,000 individuals remaining in the wild, and the population trend is declining. The Numbat remains at considerable risk of extinction and is classified as an endangered species.

John Bland

PTES Living with Mammals Survey

Since 2003 the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) has run an annual 'Living with Mammals' survey of mammals seen in urban environments. The survey takes place between **1st April and 30th June** of each year and requires you to spend some time observing a chosen site (eg your garden or allotment) throughout the survey period.

The resulting information gives an indication of the trends in mammal populations. The latest 'Living with Mammals' newsletter records the increase and spread of Muntjac and Roe Deer, and also notes Fallow Deer grazing lawns in housing estates in London.

As we are aware, Hedgehog numbers are declining and the survey also confirms this trend.

Grey Squirrels have quite a level trend but are known to do well after autumns with abundant tree seeds, so it will be interesting to see if this is the case this year.

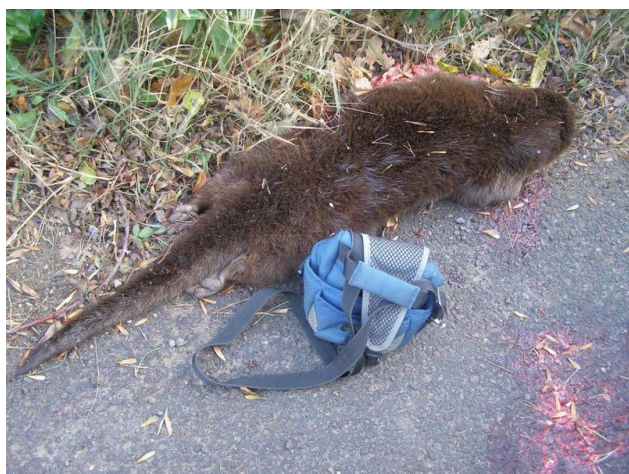
Rabbits are on an upward trend in gardens but in rural areas are badly affected by rabbit haemorrhagic disease. This may seriously affect numbers in the future and in Europe they are listed on IUCN Red List as 'Near Threatened'.

If you would like to join in this survey and record the mammals in your area, or read more about the results so far, the information is on the PTES website: www.ptes.org

Liz Lonsdale

Otter Casualty

These pictures from Bill Cove show an Otter road casualty from December 2013 in Woodhouses, south of Melbourne on the B587.



2014 Small Mammal Surveys

We will be carrying out a number of small mammal live-trapping surveys during the summer.

The provisional dates are:

- 11-13 April: Carsington
- 25-27 April: Buxton
- 16-18 May: Carsington
- 24-25 May: Pleasley Pit
- 15-17 Aug: Whaley Bridge
- 22-24 Aug: South Derbyshire
- 29-31 Aug: Carsington
- 5-7 Sept: Old Tupton

Numbers are limited, and prior booking essential. If you wish to join us, either to assist or to gain experience, please contact **Caroline Milson** (carolinemilson@hotmail.co.uk) for the 25 April or 15 August sessions, or **Steve Lonsdale** for the other sessions.

Mountain Hare Walk

Five of us from DMG met with a group of five from Shropshire Wildlife Trust on 23 March for a walk at Crowden with a view to see Mountain Hares. The weather forecast was good for the walk – cold and fine with a chance of a few wintery showers but visibility was good. This was in contrast to the exceptional snow in March 2013 which caused the walk to be cancelled. Dave Mallon led the walk, and while we were assembling in the car park Dave spotted some distant Mountain Hares on the hills opposite, which everyone was able to see through a telescope.

The walk led up the valley past a leat which held vast quantities of frogspawn. On a rock cliff ledge we saw a Peregrine sitting beside a nest, and all along we were flushing Red Grouse.



the tussocks. We found the form where the hare had been lying up (see below) - it was perfectly smoothed mud with some white hairs caught up in the vegetation. There was another sighting about five minutes later which may have been the same hare moving across the moor.

The party was much enthused by the sighting and the speed of the walk accelerated, down to the stream crossing, which was safely negotiated by all. Most of us had the experience of falling into a hole on the moor, some of which were more boggy than others.

The party reached the car park about 15.00 after a successful walk.

Liz Lonsdale



However, on the first stretch up to the Castles we saw no hares and very little in the way of droppings or other field signs.

After lunch we continued over Roundhill Moss towards the track beside Crowden Little Brook. As we approached the high point the forecast hail and snow showers arrived, but fortunately were over quickly and added a little ambiance to the walk.

We saw larger numbers of Mountain Hare droppings, which improved morale! At last a large white hare was flushed from quite close by and everyone had a good view - especially when it stopped some distance away to check us out. It then bounded away across



Mammal Society Camera Trap Loans

The Mammal Society now have a Camera Trap loan scheme.

For more information contact Dan or Lexie, on 023 8023 7874, or training@themammalsociety.org

Steve Lonsdale

Interesting Notices

From two toilets in Queensland, Australia:



Steve Lonsdale

The next edition of this newsletter is planned for Summer 2014. Please forward any articles (on any mammal or DMG related subject) to Steve Lonsdale (Lons57@gmail.com).

Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the individual authors, and may not represent the views of Derbyshire Mammal Group.

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