



# Derbyshire Mammal Group News

Spring  
2012

(Issue 18)

## Forthcoming Events:

Wednesday 11 April  
Annual General Meeting  
\*\*\* Note change of date \*\*\*  
07:30, The Bell, Cromford  
Contact: Jo Bissell.

Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 June  
Woodside (Shipley) Bioblitz  
A weekend event at one of DWT's newest reserves.  
DMG will be present - if you would like to help, contact Jo Bissell.

Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 June  
Avenue Washlands  
A 24 hour event celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the  
Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. DMG will be present - if you would  
like to get involved contact Jo Bissell.

Saturday 7 July  
DMG Summer Social and BBQ  
Booking essential - contact Jo Bissell.

Friday 20 July  
Nightworld Rosliston  
Nocturnal creatures and the night sky. DMG will have a stall.  
If you would like to help, contact Jo Bissell.

Website:

[www.derbyshiremammalgroup.com](http://www.derbyshiremammalgroup.com)

Chair: Dave Mallon

01457 853560

[d.mallon@zoo.co.uk](mailto:d.mallon@zoo.co.uk)

Secretary: Jo Bissell

07708 248776

[Jo.ian@live.co.uk](mailto:Jo.ian@live.co.uk)

Treasurer: Steve Lonsdale

01332 737935

[Lons57@gmail.com](mailto:Lons57@gmail.com)

Group Recorder: Debbie Alston

01773 821804 (evenings)

[alston@debsndave.plus.com](mailto:alston@debsndave.plus.com)

Website Administrator: Dave Alston

01773 821804 (evenings)

[alston@debsndave.plus.com](mailto:alston@debsndave.plus.com)

## In This Issue:

Planting Nuts to Detect Dormice

- Dave Mallon

Pellets and Bones Workshop

- Julia Smith

The State of Britain's Mammals 2011

Harvest Mouse Nest Survey - Willington Gravel Pits NR

- Kelvin Lawrence

Nutters !!!

- Jo Bissell

Bat Hibernaculum at Ogston Bird Club Jim Mart Reserve

- Ian Wildbur

Dormouse Box Making

- Jo Bissell

Mammal Society Mini Mammal Monitoring

- Steve Lonsdale

Another Arboreal Stoat

- Roy Frost

The Importance of Cromford Canal SSSI for Small Mammals

- Amy May

## Planting Nuts to Detect Dormice

At our main Derbyshire monitoring site we have found dormice and evidence of breeding every year since they were reintroduced in 2005. However, numbers are generally low (though we recorded 48 on one box check in 2006). As well as dormouse nests without dormice, we have also occasionally found a dormouse-opened hazel nut in nest boxes. In all, 41% of boxes have had a positive record of some kind (dormouse, nest or nut) since we started. However, nest box occupancy tends to fluctuate across different parts of the site from year to year. Occasional dormouse opened nuts on the ground in areas with no sign of box use provides evidence that dormice are present but are not using the boxes for nesting.

To try and increase the number of positive records, we left two hazel nuts in 120 nest boxes during a general maintenance and cleaning session in February 2011. We reasoned that these nuts could provide a food supply in case of early emergence, since in the recent run of warm springs we have found dormice in boxes during mid-April, when normal food sources are rather limited (the site is almost 250m above sea level).



In May we found dormouse-opened nuts in eight boxes and in another three since then, including in two boxes first put up last year in new areas of the site. None of these boxes contained a nest or other signs of dormouse occupancy. A bank vole had opened the nuts in one box, but none had been eaten by wood mice. With a positive rate of just over 10% we consider the experiment successful and we will use this as a supplementary monitoring technique each year from now on in all the boxes.



We bought the hazel nuts in shops at Christmas. These were much larger than the nuts growing on site and were no doubt imported from continental Europe. The oversized nuts posed a problem on two occasions when several attempts had been made to reach the nut. Once the animal (or animals) had attempted nine holes before eventually getting into the nut (see pictures). Dormice usually eat the nuts whilst they are still green on the tree but seem happy to eat shop-bought ones too!

Dave Mallon and the Derbyshire Dormouse Team

## Pellets and Bones Workshop

For anyone who may have thought of attending the Mammal Bone Identification Workshop and hesitated - please don't. It is excellent. Well-structured, great facilities, and really informative. I could quite cheerfully have just continued into the evening but that wouldn't have been fair on Derek Whiteley from the Sorby Mammal Group, who ran the event. He was an endless source of knowledge, which he passed on effortlessly and patiently throughout the day, and to a wide range of levels of expertise within the group.

We started with basic identification techniques for voles and shrews. Skulls were provided to examine, and helpful printouts to enable us to make notes and take away for future reference. (Tip - it's in the teeth!). Then we dissected several Barn Owl pellets and identified their contents. Not easy at first go, but truly fascinating and, with the microscopes provided and under Derek's guidance, we got there.

Following lunch we had a look at some of the larger mammal skulls - foxes, badgers, hares and rabbits, etc., and what the major differentiating points of bone structure are to aid in identification. Again, printouts provided as aide memoires.

I came away knowing so much more, knowing there was a lot more to learn and, more importantly, wanting to do so. Inspirational and great fun. Thanks Derek!

Julia Smith

## The State of Britain's Mammals 2011

The State of Britain's Mammals is produced annually by PTES (the People's Trust for Endangered Species) and the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) at the University of Oxford. This year's report offers a comprehensive overview of a decade of research and conservation carried out by wildlife experts across the country. The report focuses on how our mammal species have fared over the past ten years - looking in particular at whether the BAP targets set for them have been met (and whether in fact they have helped conserve our species); why the issues and problems surrounding bovine tuberculosis (bTB) have still not been resolved; changes to environmental legislation over the last decade and the bigger picture: moving from species to habitat and from protecting small areas to working on a landscape-scale.

The report's commentary on BAP priority species shows that while four of the original terrestrial mammals listed in the mid-1990s - Otters, Water Voles, Pipistrelles, and Greater Horseshoe Bats - have achieved, or in some cases exceeded, their targets, some species have been added to the list and are still declining, including some of the most endangered: Red Squirrels, Scottish Wildcats, Mountain Hares, Harvest Mice, Hazel Dormice, and in rural areas, Hedgehogs.

The report's authors lament the lack of an all-encompassing national framework for monitoring how our mammal populations are faring, although several NGOs and other organisations, including PTES, strive to monitor terrestrial mammals. Data compiled shows that of the 25 monitored mammal species native to the UK, half are either stable or increasing, while three are in decline: Water Vole, Red Squirrel, and Mountain Hare. Of ten non-native species that are also regularly monitored, four are increasing in population and are problematic to our native fauna: Brown Rat, Grey Squirrel, Sika Deer, and Muntjac.

Ten years on from PTES's first report in 2001, conflict with invasive species remains a serious issue for native species: 5% of all BAP mammals and 9% of BAP invertebrates list non-natives as a threat. Invasives, species which are accidentally or deliberately introduced by humans, affect native species through predation, competition, hybridisation, and the transmission of diseases. In addition, the impact of invasive species on the British economy (for example through bark stripping by grey squirrels) is estimated at £1.7 billion per year.

The problem of diseases is not just limited to transmission between invasive and native species. No less controversial ten years later, the debate around the most appropriate and effective method for managing bTB in badgers and reducing the cost of the disease not only to farmers but taxpayers, also continues to divide experts and is explored in detail in the report.

The report also examines reintroduction programmes and environmental management schemes as ways of helping to minimise ecological impact and stave off wildlife and habitat loss.

The report is free to download from the PTES website ([http://ptes.org/files/1591\\_sobm\\_2011\\_indd.pdf](http://ptes.org/files/1591_sobm_2011_indd.pdf)) or as a hardcopy for £5 plus postage ([www.ptes.org/shop](http://www.ptes.org/shop)).

## Harvest Mouse Nest Survey - Willington Gravel Pits NR

This survey, on 3 December 2011, was the first Harvest Mouse survey at Willington by DMG, and the first formal survey on the site since a nest was recorded by DWT in 2007. Earlier in the autumn, DWT midweek volunteers found continued evidence of Harvest Mice during annual surveys carried out at North Wingfield, Carr Vale, and The Avenue Washlands Nature Reserves.

Six members turned out for a crisp sunny day, poking about in the reedbeds. After a brief discussion we divided into two teams (boys v girls) and set off in search of Harvest Mice (or at least abandoned nests in good state of repair).

After a couple of hours of systematic searching we were pleased to have found several well-formed nests in 2 different kilometre squares, as well as evidence of Field Voles and good views of a Green Woodpecker. For those keeping score, honours were shared and nobody got lost.

Kelvin Lawrence

## Nutters !!!

January 7<sup>th</sup> saw DMG start their calendar of events for 2012 with a Nut Hunt.

This event has been going a few years now but saw its biggest turnout this year with 11 members joining in.

We hunt for Dormouse eaten hazelnuts in the woodland around the site of the re-introduced population to see if there is any sign of the Dormice spreading to new areas. We have yet to find any nuts in the



Jo Bissell

woods where the mice would have had to have crossed the road, but

this year did see some progress with one Dormouse eaten nut being found on the other side of a track where previously we believe there have been none.

A good result!



## Bat Hibernaculum at Ogston Bird Club Jim Mart Reserve

A disused underground water storage tank at the Jim Mart nature reserve (in Old Tupton) has been converted into a possible winter hibernation site for bats.

The building has been kept looking as natural as possible, so most of the construction is simply rocks and soil around the entrance. There are two sets of grills through which the bats can enter, and a door to allow access for inspection. An Anabat survey has shown that Common and Soprano Pipistrelles, Daubentons, Natterers, Whiskered/Brandts, Brown Long-eared, and Noctule bats all pass through



the reserve.

Thank you to all who helped, including Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group, Ogston Bird Club, Derbyshire Mammal Group, for all the money raised from the quizzes that Sue Jones and John Bland kindly produced for us, and the grant given to us from the Green Watch Awards.

Ian Wildbur

## Dormouse Box Making

Who on earth would choose one of the coldest days of the year to go and make boxes? Well, eight of us decided that although it was freezing, we would. Steve and Liz Lonsdale, Frank Bell, Sue Jones, John Bland, Caroline Milson, Ian Wildbur, and I managed to drill, saw, screw and hammer 35 dormouse boxes ready for erection in the spring.



I would like to thank Ben Young of Severn Trent Water for allowing us to use the garage at Carsington Reservoir Ranger Base.



Jo Bissell

## Mammal Society Mini Mammal Monitoring

Following input from surveyors, including some from DMG, the Mammal Society have reworked and renamed their 'National Small Mammal Monitoring Scheme'. It now has the catchier (though less scientific) name of 'Mini Mammal Monitoring'.

The main change is that the timing of the individual surveys has been restructured around the autumn months as follows:

- September: Low Density Live Trapping
- October/November: Bait Tube Survey
- October/November: Field Vole Signs Survey
- December: Harvest Mouse Nest Survey

The high-density live trapping survey has been removed, as high enough recapture rates were not being achieved to have statistical significance, and it entailed a high level of surveyor effort.

In addition, simpler volunteer guidance notes are being developed.

Surveyors are asked to carry out one or two transects for as many of the survey methods that they wish within a randomly selected tetrad.

Further information is included in the Spring 2012 edition of Mammal News, and from the Mammal Society surveys team: [surveys@themammalsociety.org](mailto:surveys@themammalsociety.org).

Steve Lonsdale

## Another Arboreal Stoat

Bill Cove's interesting note on a tree-climbing Stoat in DMG News no 16 (Spring 2011) reminded me of a similar sighting which I made in the 1960s. Unfortunately I cannot readily find a record of the date but it was certainly during spring-time.

I was in Barbrook Plantation, which lies around 270m above sea level on Big Moor, north of Baslow. There are a number of quite tall Scot's Pines at the site and a movement very near the top of one of them caught my eye. Through binoculars, I was surprised to find that it was a Stoat, which was closely investigating the sprays of foliage close to the top of the tree at a height of about 14m. Such horizontal sprays are often favoured by a variety of nesting birds, from small species such as Goldcrest and Chaffinch, to larger birds like Carrion Crow and Jay. I guessed that the Stoat was actively seeking nests, though I could not see any due to the rather dense vegetation.

Roy Frost

## The Importance of Cromford Canal SSSI for Small Mammals

Following is the abstract from my dissertation:

The effectiveness of designated areas for protecting a given species or group of species is one of the most important ecological questions at this time. Cromford Canal SSSI has been identified by Natural England as being a site of local importance for the Water Shrew. In April 2011, as part of my MSc in Biological Recording with the University of Birmingham, I carried out a study to estimate the size of the Water Shrew and other small mammal populations present in Cromford Canal SSSI and use this information to assess if the site is of local importance for Water Shrew and small mammals in general.

Live trapping was targeted at four areas of suitable habitat within Cromford Canal SSSI and then the population number of all small mammal species present was estimated using the Lincoln-Peterson method. Four numerical criteria were devised in order to assess the importance of the site for small mammals focusing on species assemblage, population density, population longevity and the representativeness of the site within the county.

A diverse assemblage of small mammal species was recorded during the study. Common Shrew and Wood Mouse were found to have exceptional populations present, Pygmy Shrew and Bank Vole were found to have good populations present, and Field Vole was found to have only a small population present. No Water Shrew was recorded.

It was concluded that Cromford Canal SSSI was an important site for small mammals and could potentially be for Water Shrew alone. However, further surveying would be required in order to assess the actual size of the population of Water Shrew present on site.

Amy May

The next edition of this newsletter is planned for summer 2012. Please forward any articles (on any mammal or DMG related subject) to Steve Lonsdale ([Lons57@gmail.com](mailto:Lons57@gmail.com)).

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