



HAM NEWS & DATES FOR THE DIARY

Herefordshire Action for Mammals Annual Meeting

GUEST SPEAKER: TRACKING THE POLECAT'S RECOVERY IN BRITAIN BY DR JOHNNY BIRKS

Come along to catch up on the latest Mammal News in Herefordshire! This year's meeting will be held in Ledbury Community Centre on Tuesday 4th November between 8.15 pm and 10.15 pm.

There will be displays, the book box, a quiz, refreshments, as well as a chance to meet other members, and find out about how you can become involved in surveys and mammal recording.

New members are especially welcome

Directions: Ledbury Community Centre is on Lawnside Road, next to the Swimming Pool. From the main street, turn down the road by the red tower of the library, (Bye Street) almost opposite the Old Market Hall, and take second right into Lawnside Road.

Mammal Recording in Herefordshire

My thanks to George Cebo and Dave Smith for their very regular recording efforts for all mammal species, polecats, house mice, moles, bats etc. At HAM's AGM last November, the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre displayed the maps of mammal records for Herefordshire and the amazing number of blank areas with no records for even the commonest species. The efforts of George and Dave, who have, so far this year, sent in 76 and 83 records respectively, are therefore most laudable. Following the AGM, Clive and I set ourselves the task of recording in the many blank tetrads (four km squares) of NW Herefordshire. This is proving a thoroughly interesting project and certainly meets with the approval of our Border Collie; a new walk every week!

Before we all meet at the next HAM AGM, please may I urge all members to **SEND IN YOUR MAMMAL RECORDS!**

Val Jermy, Recorder

Small Mammal Survey Course

The Mammal Society run a number of courses one of which is a Small Mammal Survey Techniques course. To be able to do this we require a Maximum of 15 people to sign up for it. If we can generate enough interest there is a possibility we could run the course in Herefordshire as opposed to travelling to Somerset.

If anyone is interested please email Fiona McLoughlin on fionamcloughlin@fsmail.net and we can then look into the options available. Please note there will be a charge for the course which we will be able to confirm once we have an idea of numbers.

Fiona McLoughlin

QUEEN ELIZABETH HUMANITIES COLLEGE
Join us for a great family day celebrating the commissioning of our new wind turbine

Winds of Change

BROMYARD ECOFEST 2008

Eco-friendly trade stalls	Chain Saw sculpting
Live music and dance	Blacksmithing
Barbecue	Photography
Teas and lunches	Cakes and preserves
Hybrid motors	Woodwork
Alternative energy displays and installers	Children's fairground rides
Eco-school displays	Bouncy castles
H&W Fire Brigade engines and smoke house	Sumo suits
Flower and vegetable competitions	Gladiator joust
Eco-Art display	Commissioning of the QEHC Wind Turbine
Mini-Eco gardens	and much more

7.30pm Green Tie Dinner
Dinner and Dance tickets £30
Dance ticket only £10

Evening

9pm Dance
Grand Auction
Bar 'till late
Live Band
Disco

TICKETS AND INFORMATION
ANNE DAVIES (QEHC) 01885 482230
adavies@queenelizabeth.hereford.sch.uk
www.queenelizabeth.hereford.sch.uk
www.bromyard.info

 **SATURDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2008**
12 - 4.30pm **£2 ADULTS, £1 UNDER 16s**

SPECIAL GUEST "BRITAINS GOT TALENT'S" KATE AND GIN

Ecofest

HAM is holding a stand at the above event on Saturday 13th September. If anyone would like to come and help at the stand for a couple of hours, then please get in touch with Jessica Lamerton on jessicalamerton@yahoo.co.uk. Please also spread the word about this event or bring along your family and show some support to the cause of the event.

Jessica Lamerton



DORMICE

To Licensed Dormice Surveyors- A Plea for Poo!

A PhD student is starting a project to analyse the diet of dormice from their droppings. This is to find out what dormice eat in different habitats. Do they eat more insects? She would like samples of droppings which may be produced in the bag when checking boxes for the NDMP, or may be attached to torpid dormice. Please contact cherylmillsuk@yahoo.co.uk or call 01326 374243 or 07962432524 for sample bags, recording forms and stamped sac.



National Dormouse Monitoring Programme 2007 Results

Here is a brief resume of the findings, full details are available from P.T.E.S.

- ◆ Despite May, June and July 2007 being the wettest months on record, it does not appear to have affected dormice records from the box schemes.
- ◆ 188 sites around the country are monitored with 4752 dormice recorded, an average of 4.5 animals per visit.
- ◆ Wood mice, yellow necked mice, bats, common and pygmy shrews, bank voles blue tits and even a toad were found in the boxes. (No mention of slugs and woodlice!)
- ◆ Baby dormice were found in May, which is very early.
- ◆ The heaviest dormouse weighed in at 39g (usual range is 25 – 35g)
- ◆ Two sites, in Kent and Essex recorded an average of more than 1 dormouse per box!

This makes the results of the Herefordshire box schemes a little depressing! At Queenswood Country Park the number of dormice found has declined from 20 to 1 in the last 6 years. Why? It could be due to a number of reasons, but probably not the weather

Hilary Smith

Dormouse Update News

Dormouse Nest Box Scheme in Herefordshire

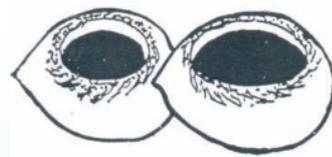
Findings so far this year:-

- 1 dormouse at Yoke Wood, Dinmore Hill
 - 1 dormouse in bird box at Whitmans Quarry
 - 1 dormouse in April at Queenswood, Dinmore, no new nests.
 - 6 babies in box at Queenswood, Dymock
- Despite regularly finding dormice at this site, none were to be seen when Channel 4 came to film! Sensible animals.

Queenswood dormouse box checks: 17th Sept and 15th October at 9 am. Contact Hilary smith on h.smith1@mypostoffice.co.uk

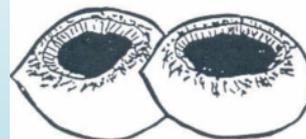
Dates for Dormouse Box Checks on Garway Hill coming up.

Hilary Smith



Dormouse - showing the smooth inside surface to the hole with toothmarks around it on the shell surface.

Bank vole - showing only corrugated toothmarks round the edge of the hole and no markings on the shell surface.



Woodmouse - showing toothmarks similar to those of the bank vole around the inside of the hole but with markings on the shell surface as well.

GO FOR A NUT HUNT THIS AUTUMN!



Breeding Bechstein's Bats Found in Herefordshire!

Monday 21 July 2008 was an important day for Herefordshire's bats as, after much anticipation, and many bat box checks, a group of bat enthusiasts from Herefordshire and Worcestershire were able to confirm the presence of breeding Bechstein's bats in the county. Old Country Wood near Coddington is part of the justifiably famous Old Country Farm where wildlife abounds. In addition to the Barn Owls, Badgers, Hazel Dormice, Barbastelles, Noble Chafers, Nightingales and general biodiversity we can now add Britain's rarest breeding bat species. Up to twelve females complete with young were discovered in one of the one hundred strong bat boxes in the wood, where Stephen West, the chairman of the Worcestershire Bat Group, is also the Woodland Manager.

"Having been involved with Bats and bat conservation for over twenty-eight years" said Stephen, "this is one bat species I had never previously encountered and, as a true ancient woodland bat species, the holy grail of bat discoveries. To find a group, complete with babies, roosting in one of the woodlands with which I am involved, and right next to my grazing forestry of horse and Dexter cattle, was a truly rare and exciting privilege!"

Woodland management planned for this autumn to significantly thin out the trees in this part of Old Country Wood are now being reappraised. Stephen explained that no breeding Bechstein's bats had been seen in Britain in the 150 years prior to 1998 when a similar colony was first discovered in Sussex. Although extremely rare, this bat was once our common bat species (though admittedly that was some 10,000 years ago!). What has changed since then? Well perhaps it is the felling of woods, and the general disconnectedness of our remaining prime woodland sites. It is thought that good hedgerow links allowed to grow tall and tilt over to form corridors; natural streams and wet areas within woods, and good roosting and feeding habitats are key to the conservation of this rare and very engaging bat species. The bat box scheme, instigated by the Vincent Wildlife Trust has been monitored for more than five years and the box checking will now be an even more interesting way to spend a day off work.

Contact Stephen on 01684 540145 for more information.

Steve West



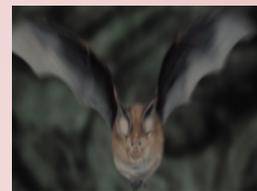
Bechstein's bat



Myotis bat



Long Eared Bats



Lesser Horseshoe

NBMP Surveys

Throughout the summer HAM members have been carrying out National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) surveys across the county. This year, we have managed to count some roosts, which have not been counted for several years including the Weir Lodge which had a peak count of 538; The highest for this site. All records have been sent to the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre and then on to the Bat Conservation Trust.

An evening survey of Ast Wood was carried out on 10th August which was attended by 15 members. Bats recorded in the woods included Common and Soprano Pipistrelles, Long Eared Bats, unidentified Myotis species and single pass by one Lesser Horseshoe bat. A first for Ast Wood. Weather permitting more evening surveys of woodlands will be carried out in September.

Bat Box Checks

This year bat boxes will be checked on the fourth Sunday of each month. Starting at AST Wood on 28th September. Three or four woods will be checked in rotation.

Dave Smith



OTTER NEWS

Update on Otter road kills

Several more otters have been killed on our roads since Tim Barber's report in our Spring Newsletter. As Tim explained, the Environment Agency like to pick up **all** dead otters and send them for a post mortem to their Biodiversity team in Cardiff.

The body can be invaluable as a source of information, not only about the health of the individual Otter prior to death, but also as an indicator to the health of the local otter population and of the environment.

What to do if you find a dead Otter.



The Biodiversity team tell me it's best to phone them direct on Cardiff 02990 245 168 – office hours (other numbers are customer services 08708 506506, or the 24-hr: 0800 807060). The otter is picked up at their cost.

You will need to give the following information: the exact location of the dead otter – road number, place name, grid reference, if known; time of discovery and time of death, if known; your own name, contact no. and address, and was this a lactating female?

DO NOT COMPROMISE YOUR OWN SAFETY but it may be helpful to move the body off the carriageway. And at weekends there could be delay in the EA picking up. On the only hot Saturday this summer we were able to get a freshly killed otter into coldstore, courtesy of the local vet, until collected by the EA during the following week. Photos or a sketch map of the location and notes on the immediate habitat can also be useful to the EA and may eventually lead the problem of black spots being addressed. Don't forget to enter the details onto your own HAM recording sheet and do call us if you need help.

Val Jermy



HEDGEHOG & MOLE NEWS



ONLINE SURVEY FORM

HAM has designed a new way of submitting sighting forms of Hedgehogs and Moles for our records surveys. It is quick, simple and easy to fill in, all you need to do is put in where you saw your mammal, the date and your name. If you have further details, then that would be most appreciated by the records office i.e. grid reference etc.. I myself have used it many times, and found it most efficient if you don't want to do a hard copy form and post it. Please follow the below link and the instructions once you are on the site, it takes a minute or two of your time. Alternatively if you are happy to fill in a hard copy form and post it in, there is a version of the form attached with the email sent with the newsletter.

www.freewebs.com/hedgehogsurvey - online survey form. We are currently updating the site with moles too.



With regards to recording moles, it is probably easiest and best to record them by a range of mole hills in a field or garden, as it is difficult to determine how many there are in any one given place. A few mole hills in one place could perhaps be just one mole or possibly two. When completing forms, mark where you viewed your mole hills.



Jessica Lamerton



The History of bovine TB

During the 1930's dairy cows were found to be infected with *Mycobacterium bovis* (responsible for tuberculosis in cattle and other mammals). Many were kept near large cities to provide people with fresh milk, because most milk was drunk raw (untreated) milk-borne human *M. bovis* infection was a major public health risk.



During this time, over 50,000 cases of human TB were recorded, with an estimation that 2,500 people were dying annually.

To control the problem in 1935 the Government introduced a voluntary TB testing scheme for cattle, a testing and slaughter program became compulsory in 1950 and pasteurisation (heat treatment) of milk introduced.

The Badger

Cattle, buffalo and bison, are the natural host of *M. bovis*, but nearly all warm-blooded animals are susceptible to the infection. Badgers were identified as being potential contributors to the spreading of TB to cattle, and from 1973 to 1998 various forms of badger culling was carried out.

In 1998 an Independent Scientific Group on cattle TB was formed to look in to methods of controlling TB. A Randomised badger culling trial was introduced, it was conducted in 30 areas of England each area measuring approximately 100km². The areas were split in to three groups, proactive culling (annual culling), reactive culling (culling badgers where recent outbreaks of TB in cattle occurred) and a no cull area where badgers were surveyed. In the proactive areas the incidence of cattle TB reduced by 23% and in the reactive areas cattle TB increased by 20% but it was found that just outside both areas cattle TB increased by 25% due to the detrimental effect on the ecology and behaviour of the badger, reactive culling was suspended in November 2003 and proactive culling in 2005 following the culling of 10,979 badgers.

The Final Report of the Scientific Group concluded that benefits of culling were modest, and only 14 breakdowns were prevented after culling 1,000km² for five years. And given its high cost and low benefits badger culling is not a useful control of cattle TB.



The next step

On the 7th July 2008 Hilary Benn, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs announced that no licence would be issued to cull badgers for TB control and that £20 million additional funding over the next three years will be spent on vaccine development.

Who gets the Vaccine

An injectable badger vaccine will be the first with a oral badger vaccine to follow this is thought to be likely available from 2010-2014, a cattle vaccine will also be produced by 2015. EU legislation currently prohibits the use of a TB vaccine.

TB Statistics 1st January ~ 31st May 2008 for Hereford and Worcester

Number of cattle tested for TB: 155,476

Number of cattle slaughtered due to TB: 1,454

Tim Barber

OTHER NEWS

Water Vole legislation change – From April 6th 2008

Water voles are now fully protected against being intentionally or recklessly killed, injured, or taken from the wild. For full details see:

www.naturalengland.org.uk/conservation/wildlife-management-licensing

MAMMAL SOCIETY AUTUMN SYMPOSIUM 14TH & 15TH NOVEMBER LONDON ZOO

Mammals in Urban Environments

If you are interested in mammals, want to catch up with latest research, meet fellow mammal enthusiasts, and get a free visit to London Zoo it is well worth attending this symposium. See Mammal Society website for details:

www.mammal.org.uk or ring 02380 237874

FLEAS!

Dormouse (or bird box) checkers will have come into intimate contact with fleas. You might now be interested in the newly published National Distribution Atlas of Fleas, the result of over 50 years work! Available from the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology.

People's Trust for Endangered Species – (wildlife at home and abroad)

15 Cloister's House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London
SW8 4BG 020 7498 4533 www.ptes.org

More Animal Fun Video's

Click on the below links to see some animal action, you will need sound!!!

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=igF1G7qbSgE&feature=related> - Baby Koala

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvYfa4AD1c> - Baby Hedgehog

Jessica Lamerton

If any HAM members wish to contribute articles, stories or photographs of interest then please do send them in to the Newsletter team at: hamnewsletter@hotmail.co.uk

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