

Field Studies Report - 1986

Excluding the two ongoing biannual traps at Blackwoods (Wheldrake) and Hopewell House Farm (Knaresborough) the Mammal Group carried out five Longworth trap sessions during the year. A sixth session, organised to trap water shrews (*Neomys fodiens*) at the Water Cress Farm, Pickering, had to be cancelled because of poor weather conditions. This report does not include the activities of the Bat Section of the Group which are reported elsewhere.

In date order the following traps were carried out:-

1. Wharncliffe Wood, Sheffield - 25th-27th April.

Trapping took place in a large Forestry Commission woodland, with deciduous wood to the north and coniferous wood to the south. Traps were laid in 4 lines (96 in all); (1) in the coniferous part, along a stone wall bordering the forest and a grassy field; (2) 4 yards into the forest and parallel to line 1; (3) a further 15 yards into the woodland; (4) was along a stream edge and a grassy bank. Despite warm dry weather and one week of pre-baiting, the results were disappointing. The traps were examined at 8.00am and 8.00pm on 26.4.86, and at 8.00am on 27.4.86. Only two live common shrew (*Sorex araneus*) were caught in line 4. The poor result could be attributable to over baiting in the pre-baiting phase and the maturity of the trees, but one would expect to find woodmouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*). Evidence of grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) and fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) was found.

2. High Batts Reserve, Ripon - May 25th.

A one day trap, using 4 lines and 96 traps. In this 29 acre deciduous woodland, surrounded by farmland on three sides and the River Ure on the other, the lines were; (1) next to a footpath close to young trees and shrubs, (2) in a grassy glade, (3) in the woodland and (4) in the woodland next to a grassy track. The traps were inspected at 8.00am, 1.30pm and 4.00pm. The results were poor, probably due to not pre-baiting. The numbers of mammals caught were:

Species	Numbers	Time: am/pm	Weight range	Sex
<i>Clethrionomys glareolus</i>	2	1/1	17-20g	2M
<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	2	2/0	26-28.5g	1M/1F

There were several sprung traps. Evidence of rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) and roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) was also found on the Reserve, and this, along with the findings of the group from Mammal Society Conference at Ripon on 6th April (which included evidence of mink, badger, water vole, hare, mole and common shrew) makes High Batts an important mammal reserve in North Yorkshire. Further small mammal studies are planned for 1987.

3. Filey Dams - June 15th.

A one day trap, using 3 lines and 75 traps. The traps were examined at 9.15am and 3.00pm. This was the second Y.M.G. Longworth trap session on the Reserve, and in the intervening time there have been some habitat changes, such as an artificially created pool and the removal of a ditch and a hedgerow. Traps were laid in three main areas; (1) a hedgerow, (2) a woodland edge and (3) by the stream. Reasonable populations of 4 of the 5 species of small mammals were trapped, despite the habitat changes and pressure from the local housing estate. The most important find was a healthy population of water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*), one of the largest known populations of this species in Yorkshire to date, thus a good reason to establish and maintain a Reserve at Filey Dams. The animals caught were:

Species	Total Numbers	Numbers/Time	
		am	pm
<i>Sorex araneus</i>	17	11	6
<i>Neomys fodiens</i>	16	8	8
<i>Clethrionomys glareolus</i>	4	2	2
<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	8	8	0
<i>Microtus agrestis</i>	1	1	0

In all 46 small mammals were caught, the majority being shrews.

4. Cropton Forest - 10th-12th October

Using 100 traps in 4 different habitats, one line per habitat, it was found that different small mammals were found in different habitats. Common shrew (*Sorex araneus*) dominated the boggy valley whereas they were also found, along with bank vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*), in the woodland ditch (line 2). Line 3, which was woodland edge with meadow, produced (*S. araneus*) and woodmouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*). A dry wall and meadow habitat (line 4) was dominated by field vole (*Microtus agrestis*), and again had *S. araneus*. All, except shrews, were marked, but it would seem that *S. araneus* was present in all different habitats. Water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*) was caught at both sites that had a higher water content. The traps were laid and pre-baited on 5th October, set on 10th October, and examined twice on 11th, and finally on the morning of the 12th. Summaries of the findings are as follows:-

Species	Total	Line 1	Line 2	Line 3	Line 4
<i>Sorex araneus</i>	41	8	8	13	12
<i>Neomys fodiens</i>	2	1	1	0	0
<i>Clethrionomys glareolus</i>	14	1	13(4)	0	0
<i>Microtus agrestis</i>	8	0	2(1)	0	6(2)
<i>Apodemus sylvaticus</i>	11	1	0	9(3)	1

Figures in brackets indicate recaptured mammals.

These results show that forest plantation verges provide vital and varied habitats for a wide range of small mammals. From prints, other mammalian species identified in the area were mink (*Mustela vison*), grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) and red deer (*Cervus elaphus*). Droppings