



Derbyshire Mammal Group

Newsletter

Autumn/Winter 2016 Issue 28

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Results from the October
2016 Dormouse box
check.

We checked 233 boxes
and found:-

7 Wood Mice
2 Common Shrews
1 Pygmy Shrew
3 Dormouse Nests
2 Dormice

See page 11 in this issue
for more on Dormouse
monitoring in Derbyshire

Jo Bissell

New Species of Mammal for Derbyshire!



A new species of bat, not recorded within Derbyshire since the last ice-age, has recently been recorded in the county. The rare barbastelle bat (*Barbastella barbastellus*) is a woodland specialist and is very distinctive because it is the UK's only bat which has black fur. All our other

species are brown or gingery in colour.

The echolocation calls were recorded by Derbyshire bat group member Matt Cook at a location in north-east Derbyshire. Barbastelles have been recorded in nearby Nottinghamshire for several years but no-one had recorded one in Derbyshire until one evening in September 2015 when Matt was out detecting bats in the area within his ultrasonic bat detector, following a tip-off from a nearby record made over the border in Nottinghamshire by an ecological consultant.

All British bats echolocate using ultrasound and bat conservationists use handheld detectors to listen to these calls to help identify which species they are listening to. The detector Matt was using was able to record the calls so that they could be further studied on computer software in more detail. The recordings were verified by the group's rare bats committee. Before this record, the last new mammal for Derbyshire was also a bat – the Nathusius' pipistrelle.

Barbastelles emerge from their roosts later in the evening as they are slow-flying and use this late emergence technique to avoid predation by predators such as tawny owl and hobby. It has a distinctive pug-shaped nose and its ears are broad and joined at the base on top of the head. It mainly feeds on moths but will also feed on flies and beetles. It is one of Britain's rarest mammals with an estimated 5000 individuals in England and Wales (is it not found in Scotland or N. Ireland) and on average weighs about 10 grams (the same as a £1 coin).

This record is one of the most northerly encounters of barbastelle in England, its UK stronghold is in the southern half of England. It is commonly found elsewhere across Western Europe.



Steve Roe
Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group

Water Vole Book

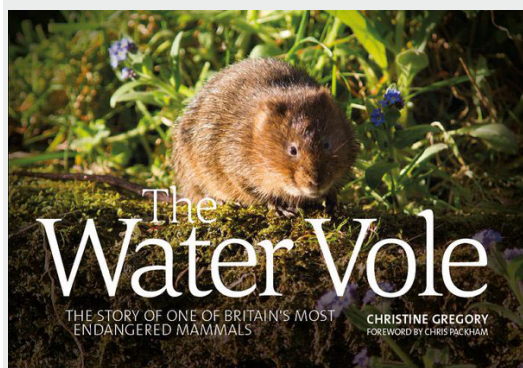
This wonderful book by Derbyshire photographer and author, Christine Gregory, tells the story of the water vole, past, present and future, principally through its history in the waterways of Derbyshire. Having spent several years studying Derbyshire's water vole population and habitats, and capturing their behaviour intimately through her photography.

Christine has developed a relationship with many of the custodians of the county's waterways, who are vital to the survival of the water vole. Decades of painstaking research into the decline of the water vole and the visionary work of conservationists give much cause for hope. Respecting our countryside and wild places and rebuilding the health of our rivers is key: we all have a role to play in the water vole's future.

The book is widely available in bookshops in the County, and also from the publishers Vertebrate Publishing <http://www.v-publishing.co.uk/books/categories/wild-life-photography-and-outdoors/the-water-vole.html> and if you use the code DWT30 for 10% off - every time it's used, Vertebrate Publishing will make a donation to Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

Members of DMG attended the launch of the book in February and Christine kindly gave an excellent talk on Water Voles at our AGM in April.

Debbie Alston



Derbyshire Otter

On Sunday 24/01/16, via the enquiries e-mail, we received information that an otter had been found dead on the A6 north of Rowsley. The otter had been hit by a vehicle but the cyclist who had found it had moved it on to the grass verge. He kindly sent a photo with his e-mail.



We, unfortunately, didn't pick up his e-mail until about 6pm that evening, but undeterred at trying

to find an otter in the dark, on a grass verge by the A6, Ian and I ventured out and found it.

Upon inspection, it was a female otter (*Lutra lutra*) and based on her size she was a juvenile.

So what do we do now? What any person would do – freeze her!



We went to the committee and suggested this would be a good opportunity to

have an actual Derbyshire otter for the group so should we get her stuffed? It was agreed, so we went about getting a licence for the possession of a European Protected Species and it was granted for the purpose of education.

We delivered the frozen body to the taxidermist on 12/03/16 and collected her on 14/08/16.

Jo Bissell



Christine Gregory and her Water Vole book, pictured at the book's launch at Hassop in February

Mountain Hare Walk 2016

Seven of us met at Severn Trent Water's Fairholmes car park and visitor centre in the upper Derwent Valley. It was a grey and cloudy day with a rather cold east wind, but at least there was no rain and visibility was good.

We set off along the minor road on the east side of the reservoir, past the site of the now drowned Derwent village and then headed steeply up the eastern side of the valley through fields to the edge of the moorland. Here we located the first two mountain hares, just below the rocks of White Tor on Derwent Edge. Both were rather greyish in colour as they had begun to moult back into their summer coat. A brown individual scuttling around the base of the rocks was watched for a while before being demoted to rabbit: the ID was confirmed when we reached the top and found lots of rabbit droppings and holes under the boulders.

The ridge lies at 487 m (almost 1600 ft), putting these among the highest altitude rabbits in Derbyshire. The upper slopes on this side of Derwent Edge are steep and difficult to traverse due to boulders and deep heather so we moved up on to the top of the ridge and followed the footpath north to the crags of Dovestone Tor. Four mountain hares showed well on the slopes just below, one of them still pure white.

We continued north along the edge seeing another three hares, one on a patch of snow in a grough and another loping over the snow eastwards. At Back Tor we took the footpath back down into the valley and eventually to the cars. Nine hares were seen in total, and good views had by all.



Dave Mallon

Ooh! Deer!

Our annual pilgrimage to Breckland is primarily for birds but we do look out for other things.

As we walked down the sandy path onto Lakenheath Warren we became aware that in the pine wood to our left a herd of about fifteen fallow deer included some pure white ones. They faced towards us, appeared to sniff the air and melted away into the trees. Ahead we could see small groups of red deer hinds. Several leapt over the wire fence between sections of the Warren.

Having ticked off our target species of woodlark we moved on and paused near the charch by the end of the runway of RAF Lakenheath. A muntjac scampered along the edge of the cultivated land. As a military plane roared out the muntjac surprisingly stood stock still, continuing its journey when the noise abated. A few hundred yards further on a family party of roe deer were nibbling the grass at the edge of a wood.

Nothing to unusual about those species I suppose, but four species of deer in under an hour seemed good going to me.

Sue Jones

Mercia Mammals

Living at Mercia Marina, Willington has given us the opportunity to investigate our small mammals. After attending a three-day course with Debbie at Preston Montford, we came back raring to go. We used four Longworth traps and were not sure how successful we would be.

We had no need to have worried; the first outing gave us a lovely bank vole, as did the second trapping session. Even more wonderful, as we were setting the traps a vole actually ran past us. Next, we added a wood mouse to the list. All these were caught in long grass close to a large soil and scrub bank which had been put in to help reduce noise from the A50. Also, mixed in with the soil were odd bits of masonry, old pipework etc. and these small mammals were delighted with this type of habitat.



High five from a vole? Whatever next? This picture went down a storm with everyone here at the marina.

Across four days of trapping we caught a total of four bank voles, one field vole and a wood mouse. We then moved the traps into some woodland for one night and had 75% take-up. All wood mice as you would expect, one juvenile male, an adult female and a very pregnant one. The best thing about all the animals trapped is the extremely good condition they are all in.

As well as trapping, we have also been able to identify, from other methods, fox, squirrel, weasel, rabbit, mole, shrews (as yet unidentified species) and alas, mink which will put the chance of water voles out of the question.

We are continuing our surveying and using a camera trap and observation throughout the winter months. Hoping to get others actively involved here as well as and set up some form of recording matrix. Looking forward to the future and loads more identifying. Told Debbie we are determined to have the first Yellow-necked Mouse in the county. Well, we can all dream, can't we? Hmm.. wonder if there is a stuffed one in Derby Museum we could borrow?



Keeping a close eye on us..

Jane & Neil Wakeham

When mammal recording becomes stoatally obsessive!

I'm told it is not uncommon amongst mammal enthusiasts to build up a collection of mammal 'bits and pieces'. Well, I'm guilty of building up quite a large collection of skulls, of poo and what I refer to as my 'frozen collection'. The 'frozen collection' is used for my mammal courses, but until they have been taxidermized professionally, they continue to go in and out of my freezer. I have a good range of British small mammals including all mainland shrews, most voles and mice, a mole and a weasel.

When I drove back from a weekend teaching in Shrewsbury I spotted a freshly run over stoat which would be a useful addition to the collection. The unfortunate animal was clearly dead having been run over, but was still warm. I quickly stopped, put some gloves on and placed the animal, still bleeding, on the rubbish that had accumulated on the floor of the passenger well. The rest of the 80 minute journey back was spent trying not to find any other reason to stop and wondering if the air conditioning would be sufficient to keep the smell at bay till I got home.



Once there, I took the stoat to the shed and went inside for some newspaper, washing up liquid and cotton buds. I gradually cleaned the blood off the animal's fur and out of its mouth. Having given most of the stoat a good lathering it resembled a very shaggy carpet, and required a good rinse, then the only 'sensible' thing to do was to get the hairdryer out – I've never given a stoat a shampoo, rinse and blow dry before!

I got the weasel out of the freezer and took a photo of the two together as they were in the same 'pose' making comparisons nice and easy. It is now labelled in the freezer with the others, awaiting taxidermy.

If you come round for dinner at our house, just watch which freezer I get the dinner from!



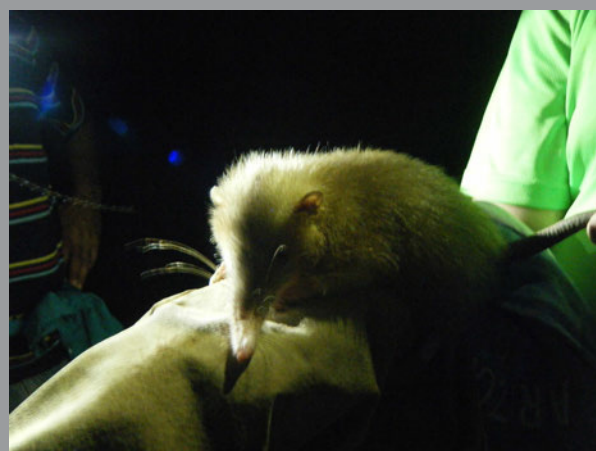
Debbie Alston

Hispaniolan Solenadon

In April 2016 we made a hastily arranged visit to The Dominican Republic to see a Solenadon. This animal is in its own family, head and body length 28-32 cms and with a naked tail. It lives in the forest active at night and sheltering by day in caves, rocky crevices or burrows they dig themselves. It has toxic saliva, very sharp claws and a long nose which is joined to the skull with a ball and socket joint. There are records of this animal dating back 23 million years and its ancestors go back 70 million years. When you read of a shrew-like mammal living with the dinosaurs think solenadon.

To see it you drive to the extreme SW by the border with Haiti, hire Nicholas as your guide and drive up into the mountains to an area of native forest. Nicholas walks off into a very dark forest full of holes; this is Karst (very sharp limestone with lots of caves). We then drove a short way down the hill and waited. To amuse ourselves we had visits from the locals, all interested in why we were there and shone spotlights into the trees just in case there was anything to see. We also used a bat detector and picked up a few calls, some very faint probably fruit bats and some much louder and lower possibly big brown bat. Eventually Nicholas emerged carrying a sack containing a very annoyed solenadon. We had a good look and took lots of photos before releasing the animal back into the forest.

We also saw a family of Hutias with Nicholas's help, for them we had to walk into the forest thankfully not very far. It had been raining so was very slippery and leaves covered some of the holes. We visited some bat caves and set some mist nets so managed 7 species. Lots of birds including 32 endemics. There had been a 15 month drought until we arrived, tropical downpours doesn't quite picture it. It rained for hours but mostly afternoon or overnight so in between we managed to squelch our way around. Some of the tracks were very slippery so the 4 wheel drive was essential. A great trip just goes to show months of planning are not always needed.



The annoyed solenadon

Shirley Cross

The next newsletter will be published around April 2017. Please send any articles to Dave Alston. Email: newsletters@derbyshiremammalgroup.org.uk 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 spring.

Attention cat owners!

Cat owners wanted to participate (long-term) in study on effects of cat predation on small mammal and bird populations.

At the University of Derby, we would like to investigate what effects cats truly have on small mammals and birds. It is well known that free-roaming pet cats, even if well fed, are efficient hunters. Yet, whether their hunting behaviour affects populations in the long run in Britain is less certain. For example, if cats concentrate on weak or young animals, populations might be less strongly affected than might be feared based on the pure number of killings per year.

We would therefore like to collect data on as many pet cats as possible. To do this, we need cats and their humans to help. 1) Cat owners could keep a "What-the-cat-brought-home diary". The information obtained from this would also be shared with the Derbyshire Mammal group (Debbie Alston), to extend the data set on mammal sightings. This diary should ideally be kept for as long as possible, but the data could be sent monthly to us. 2) We would also like to accompany this diary for some cats by videos taken by the cats themselves (see Fig. 1), since cats might kill and eat the prey away from home, or also pick up already dead animals and bring them home, pretending that they have killed them themselves.

These video-cameras are quite light (only 32g) and have a battery life of about 2.5 hours, after which they can be recharged. 3) We would also like to get information on home-range use by cats, using tiny GPS devices that again can be worn by the cats on a collar. 4) Finally, if mammal surveys are conducted, it would be great to place also some wildlife cameras in the area to determine how many cats use it.

Anyone who would like to get involved should contact Dr. Maren Huck, University of Derby, Kedleston Rd., DE22 1GB, Tel: 01332-592354, e-mail: m.huck@derby.ac.uk

Maren Huck



Female cat 'Treacle' wearing a 32g cat videocamera.

Roe-D casualty

On the afternoon of March 24, George Hudson telephoned to say that he had just driven past a dead male roe deer lying by the side of the slip road off the Chapel-en-le Frith bypass. After collecting camera and GPS I arrived within 45 minutes on the outskirts of Chapel to meet George. Only to find that the body had gone! The deer was last seen slumped against a gate, just off the road. We found a pool of blood on the road at the site of the collision, a smear of blood where it had been dragged off the highway, and more blood and some hairs on the grass where it had been left. Whether it had been cleared up by the local council (there is a depot nearby) or taken for roadkill, who knows?

A similar incident occurred a few years ago when DMG was alerted to a dead otter by the roadside at Burbage in Buxton. By the time we arrived it had disappeared. On this occasion it had been picked up by an ecologist from Penny Anderson Associates who spotted the body on his way into work, and we were able to collect and measure the specimen later, then send it off to Cardiff University for post-mortem analysis. This otter was on a suburban road, quite a long way from water; we assume it had been following the Wye upstream and ran out of river, then was channelled up the slope onto the highway. The lesson of these incidents is: if you find something by the road and want to record, photograph, collect or eat it, don't delay, because you never know how long it will be there...

Dave Mallon

Derbyshire mammal recorder's update: they all count!

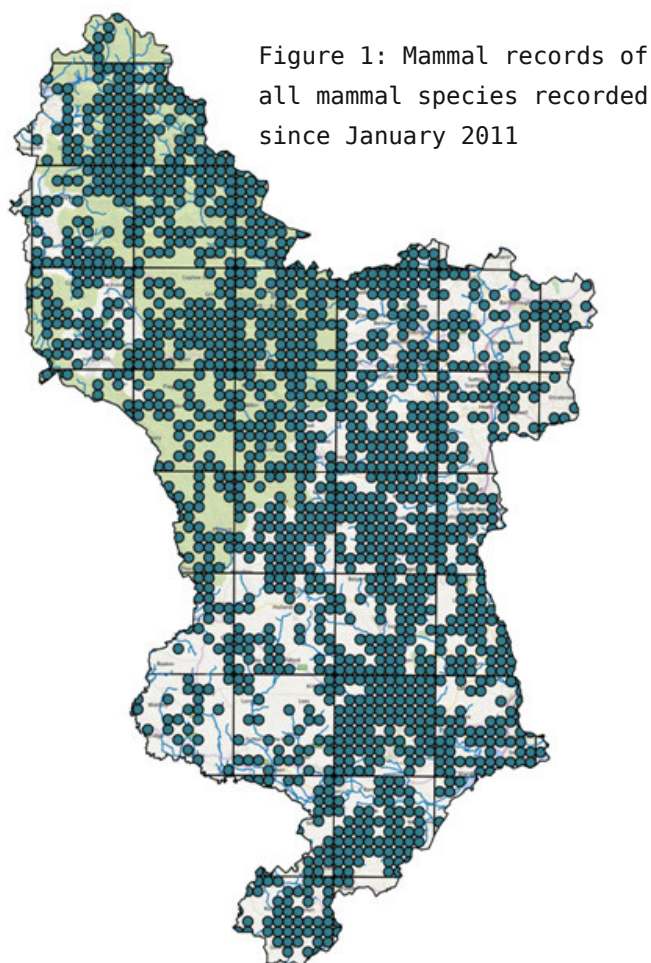


Figure 1: Mammal records of all mammal species recorded since January 2011

Derbyshire Mammal Group has been collecting records of mammals since its launch. They formed the backbone of our book *The Mammals of Derbyshire* which used more than 85,000 records to produce the distribution maps.

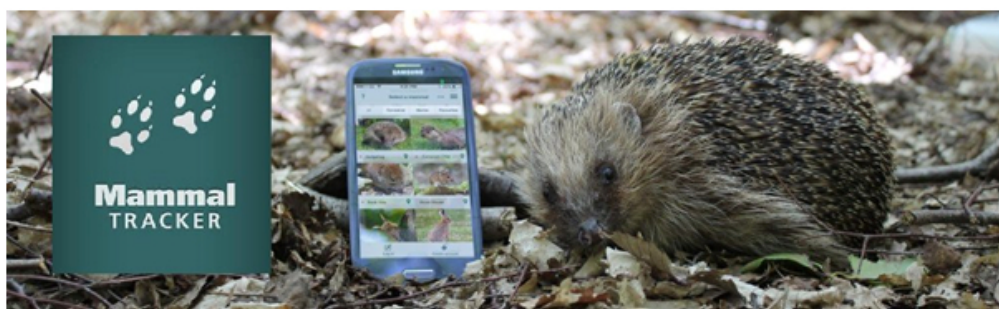
At the end of October 2016 we had 107,583 records on the database. I believe this is the largest county-wide mammal database in the UK (not that we are competitive in DMG!).

Figure 1 shows the distribution of all mammal records recorded since we closed the database for the Atlas. Without any particular additional effort, we have managed to get records from a good proportion of the county, but there are plenty of places where we have no recent mammal records, even molehills!

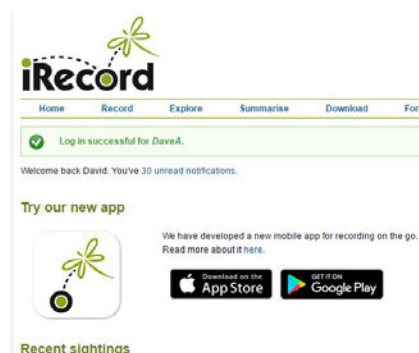
These records have come from a variety of sources. Almost a third of them came from iRecord and the Mammal Tracker app. A small number come from Twitter and to Derbyshire Natural History Facebook account and we have had a large exchange with Sorby and a dataset from DWT. The rest have come from our members in excel spreadsheet format.

Mammal records help us have an overview of the current status of all mammal species and work with others to protect and conserve the rarer species. As the County Mammal Recorder I am interested in any mammal records, either live sightings, dead mammals and signs, so that means molehills, fox scats, road casualties (including foxes and badgers) as well as grey squirrel sightings all count! There are a number of ways to contribute:

1. If you have a smart phone, the simplest way is to use the fantastic and free Mammal Tracker app. This was developed by the Mammal Society to make recording mammals very easy. It has some great identification photos on it and you can input records directly using aerial maps. Find out more from http://www.brc.ac.uk/mammal_tracker/



2. You can use the iRecord online biological recording website. This has been developed by the national Biological Recording Centre to aid with all record making across all recording including mammals. You can set up a free account and use it to record any species anywhere in the UK. You can add photos to the record if you are unsure of your identification or to help the person checking it if it is a rarer species (I use this to record anything outside Derbyshire as I don't know who to send them to directly). The Mammal Tracker app is linked to the iRecord database. iRecord can be found at www.brc.ac.uk/irecord.



Once you have input records in via the Mammal Tracker app or iRecord, all records go into a central database awaiting verification. This means that someone with specialist local knowledge of the group of organisms and the area, checks and 'approves' your records. I verify all mammal records sent in for Derbyshire. Once I have 'approved' the records, they are released to the national database and I can also then download the record to add to our county set, knowing that we have eliminated any dodgy records such as red squirrel records in Derby city.

3. You can submit records via the online form on the Derbyshire Mammal Group website <http://www.derbyshiremammalgroup.org.uk/form11.html>. (you can't add photos to this form)

4. You can fill in our excel spreadsheet available with some notes from <http://www.derbyshiremammalgroup.org.uk/records.html>.

5. You can send me details of what you saw, with the date, your name and a location and grid reference and any other comments to mammalrecorder@derbyshiremammalgroup.org.uk.

6. Scribble it on the back of an envelope and give it to me at a meeting or post it to 90, Over Lane, Belper, Derbyshire, DE56 0HN

If you need to get a grid reference, one of the easiest websites to use is UK Gridfinder which uses aerial maps. The more accurate the grid reference is the more useful the record will be. So a 6 figure grid reference such as SK123456 is more useful than a 4 figure one (SK1234). Rarer species would benefit from an 8 figure grid reference (SK12345678).

Prize winning competition I want to set the ambitious target of reaching 110,000 records on our database by the end of 2017 and as an extra incentive will be offering a small prize to the DMG individual member and DMG household members as well as organisation who submits the most records recorded between 1st January 2017 and 31st December 2017.

I look forward to you keeping me busy checking Derbyshire's mammal records in 2017.

Debbie Alston

Derbyshire Mammal Recorder mammalrecorder@derbyshiremammalgroup.org.uk

Deer Day at Calke



A good turnout for the Deer Day at Calke on 6th November. Although the fallow deer had quietened down, one red deer stag in particular was being quite vocal and seeing off rival males. We also had a look in nearby woodlands at signs of deer presence, measures to prevent damage to coppiced hazel and the understorey in general.

Many thanks to Bill Cove for his entertaining and informative talk on deer species, showing us around areas not normally open to the public and for the refreshments.

Dave Alston

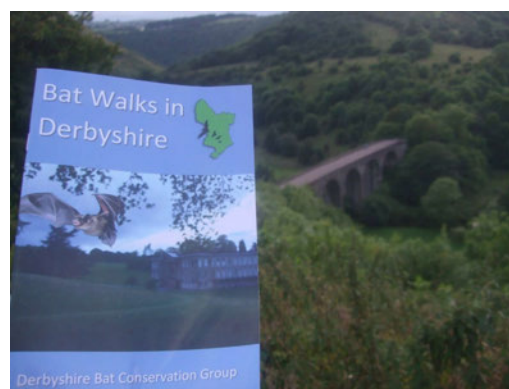
Have you ever wondered where are the good places to watch bats in Derbyshire? The Bat Walks in Derbyshire booklet will give you the answer. This fabulous little 52 page booklet is the answer. The Derbyshire Bat Group has written the booklet which includes a summary on the bat species in the county and details 12 recommended places to walk in summer evenings to see bats and the species you could expect to see.

Derbyshire Mammal Group members tried out the Monsal Dale walk in August and were treated to seeing 5 different species of bats.

Chris Packham, President of the Bat Conservation Trust says:

"I want to urge everyone to get into bats. I love watching these remarkable mammals swoop and pirouette as they catch insects. The Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group have created a wonderful resource for everyone in Derbyshire, regardless of whether you are a visitor or a resident, to go out and not just learn more about bats in the county but also experience the wonder of bats for themselves."

Debbie Alston



To get your copy visit the Derbyshire Bat Group website at <http://www.derbyshirebats.org.uk/batwalksbooklet.php> to buy it online for £2 plus p+p or see which local bookshops sell it.

Dormouse monitoring in the Peak

A Dormouse monitoring programme has been running in the Peak District for 11 years. Over 300 boxes have been erected throughout the wood and these are checked twice during the year and the results are sent to PTES. The boxes that are checked are purely a monitoring tool. To find Dormice is the best result but if only nests are found this is also positive. Even a nut that has been opened by a Dormouse is a good sign. This year the number of Dormice found was 3 over the 2 checking days.



What are the chances of that? Dave Mallon just had time to take this photograph of a dormouse in the entrance of the nestbox during the box checks in October this year. This was one of the plastic tubular boxes which are an alternative to the more usual wooden variety.



On site putting new nest boxes together. After a few years, the weather takes its toll on existing boxes and they need to be replaced.

Small Mammal Trapping 2016

Six Small Mammal Trapping sessions were organised through 2016 at Edale, Pleasley, The Avenue Washlands, Jim Mart, Hillbridge and Whistlewood Common.

We would like to thank everyone who took part. If we can also give special thanks to Sarah Helliwell, as she continues to make us very welcome despite all the other demands on her time. To those at the Avenue Washlands who donated £100.00 to DMG and to Ogston Bird Club for allowing us to survey at the same time each year.



Debbie managed to get a sample of a Heslinga Trap. We tried it out in the field, but will need a few more trapping hours with it before we can give a comprehensive opinion.



A woodmouse in the bag



Habitat at Edale

This newsletter has been made using the free, open source desktop publishing software Scribus 1.5

<https://www.scribus.net/>



Jo Bissell

Don't forget the group has a twitter account @derbysmammals now with 333 followers!



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