JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO GO BACK INTO THE WATER.....

The killer whale (*Orcinus orca*) appears to be widely distributed in British and Irish waters. Sightings show that it occurs particularly along the Atlantic seaboard and in the northern North Sea, with coastal records occuring predominantly between April and September. The species seems, however, to be relatively rare off the Yorkshire coast!

Ref: Evans, P.G.H.
Rit Fiskideildar 11 1988

WATER VOLE SIGHTING

On 28th March 1990, at 7.55 a.m., a water vole was seen at Holgate Beck, York. The animal appeared at the entrance to a hole in the bank about 18" above the water line below Garnet Terrace, a few yards upstream from the culvert under Water End. Its head and forequarters were visible for several minutes; it then sniffed, stretched slightly, and disappeared back down the hole.

L. Gibb.

CAT REVEALS BAT ROOST

There are at least two cats in Skidby, East Yorkshire, which hunt for prey over the roof tops. On a few occasions bats have succumbed to their attentions. One evening in May 1989 at sunset, I spotted one of these pampered pets crouched on a flat dormer roof, its attention concentrated on a gutter near a downfall pipe. I enquired of the householders whether they had a birds nest in that region. When a negative asnswer was received, I asked to stay and see what happened.

Although I was peering up at the cat, he was more interested in events occuring under the roof lining. He clearly became more excited and coiled himelf in anticipation. Over the next ten minutes seven pipistrelle bats emerged from under the barge board and avoided the cat's swinging paw. To my knowledge the bats did not return to that roosting site, prefering other nearby sites. In the summer of '89 I did not have any damaged bats brought to me.

This incident suggests that cats can be useful as biological indicators of bats' presence within roof cavities.

Tony Lane

THE HISTORY OF THE YORKSHIRE MAMMAL GROUP 1970 - 1990

The beginnings of the Yorkshire Mammal Group can be traced back to Micheal Thompson's work on the natural history of Overton and Skelton parishes as part of an update of the Bootham School survey of 1956. Due to a lack of baseline information on small mammals, a trap at Moorlands nature reserve was organized with the help of Colin Simms of the Yorkshire Museum and Neil Cowx of St. John's College. This event took place in 1969, and it was decided in 1970 that a local group dedicated to the study of mammals should be formed. The first meeting of the YMG was held in February 1970, followed by monthly meetings at Heworth Croft, St John's College.

Field projects were organised at Moorlands, Oxleas Farm, Whitwell and at Overton. Eventually a long term monthly trapping programme was established at Howsham Woods, the results of which were published in the Naturalist (D. Aspinall & M. Thompson, 1973). The Yorkshire Philosophical Society kindly donated £100 to the group for the purchase of a field studies hut, which was sited at Howsham Woods. This project completed, the group moved in 1973 to the Forestry Commission nursery woodlands at Black Wood, Wheldrake, taking their hut with them. Here, in a newly planted area, it was possible to observe the small mammal changes within one area undergoing rapid succession. The Wheldrake project became one of the longest running small mammal traps in Britain and ended in 1986. The results have been published in IMPRINT (Carolyn Fraser and Ken Wilson, 1987), and elsewhere.

Running concurrently with Wheldrake, the Yorkshire Mammal Group was invited in 1980 to take part in the Demonstration Farm Project, organised by the Countryside Commission. Subsequently, the group undertook a six year study of Hopwell House Farm, near Knaresborough, the chosen farm in Yorkshire for the project. The results were rewarding. Eight different species of small mammal, including the relatively rare harvest mouse, were trapped and released. Again the results were written up by the then field studies officer of the group, Carolyn Fraser, to be published in IMPRINT in 1988 and used elsewhere.

Besides small mammal survey work, the group has been involved in national badger, otter and harvest mouse surveys organised by members of the Mammal Society of Great Britain, to which it is affiliated and on which it models its organisational structure. The group collects scientific data about wild mammals, but is not directly involved in conservation issues. Along with other naturalists in Yorkshire, group members have contributed records for the 10 kilometre square mapping scheme of the mammals of the British Isles. In 1985 a book entitled 'Yorkshire Mammals', edited by Professor Michael Delaney,