identify a small mammal having no more than a fleeting glimpse of a rapidly disappearing bundle of fur. My amazement stems partly from the fact that some of these same, eagle-eyed, observers have proved rather less positive when they've had the same species to hand. I've seen, and handled, quite a few small mammals during the last six or seven years but I still have to look long and hard at immature shrews, voles and mice. They're not easy to identify and, for recording purposes, I'd rather not know about casual sightings of small mammals in the field.

How many times have householders sheepishly admitted to you that they've caught a 'house mouse' in a Nipper trap in their pantry or kitchen? Surely it wouldn't be unreasonable to accept these records? What possible confusion could there be? Well, the trouble is that the average 'Mr and Mrs Householder' supposes that everything with four legs and fur which ventures into a house has got to be a house mouse *(Mus musculus)*. Of course that isn't the case and I've seen several corpses of woodmouse *(Apodemus sylvaticus)* which have been caught in Nipper traps. One trap, placed in a cupboard of a farmhouse kitchen at Bishop Thornton, has the dubious distinction of having caught five species of small mammal; bank vole *(Clethrionomys glareolus)*, common shrew *(Sorex araneus)*, pigmy shrew *(Sorex minutus)*, wood and house mouse. Everyone can recognise a deer. No problem. But how many readers can put their hand on heart and say that they can - with certainty - differentiate between red (*Cervus elaphus*), fallow (*Dama dama*) and sika deer (*Cervus nippon*) in the field. And, don't forget, there are two races of sika present in the wild in Yorkshire.

Then there are bats. To be precise eleven of the fifteen species known to reside in Britain are on the Yorkshire list. And each - including the 'long-eared' - causes problems! I was recently shown a photograph of a bat, taken in a disused railway tunnel near Harrogate, which had been identified by the person who took it as being Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteini*). Admittedly it wasn't a very good photograph and the retrospective mis-identification was excusable. In fact the animal was a long-eared brown bat (*Plecotus auritus*) and this is just one example of dozens of similarly doubtful or incorrect bat records which have been 'offered' to me in the last couple of years.

In the final analysis though I've got to salute all those Yorkshire Vertebrate Recorders who do such an excellent job. To them, falls the unenviable job of sorting the wheat from the chaff - perhaps that should be shrew from the vole - and asking the question "Are you sure?"

As a tail piece I wonder how today's informed breed of mammalogists would react if presented with the following report. A gentleman named Joseph Lucas was the author and the account appeared in a book entitled Studies in Nidderdale, London, Elliott Stock (n.d.).

> "The first time I ever saw a Fomud was during a never-to-be forgotten visit to my venerable friend, Col. Crompton, at Azerley Hall. It had been shot in the woods there a few years before.
>
> One hot afternoon in the summer of 1879, about three o'clock, as I was walking with Plato down High Ash Head Moor, at the height of 1200 feet above sea level, on a northern exposure, my dog, who was a few yards ahead of me, suddenly stopped. When I came up to him I found that he had at bay a most beautiful and courageous animal, in shape like a gigantic Stoat, in colour russell, and with a head like that of a Fox. It was crouching with its fore quarters down, and its pretty face turned up showing the sharpest white teeth, its ears erect, and beautiful eyes rivetted on its Leviathan assailant. My dog was burning to attack it, but I restrained him, when, taking advantage of the opportunity, the beautiful creature shot swiftly away. Its general appearance was tht of a Fox, with a long thin body and very small head. In fact it more resembled a fox than any other animal. As I did not know what the animal was I described it to the next man I met on the borders of the moor, who told me it was a Fomud. This was all the enlightenment I could get, and I was obliged to rest satisfied with it for some time afterwards when I learned from the late Mr. Wood, the intelligent keeper at Bewerley, that it was a Marten. He said "The Foul Mart". Herein, however, my poor friend was mistaken, in common with everybody who has written about this name, - than which no word has given rise to more confusion or originated more mistakes. The Fomud is not the Foul Mart, which is the Polecat. A Polecat would often be called a Foul Mart, but never Fomud."

Well, what do you make of that? There's even an illustration of the animal on the cover of the book! And, for those who are really interested a further five pages of notes followed the account which, amongst other things, examined the derivation of the strange beast's name. I've seen the illustration, read the account in full - several times - and must admit that I'm not much wiser! Certainly if Mr. Lucas had been alive today I'm sure I'd once again be asking the question, "Are you sure?".