



HEREFORDSHIRE MAMMAL GROUP SUMMER NEWSLETTER

(July 2014 to September 2014)

What's Inside?

Title	Page
Summer Events	1
New Members	2
News in Brief	2
Tribute to Rob Strachan	4
Dormouse Co-ordinator Update	5
Bat Co-ordinator Update	6
Herefordshire Mammal Atlas Update	7
Highlights from the Mammal Conference 4-6 April 2014	8
Badger Vaccination	10
Website and Facebook	11
HMG Contacts	11

Summer Events

JULY

Saturday/Sunday, 05 - 06 July 2014

BatFest - London

This is not organised by HMG
Further details available from the BCT website

Tuesday, 08 July 2014, 21:15

NDMP Field Survey

Searching for pipistrelles and big bats
Coddington, Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Thursday, 17 July 2014, 10:00

Dormouse Box Check

Ast Wood, near Ledbury (Approx SO674379)
Contact Dave Smith 07905 849842 or 01432 266937

Saturday, 19 July 2014, 20:45

Woodland Bat Project – Mist Netting, Harp Trapping

Haugh Wood South, Meet in car park
Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Tuesday, 22 July 2014, 21:00

NDMP Field Survey

Searching for pipistrelles and big bats
Coddington, Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Friday, 25 July 2014, 20:45

Woodland Bat Project – Mist Netting and Harp Trapping

Frith Wood, Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Friday, 26 July 2014, 20:45

Woodland Bat Project – Mist Netting and Harp Trapping

Mowley Wood, Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Sunday, 27 July 2014, 10:00

Bat Box Check

Lea and Paget's Wood
Meet in lay-by at the side of road at about SO595346, Contact: Denise Foster via HMG

AUGUST

Saturday, 02 August 2014, 13:00

Bat Box Check

Double event at Ast Wood, Nr Ledbury
Meet inside wood at approx. SO674379
Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Saturday, 02 August 2014, 20:30

Woodland Bat Project – Mist Netting, Harp Trapping and Static Netting

Double Event at Ast Wood, Nr Ledbury
Meet inside wood at approx. SO674379
Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Saturday, 09 August 2014, Afternoon and Evening session

Bat Box Check, Mist Netting and Harp Trapping Event, Old Country Wood, Mathon

This event is part of the Woodland Bat Project but it also serves as an outreach event which the landowner has requested. This event will be publicised as "An Introduction to Bats" evening

for the local community. We would appreciate some experienced bat workers who can handle, identify and process bats confidently for this event. Numbers will be limited at this event
Contact David Lee or Denise Foster via HMG

Friday, 29 August 2014, 19:30

Woodland Bat Project – Mist Netting and Harp Trapping

Mowley Wood; a late finish is expected
Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Saturday, 30 August 2014, 19:30

Woodland Bat Project – Mist Netting and Harp Trapping

Haugh Wood South, Meet in car park
Contact Denise Foster via HMG

SEPTEMBER

Friday, 19 September 2014, Evening

Woodland Bat Project – Mist Netting and Harp Trapping

Old Country Wood, Mathon
Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Sunday, 21 September 2014, 10:00

Bat Box Check

Lea and Paget's Wood
Meet in lay-by at the side of road at approx. SO595346, Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Friday - Sunday, 26 - 28 September 2014

Mammal Surveying and Trapping Weekend - Johnny Birks

Small Mammal Trapping, Otter Surveying, Trapping for Stoats and Weasels
Location: Herefordshire
Full details to follow
Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Friday, 26 September 2014, 18:30

Woodland Bat Project – Mist Netting and Harp Trapping

Part of the Mammal/Surveying and Trapping Weekend, Moorhouse Wood, Contact Denise Foster via HMG

NEW MEMBERS

We would like to welcome the following new members to HMG:

Steve Evans, Samuel Walker, Trina Barrett, Sophie Cowling, Angus Walker, Beck Baker,

Charlotte Long, Linnet Whiston, Sam Jones, Fergus Henderson, Mark Barber, Mike Davies, James Bisset

NEWS IN BRIEF

Membership and Facebook

We currently have 69 paid up members in HMG and 91 followers on Facebook. This is a significant increase from last year.

Bromyard Downs Bioblitz 2014

HMG will be undertaking small mammal trapping and bat surveys on Bromyard Downs on the 11th and 12th of July. The event will be organised by *Herefordshire Nature Trust* who are keen to record as many species as possible in a 24 hour Bioblitz. Details are available on the HNT website. All HMG members, their families and friends are welcome to join in. Members who would like to assist can contact Louise Scott at lscott330@hotmail.co.uk to express their interest.



Celebration of the Hedgehog Week – May 2014

The Herefordshire Mammal Group was invited to set up a display stand in Ross Library to promote the work of the group at the *Celebration of the Hedgehog Festival*. We had a few people visit and show interest in our stand and also a lively, but well-behaved, school party of over-enthusiastic nine year olds.



Photo - exhibits we had displayed on our table in Ross Library.



Photo – Denise Foster with Princess – a captive common pipistrelle bat

National Hedgehog Survey by Dave Smith

The Western European hedgehog is widely believed to have undergone a marked decline in Britain in the last few decades. As a result, the species has been highlighted as being of conservation concern. Studies are, therefore, urgently required to identify the current distribution of the species, to determine factors affecting this distribution and to serve as a baseline against which future changes can be compared.

Consequently, the University of Reading and Nottingham Trent University, in collaboration with the People’s Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society (BHPS), are conducting a National Hedgehog Survey. To complete this survey, the organisers are looking to enlist the help of volunteers to survey designated sites across England and Wales using footprint-tunnels. These simple devices consist of a triangular

plastic tunnel which houses a tracking plate containing sections of paper and ink; as a hedgehog moves through the tunnel, copies of its footprints are left on the paper for identification. To help attract hedgehogs into the tunnels, commercially available hedgehog food is used as bait.

There are ten survey sites in Herefordshire waiting for volunteers. If you are interested in taking part please contact Dave Smith to be assigned a survey site as close to your home address as possible. Tunnels will be provided by the survey organisers.

This is a great opportunity to take part in a national survey and also to contribute to the *Herefordshire Mammal Atlas* by providing records of not only hedgehogs, but also many other small mammals. Volunteers must be able to dedicate a couple of hours on five consecutive days anytime between now and the end of September. Contact Dave Smith for details.



Photo: Hedgehog tunnel in action. Photo credit, Barry Kemp

Big Black Cat Sighting in The Doward

Clare Balding, presenter, writer and broadcaster starred on a recent BBC Radio 4 *Ramblings* episode in June featuring the Wye Valley. Whilst Clare and two friends were walking in the Doward near Ross-on-Wye, Clare witnessed a large black cat which she described as a panther sitting in the middle of the road.

Woodland Mice. An unusually successful year!

At the latest dormouse box check in Old Country Wood (Mathon) there was a total of 51 mice in 55 boxes - 37 yellow-neck and 13 wood mice, plus one unidentified escapee. This total included seven mothers with litters in various stages of development. Mice frequently appear in dormouse boxes but these numbers are very much greater than we have seen before. It was similar news in the bat boxes in the same wood, with a total of 11 mice found in the previous week.

So far it is not clear whether the increased numbers of mice are having any impact on the dormouse population, since dormouse numbers are always low in the Old Country Wood boxes at this time of year, but it will be interesting to see how the season develops.

It has been the same story in dormouse boxes in the Knapp and Papermill Nature Reserve, just over the border in Worcestershire, where there were nine yellow-necks in both March and May plus a pair of wood mice in a dormouse tube in the adjacent private woodland in June. Mice have never previously turned up in boxes or tubes in these locations at this time of year.

The much greater relative abundance of yellow necks compared to wood mice appears to be typical for Herefordshire, which seems to be a particular stronghold for this species.

ROB STRACHAN

A Personal Tribute by Johnny Birks



Photo by David Lewns

When Rob Strachan died at home in Wales on 17th May 2014 after a short illness we lost an

inspirational friend and outstanding naturalist who shared his exceptional knowledge widely. Always modest, selfless and patient in his dealings with others, yet fired by a deep passion for wildlife that burnt fiercely to the very end, Rob embodied the true, generous spirit of natural history. With the quiet authority only found in truly great people, enlivened by many a twist of Strachan wit and charm, these qualities made Rob the most effective of teachers. He gave so much of himself to others in order that we could better appreciate and conserve the wildlife that he loved. In turn he was loved and admired by the countless people whose lives he enriched; yet he was constantly bemused by this adulation, which merely makes his greatness lovelier.

I became friends with Rob in the early 1980s, when he worked for Durham Wildlife Trust and we both helped to run the newly-formed Durham Bat Group. Rob's field skills and his calm handling of anxious roost owners set high standards for the Group. From 1985 Rob embarked on a ten-year semi-nomadic life in a camper van, conducting national surveys of otters, mink, pine martens and water voles, initially for the Nature Conservancy Council and, later, for The Vincent Wildlife Trust. During this roving phase Rob honed his already impressive field skills to become, in the words of Don Jefferies (retired NCC chief mammal ecologist) "simply the best wildlife surveyor I have ever known". Thanks to his occasional need for a hot bath and company, Rob frequently parked his van outside the homes of his many naturalist friends around the country to spend long nights poring over ambiguous mammal field signs and sharing whisky-enhanced tales of surveyor derring-do.

When he finally parked his van for the last time and started working at Oxford University's WildCRU, Rob wrote and illustrated his first delightful book, *Mammal Detective*, published by Whittet in 1995. The WildCRU years were very important to Rob, enabling him to build new friendships and to work as part of a team on a range of exciting projects. Notably, he was centrally involved in research to understand and reverse the water vole's decline, becoming a national authority on the species and contributing to influential publications such as

the *Water Vole Conservation Handbook*; he wrote his second Whittet book, *Water Voles*, published in 1997. In 2005 Rob left WildCRU to work for the Environment Agency/Natural Resources Wales in their Biodiversity Team, including successful measures to restore water vole populations in South Wales. Despite the demands of this new role he still found time to provide advice and guidance to his growing band of contacts throughout Britain; and he taught mammal courses for the University of Aberystwyth's School of Education and Lifelong Learning.

Rob was an enthusiastic supporter of The Mammal Society (he was awarded The Society's medal in 2008): he frequently spoke at our conferences and regional events; he gave his time generously to many local mammal groups; he supported Mammal Action (the youth group) by leading expeditions to Scotland and Lithuania, and many shorter mammal-watching trips; and with Adam Grogan he delivered the popular training course *Management for Riparian Mammals*; even after pancreatic cancer was diagnosed Rob worked fast to produce some charming scat and footprint drawings for T-shirts to celebrate The Society's 60th anniversary.

There are other dimensions to Rob's life that I do not have space to explore fully here: although we knew him mainly as a mammalogist, he was a superb all-round naturalist and an exceptional birder and botanist; he was an accomplished artist and poet; he relished foreign travel, preferably to remote and challenging places from which he sometimes returned accompanied by exotic new friends (he once happily showed me the Peruvian bot-fly larva growing within his scalp, until its wriggling kept him awake at night so his long-suffering GP had to remove it prematurely).

Rob spent the last few years living in Tretower with his beloved new wife Jane – they married in their sunlit garden surrounded by close family and friends the day before he died.

Note: This article was originally written for the Mammal News and is reproduced in the HMG newsletter with kind permission of the author

DORMOUSE CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE by Ann Bowker



Photo: Denise Foster

We are well into the survey season now and hopefully, as with Malvern Wells, a reasonable number of dormice have survived the mild winter.

We have obtained a list of all records for Herefordshire held by the HBRC and analysis shows that there are areas, mostly to the north and west of the County, which have had no records in the past ten years. This is more likely to show that recorders, rather than dormice, have been thin on the ground. It will be our job in the next year or two to try to fill in the gaps, especially as we have the mammal *Herefordshire Mammal Atlas* to contribute to.

Currently I hope to obtain a map of the ancient woodland in the County which will help to indicate areas which could be usefully resurveyed. Just as we were getting going, Natural England sent round a circular asking each County to send in a Dormouse Conservation Strategy by the end of May. This I managed by the skin of my teeth and sent a copy round to all on my email list.

We are always looking for new members, so if you have an interest or would like to go out on dormouse checks just drop me a line at mike.bowker@clara.net. You don't have to be an expert. Any meetings or training we hold will be open to all members of HMG, but emails are shared by those on my list.

BAT CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

by Denise Foster

Woodland Bat Project

The Woodland Bat Project continues and trapping will start again in July after the maternity season. We have managed to survey 5 woodlands so far this year due to some good weather and we have found some interesting bat species.

Woodlands surveyed so far this year are Frith, Haugh Wood South, Haugh Wood North, Ast Wood and HNT's Miner's Rest.

We were pleased to find Barbastelle bats in all of the woodlands surveyed which were either caught or detected on bat detectors. We were overjoyed to find both whiskered and Brandt's in Ast Wood in June. However, the Serotine (pictured below) which was caught in Miner's Rest was the most exciting catch so far this year.



Photo: Denise Foster

Bats and Swifts in Churches Project

Our roll-out meeting for this project was very poorly attended but those few who did attend have undertaken to survey their local church.

We started this project by attending an official NE roost visit for the Cathedral on the 16th June. The cathedral is having repair works carried out to St. John's Walk and this visit qualified under the Natural England Roost Visitor Contract. This is a good start to the Bats and Swifts in Churches project. This visit was well-received by the church administration office as having

volunteers help with the survey effort has justified one of the criteria for their funding application.

Marden Church was also surveyed which produced very little bat wise. A few scattered bat droppings were observed inside the church and tower but no bats were observed emerging. This was surprising considering this church is surrounded by water bodies. However we did detect at least 5 species using the site namely Noctule, common and soprano pipistrelles, Myotis (most likely Natterer's) and Long-eared.

Pembridge Church Survey was also surveyed in June and this survey will be one of many. The church has at least 50 Natterer's roosting inside the church and commuting along the nave to emerge at an opening by the eaves. Soprano and common pipistrelle were also heard inside the church. We are hoping to offer some assistance to the church to try and minimise the effect these bats are having on the church congregation.

If you are interested in participating in this project please contact the Denise Foster.

National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP)

NBMP Roost counts were carried out in June for the Bat Conservation Trust and results for our significant roosts are as follows:

Soprano Pipistrelle Roosts

Tuck Mill produced a headcount of **1138** which is stable compared with last year's headcount.

The Weir Garden Lodge produced a headcount of **189** which is similar to last year but down on previous years.

Lesser Horseshoe Roost

Holme Lacy House produced a headcount of **175**. I believe this is an increase compared to previous years.

Upper Hall produced a headcount of **87** which is similar to last year.

NBMP Field Surveys are scheduled for July where we look for big bats and pipistrelles.

NBMP Waterways Surveys are scheduled for August and here we seek out Daubenton's and Natterer's bats.

If you want to get involved, you can either assist at an organised event or sign up to survey bats near to where you live. Please contact Denise Foster for more details.

Bat Box Checks

We have carried out a number of bat box checks so far this year. Ast Wood and Lea and Paget's are our main focus this summer as these boxes have not routinely been checked during the summer months. We have also carried out single box checks in HNT's Nupend and Woodside reserves too.

Interestingly, the noctules which were found in Lea and Paget's and Nupend last autumn have not shown themselves so far this spring. However, we have found a number of brown long-eared bats in Ast, Nupend and Lea and Paget's woods. The maternity colony of brown long-eared bats (13) in Lea and Paget's Wood were present at the last check which was reassuring. At the Nupend box check, not only did we find 5 brown long-eared bats but we got a surprise guest turn up in a 1FF box - a barbastelle which had no intention of sticking around when we arrived. This is a new record for the wood.



Photo: 3 Non-breeding females found in a box at Nupend Nature Reserve in June (Denise Foster)

Herefordshire Mammal Atlas Update by Dave Smith

The first training session aimed specifically at the new mammal atlas was run over two days

between 19 - 21 June. The Herefordshire Nature Trust have supported HMG in this project from the start and small mammal trapping training course was organised by HMG for HNT wardens and volunteers. In total eleven people were trained in trapping and identifying small mammals.

It is now their task to survey as many HNT reserves as possible and send us and the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre the records which will eventually make their way into our new atlas. Only three species were trapped during the training course but ID guides and photos of the other species likely to be found were handed around and different identification features were discussed at length.

All trainees had the chance to scruff wood mice *Apodemus sylvaticus*, and yellow-necked mice *Apodemus flavicollis* which are probably the two species most likely to be confused.



Photo: Yellow necked mouse being scruffed to show distinguishing yellow band across the neck

The other species trapped was bank vole *Myodes glareolus* which can be distinguished from the field vole *Microtus agrestis* by its red-chestnut brown pelage and slightly longer tail.

All participants gave us good feedback and are all keen to get out in the field and carry out trapping on their own. Two volunteers left with traps and will start surveying reserves straight away.

There is now an online set of maps for all the mammal records in Herefordshire so our next task is to target individual groups of species and areas where records are lacking. Another training session for small mammal trapping will be organised for HMG members later this year for anyone who is interested, and we will also be demonstrating trapping techniques at the Bromyard Downs Bioblitz on Friday 11th and Saturday 12th of July. In the mean-time please keep sending us all your records (anything dead or alive) either to HBRC or the county mammal recorder, Felicity Burge.

The Mammal Conference 4-6th April 2014 – Highlights from the Conference



The Mammal Society is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year and this was certainly reflected in this year's annual conference. There was a variety of lectures and posters, which attracted all levels of interest. It included badgers, pine martens, hares, bats, seals, otters, small mammals, hedgehogs and dormice. The conference was attended by a respectable number of members of the Herefordshire Mammal Group - namely Denise Foster, Emma Franks, David Lee, Dave Smith, Nick Underhill-Day, Lizzie Croose, and Johnny Birks (who is also the Chairman of the Mammal Society).

For those attendees who were able to get to the conference on Friday night, they were lucky enough to hear the very interesting history of research which has taken place over the years on Bovine TB, Cattle and Badgers by Rosie Woodruff. Rosie told us that from the 1930s,

40% of herds were infected by TB and 2000 people/year died from Bovine TB through infected milk. However, by the 1960s the disease was mostly eradicated but then it suddenly increased exponentially from the 1980s. Research programmes, which have been performed to investigate the spreading of the disease, have taken place since the 1980s and included a badger culling and a vaccine programme. Interestingly, during these studies, it was found that when the numbers of badgers dropped through the culling programme, the numbers of infected badgers increased. Each remaining badger was becoming more infectious as the badger's range started to widen.

The conference officially opened on Saturday and the keynote lecture was presented by David MacDonald of WildCRU, Oxford University, who gave a lecture "Almondo's Pact - Carnivores in Conflict" which explained the plight of the big cats, wild dogs, bears and other top predators with humans, such as farmers and hunters in Africa. David explained the challenges these top predators face with agricultural spread, habitat loss, invasive species, disease (rabies), persecution, trophy hunting and climate change. David told us that education programmes and trials were in place to encourage better husbandry by farmers, namely keeping cattle inside at night as well as placing trained dogs in sheep flocks and goat herds. The latter was really effective and results of a reduction of 70% predation by big cats were due to dogs taking on the role of a shepherd!

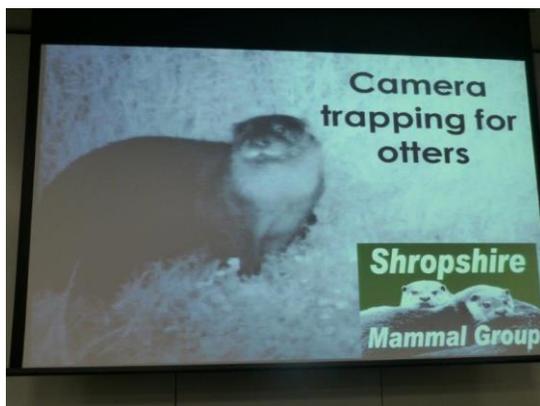
Education in schools is an on-going priority since targeting children has been shown to have a greater influence on their parents' attitudes.

David also told us there is a trial in Botswana using lion guardians who patrol on bikes with mobile phones and GPS units. These guardians use this information and network to inform local farmers that a big cat is in their area.

So who was Almondo? Almondo was a male lion who had a family and a territory. Two of his brothers were shot and the pack became disjointed. Almondo ended up with no family and no territory and wandered from territory to territory being chased away by other packs of lions. Eventually he left the national park and

was shot after 9 months, which highlights the need for change to attitudes in Africa. The project continues to educate local people to live alongside these animals.

Camera trapping seemed to be a recurring theme at this year's conference – this non-invasive trapping technique was included in a number of the talks, including measuring the relative densities and abundance of the native Irish and invasive European hare in Ireland, monitoring of otters on Shropshire's waterways and its use as a non-invasive survey method for hazel dormice.



Sunday's lectures were just as exciting and one which would interest our members was the lecture given by Richard Yarnell of Nottingham Trent University on "Using Footprint tunnels as an effective survey method for monitoring hedgehog populations". This is a study that is going to be extended to other counties and in which we will take part.

Hedgehogs are in decline in the UK and measuring their abundance is not an easy task. Direct counts and observing indirect field signs are difficult to perform so the footprint method provides a good way forward to measure occupancy rates, since hedgehog footprints are very distinctive.

In this study groups of 10 hedgehog tunnels are placed spaced 100m apart (linear) at 15 randomly chosen sites and monitored for 5 days. Naïve occupancy (were the sites empty or did the animals just not enter the tubes?) versus estimated occupancy was equal, so this indicated a low false absent error rate. Observed and predicted occupancies were in close agreement, which demonstrated that the

false-absence rate was low. Extending the survey period to 5 days increases the statistical confidence to 95%, so this technique appears to provide a sound method for determination of hedgehog distribution and abundance. The overall detection rate was 60% and survey results indicated that detection rate was affected by badger presence but not by habitat availability. This protocol can reasonably be used to detect population changes $\geq 25\%$ with 95% confidence. The technique is eminently suitable as a citizen-science project, so there is a great scope for its use to create awareness for this much loved garden visitor.

Cheryl Mills from Exeter University presented her study of non-invasive survey methods for hazel dormice, using both camera trapping and similar footprint techniques to those used for hedgehogs. Cheryl set up five feeding stations at a height of 2m, baited with nuts and apples and left in situ for 21 nights. Two out of the five feeding stations detected dormice. Footprint detection feeding stations were placed in squirrel-proof enclosures.

Dormouse prints are also very distinctive because they have 3 triangular pads on the foot, just below the toes. The success of this study emphasised the need for protocol development of these survey methods and further trials could lead to their use in citizen-science projects.



The poster presentations gave us a flavour of other, more current, research that is being performed nationwide, including "Recording and Recovery - the Changing Distribution of the Polecat in Britain" presented by VWT and HMG member Lizzie Croose; "Surveying for Dormice in the Canopy of Broadleaf Woodland" by our own Dave Smith; "The Use of Coniferous Plantations

by Bats in the UK” and “The Use of Tooth-Pit Analysis to Assess the Evidence of Feral Cats” by Rick Minter and Andrew Hemmings (analyzing bite marks on bone).

As, I started this review with big cats I thought I would end it on the same subject – I am pleased to announce that Rick Minter has kindly offered to give a talk to Herefordshire Mammal Group in January 2015, describing his study of large cats in and around Herefordshire.

Keep your eyes on the HMG website for further details.

BADGER VACCINATION – A TALK BY THE SOMERSET BADGER VACCINATION GROUP

by Louise Scott



Photo: Neil Phillips

Adrian Coward from the Somerset Badger Vaccination Group gave a talk to HNT members in Kingsland in April. He opened the talk by stressing that members of a Vaccination Group must be determined and fully committed individuals. The Badger Trust whose aim to promote conservation and welfare of badgers and protection of setts and habitats will be on hand to provide support to the group.

Somerset was one of the County’s chosen as a culling area, primarily due to large tracts of land under the ownership of a few who supported the killing.

The opportunity for the group to vaccinate in Somerset occurred 3 years ago when a farmer had the option to cull /do nothing/ or vaccinate. The farmer decided that vaccination was the best sustainable business decision, to minimise the chances of their stock getting bovine TB. Incidentally, the Welsh Trial shows that a vaccine protects both badgers and farm stock.

Key benefits of the vaccination process have been highlighted by work undertaken within Gloucestershire:

- 74% reduction of badgers testing positive to bovine TB.
- Cubs born into the vaccination group have 80% less chance of contracting bTB.
- Reduces the progression of bTB in infected badgers.
- No perturbation effect (disruption to the social structure of the badger group)
- Protection of farm stock.

The Somerset Badger Vaccination Group identified 3 sites, set a target of 70% (as recommended by the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA)), and met this by catching 30 badgers. The work is undertaken following established protocols.

This work requires a Natural England Licence (valid for 4 years) issued to a trained vaccinator, permitting badger disturbance and trapping.

Sites need to be surveyed to determine the territorial boundary of the badgers, to pinpoint the focus of activity thus aiding the placement of the traps. Contrary to protocol, the Somerset Vaccination Group determined by trial and error, that the placement of traps remotely at latrine sites had a higher success rate of capture, than those located at the badger setts.

The chosen locations are first pre-baited with peanuts, without the trap. Wood mice were initially posing a problem so the Group contained the peanuts in a terracotta saucer covered by a section of paving slab. After a period of time the cages (locked open) were introduced. The group were able to view videos of badgers happily entering the cages, removing the paving slab, and dining on peanuts. The traps were subsequently set a week later.

At first light the badgers are processed. They are checked to ensure good health prior to receiving the vaccine (intramuscular on the thigh,) and sit quietly during the process.



Photo: Jenny Bailey

Cleanliness is paramount between sites so a strict disinfecting regime is carried out to vehicles and boots and traps are steam cleaned after use. Documentation for each badger includes:

- Assessment Form 1- records vaccine batch, people involved and the number of badgers. This form has to be signed off by a vet.
- Assessment Form 2- Greater details of the badgers maturity and health.
- Audit Report Form- for FERA
- Natural England renewal form and report of action taken under licence.

There is no doubt that there is a corresponding rise and fall in cases of bovine TB in cattle and badgers. At present the only reliable way of testing badgers for bTB is post mortem. It must be remembered that the statistics for bTB in cattle are subject to false positives (in newly calved cows and those infected with liver fluke.) The animals currently culled are not tested. It is clear that there needs for a more co-ordinated effort and that the protection of the badger should remain paramount.

WEBSITE

HMG has a website which is updated with our news, details and also a library of pictures of our work and events. Please check it out at the link below.

<http://ham.btck.co.uk>

FACEBOOK

HMG also has an active Facebook page where we post all our events past and present. We currently have 91 followers.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/222077991279736/>

HMG CONTACTS

Lead Co-ordinator - Dave Smith

Email: davetreesmith@aol.co.uk

Treasurer - Mike Coleman

Email: mike.coleman@btinternet.com

Membership Secretary - Louise Scott

Email: lscott330@hotmail.co.uk

Bat Co-ordinator and Newsletter Editor -

Denise Foster

Email: sweetchildofmine@btinternet.com

Deer Co-ordinator - Martin Hales

Email: wildwaysmartin@btinternet.com

Committee Member - Jessica Lamerton

Email: jessicalamerton@yahoo.co.uk

Committee Member - Rebecca Collins

Email: enquiries@cec-ltd.org.uk

Committee Member (Co-opted) - David Lee

Email: davidlee@thespis.eclipse.co.uk

County Mammal Recorder - Felicity Burge

Email: felicity.burge@mypostoffice.co.uk

Dormouse Co-ordinator - Ann Bowker

Email: mike.bowker@clara.net

HMG Main Email:

Email: hmg2013@btinternet.com