



Derbyshire Mammal Group

Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2017 Issue 29

In this issue

Hedgehog Tunnels
Pine Martens in
Derbyshire?
Fraser's Hill
Mercia Marina update
Hedgehog tunnels in use
Ecological rules, OK.

Small Mammal Trapping is still going strong. The next sessions are on 28/29/30th July at Uppertown, Matlock and then 11/12/13th August at Meaden Bridge, Bakewell. Contact Jo Bissell for more information.

We are going into our 12th year of monitoring at the Dormouse site. All data is added to the PTES national monitoring scheme. We have 2 official checks per year June & October but also a few maintenance days over the winter. If you want to come along please contact Jo Bissell to register your interest.

Hedgehog Tunnel Manufacturing



There was lots of activity making hedgehog tunnels at the Whistlestop Centre, Matlock Bath in Spring. These can be placed in gardens, etc. to check for signs of our prickly friends. Luckily, the weather was good so we could work outside and get a good production line of tunnels going.

The idea is to check for their presence by placing food half way into the tunnel. On the way in and out, they will walk over a harmless paint/oil mixture leaving their characteristic footprints on sheets of A4 paper.

See pages 7 and 8 for more regarding hedgehog tunnels.



Dave Alston



Notes on images:
Pine Marten (*Martes martes*) taken
in the wild on the Black Isle,
Scotland.
Ideal pine marten habitat



Pine Martens in Derbyshire - A case for re-introduction

Although I have lived in central Derbyshire for many years I seem to spend a disproportionate amount of my time in Scotland in general, and the Black Isle in particular. This is a peninsula – not an island – approx. 20 km in length, just north of Inverness. Most people just drive across it on their way to the far north.

From a wildlife perspective the Black Isle is best known as being home to, or more specifically at the core of the range of, the Moray Firth dolphins. A thriving population of around two hundred Bottlenose Dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*) being regularly seen here. Whilst it was the dolphins that first drew me to the area, there is plenty of other wildlife to be seen - including the Pine Marten (*Martes martes*). Viewed subjectively the Black Isle being a mixture of woods, farmland, small towns and farms is not dissimilar to Derbyshire so why don't we have any martens?

The simple and perhaps unsurprising answer is that we did – at least until they were exterminated, most likely in the 19th century. Subsequent sightings were analysed in some detail in an article by Dave Mallon in the autumn 2008 newsletter. The current situation is that we can state with a very high degree of confidence that neither Derbyshire, nor the surrounding counties support a viable breeding population.

In recent years the Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) has been leading a project to reintroduce martens back into their former areas. Under licence from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), they have successfully captured animals from several areas of Scotland and released them at locations in mid-Wales. Radio tracking and other monitoring indicates that they are doing well, and have bred successfully. The barriers to a successful re-colonisation in Derbyshire are likely to be social, political and financial as opposed to the lack of suitable environment. The preferred habitat of the Pine Marten is: 'structurally diverse woodland habitat, be it deciduous or coniferous, with a well-developed ground and shrub layer and some old trees.' (VWT). Like most mustelids martens are opportunistic feeders. Small mammals, eggs, carrion, birds, invertebrates, fruit and nuts being important components of their diet. They are not averse to foraging, for example around litter bins and will,

given the opportunity, take domestic fowl. They can albeit often after a considerable period of acclimatisation, be encouraged to visit sites where supplemental feeding occurs. This is how the vast majority of images of the species are obtained.

A beneficial aspect of a healthy population of martens is a reduction in grey squirrel numbers. Red squirrels are much less affected, possibly because the two species have co-evolved and the reds are smaller and spend a greater proportion of time in the canopy than greys. I have observed red squirrels feeding on the ground suddenly take to the trees only for a marten to arrive a short while later. Likewise after only a minute or so of the martens departure the squirrels resume feeding.

What is not often discussed is the marten's ability to exist around people. Being predominantly nocturnal they can be difficult to see. Human habitation presents potential den sites as well as a ready source of food.

So where in Derbyshire could pine martens live? Well anywhere from the plantations north of Matlock, through Chatsworth and into the Upper Derwent around the reservoirs – this was the last area of the county where sightings were reported in 1996-2003. Whilst none of these areas contain wooded areas to compare with those in Scotland and Wales I am sure that they could support a viable population of one of our rarest mammals.

Links:

www.vwt.org.uk/projects/pine-marten-recovery-project/

www.pine-marten-recovery-project.org.uk/

www.blackislehides.co.uk/ Highly recommended for photographing martens

Tim Stenton



Bison by John Bland

In the land of the Apache,
On America's wide prairie
Lived the mighty beast the bison,
Massive shoulders, huge and hairy,
In vast herds of many thousands,
Till the white man came to hunt them,
Then the bison lost the battle,
So the white man had his cattle
On the wide and rolling grassland
With his wheat upon the prairie,
Growing burgers for the millions,
For the poor and huddled masses
While the bison numbers dwindled,
But small herds are still there roaming
In Montana and Wyoming,
And the white men come to hunt them
With their telescopes and cameras,
For they're wonderful and rare,
But it does seem so unfair.

Surprises at Mercia Marina

We have had an exciting time here at the Marina. To start with, we have resurrected the wildlife group which sadly declined a few years ago. Now known as The Nature Society, it calls on everyone here to get involved. So, we have had dead shrews brought to us for identification, reports of sightings of foxes and weasel.

We have found what looks suspiciously like otter poo beneath the footbridge across the canal. This was found last year and again today, April 20th. Smells nice and has more fish scales than bones. We live in hope. Did put a camera trap there last year but only got a rat, surprise, surprise.



We took our mammal group out for a foraging walk and as you can see they were at first reluctant to get involved with sniffing poo, however they soon got the hang of it.

Luckily, we found lots of Field Vole



evidence good runs, latrines and food stores. This engendered a race to see who could find the best ones. All good fun. We had previously run a bit of a Mammal workshop with them all and had owl pellets to dissect. Everyone was engrossed for nearly an hour identifying the mammal bones. You would think they were all children instead of having a few years under their belts!

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?

Jane & Neil Wakeham

Fraser's Hill

Prior to our trip to Borneo we decided to have a couple of days near Kuala Lumpur to recover from the flight and adjust to the climate. I did the tiniest bit of research and saw the word Siamang (*Symphalangus syndactylus*) the largest of the gibbon family up to 1m in height and 14kg; that was enough for me to go the Fraser's Hill an old colonial hill station.

We were met at KL airport by our very friendly and efficient guide Wilbur. He drove us around KL and up into the hills. We passed some macaques (long-tailed and stump-tailed) on the way. Fraser's Hill is just what you expect; I thought a district officer or regimental colonel would walk out of one of the bungalows.

We lost no time before starting our birding on the area and soon found lots of species new to us. There were several Slender squirrels around so when we heard a rustle on the bank we assumed it was another squirrel. Imagine our surprise when a Binturong (*Arctictus binturong*) a viverrid otherwise known as a bearcat; rolled down the bank looking a bit stunned. It rested its head on its paws and just lay there. I thought I saw a tiny bit of blood on its head so it had, presumably, given itself a bit of a knock and was recovering from the stars in its eyes. After a few minutes it got up and staggered into the road (very quiet around here) and then moved off more rapidly to disappear into the bushes. A great view of an animal we were only to see dimly in a spot light in Borneo.



The following day we heard Siamang calling a long way away but only found Pallas's squirrel to add our mammal list. After lunch we had to decide whether to head lower down to look for other species or try the only road we had not walked on the hill. We chose the latter and it proved a good choice.

We watched from a vantage point before going higher and seeing some more birds, when Mike said 'I think I can see a black monkey'. My antenna went up as I tried to get him to tell me where. Sure enough there was a Siamang making its way towards us before moving down the hill. Back to the vantage point for a good view. As we still had some birds to see we went back up for another 20 minutes before deciding it was time to go.

This time as we walked down there were some White-thighed langurs in a big tree, terrible light. A bit lower down some Dusky leaf monkeys put on a really good show taking us back to the view point.

An adult and juvenile Siamang kept us amused for another half hour (so much for birding down the hill). We did stop for another Siamang and two Rhinoceros hornbills before returning to the big city for the night in a huge hotel. An event had closed some of the major roads, so we had a circuitous journey to the airport for our onward flights to Sabah and more interesting mammals.

We all decided it had been a great start to the trip with 9 mammals and 43 birds in the two days.



Shirley Cross

The next newsletter will be published around November 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.

Hedgehog Tunnels in Use.

Broomfield, Derby College Level 2 Animal Care student's Hedgehog Tunnel Tracking: April 31st-May 5th 2017. Comments from students and lecturers:

'Firstly, we would like to thank Debbie Alston from the Derbyshire Mammal Group and Derby University for letting us use your equipment.' James Finn Gartside

We were given everything we needed to undertake our survey, the tunnels, paper, paperclips, non-toxic paint, paint brush, petri dish, masking tape, hotdog bait, notices, tent pegs, guidance and recording sheets – Abby Bruce

'The results we got were amazing!' Chloe Sirett



'We got a lot of results not only from hedgehogs but from cats, mice, birds and probably more. Some of the prints we have yet to identify but some were most definitely hedgehogs. We weren't able to tell if they were the prints of our released hedgehogs but we now know there are definitely some on site.' Chloe Cartwright

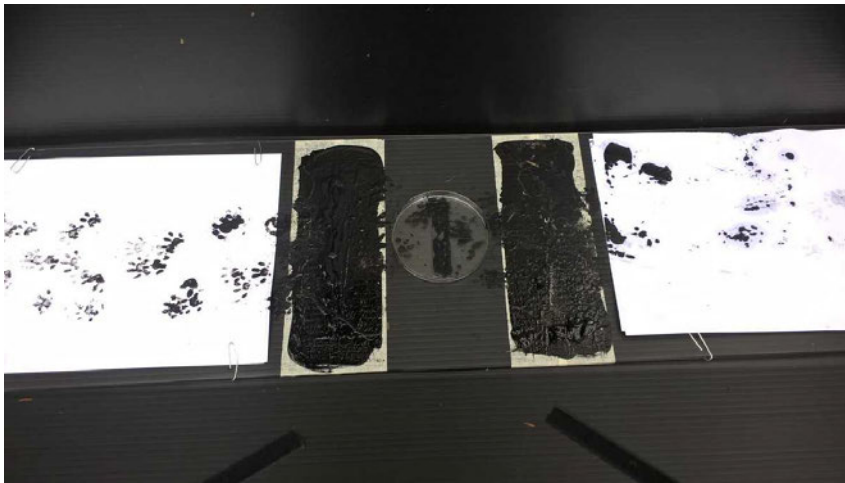
'I would recommend this to others as it is a fun activity for all ages and you can also do it in your back garden.' Niamh Mulholland



'During our course we have been doing a project on hedgehogs after the general public brought into college 3 hedgehogs because they were under weight and wouldn't have survived the winter. However, a few weeks ago we released these hedgehogs back into the wild and in order to track them (and to see if we already have hedgehogs on site) we used the mammal group's tunnels.' Bethany Wyld

'I, along with my tutor and fellow students, set up some tunnels around the Broomfield Hall Site. Inside each tunnel was paper, paint and hotdog meat. The hotdog meat was to attract the little hedgehogs, and the paper and the paint was to capture their footprints. Each tunnel was set and checked daily over 5 consecutive days.' Esme Prjanikov

'Keeping track of the hedgehogs is good as it allows us to ensure that they're still safe and it also allows us to continue our project on at college.' Finlay Gillespie



'It has given us a good prospective on what kind of wildlife is around us and has greatly helped my animal care studies as it closely links to our British Wildlife unit.' Demi Tipping

'Hedgehogs are important as they provide pest control and play an important role in food chains by eating insects.' Samantha Sturch

'The problem for hedgehogs is that people are destroying their natural habitat, causing numbers of hedgehogs to decline. Between 2003-2012 the number of hedgehogs fell by over a third. This statistic is devastating seen as though such a small creature has such a big importance. Hedgehogs are seen as an indicator species for the health of the natural world. So the decline in our beloved hedgehogs tells us that our environment is in bad shape.'

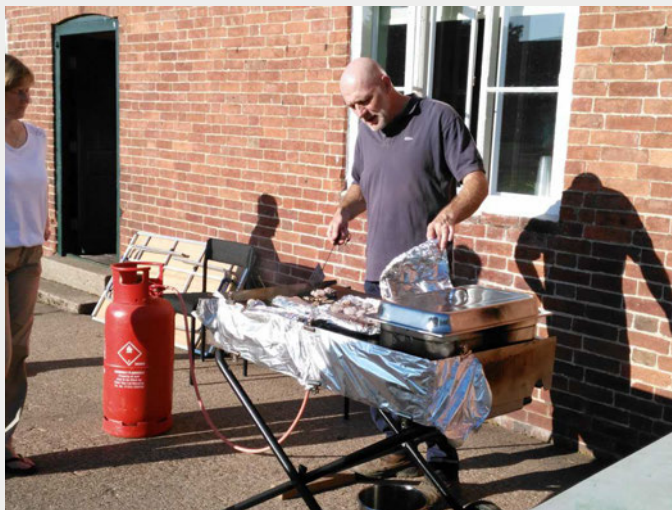
Esme Prjanikov

'It's interesting, educational and is also important to help boost populations. It is important to help not just hedgehogs but other animals in the UK.' Caitlyn Malthouse

'Photos can be found on our college website and 'Broomie the lamb' facebook page.' Chloe Sirett

You can apply for courses on Broomfield online now, get involved! -Abby Bruce

Compiled by Abby Bruce



A very enjoyable barbeque and bat evening at Calke in June, with members of DMG and Derbyshire Bat Group. Ian was as usual on top form with the barbecue. As well as bats, some of us also saw and heard Woodcock.

Dave Alston

Ecological Rules, OK

Paul Highman recently passed on to me a small volume entitled *A Glossary for Bird Watchers* by Michael Lister published in 1962 at a cost of 8s 6d. As an example of the sort of words covered there is an entry “mictogone see plethogam”. Amongst these words are a number of rules, laws and hypotheses which were held to apply to mammals as well as birds. I find these quaint and interesting though I don't know how many have any use or validity now.

Allen's Rule: in warm blooded animals the relative size of the exposed parts (limbs, tail, ears etc) decreases with decrease of the mean temperature of their habitat.

Baird's Rules: 1) North American mammals of wide distribution in latitude, whether migrant or resident, are larger the higher the latitude of their place of birth. 2) In the same latitudes of North America the specimens from greater altitudes are larger.

Bergmann's Rule: within a polytypic, warm blooded species the body size of a subspecies usually increases with decreasing mean temperature of the habitat.

Biogenetic Law: The hypothesis that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny ie that stages in a species' evolution can be seen in the developmental history of an individual organism from fertilised egg onwards.

Galton's Law: an individual derives its characters as follows ; $\frac{1}{4}$ from each parent, $\frac{1}{16}$ from each grandparent, $\frac{1}{64}$ from each great grandparent and so on.

Gause's Principle: a homogenous environment cannot support two very similar species; the better adapted form will gradually eliminate the other.

Gloger's Rule: Animals inhabiting warm and moist regions tend to have more dark pigment than their races in dryer and cooler regions and races in dry desert regions tend to have more yellow pigment.

Mayr's Rule: races in the cooler climates are often more strongly migratory than races in the more southerly, warmer climates.

Merriam's Rules: a) animals and plants are restricted in their northward range by the total amount of heat in the season when growth and reproduction are taking place and b) animals and plants are restricted southwards by the mean temperature of the six hottest weeks.

Rensch's Rules: 1) the races in the warmer climates have less underfur and shorter contour hairs than those of colder climates and 2) the number of young in a litter averages higher in cooler climates.

Seventy-five per cent Rule: a rule of taxonomists that before a subspecies can be accepted as valid 75% of one population must differ in any token character from 99% of the population with which it is compared.

Van Baer's Rules: 1) In development from the egg the general characters appear before the special characters 2) from the more general characters the less general and finally the special characters are developed 3) during its development an animal departs more and more from the form of other animals. 4) the young stages in the development of an animal are not like the adult stages of other animals lower down the scale but are like the young stages of those animals.

Willis's Hypothesis: other things being equal species which have existed longer will occur throughout a greater area than species of more recent origin.

John Bland

Not in Derbyshire but..

On holiday in the Yorkshire Dales this year we had good views of Red Squirrel, Weasel and Water Vole. No decent photos, unfortunately.

The Water Vole was near Malham Tarn, the weasel was running in and out of vegetation and limestone rocks between Malham Tarn and Malham Cove and the squirrels were at Snaizeholme, near Hawes.



Water Voles were recently re-introduced at Malham Tarn, after a long absence. The area has been free of mink for some time, so their chances would seem to be good.

Debbie and Dave Alston

This newsletter has been made using the free, open source desktop publishing software Scribus 1.5.2

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



Don't forget the group has a twitter account @derbysmammals now with 435 followers!



Derbyshire Mammal Group

Chair: Debbie Alston
01773 821804
debbie@debbiealston.co.uk
Secretary: Jo Bissell
07708 248776
Jo.ian@live.co.uk
Treasurer: Shirley Cross
crosssk@btinternet.com
Group Recorder: Debbie Alston
01773 821804 (evenings)
alston@debsndave.plus.com
Website Admin: Dave Alston
01773 821804 (evenings)
webadmin@derbyshiremammalgroup.org.uk