



Derbyshire Mammal Group News

Autumn
2012

(Issue 20)

Forthcoming Events:

The DMG 2013 Programme is currently being pulled together. Early events are likely to include an event to mark the 10th anniversary of the group in January.

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Swimming Stoats

Last year, DMG was contacted by Andrew Veale, a scientist in New Zealand, who was researching instances of stoats observed swimming. This is an important factor in New Zealand, where the introduced Stoat is an invasive predator that threatens many native birds and has reached several islands: hence, assessing how frequent this is and how far they can swim is useful.

He had read on the DMG website of one case here in Derbyshire that involved a group of five watched swimming across the River Alport in High Peak. The final article has just been published in the New Zealand Journal of Zoology (copy available from Dave Mallon). It turns out that this is quite a rare occurrence, but stoats are able swimmers – one was seen in a lake 1.6 km from land! The article includes a photo of a group of stoats swimming across a river in North Wales, in a similar situation to ours.

This is not the first time DMG website has shown its global reach: during the Atlas recording period a polecat record from Ohio, USA was submitted – along with a request to identify the species!

Dave Mallon

Small Mammal Surveying in Nutbrook Local Nature Reserve

Through the months of July, August and September, I conducted a small mammal survey in the Darley and Nutwood nature reserve in Darley Abbey. The aims of the study were to establish the small mammal species present at the reserve and also attempt to establish the preferred habitat within the site.

In order to establish habitat preference, three sites with varying floral composition were chosen. The first of the three sites was an area comprised of grassland and scrub, the second site was the ancient Nutwood and the third was an area of developing woodland. Within in each site a total of 10 traps were set over a three day period, with a total of seven trapping sessions undertaken.

During the study period a total of 102 mammals were trapped, 37 of which were recaptures. The species trapped were Wood Mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), Field Voles (*Microtus agrestis*) and Bank Voles (*Myodes glareolus*). Unfortunately, although expected, there were no shrews (*Soricidae* sp.) trapped during the study. Although it is possible that the shrews inhabit areas of the site that were not studied, it is also possible that shrews are no longer present at the reserve.

In looking at the data acquired, it is possible to determine that the preferred habitat was the ancient Nutwood, whilst the most diverse habitat was the grassland habitat.

In the future I am hoping to conduct a similar project, with a view to establishing a more comprehensive analysis of the small mammal species at the Darley and Nutwood nature reserve.

Phillipa Mudd

Name That Bat ...

All major European bat species can now be identified from their echolocation calls. An online tool called iBatsID finds the best match for a call from a library of 34 species.

(from Journal of Applied Ecology, DOI: 10.1111/j.1365-2664.2012.02182.x)

Hantavirus Outbreak in Yosemite National Park

The following information is a précis from the Health Protection Agency's (HPA) website.

Hantaviruses are found in the droppings, urine and saliva of rodents. Infections in humans are caused by breathing in small particles of mouse droppings or urine that have been stirred up in the air. Large outbreaks are rare and usually caused by human disturbance, land use changes or unusual environmental events such as increased rainfall.

The viruses cause two syndromes in humans, Haemorrhagic fever with renal syndrome (HFRS), and Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome (HPS). HFRS is found in Europe and Asia and HPS occurs in North and South America (not found in the UK).

HPS is the infection that occurred in Yosemite. The illness can start up to six weeks after exposure. Symptoms are initially 'flu like', fever, chills, headache, muscle aches and cough. Other symptoms can include nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. The disease quickly progresses causing difficulty in breathing and can result in death in some cases. There is no specific treatment but seeking early medical treatment greatly improves the chances of survival.

HFRS, which occurs in Europe, has an incubation of 2-4 weeks. The disease is characterised by fever, headache, gastro-intestinal symptoms and renal (kidney) dysfunction. More severe forms have haemorrhagic (bleeding) manifestations. The form most commonly seen in NW Europe, Nephropathia epidemica, has an abrupt onset. Acute renal failure occasionally requiring dialysis can occur. The mortality rate is less than 0.1%.

Very few Hantavirus infections have been confirmed in the UK although there is information from blood monitoring to suggest exposure does occur without causing severe symptoms.

The Health Protection Agency's advice for people in close proximity to rodents is:

- Wash hands thoroughly before eating
- Avoid contact with rodents or their excreta
- Take measures to avoid attracting rodents (keep food covered/in containers and don't store firewood inside).
- When cleaning areas frequented by rodents; wear gloves and a face mask, dampen the area and clean with disinfectant then vacuum.

Liz Lonsdale

A New Mammal for Derbyshire !

In early November, DWT's Wildlife Enquiries forwarded a message to DMG from the Glossop Chronicle requesting identification of an unusual mammal photographed on the edge of Glossop. This was a clearly a Raccoon *Procyon lotor*, a native of North and Central America and often kept as a pet. The animal was on a drystone wall on the woodland/moorland border.

Rich Bacon quickly tracked down a report in the Manchester Evening News from 25 September that offered a £100 reward for the return of three raccoons that had escaped from their cage in Dukinfield, Greater Manchester. It seems likely that one of these was the Glossop animal, but it nonetheless represents quite an impressive several-kilometre journey, either east around Glossop, then south, or across the M67 and several other roads.

According to the Handbook of British Mammals, there were 32 confirmed occurrences of free-living raccoons in England since 1970. Six survived for more than one year and one for four years. They also include a pregnant animal that escaped near Sheffield in 1984 and is believed to have given birth to two young, but there is no evidence of a breeding population in the UK. Feral populations are established in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. More news on the local animal as it becomes available.

Dave Mallon

National Hedgehog Survey – A Students Tale

Jo Dent, a member of the Mammal Group, volunteered to carry out a survey for hedgehogs using the new 'Tracking Tunnels' available from the Mammal Society.

The Hedgehog is widely reported as undergoing a decline in the UK, and is now a Biodiversity Action Plan species. The Mammal Group were approached by Dr Richard Yarnell of Nottingham Trent University for help in surveying using the new tunnels. The tunnels consist of a triangular plastic tunnel, which houses a piece of paper and an ink pad. The idea is that the Hedgehog walks across the pad, and then the paper, leaving tell-tale tracks.

Tunnels are deployed for five nights, and the paper changed daily



Following is Jo's diary of her survey.

Hedgehog Diary

July 2012

Well I certainly picked a great few days to put out the hedgehog tunnels, it started to rain even before I had finished putting them out. The night before I had done a desk top study of my chosen 1km square and completed my GoogleEarth map so I knew where to place the tunnels. Before putting them out I prepped them following Dr. Richard Yarnell's protocol. This meant securing fresh paper in the tunnels and applying more ink to the masking taped areas. I then set out to put the tunnels in their allocated positions, once in place I put in some hotdog sausages as bait and went home with fingers crossed.

On the first day 2 out of the 10 tunnels showed intriguing footprints as I methodically checked each tunnel. Fresh hotdogs and new paper were added to the tunnels which contained tracks. It had been very wet in the night so many of the tunnels had become wet and in some cases the tracks were smudged.

Day 2 showed more intriguing hedgehog footprints this time in 3 of the tunnels.



My little boy helped me check the tunnels on the third day and to his delight we found 4 tunnels containing hedgehog tracks. Other tunnels contained rodent prints and a couple had domestic cat prints. It's funny to think what's prowling around at night whilst we are tucked up in bed. It tried to rain on us today but most of the tunnels remained quite dry.

Day 4 produced 4 tunnels with hedgehog tracks in as well as some rodent and domestic cat prints.

Day 5 after finding hedgehog prints on each day of the survey and having really enjoyed checking the tunnels I was disappointed but not entirely surprised to find my number 7 tunnel missing on the last day of the survey, luckily though the culprit had left behind the paper which had hedgehog tracks on it. I eventually found the missing tunnel a few days later whilst out horse riding about half a mile from where it had been taken so took it home and returned it to Richard Yarnell at Brackenhurst. After checking and putting my results in a table I noticed that tunnel number 5 had contained hedgehog prints every day

of the survey, this tunnel had been positioned on pasture land. I did notice that sometimes even though hedgehog prints were present that not all of the bait had been taken, it appears

either that the hogs were not that hungry, (it was very wet during the survey and there may have been a lot of food available) or that some hogs prefer hotdog sausages to others. Over all it was a very rewarding, enjoyable experience albeit a little wet and I am grateful to the mammal group for letting me take part.

Jo Dent
BSc Wildlife Conservation Year 2
Nottingham Trent University

A Rare Sunny Day

On the 18th of November the sun shone for the first time for many days as six members of DMG assembled at Home Farm, Calke Abbey, to undertake some coppicing in South Wood.

We were taken to South Wood by Bill Cove, Head Warden. Here suitably equipped with protective gloves, loppers, and bow saws we arrived at an area of hazel stools. A day or two earlier National Trust volunteers had chain-sawed down the larger trunks in each stool. Our job was to erect a fence round each stool to discourage the deer from browsing the fresh growth from the base of the stool.

Using the wood that had already been cut down, a set of upright stakes were driven into the ground and then the whippier branches were woven around the stakes. The resulting fence was about 1- 1.5metres high and fairly rough to keep the deer from leaning over. Attention was also paid to the base of the fence to ensure that any gaps were too small for Muntjac to sneak in at the bottom.



When all the designated stools had been protected we went to an area that had been previously fenced. Inside were several mature stands of Hazel. Here we experimented with different ways of encouraging the Hazel to regenerate. Several large trunks were split and bent over, some smaller ones were laid as if a hedge, a large branch was cut, and one large tree was left as a mature specimen. It will be interesting to revisit to see if the Hazel produces new growth as a response to our efforts.



A side product of our chopping and snedding was a large bundle of hazel sticks which will be used to create Osprey nests in the area.

At the end of the session all personnel and tools were counted. We returned to Home Farm for delicious homemade cake and tea.

Liz Lonsdale

The next edition of this newsletter is planned for Spring 2013. 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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