



# Derbyshire Mammal Group

## Newsletter

Spring 2015 Issue 26

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### Recorder's Report

The latest news about county mammal records, species distribution maps and the National Mammal Atlas.

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### Mammal Collection at Derby Museum

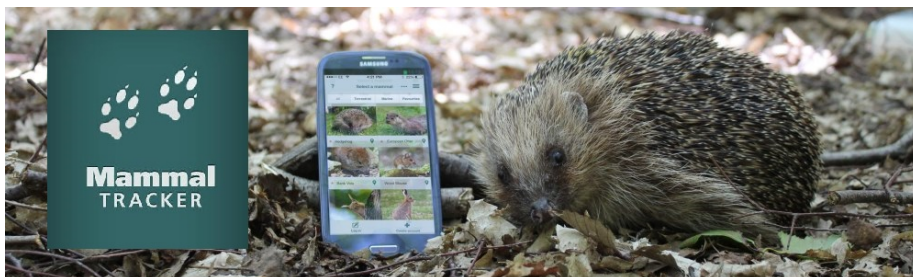
The mammal collection at Derby Museum is part of the refurbished Natural History display recently opened by Michaela Strachan.

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### Water Voles on the Cromford Canal

A look at the status of Water Voles on the Cromford Canal, with some excellent photographs to accompany the article.

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## Mammal Recording on the Move!

Do you want a quick and easy way to record mammals? Then Mammal Tracker might be the answer!

Mammal Tracker is the Mammal Society's app to help encourage records for the National Atlas project. The app will help you identify which mammal species you have seen with photos, descriptions, sounds and annotated images of those that are often easily confused, as well as making it easy to submit the records. Where possible try and get photos to accompany your record, especially for more unusual sightings. The records get sent to iRecord and are verified by a nominated expert. You can also visit the Mammal Tracker app's own website at [www.brc.ac.uk/mammal\\_tracker](http://www.brc.ac.uk/mammal_tracker) to see all records and find out if you are on the leaderboard for the number of mammal species you have recorded!

The Mammal Tracker app is Free and can be downloaded from Google Play or the App store. (The app works on iOS

version 6 or later for iPhone and version 4.0.3 or later for Android OS phones. It is not available on Windows phones).

Debbie is the verifier for mammal records in Derbyshire for iRecord and once verified, the records go forward to the NBN Gateway and a copy can be downloaded for local use. To date, more than 300 Derbyshire mammal records have been submitted using the Mammal Tracker. Comment from Dan Martin, a local user is 'make sure you register first before you try and submit a record, then it's a brilliant app (signal willing)'



Debbie Alston



Derbyshire Mammal Group now has its own Twitter account! We hope that this will attract some new members and a wider interest in mammals bringing in more mammal records.

The account went live on 12th April and within a 24 hours had 60 followers!



## Alvaston House Mouse

In February this year I was clearing out a shelf in our garage when I came across some chewed silver paper, which had been left in a box for recycling. Closer inspection revealed some small mammal droppings on the shelf too.

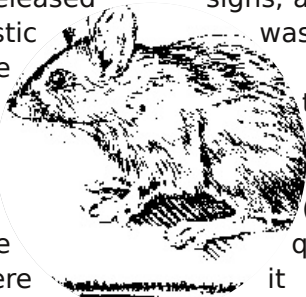
I checked the area in which we keep the small mammal trapping equipment, and found further evidence – more droppings and some seed which had been released from a chewed plastic milk carton. There was not a lot of mess, and so I concluded that the culprit had not been in the garage for long, though there was a strong ‘mousy’ smell. I had not noticed any signs when I had handled some of the trapping equipment earlier in the year.

We do get the occasional wood mice in our workshop, which adjoins the garage, and so expecting a wood mouse or two I set some traps, and after a couple of nights had the varmint.

Surprisingly, it was a house

mouse. We had noticed that the droppings were a bit smaller than normal wood mouse droppings, but had not thought much more about that; however, the animal was grey-brown on top and a little lighter below, and had smaller eyes and ears than a wood mouse – definite house mouse. In addition, the trap was noticeably smelly, and had been clean before use.

There have been no further signs, and so I assume that it was single animal.



To our knowledge there we’ve not had house mice here since we came (1986), so the question is: Where did it come from? We picked up a bag of hay from a farm (where we know there are house mice) back in the summer, but have noticed no signs until those referenced above, and these are in areas where we would have noticed any activity if there had been any in the previous 6 months.

So, I assume it either came with the hay and went away for a while, or arrived from elsewhere.

Steve Lonsdale

## Marine Mammals Quiz

Just a fun quiz by John Bland based on some interesting facts.

- 1) Which is the fastest marine mammal?
- 2) Which species of seal filter feeds in the way that whales do?
- 3) Which marine mammal can be described as odobenid?
- 4) Which whale's name means “white one” in Russian?
- 5) How many teeth does a female sperm whale have?
- 6) Which species of dolphin does not have a beak?
- 7) Which species of marine mammal was first found by Europeans in the Pacific in 1741 but was extinct by 1771?
- 8) How many teeth does a male Cuviers beaked whale have?
- 9) Which seal lives entirely in fresh water?
- 10) Which whales to these cryptic clues relate to?  
a) kMe b) SR c) like a camel

Answers on page 5

# Recorder's Report

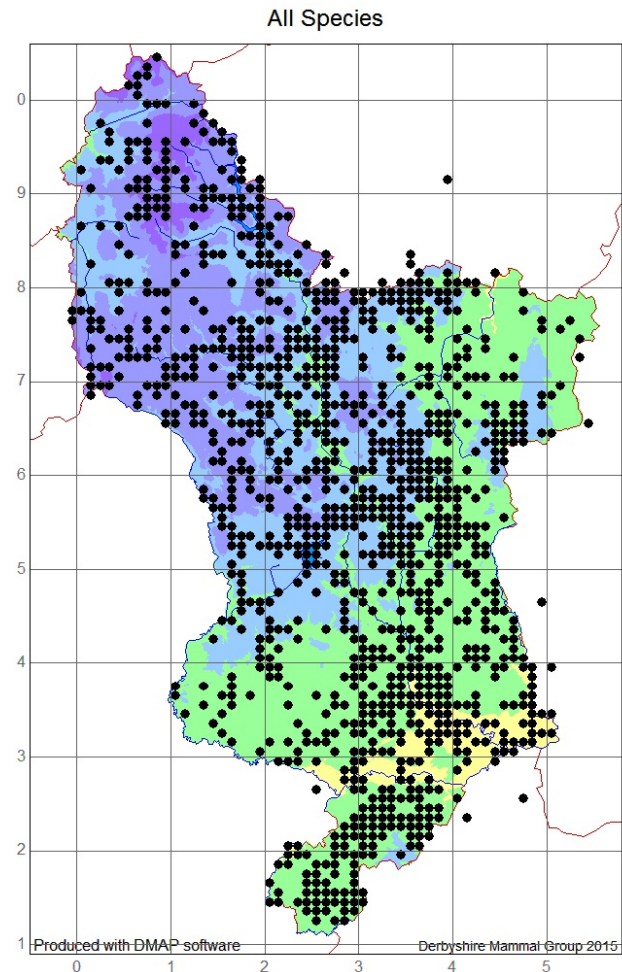
This time last year, I reported that 3,300 records have been received since the data was closed at the end of 2010 for the Mammals of Derbyshire book. The number of records on the DMG database now stands at 98,898. This is almost 4,000 records added since April 2014.

Records added included batches from: Shirley Freeman (more than 1,000 records!), Steve Docker, Malcolm Hopton, Dot Morson, Alan Willmott, Shirley Cross, Steve and Liz Lonsdale, Jo and Ian, Mike Williams, Chris Monk, Trevor Taylor, Stuart Robinson, Debbie and Dave Alston.

Group records were received from: Long Eaton Natural History Group, Dronfield and District Natural History Group, Findern footpath Group and the Moss Valley Wildlife Group.

As the county recorder, I am also the Derbyshire validator for mammal records submitted to iRecord (<http://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord>.) This is a national biological record database set up by the Biological Record Centre. It accepts any biological record from any individual once they are registered. All records require validation before being included on the NBN Gateway <https://data.nbn.org.uk/>. The Mammal Society is promoting it as the main way to encourage members of the public to contribute records towards the National Mammal Atlas. So far, I have validated 500 records and following some national promotion, there is now a steady trickle of records which require a weekly validation session to keep up with. Once validated, the validator can download the records for adding to any county set. The free Mammal Tracker app is making iRecord easier to use for recorders.

Following Derek Whiteley's update on the National Mammal Atlas project at the Christmas Social, I sent the Mammal Society a copy of the Derbyshire Mammal Atlas database (minus any records we didn't have permission to pass on) and encouraged both DWT and the Derbyshire Bat group to do the



same, so that Derbyshire is correctly represented in the National Mammal Atlas. A second set of records was sent in March to which included records up to 15th March 2015. A total of 76,277 records have been sent for inclusion in the national atlas. The same databases have been given to Derbyshire Wildlife Trust for conservation purposes (but not to be included in any consultant enquiries).

Species maps for records since the beginning of 2011 have been updated and will be uploaded on the DMG website during the next few weeks. The map above shows the distribution of any record since the beginning of 2011. This shows considerable gaps in our recording.

To help fill in any gaps in the National Mammal Atlas I have produced species maps showing records from 2000.



The National Atlas is recording on a 10km grid square basis and despite our diligence throughout the Derbyshire Mammal Atlas Project, there are still a few partial 10km squares in Derbyshire which don't have records for common species. These will form the basis of recording effort during the rest of 2015. Copies of the 2000-March 2015 species maps are in a DMG Dropbox Folder and a link can be sent to any DMG member who wants to help fill in the gaps.

I have spent some time this year helping mammal enthusiasts in Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire work towards setting up county Mammal Groups. In 2015 they will be working towards recording for the National Atlas, then continue for their own counties. The Notts Mammal Group <http://nottsmammals.org.uk/> will be launched on 9th May.

I have responded to 3 consultant enquires in the last 12 months.

My aim for the end of 2015 is to reach 100,000 records on the DMG database and to have filled in obvious gaps in the 10km grid square and sent off another batch of records to the Mammal Society for the Atlas project.

Debbie Alston  
DMG Mammal Recorder

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## Weasely done



Isle of Sheppey, Kent. A weasel bit off more than it could chew when it made the unwise decision to attack a heron. The mammal was seen leaping up and biting the large bird's beak. The annoyed heron scooped up the weasel and flew to a

nearby lake to drown it, dipping the weasel underwater twice to make sure it was dead before gobbling it up.

Source: Daily Mail Online. 9 March 2015.

Dave Mallon

### Mammals of Derbyshire

More than 420 copies of the Mammals of Derbyshire publication have now been sold

### Web site changes

The DMG web site will be changing from .com to .org.uk later this year. This will bring us in to line with other mammal groups nationally (most of which are .org.uk and more accurately defines the group as a 'not for profit organisation in the UK' as against .com which is intended more for commercial businesses.

# The Mammal Collection at Derby Museum

Derby Museums Trust has been working with local volunteer naturalists to revamp the natural history displays at Derby Museum. I volunteered to help them out with the mammal collection. Over a period of 18 months I helped them validate the UK part of the collection, chose specimens for the display and review interpretation material. I tried to choose good Derbyshire species and show, where possible, good poses for identification purposes, especially between commonly confused species.

The Nature Galley was officially opened by Michaela Strachan on 27th March and is now open to visitors. The gallery contains lots of specimens not seen on display before, including skulls, skins and skeletons. The Allenton Hippo has a bright new display cabinet. There are a number of museum guides with details about the specimens and species on display, including one for the mammal collection.

Go and see the nature gallery for yourself. It is open in the Derby Museum and Art Gallery, The Strand, Derby, DE1 1BS. Open Tuesday – Saturday: 10am-5pm, Sunday: 12-4pm and Bank Holiday Mondays: 10am-5pm

Debbie Alston



## Brown Hare by John Bland

Often seen hunkered down  
In a form, that's their norm.  
A brownish lump, it appears,  
A brownish lump with black tipped ears.  
In March, perhaps, you'll see a pair.  
You've heard the saying Mad March  
Hare.  
Something strange is taking place  
One sets off and one gives chase,  
Twisting, turning, like a rope,  
Nose to tail he sniffs in hope.  
Suddenly she turns and dances  
Rebuffing swiftly his advances.  
Boxing now, exchanging blows,  
Sparring, dancing, off she goes.  
Some time soon he hopes she might  
Let him know her time is right.

## Answers to Marine Mammals Quiz

- 1) Orca or killer whale which can reach 34mph
- 2) Crabeater, which don't eat crabs but filter krill with strange lobed teeth.
- 3) Walrus, whose scientific name *Odobenus rosmarus* means "tooth walking sea horse".
- 4) Beluga
- 5) None, only mature male sperm whales have teeth. It is presumed the females suck squid into their mouths
- 6) Risso's
- 7) Steller's sea cow, which was like a manatee or dugong but much bigger.
- 8) Just two, small ones in lower jaw
- 9) Laike Baikal seal but it is apparently threatened by pollution from paper industry.
- 10) a) Minke    b) Southern Right    c) Humpback



# Water Voles on the Cromford Canal

Amongst wildlife photographers Derbyshire is known as the place to go to see water voles. If we had to choose an animal to represent the county it would be at the top of my list. When I started writing this article I was concerned. It was late March and despite several visits to the Cromford Canal I had yet to see, or even see evidence of, a water vole. I knew that they had been sighted in other parts of the county such as Hilcote - but nothing on the canal. Whilst in previous years I hadn't kept formal records - my photo library provided a good source of data. This showed regular sightings from the end of March onwards, particularly in 2014. During a spell of warm(ish) weather on the 28th March I saw my first voles of the season, much later than expected. It is now the 11th April and in total I've spent nearly 20 hours at well-known vole haunts, across the length of the canal with only one further sighting, likely the same animal.

So how do my observations fit with those contained in the excellent Water for Wildlife newsletter published by the DWT in February?

Since I spent much of the summer of 2014 elsewhere, last year's visits were primarily in the period from March until the end of May. Later in the summer the vegetation was particularly lush. Certainly on the southern section, from Whatstandwell to Ambergate, the view of the canal was obscured in many places. Great for voles but not for watching. This doesn't explain the almost total absence of reported sightings from late summer on though.

Based on my observations 2014 seemed to be a good year for the voles with sightings on almost every visit to High Peak Junction, and the section from Whatstandwell going south to the canals termination at Ambergate. My trips to Cromford Wharf are infrequent but I've not seen a vole there for many years. A couple of Pike weighing maybe 3lbs inhabit this area - could this be a factor in the voles decline?

I don't subscribe to the theory that rising water levels have had a significant effect on vole numbers. On natural watercourses voles have evolved to cope with rapidly changing levels, moving young to higher ground when levels rise. On the canal levels have risen (I'm not sure by how much) but this probably happened relatively slowly and since they have not returned to former levels.



Based on a subjective assessment of vole sites, the areas with highest concentrations tend to be adjacent to bridges, or where there are old wharves. The steep sides and loose stonework providing an ideal site for 'burrows'. Such locations would typically be relatively unaffected by a slight rise in water levels.

As indicated in the newsletter recreational use of the canal seems to be increasing. Whilst this undoubtedly is having an impact, particularly at visitor hotspots such as Cromford Wharf, voles are present in other busy areas. During the spring and early summer of 2014 at least 5 animals were present within 100m either side of High Peak Junction. The southern reaches of the canal are typically much quieter, even most visitors to Whatstandwell tending to head north. Fortunately for much of its length, pedestrian access is restricted to one bank, providing a haven for wildlife – water voles, grass snakes, a sizeable population of wrens and even a long staying water rail! This does not necessarily mean that the voles will always inhabit these inaccessible areas. During the Easter period 2014 a particular vole seemed completely unperturbed by people, I had to resort to a macro lens at times.

As evidenced by the recent events when a vole was killed by a dog, they (or rather irresponsible dog owners) are a problem. Dogs eroding banks, causing disturbance both in and out of the water not to mention fouling footpaths and banks. Is it not time to introduce bylaws requiring all dogs to be on leads and designating some sections as dog free? Fencing bankside areas such as part of the picnic site by the café at High Peak Junction would also be useful.

What of other factors? Mink would certainly cause a problem but I've not heard of any sightings, and the mink platforms would alert the DCC rangers as to their presence. Habitat management could be detrimental, particularly if undertaken during the breeding season but overall is surely beneficial. 'Burrow' sites being created by the felled wood, and the increased light penetration being conducive to growth of vegetation on the banks.

Back to 2015. Looking back though my images vegetation growth seems to be at least three weeks behind 2014, so hopefully the season has just been delayed. I'll try to visit some other locations and more importantly I'll record my efforts and submit sightings. If you see someone with a toy dolphin resting on the end of a long lens say hello!

Tim Stenton



More images see Flickr - Tim Stenton  
[www.timthewhale.com](http://www.timthewhale.com)

The next newsletter will be published around September/October. Please send any articles to Dave Alston.  
Email:  
[newsletters@derbyshiremammalgroup.com](mailto:newsletters@derbyshiremammalgroup.com)

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this newsletter. Apologies to anyone who sent something to me but hasn't had it appear in this issue. It will be used in the next issue in the autumn.

Dave



# Carsington Mammal Project Update

In Jul 2014, the 2014 Carsington Mammal Project was launched. The project was initiated to update the mammal records from the 2004 project. The initial project recorded 28 different mammal species, the 2014 list was 31 species. The differences between them are that in 2004 red deer, fallow deer and harvest mice were recorded, but were not recorded in 2004. The list for 2014 confirmed the presence of polecat and polecat-ferret, as well as otter and soprano and Nathuisus' Pipistrelle. The Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group undertook a number of survey session at Carsington Water as part of the National Nathuisus' Pipistrelle Project.

I have yet to receive the full records from Severn Trent Water, but the table summarises the number of records for each species received at Carsington Water in 2014. In addition, common shrew, pygmy shrew and water shrew were caught in a small mammal trapping session in May before the project officially launched. A full analysis will be undertaken once the full records have been received and mapped.

Debbie Alston  
DMG Mammal Recorder

Species	No of records received
Rabbit	266
Grey Squirrel	234
Mole	102
Bat sp.	76
Badger	68
Fox	59
Brown Hare	55
Brown Rat	37
Water Vole	37
Common pipistrelle/Pip sp.	35
Stoat	31
Weasel	24
Wood Mouse	14
Field Vole	12
Hedgehog	11
Bank Vole	8
Vole sp.	8
Daubenton's Bat	8
Noctule	4
Soprano pipistrelle	4
Otter	2



Not a sight you see every day! Taken with a stealth-cam.  
Thanks to Jo Bissel for sending this in.

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