



HEREFORDSHIRE MAMMAL GROUP

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

(October 2014 to December 2014)

What's Inside?

Title	Page
Autumn Events and Winter Talks	1
New Members	2
Membership Subscriptions	2
News in Brief	2
Small Mammal Trapping Weekend Review	4
County Mammal Recorder	6
DVD Guide to British Mammals	6
Dormouse Co-ordinator Update	8
Bromyard Bioblitz Review	8
Glis Glis – HMG's visit to Hockeridge Woods	10
Bat Co-ordinator Update	11
Website and Facebook	12
HMG Contacts	12

Autumn Events and Winter Talks

OCTOBER

Thursday, 02 October 2014, 19:30 hrs
HMG AGM
 Bunch of Carrots Inn, Hampton Bishop, Hereford, HR1 4JR
 Followed by five 15 minute talks:
 - Woodland Bat Project – Denise Foster
 - Bats and Swifts in Churches – David Lee
 - Filming HMG - Steve Evans
 - BCT Partnerships - Lisa Worledge

Saturday, 25 October 2014, 10:00 hrs
Bat Box Check (Last Check of season)
 Lea and Paget's Wood
 Meet in lay-by at the side of road at approx. SO595346 - An all-day event
 Contact Denise Foster

NOVEMBER

Saturday, 1 November 2014, 10:00 hrs
Bat Box Check (Last check of season)
 Ast Wood
 Meet inside wood at approx. SO674379
 Contact Denise Foster

Wednesday, 12 November 2014, 19:30 hrs
The Deer Initiative - Graham Riminton
 Bunch of Carrots Inn, Hampton Bishop, Hereford, HR1 4JR.
 Graham is a Deer Liaison Officer for Wales and the West Midlands. There will be a small charge at this event to cover costs

Wednesday, 19 November 2014, 19.30 hrs
Dormouse Meeting
 The Bunch of Carrots Inn, Hampton Bishop, Hereford, HR1 4JR. There will be a small charge at this event to cover costs

DECEMBER

Friday, 05 December 2014, 19:30 hrs
Celebrity Lecture
An Illustrated Talk - Michael Leach
 Michael is a wildlife photographer; the subject of his talk is to be confirmed.
 Woolhope Village Hall, HR1 4QS. There will be a small charge at this event to cover costs

JANUARY

Friday, 09 January 2015, 19:30 hrs
Feral Big Cats - Rick Minster
 Rick Minter will be giving a talk about the evidence of "big cats" in and around Herefordshire
 Bartestree Village Hall, HR1 4BY. There will be a charge at this event to cover costs

FEBRUARY

Friday, 06 February 2015, 19:30 hrs

Polecats - Johnny Birks

Bunch of Carrots Inn, Hampton Bishop,
Hereford, HR1 4JR

MARCH

Thursday, 05 March 2015, 19:30 hrs

**Bats and Swifts in Churches Project and Church
Architecture – Denise Foster and Tim Bridges**

Bunch of Carrots Inn, Hampton Bishop,
Hereford, HR1 4JR

NEW MEMBERS

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

Sarah Lester, Bryn Edwards, Jan Densham, Mike Jones, Helen Stace, John Morgan, Joshua Humphries, Morgan Bowers, Kate Denton, Mike Brown, Emily Perks and Charlene Jones.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Louise Scott, Membership Secretary.

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to all the members of Herefordshire Mammal Group for their support during the past year. May I kindly remind you that your Membership expires at the end of September 2014 with Subscriptions due at the beginning of October, 2014. The cost remains at £7.50 for the family and covers insurance for any event you attend. If you plan to join us at the AGM then this is a good opportunity to bring your remittance along with you.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Membership and Facebook

We currently have 78 paid up members in HMG and 119 followers on Facebook.

Hedgehog Moving House

Gillian Herbert from Linley Green kindly sent us this encounter with her resident hedgehogs.

The hedgehog sow was trying to move her hoglets into a hay barn but the kerb, that prevents rainwater entering the yard, was a real challenge. The Sow walked along with the hoglet in her mouth, tossing it up to the top of the kerb until she got to a point where it didn't fall back down on top of her, then followed it over. Three hoglets were transferred in the same way.

Gillian's hay barn now has a set of hedgehog steps both in and out!



Photo: Courtesy Gillian Herbert



Photo: Courtesy Gillian Herbert



Photo: Courtesy Gillian Herbert

Hereford Times - First published Monday 28 July 2014 - Mysterious big cat spotted near Lugwardine last night



“A HEREFORD woman did not expect to come across a rather mysterious big cat on her way to work last night.

Debbie Smithers was travelling from her Whitecross home to St Michael’s Hospice at around 8.55pm on Sunday evening when she came across what she describes as a “large, dark cat” on Lumber Lane, near Lugwardine. “It was about three feet high, stood on the opposite carriageway of the road, facing Hereford,” said Mrs Smithers, a nurse at the hospice.

“Within seconds its tail went up and it sort of gracefully jumped across into the verge and into the hedge.”

Mrs Smithers said she has only seen similar animals in a Safari Park or Zoo. “I just thought ‘what on earth is that?’ I was just amazed really, more than anything. I was quite taken with the elegance of how its tail went up and it jumped into the verge,” she added.

Look out for the **Feral Big Cats** - Rick Minster talk on the 9th January 2015.

Ray Mears’ Wild Rivers series – River Wye

HMG were joined by Ray Mears and his production team at the National Trust property, The Weir in August. The emergence of the large soprano pipistrelle roost was captured on film by the production team. Using a static hand net which was placed just under the roost entrance, one bat was caught for identification purposes.



Photo: Ray Mears waiting for the emergence of soprano pipistrelles (Courtesy David Lee)

Chase Wood, Near Ross-on-Wye

The new dormouse box scheme in Chase Woods this year produced two dormouse nests and one female dormouse in one of the new boxes. The nests and one animal were found in a part of the woodland where the brambles are very dense.

Survey tubes placed at the north end of the wood have so far had no uptake.



Photo: Courtesy Denise Foster

Bat Ringing Projects in two Herefordshire Woodlands

We have just started a ringing programme for two colonies of bats in two Herefordshire Woodlands. We want start monitoring the movements, health and social networks of a colony of brown long-eared and Bechstein’s bats which have been roosting in the woodlands for a number of years.

At our August bat box check in Old Country Wood, we encountered 67 Bechstein’s Bats and in the September bat box check 42 bats.

In Lea and Paget's Wood on 20th September, we ringed 18 brown Long-eared bats but we had an

extra surprise when we found a colony of Natterer's bats – 26 in total.

Bechstein's Bat caught in Ast Wood

A juvenile Bechstein's bat was recently caught in a harp trap in Ast Wood as part of the Woodland Bat Project. This very rare bat was also found by Lia Gilmour during her research study in 2012. This indicates there is a strong likelihood that a maternity roost is either using the wood to roost.



Photo: Britain's rarest bat, the Bechstein's bat. Courtesy Denise Foster

HMG Receives Recognition for Bats and Swifts in Churches Project by BCT's Chief Executive Officer

HMG's Bats and Swifts in Churches project is being discussed at high level. HMG has received some good feedback from Natural England and Julia Hanmer from BCT who wrote "I really like the work you are doing, and how you are looking at the church in the landscape and other roosting sites in the vicinity. Your project is a really excellent pilot and I would like to learn from the ideas for a funding bid we are developing".

Harvest Mouse Surveys 2014

Last winter several members of HMG took part in the Mammal Society's national harvest mouse survey which was due to run over two consecutive winters, ending in 2014/2015. Unfortunately the Mammal Society has decided not to continue into the second year, due to financial constraints and a re-distribution of their resources.

However this does not mean that HMG members cannot carry on with the survey. The original survey instructions are still available (see link below) and it would be advisable to follow their methodology. HMG need all the records we can get for our forthcoming atlas, so if you started this survey last year please carry on and send all records to us. If you did not sign up last year, then now is your chance! Please contact Dave Smith if you wish to take part in this survey and also a training day for people who have not yet had experience of finding harvest mouse nests will be arranged.



Photo: Courtesy Mammal Society

www.mammal.org.uk/sites/default/files/National%20Harvest%20Mouse%20Survey%20Instructions.pdf

Bat Box Donations

Thank you to the following companies who have kindly donated / funded bat boxes for both the Bats and Swifts in Churches project and the Woodland Bat Project.

Forestry Commission
LaFarge Tarmac
Udall-Martin Associates

Small Mammal Trapping Weekend 26-28 September by Dave Smith

This year's event was well attended, with a total of 14 participants including a contingent from the South Wales Mammal group.

Friday evening began with the pre-baiting of Longworth traps and Mustelid traps. This was led by Johnny Birks who kindly gave up a chunk of his weekend to help run the course. Thirty Longworth traps and four Mustelid traps were positioned at two different sites and were left locked open to allow animals to familiarise themselves with the traps for 24 hours before

they were set to trap. This was followed by a harp trapping and mist netting session in a nearby wood, led by Denise Foster as part of our ongoing mammal atlas and woodland bats projects. Only two bats were caught on the night, a whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*) and a natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), these are valuable records for the county along with the other records recorded on several static bat detectors which have yet to be analysed. Despite the low number of bats caught this was still a very enjoyable evening and a great experience for those who had not attended this type of event before.



Photo: courtesy Denise Foster

Saturday morning consisted of a fascinating talk given by Johnny on Mustelid ecology and conservation issues. Each of our seven resident mustelids were discussed in turn including the types of habitats we are likely to find them in, their different dietary requirements and the differences in their legal protection (or lack of it).



Photo Courtesy Denise Foster

In the afternoon Johnny led us on a walk along a short section of the river Leadon and instructed us on the best way to survey for otters (*Lutra lutra*). Everyone had a chance to look for otter spraints and footprints. The differences in size, shape and smell of these useful signs were pointed out along with health and safety issues of river surveys. Saturday's session ended with the final setting of the traps which had been positioned on the previous day.

Sunday morning began early with the checking of the traps. None of the Mustelid traps were successful. Johnny explained that this was to be expected, as only four traps set for one night was inadequate and the reason for setting them in this instance was for training purposes. However, he kindly demonstrated what to do if we had trapped anything and covered trapping legislation and animal welfare.



Photo: Mike Brown (Courtesy Denise Foster)

The Longworth traps were more successful with over half the traps containing animals. These were all identified and quickly released, with everyone having a go at handling and identifying the catch. Four species were trapped in all, wood mouse, (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), Yellow necked mouse (*Apodemus flavicollis*), bank vole (*Myodes glareolus*) and pygmy shrew (*Sorex minutus*). After all the traps had been collected in, we parted company with Johnny and continued on to Old Country wood to check some dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) boxes.

This final session was led by Denise Foster and David Lee. Yellow necked mice outnumbered the dormice by about 4-1 so everyone who wanted practice at handling these feisty animals had plenty of opportunity. Several dormice were also

found; these were weighed and sexed as part of the national dormouse monitoring programme, before being safely returned to their nests. Several of the course attendees had not seen dormice before so this was a wonderful opportunity for them to get up close and personal in the field with these fascinating little creatures. All in all it was a very successful weekend, everyone went home with a certificate of attendance and hopefully more knowledgeable and with an increased passion for field work and our native mammals.

COUNTY MAMMAL RECORDER

by Felicity Burge

If asked what the key points for a Mammal Recorder were, I'd list them in the following order; enthusiasm for the job (which is, after all, totally voluntary), good identification and IT skills, verification abilities with the knowledge that others can be called upon if required and a professional approach to the general public and taking an interest in their finds.

There may be more pointers but I feel that Joe Allsopp has all the above qualities. Joe approached me some months ago to offer his help in any way he could when he realised I was spending a considerable amount of my time in France, due mainly to a change in my circumstances. From then on, he has shown the necessary enthusiasm for potentially becoming a County Mammal Recorder.



Photo: Joe at last year's Harvest Mouse Training Day. Courtesy Denise Foster

Joe has excellent IT skills and has done a variety of conservation work, ranging from radio-tracking mink and badgers to being a volunteer warden with the RSPB. He is a licensed dormouse worker with his own NDMP woodland, whilst having access to other

woodlands. He surveys and monitors regularly, as well as helping to train newcomers.

Joe has lived in Herefordshire for around 20 years and last November took part in a harvest mouse training day with Johnny Birks. His day job is in IT, and he hopes to use these skills to manage the mammal record data and make it more accessible to HMG and conservationists within the county.

The new contact address for mammal findings is now hfdmammalrecords@gmail.com

DVD Guide to British Mammals

by Steve Evans

For as long as I can remember I have been interested in nature, and I have always been keen to expand my knowledge of the wildlife we have here in Britain. I am continually amazed by the diverse range of species we have on our own doorsteps, most of which we take for granted. My other passion in life is making films/documentaries and I have been lucky enough to combine the two for several years, producing thirteen films about Birdwatching in Britain and Europe.

Early last year I was looking for a DVD guide to the Mammals of Britain but was surprised to find that no such title existed. As a result I decided to look at the possibilities of producing one myself and quickly enlisted the help of fellow wildlife cameraman, Paul Wetton.

We researched the idea looking at each species group in detail to try to establish if such a project was even possible. We believed it was, however it didn't take long for us both to realise that Bats and Cetaceans were going to be extremely challenging to capture on film. We both knew that to stand any chance of success we would need the support of some experts.

We contacted the Mammal Society and the Bat conservation Trust for advice and they suggested that we should contact local Mammal and Bat groups.

After looking through the many groups across the UK it was the Herefordshire Mammal Group that really stood out. The group are very active

in the field and have an ever growing list of events that members can participate in. I quickly became a member and made contact with the groups Bat Co-ordinator, Denise Foster and explained what I was trying to achieve.

Denise and the group couldn't have been more supportive and since joining the group I have attended many of their events within the county of Herefordshire.

One such event was a "Bats & Swifts in Churches" survey, which took place at Pembridge church. Reverend Brenda Jacobs was becoming increasingly concerned at the amount of bat droppings being found in several parts of the church, some of which were staining the furniture. She was keen to find a safe way to move the bats to prevent this. The group initially conducted a survey to establish how the bats were using the church and if inside where they were roosting. It didn't take long for the group to discover several groups of roosting bats, one of which was a maternity colony of Natterer's Bat.



Photo: An emergence survey was carried out and surveyors were placed around the church at sunset by Steve Evans

Whilst conducting the survey a baby Natterer's bat was discovered which had dropped from the maternity roost. Incredibly the baby Natterer's was still alive but was clearly dehydrated. Denise quickly gave it drops of water from a paint brush to re-hydrate it and later in the evening the group tried to re-unite the bat with its mother by placing it on the wall close to the Maternity roost. I was amazed to see the bat crawling back towards the roost and as it did it was possible to hear it calling continually through the use of a bat detector.



Photo: Baby Natterer's being given water at Pembridge Church by Steve Evans

All of this activity was captured on film, as was a follow-up visit in which the group were able to suggest possible solutions to help the Church. I also managed to capture on film an interview with Denise Foster, in which she explains in detail what the group were trying to achieve.

I have also attended several other activities with the group which include, three Lesser Horseshoe Bat counts at Holme Lacy House, several bat mist net and trapping evenings and a Dormouse Box check... and there are still more to come. Each event has given me the opportunity to capture different species of mammal on film, some of which I have never seen before.



Photo: Lesser horseshoe bat by Steve Evans

I am very glad I joined the Herefordshire Mammal Group because not only have they helped me to gain a wealth of footage of Mammal species, but I have also had the pleasure of spending time with some truly inspiring individuals, who happily give up their free time to study and protect the mammals within the county of Herefordshire. They are also very happy to share this knowledge with

everyone...I only wish I lived closer so I could join them on more of these fantastic events."

Editorial: Steve Evans approached HMG at the beginning of this year seeking to obtain footage of rare and protected species such as Horseshoe and Barbastelle bats and dormice. Steve has gone on to film a variety of our activities as examples of the conservation projects which volunteer groups carry out. He has regularly attended our events and has been an absolute pleasure to work with. Steve has also produced some excellent video clips for us which will help promote HMG's work for on-going and future projects. I hope Steve continues to work with the group not only as a film maker but also as a volunteer and will continue to become involved with our important conservation work. His enthusiasm and commitment in producing this DVD is commendable and I very much look forward to seeing the final production.

Steve will be giving a review of his work with HMG at the AGM on 2nd October. Denise Foster.

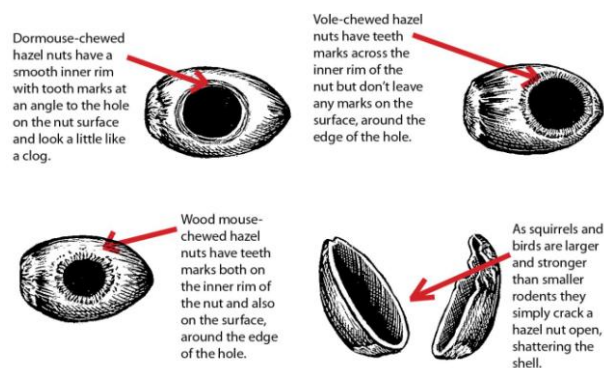
DORMOUSE CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE by Ann Bowker

COULD YOU SPARE AN HOUR FOR DORMICE?

Autumn is upon us and this the ideal time for nut hunts. As I expect you all know, dormice like hazel nuts and open them on the side, leaving a neat round hole with a smooth inner rim and oblique tooth marks around the outer side of the hole. I believe there are now over 70 members of HMG and if each of us does a nut search in the next few weeks that would add many useful records to our store.

You can email your results (including negative results) to me giving date and place searched, or why not bring any nuts you are unsure of to our **DORMOUSE MEETING** on Wednesday 19th November from 19:30hrs to 21:30hrs at The Bunch of Carrots.

Pat Morris (The Chief Nutter) writes "...searching three 5 x 5 metre squares under different hazel bushes for 20 minutes each will almost certainly turn up evidence of dormice if they are present". If you could just manage one square for 20 minutes in your local woods that would really be helpful.



Downloaded from PTES site

<http://ptes.org/campaigns/dormice/dormouse-nut-hunt/>

Please be careful not to search in private areas without the landowner's permission. We are keen to increase the number of dormouse licence holders in Herefordshire and we can offer training. It occurs to me to ask if any of our newer members are interested in training for a Dormouse Licence. In general it involves two (or possibly three) years visiting sites with a licence holder once or twice a month from April to October. Do get in touch if you would like to be considered.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me by email - mike.bowker@clara.net - or telephone 01684 574079.

Bromyard Downs – Bioblitz Update by Louise Scott

Bromyard Downs, which covers 114 hectares of registered Common Land, was subjected to 24 hours of concentrated ecological recording on the 11 July. Hereford Nature Trust organised the event as part of the initiation stage of a 3 year project on behalf of the Bromyard Downs Common Association.

The project will eventually culminate in an effective Management Plan for the range of habitats and species. Rising to above 700 feet on the East of the town of Bromyard, there are swathes of traditional grassland; relic heathland patches; springs with small watercourses and scrub encroached ponds, all contributing to the diversity of the site. Oak dominated woodland provides an important link into the neighbouring National Trust land at Brockhampton.

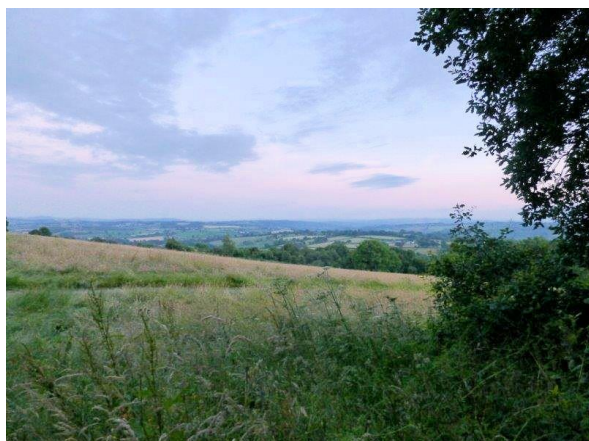


Photo: Courtesy Denise Foster

Members of Herefordshire Mammal Group joined ranks with a wide range of ecologists and enthusiasts including Herefordshire Amphibian Reptile Trust, The National Trust and The Bumblebee Conservation Trust. A programme of activities was designed to allow the public to participate in the surveying bonanza. Daytime activities saw scheduled surveys for wildflowers, butterflies, birds, reptiles, bees, dragonflies & damselflies, and small mammals. Night surveys were run for small mammals, bats, moths and glow worms.



Photo: HMG's display stands at the Bromyard Bioblitz. Courtesy Denise Foster

Herefordshire Mammal Group contributed to the intense period of biological surveying looking for signs of small mammals and bats. Other contributors shared knowledge of their mammal sightings and evidence to boost the site records.



Photo: HMG's display table at the Bromyard Bioblitz. Courtesy Denise Foster

Appropriate sites within the scrubland, on the lower slopes of the Downs were selected for small mammal trapping. Around 30 Longworth Traps were filled with fresh hay for bedding material along with a variety of sustenance items which helped to lure the small mammals into the overnight refuges. Early morning checks revealed that some of the triggers had been activated and live mammals were found including wood mouse, yellow necked mouse, bank vole, and common shrew. In addition to these records, hedgehog droppings were found and noted. There were live sightings of muntjac deer and squirrel, together with signs of mole, rabbit and rat. A night vision camera was set up at the southern end of the Downs by the Nature Trust and captured images of badger and fox.

Bat detector sessions were laid on for the general public and areas of the Bromyard Downs were walked during the dark hours to attain an indication of activity and species presence. Under licence, Harp Traps (named due to the fine instrument like filaments that act as a barrier to flight) were erected near the woodland edge on the upper slopes of the Common Land. The combined effort and analysis of collected recordings indicate the usage of the area during the recording period by both common and soprano pipistrelles, long-eared bats, *Myotis* species, and *Nyctalus* species.

The Bioblitz provided a great opportunity for HMG to support the local community, educate youngsters and adults alike and to liaise with other naturalists, whilst further contributing to Herefordshire County's Biological Records. The data will now provide additional information to

support and furnish the proposed creation of a Herefordshire Mammal Atlas in the future.

Glis glis – HMG's visit to Hockeridge Woods by Kate Wollen

The edible or fat dormouse (*Glis glis*), was introduced to this country from Europe by Lord Rothschild, who brought six *Glis glis* to Tring Park in 1902. They look similar to a small squirrel and do look cute from a distance! The introduced animals soon escaped and have spread and bred, although luckily are mainly confined to the Chilterns within 25 miles from Tring, but are slowly expanding in range. The population is estimated at 10-50,000 animals, a lot for an animal with big strong teeth who like to strip bark from trees (like a squirrel), will get into bird boxes for dinner and sometimes comes into buildings and chomp on wires etc!

There are certainly some similarities with our lovely harmless, native Hazel Dormice (no bias here).



Photo; Courtesy Robin Hemmings

The Edible Dormouse's nickname is the Seven Sleepers as they hibernate for seven months of the year. Hazel Dormice also hibernate all winter, although, from my observations, with later autumns, they probably only hibernate for 5 or 6 months or so now. Hazel Dormice hibernate in depressions in the ground, in the base of old trees etc, while the Edible goes quite deep underground. Both are hole nesters, although the hole for an Edible needs to be much larger as an adult Hazel Dormouse weighs around 18-20g, whilst the average Edible Dormouse is about 140g, with many larger! Eyes don't even open on the Edibles by 20g. Litter sizes of Edibles are larger than Hazels and seem

to be usually about 7–11 young. Often 2 mummy Edibles will join up to have young so you can find 2 mummies and 2 slightly different ages of young in one box. When monitoring Hazel Dormice, sometimes we find what we think maybe 2 mummies and litters together, but you are rarely sure as the litter sizes in Hazels are small anyway and finding so few breeding animals makes it hard to draw definite conclusions.

Like Hazel Dormice, the Edibles have a range of food depending on the time of year, with beech flowers and seeds being particularly abundant in the Chiltern area.

The Edible Dormouse is protected under Section 11(2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) in that certain methods of killing or taking are prohibited except under licence. Occupiers of land may however, kill or take edible dormice by any non-prohibited method, such as shooting, without needing a licence. It is an offence under Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to release or allow the escape of edible dormice into the wild without a licence, but a long running monitoring scheme in a wood near Tring, has a licence to release live animals after monitoring in order to understand how the animals behave in their non-native England.

A small group from HMG had the opportunity to help check the Edible Dormouse boxes in this wood on 17th August, and what an interesting day it was! 200 boxes in an 80 ha woods, largely beech and conifer with little understorey over most.



Photo: Two 20g *Glis glis* juveniles by Kate Wollen

The Edibles emerged late this year and so early box checks had been yielding little, but by early August breeding was well underway and there were 150 adults of which, around 30 were still pregnant and 369 pink and pink-grey babies weighing from 3.5 to 14g in 48 litters. In August 2011 a record of 765 adults and young were found in the boxes. We were warned that we could have a long and busy day ahead and it certainly was!!

We had over 600 animals With a further 79 animals and some pinkies found a few days later in the boxes that we had not had time to check on the Sunday, the third largest number ever. Of these 107 were recaptured adults; 212 pink young and 292 were larger young (c. 20g upwards) and so were micro chipped.

You certainly treat these animals quite differently from our delicate little Hazel Dormice! You shake (hard) them out of the box into the bag, you never let your ungloved hands anywhere near an adult or young that is old enough to have its eyes open and you hold the adults tightly. To handle them thick leather welding gloves are worn and even through these it smarts when the adults chomp you!

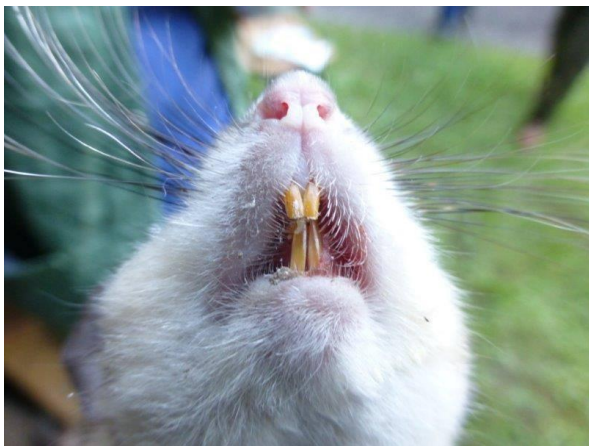


Photo: Teeth not to be messed with by Denise Foster

The nest is just a pile of leaves, green and brown ones, and in some boxes we had up to 17 young with 2 mummies, quite an accomplishment to separate mums and babies without losing an adult up a tree, or a finger! All adults and older young were scanned as all Edibles are micro chipped once they are large enough to take a chip- usually around 20g as it is a big needle. Similar to Hazels, once finished weighing and sexing adults, they are 'posted 'back through the

hole in the box. When checking Hazel Dormouse boxes, if you find an occupied box you get very excited, however with so many Edibles in the wood, finding an unoccupied box is actually quite a relief!

All in all a fascinating day and although different from our Hazels, the sheer number of animals to study did give a bit of an insight to how our Hazel Dormice may live, in particular to mummies creching together. Oh and the cakes were yummy!

BAT CO-ORDINATOR UPDATE

by Denise Foster

The bat season is slowly winding down and autumn/winter is the time to catch up with writing reports, amending project plans and entering all the bat records for the season. We have three major bat projects which are ongoing, the Herefordshire Woodland Bat Project, Bats and Swifts in Churches Project, and the Herefordshire Mammal Atlas.

Bats and Swifts in churches project

The Bats and Swifts in churches project has proved to be an interesting project and a learning curve for both trainees and experienced bat workers. We have had a good number of members help out with the surveys and it has generated interest within the group. Our work is being discussed at high level in Natural England and the Bat Conservation Trust which is very uplifting. We started the project this year as a pilot to see how things worked out with volunteers, the attitudes of the church around bats in churches and to gain records for the forthcoming mammal Atlas.

We have carried out full surveys on 9 churches over the summer, 9 under the Bats and Swifts in Churches project and one of those 9 under the Natural England Roost Visitor System. We have also carried out an official Natural England Roost Visit on St. John's Walk at the Cathedral so 10 church buildings in total. Two of the churches were revisited to carry out a dusk/dawn survey which was required.

We have also carried out pre-surveys on 24 churches. Preliminary surveys take about 10-15 minutes to look for evidence of bats in and around the church. We then decide whether a full survey is required. We are currently concentrating on churches with bats using the interior of the church because our county has over 250 medieval buildings so we have to be selective.



Photo: King's Pyon church by Denise Foster

We found two churches with bat issues which we will be revisiting next season to monitor activity. We also have 3 churches on the list to carry out full surveys next summer.

We will continue with this project in 2015 and try to survey 10 churches over the summer month. If you want to get involved with the project please contact Denise Foster directly as these surveys will not be published on the website as numbers need to be limited.

Woodland Bat Project

We have finished both Forestry Commission woodlands; Frith and Haugh this year with interesting results. We also finished the Herefordshire Nature Trust reserve Miner's Rest too. Overall Haugh Wood and Miner's Rest proved to be disappointing bat wise despite the Serotine turning up at Miner's Rest in May. However we did get some good results at Frith including a number of pregnant and lactating/post lactating females which has resulted in the Forestry Commission changing their management plan of the wood and they have also funded a 50 bat box scheme. This is an excellent outcome for this wood and the project.

We have also carried out surveys on a few non-plantation woodlands this year namely Ast Wood, Mowley Wood and Old Country Wood. Data analysis is still ongoing for these sites.



Photo: HMG members busy processing bats at trapping sessions by Denise Foster

Herefordshire Mammal Atlas Update – Bats

We have also managed to survey 9 sites under the project plan for collecting bat records for the county Mammal Atlas including Evesbatch Lake, Wellington Gravel Pits and Bodenham Lake. We would like to concentrate more on the water bodies around the county and possibly parkland. No major surprises regarding species but we are hoping to track down the elusive Nathusius, Serotine and Leisler's bat species and get confirmation in the hand. Data analysis is still ongoing for most of the sites surveyed.

FACEBOOK

HMG also has an active Facebook page where we post all our events past and present. We currently have 119 followers.

www.facebook.com/groups/222077991279736/

HMG CONTACTS

Lead Co-ordinator

Dave Smith

Email: davetreesmith@aol.co.uk

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