



HEREFORDSHIRE MAMMAL GROUP

AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

(September-December 2017)

What's Inside?

Title	Page
Autumn Events	1
Membership	1
New Members	2
News in Brief	2
Bat Co-ordinator Update	5
Dormouse Co-ordinator Update	7
Water Shrew Project	8
HMG Contacts	9

AUTUMN EVENTS

(Events are subject to being updated – please check the website and Facebook regularly)

SEPTEMBER 2017

Monday, 4 September, 2017 19.30

Bats and Roadside Mammal Survey - Analook Training

Venue: Hom Green, Ross on Wye
Contact David Lee via HMG

Tuesday, 5 September 2017 at 10:00

Bat Box Check - Lea and Paget's Wood

Meet in lay-by at the side of road at SO595346
Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Monday, 18 September 2017 at 10:00

Bat Box Check – The Doward

White Rocks and Woodside HNT Reserves,
Meet at Miner's Rest Car Park at SO553158
Contact: Mike Bailey via HMG

Friday, 22 September 2017, 09:30

Dormouse Box Check

Ast Wood

Contact: Dave Smith for directions and to confirm attendance

Saturday, 23 September 2017, 09:30

Bat Box Check

Ast Wood

Contact: Dave Smith for directions and to confirm attendance

Monday, 25 September 2017 at 13.00 and 19.00

Bat Box Check and Trapping at Lime Kilns - Lea and Paget's Wood

Meet in lay-by at the side of road at SO595346
Contact Denise Foster via HMG

OCTOBER 2017

Wednesday, 11 October 2017 at 10:00

Bat Box Check - Lea and Paget's Wood

Meet in lay-by at the side of road at SO595346
Contact Denise Foster via HMG

Thursday, 12 October 2017 at 19.15

AGM followed by 5 short presentations on Local HMG Projects

Venue: Bunch of Carrots Pub at Hampton Bishop, HR1 4JR

NOVEMBER 2017

Saturday, 11 November, 2017 – 10.00 to 16.00

Bone ID workshop with Ric Morris

Venue: Hampton Bishop village hall
Numbers will be limited so booking is essential
There will be a charge for this event
Contact: Leigh Russell via HMG

DECEMBER 2017

Wednesday, 13 December 2017 at 19.00

HMG Christmas Social - Eating, Drinking, Bowling & Rock n Rolling in Hereford

Venue: MFA Bowl, Station Approach, Hereford HR1 1BB
Contact Leigh Russell via HMG

MEMBERSHIP

Leigh Russell, Membership Secretary

We currently have 81 paid up members in HMG and 262 followers on Facebook. Remember, if

join the Mammal Society and get HMG subs free!

Facebook - HMG has an active Facebook page where we post all our events past and present:
www.facebook.com/groups/222077991279736/

NEW MEMBERS

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

Hazel Pickering
Fred Taylor
Bartolomeu Bueno Cunha
John Powell
Scott Brown
Porscha Thompson
Lorna Price
Linda Moseley

NEWS IN BRIEF

HMG's Annual General Meeting, 2017

HMG's Annual General Meeting is to be held on Thursday, 12 October 2017 at 19.15 at the Bunch of Carrots, Hampton Bishop, HR1 4JR.

The formal AGM business will be followed by 4 ten minute presentations about the work we have carried out this year. There will also be a short presentation about the new Water Shrew project.

Presentations include:

Dormouse Project
Bats and Swifts in Churches Project
Woodland Bat Project (including the Radio-tracking Project)
Introduction to the Water Shrew Project
Bats and Roadside Mammals Driven Transects

The Committee are proposing to change the subscription fees for 2017 which will be notified at the meeting.

The present committee are all willing to stand for another year but if any member wishes to join as a new committee member or nominate

someone to replace an existing incumbent, then nominations need to be sent to the Secretary (Mike Bailey) no later than two weeks before the AGM.

There will not be a charge for the meeting but we will appreciate donations to help cover the hiring of the room.

Hedgehog Festival – Ross on Wye



Family Fun Day at the Hedgehog Festival in Ross-on-Wye and learn how to be a Hedgehog Hero, buy and make hedgehog-themed arts and crafts including homes made by local children, learn how to create wildlife gardens, come face to face with birds of prey, listen to hedgehog-themed stories and so much more!

Check out Facebook on @festivalhog for more details or www.playross.com/hedgehog-festival.html

UK Biodiversity Indicators Report from the JNCC-DEFRA (2017)



Photo: Taken from JNCC-Defra Website (Sep17)

JNCC-DEFRA are committed to developing indicators to report on progress towards meeting international goals and targets. The 2017 UK Biodiversity Indicators Report is now available from <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-4229>

HMG on BBC Countryfile



Photo: Denise Foster and David Lee filming with Ellie Harrison and Martin Brown from BBC Countryfile

BBC Countryfile were filming at this years Hay Festival. During the week, Ellie Harrison took Martin Brown, author and illustrator of the book 'Lesser Spotted Animals', on a special safari of the Wye Valley. Armed with their sketch books they headed to Mabley Farm in Woolhope Dome on a wildlife drawing safari. On the top of their safari list were the Wild Honey Bee, the Wood White butterfly and the Hazel Dormouse. David Lee and Denise Foster were able to introduce the team to two very adorable dormice.

HMG at Local Events

HMG were represented at two shows this summer, Blossom Day at HWT's Pool Ellock Nature Reserve and also at the Hampton Bishop Village Fete.



Photo: Hampton Bishop Village Fete

Pine martens in Herefordshire

There have been no confirmed sightings of Pine martens in Herefordshire for many years but this may change in the near future. There is now an established population of Martens to our west in Wales thanks to the efforts of the Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) and their recent translocations of over forty animals from the expanding populations in Scotland. In the north, the Shropshire Mammal Group (SMG) and the Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) have discovered a small number of martens on the Herefordshire, Shropshire border near Clun, which they have been monitoring for a number of years now, and down in the south east the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (GWT) are hoping to replicate the VWTs work in the Forest of Dean. They have a dedicated member of staff who is working on their own Pine marten project and if all goes

according to plan, they will begin to re-introduce martens into the FOD in the autumn of 2018, some of these animals will almost certainly cross the border into Herefordshire soon after their release. With all these neighboring Martens at our borders, it is only a matter of time before we have our own wild population of Pine martens in Herefordshire.



Pine marten credit Robert Cruickshanks

With this in mind, the Herefordshire Wildlife (HWT) Trust are beginning to develop their own Pine marten project. Herefordshire Mammal group were invited to the first meeting of the Herefordshire Pine marten project, which was also attended by representatives from the VWT, GWT, SWT, SMG, Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, National Trust, and the Welsh beaver project. The project will be focused around the Marches area of the county adjacent to the Shropshire Pine marten sightings. The early stages will involve surveying and monitoring the area for martens which may already have entered the county, and public engagement. This could be followed by making and erecting den boxes and possibly introducing animals into the area in the future if there is thought to be a need and suitable sites can be identified. At some stage the HWT and HMG will be looking for volunteers to assist with the initial surveying of the area.

Public Health England - New Rabies Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Form

Public Health England has just issued new guidelines for requesting pre-exposure rabies prophylaxis. In order to obtain rabies vaccine free-of-charge your GP or Practice Nurse now must submit a risk assessment form for each subject. Bat workers must now provide more

detailed information including which organizations you volunteer with, licence status or whether you are about to start training, whether you are a bat rehabilitator and your frequency of handling bats.

The new risk assessment is completed by the practice nurse/doctor to determine whether the subject is at risk of contracting rabies which will include the frequency of handling bats. Clearly vaccination will only be provided if the applicant is considered to be at significant risk. If you wish to be able to handle bats at Mammal Group events you will need to be vaccinated against rabies. However, HMG is often asked for a reference by the doctors surgery justifying the free rabies vaccination. With immediate effect HMG will only provide a reference for those members who demonstrate a level of commitment towards working with bats.

Full details and forms can be found below:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/rabies-pre-exposure-prophylaxis-guidelines

www.gov.uk/government/publications/rabies-pre-exposure-request-form

Post-exposure guidelines and risk assessment have also been updated.

www.gov.uk/government/publications/rabies-post-exposure-prophylaxis-management-guidelines

www.gov.uk/government/publications/rabies-post-exposure-risk-assessment-form-and-calendar

www.gov.uk/government/publications/rabies-risk-assessment-treatment-after-exposure-to-bats

The pre-exposure risk assessment form only applies to volunteer batworkers. However, according to the NHS Choices Rabies webpage: "If you need the vaccine because there's a risk you could be exposed to the infection through your job, you might be able to have the vaccination for free. Ask your employer or occupational health department about this."

www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Rabies/Pages/prevention.aspx

Bat Co-ordinator Update by Denise Foster

Bats and Swift in Churches Project

HMG has carried out preliminary surveys at 18 new churches, 5 Volunteer Bat Roost Visits and monitoring checks at Pembridge and Wellington Church during the summer. There has also been a joint effort for carrying out swift surveys with Herefordshire Ornithological Club which has resulted in 46 swift surveys.



Photo: Both bat boxes inside the bell chamber contained long-eared bat droppings.

During the swift survey at Staunton-on-Wye church, the two bat boxes installed inside the tower were checked for uptake. There was evidence in both bat boxes of long-eared bat usage which is good news.

A roost visit took place at Tenbury Wells church in 2015 where HMG recommended the installation of bat and swift boxes as part of the church's HLF repair grant. The church is now ready to purchase and install boxes and well as making our recommended modifications to the tower to allow bats access. Scaffolding is currently in place so this is the only time this work can be carried out.



Photo: Two resident brown long-eared bats inside the tower at Staunton-on-Wye church.

Goodrich Castle – Bat Survey

Ten HMG members were lucky enough to carry out a bat survey at Goodrich Castle in July this year. Using IR cameras and night scopes, members saw a colony of Natterer's bat emerge from the Keep and recorded a total of 6 species of bat, including both horseshoes. The staff at the castle are very pro their wildlife which is reassuring for the bats future.



Photo: Courtesy of English Heritage Goodrich Castle Website.

HWT Members Event – Bats at Bodenham Lake



Photo: John Morgan showing HWT members bats in the hand.

A HMG/HWT Bat Trapping Event took place at Bodenham Lake on the 26th August. About 15 members of HWT turned up to learn more about the bats of Bodenham. The evening was a great success but a little hectic at times to say the least as a total of 72 bats were caught very early on. Species caught were 51 soprano pipistrelles, 3 common pipistrelles, 17 Daubenton's bats and 1 whiskered bat - 4 species caught but another two were recorded on the bat detectors; noctule and long-eared.

Woolhope Dome Bat Tracking Project – May 2017

The only bat radio-tagged at May's Bat Tracking event was a ringed BLE from a bat box in Lea and Paget's wood. A box of 4 bats were found roosting together; 2 parous females ringed in 2014 (who routinely roost together), a male and a non-breeding female ringed as adults in 2015. All 4 four bats were found roosting together again in 2016. Despite the tag being prematurely groomed off in a roof void of a house SE of the wood (same house as in 2016), after 24 hours, we managed to save the project and counted out bats from the car port for 3 consecutive nights. A maximum of 12 bats emerged from the car port. During the counts bats were observed flying towards the roost entrance and after a second bat emerged a pair would fly away together – this could possibly be females with their older offspring.



Photo: A breeding female was tagged from a bat box at Lea and Paget's Wood.

Berrington Hall Bat Tracking Project – August 2017



Photo: Berrington Hall near Leominster

The radio-tracking at National Trust property Berrington Hall near Leominster which took place at the beginning of August was a great success. Two females were caught and subsequently fitted with radio-tags funded by the National Trust, a non-breeding Bechstein's bat and a post-lactating Noctule. It was a gamble to radio-tag a Noctule due to the distances they can commute, but our female stayed local and she lead us to 5 new tree roosts in and around the grounds of Berrington Hall; she also introduced us to 27 of her friends.

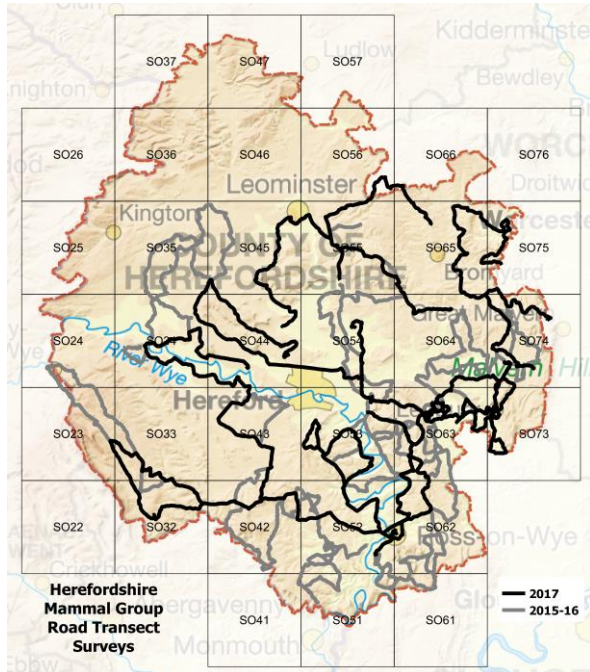


Photo: Post lactating female Noctule was radio-tagged during the project

The female Bechstein's bat lead us to 3 new tree roosts and we counted out 41 of her friends. We have to include juveniles in the count which is likely to be 30% to 40% of the total. Some of our bats, particularly our Bechstein's, have had a

better year mainly due to the fair weather and early spring. Lets hope the damp wet August and September does not set them back too far.

Bats and Roadside Mammal Driven Transects



During the summer 7 HMG members drove a total of 302.4 miles. The number of records collected and any highlights will be published in the next newsletter.

Bat Box Checks



Photo: HMG member Camilla Smith processing a Bechstein's bat at Old Country Wood

HMG continues to check 10 bat box schemes in the county which has had some interesting results this year. Titley Pool still supports a maternity colony of brown long-eared bats. A new maternity colony of brown long-eared bats has appeared at Brilley Green Dingle and at Frith Wood. Also in addition to the ringed colony of brown long-eared bats in Lea and Paget's wood a second colony appeared at the August check.

The Bechstein's bats at Old Country Wood have done well this year. A total of 31 breeding females were encountered and most of them have been successful in producing young this year. A total of 60 bats were encountered at the August box check. Also a new maternity colony of brown long-eareds has turned up in the boxes which is a new record for the wood.

Dormouse Coordinator Update by Ann Bowker

HMG now have two new dormice box schemes; one at HWT's Titley Pool and also at HWT's Lea and Pagets where we are working towards replacing some of the old boxes to get the scheme in good order for the NDMP. If you are interested in getting involved with either of these two sites please get in touch with Ann Bowker or Denise Foster via HMG.



Photo: Torpid dormouse

Tube surveys which took place this year at Badnage Wood, Credenhill and Moorhouse Coppice have so far not shown the presence of dormice.

Water Shrew Presence/Absence Surveying Project by Dave Smith



Photo: Courtesy of Steve Evans

This year, the Herefordshire Mammal Group have been extremely fortunate in the receipt of a grant of £840 from Newgrove Trust, for the purpose of carrying out a survey to establish the presence or absence of Water Shrew in Herefordshire.

The Water Shrew is the largest of the three Shrew species found in mainland UK, the other two being the Pygmy and Common Shrew (*Sorex minutus* and *Sorex araneus*, respectively). The Water Shrew is unique in its ability to swim and forage underwater and can be found in the vicinity of any standing or flowing body of water. The Water Shrew has a physical adaptation of stiffened hairs along the underside of its tail which enable it to steer effectively whilst swimming. The same stiff hairs can be found on each foot which create a greater surface area for propulsion.

The diet of the Water Shrew is comprised predominantly of riparian invertebrates such as; crustaceans, fly larvae and other insect nymphs, in addition to, some terrestrial invertebrates such as Millipedes. The remains of the Water Shrew's prey form a key identification feature when examining their faeces.

During the years of 2004 and 2005, a nationwide Water Shrew survey was undertaken, however, as Herefordshire was not included, the records of Water Shrews within the county are incomplete. At present only 40 records are held for the presence of Water Shrew in Herefordshire.

The aim of the survey is to target the areas of the county which currently hold no records for Water Shrew. These areas will incorporate the River Frome and its tributaries to the North-East and the River Dore and its tributaries to the South-West. The survey will follow the same protocol as the National Water Shrew Survey which is described in *The Water Shrew Handbook* (Carter and Churchfield, 2006).

The survey involves making Bait Tubes which will be sited around the edges of water bodies. The tubes are left in-situ for approximately two weeks with the hope that the focus species will defecate within the tubes in that time frame. After two weeks, all droppings are collected, labelled and air-dried to enable analysis by hand-lens or microscope.

Water Shrew droppings are distinct from other small mammal droppings by the presence of riparian invertebrate remains. A guide to the identification of these remains can be found within Appendix Two of *The Water Shrew Handbook* (Carter and Churchfield, 2006).

Once permission has been obtained for the commencement of survey works on identified sites, help from volunteers would be greatly appreciated in the assembling and setting of Bait Traps. Volunteers will be invited to attend an introduction to the survey. This will be presented at this year's Annual General Meeting.

The survey will run from winter 2017 through to summer 2018, at various sites throughout the county.

References

Carter, P., Churchfield, S., (2006), *The Water Shrew Handbook*, The Mammal Society

HMG CONTACTS

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