Contents

Chairman's report – 2010

Geoff Oxford

In 2010 the YMG was fortunate to be awarded a National Lottery 'Awards for All' grant for its 'Mammals Detectives' project. With this largesse we have bought, among other things, bat detection equipment and associated species identification computer software, a laptop and data projector for our indoor meetings and replacement Longworth traps. The aim of the initiative was to engage a wider range of the general public with mammal-related information and activities, and to increase the YMG and NYBG membership. Putting this bid together largely fell to Robert Masheder, and we are extremely grateful for his efforts.

As part of our on-going attempts to take mammals to a wider audience, we attended two major wildlife events at Dalby forest and at the Arboretum, Castle Howard. Many thanks to Robert Masheder and Ann Hanson for running our stand at the Dalby '…ology' extravaganza. The 'Wild about Wood' event at Castle Howard, now in its second year, is gaining momentum as the place to go in early September. The YMG tent received more than 600 visitors over the weekend, where people young and old learned about mammal tracks and signs. This level of activity would have been impossible without dedicated volunteers. Sincere thanks to Sian and Steve Abbey, who erected a splendid tent and supplied tables and chairs, and to Sian, Roma Oxford, Gordon Woodroffe and Mary Youngman who worked their socks off enthusing the public. Once again, Ann Hanson and Rob Masheder organised a splendid series of field events – trapping sessions and mammal walks – which promoted the more practical skills of mammal work and at the same time provided data for the Atlas (see below).

It became increasing clear during the early part of the year that, if we were successful in attracting more members and visitors to YMG indoor meetings in the wake of the Lottery grant, the library at the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT) would not be able to cope. The search was on for a larger venue. Fortunately, we were able to book the upstairs room at The Black Swan, Peasholme Green, although this entailed a change from our usual Thursday slot to Tuesday. We do hope this hasn't caused too much inconvenience. This change also takes the pressure off YMG officers (mainly Ann Hanson) who used to act as 'baristas' at our YWT meetings –

drinks are now bought at the bar. And, yes, new faces have started to arrive. Thanks to Delphine Pouget and Maija Marsh for, respectively, organising and publicising our programme of events. Delphine had to retire as Secretary from early 2011 for 'biological reasons'. She has done a wonderful job for the past five years and we are most grateful for all her hard work.

Our long-term monitoring of two re-introduced dormouse populations continues. At the site near Helmsley, no traces of dormice were found again so extinction seems more and more likely. The population at West Tanfield continues to thrive. The end of this year marks a milestone in our project to map mammal distributions in North Yorkshire overseen by our recorder, John Ray. Once all records are in we will begin the mapping process with the aim of publishing a web-based Atlas during 2011. Then, from the 1st January 2011, we begin collecting records all over again!

Finally, a special thanks to all those who have contributed to this volume of *Imprint*. Andrew Halcro-Johnston has kindly volunteered his services as editor for this issue, providing a welcome break for Mary Youngman who has edited *Imprint* since 2004.

Atlas of North Yorkshire Mammals

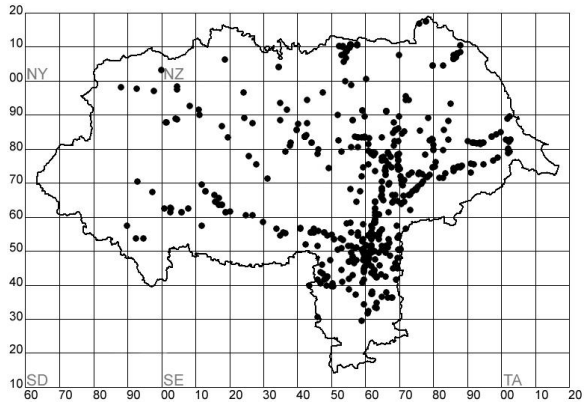
Geoff Oxford

As mentioned in my Chairman's report, we have reached an exciting stage in mammal recording in North Yorkshire. At the end of March, all data for 2010 will be submitted to the North & East Yorkshire Environmental Records Centre to complete their dataset of records for the period 1996 to 2010. These will form the basis of the maps at the heart of our *Atlas of North Yorkshire Mammals*.

The Atlas will be web-based and the broad layouts for the pages have already been agreed. After an introductory page of background and acknowledgements there will be a list of all terrestrial North Yorkshire mammals with links to the species pages. Each species page will comprise:

a. two photographs,

b. a static map of distributions to hectad (10 x 10 km square) resolution,
c. a map of overall recorder effort (which will, necessarily, be the same for all species),
d. a link through to the ARKive website (where information on each species' appearance, vital statistics, habitat etc. can be found – see http://www.arkive.org/hedgehog/erinaceus-europaeus/ for example),
e. a link through to an interactive map of North Yorkshire,
f. a commentary on the mammal distributions in the county, pointing out significant changes in ranges since Delany (1985) and the reliability of patterns against the background of recorder effort.



Distribution map of the hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) based on data collected from 1996 to 2006 (Photo: Roma Oxford)

To provide a little more detail, the photographs will mostly, we hope, be taken in North Yorkshire and will be of the mammal itself and key field signs with an explanation of why they indicate a specific mammal. Interestingly, the ARKive site does not include field signs, so this feature of the *Atlas* is educationally important. The photographs will be taken from a dedicated YMG Flickr page of uploaded material. Any member of the YMG can contribute material to this site so please look out any photographs you may have. Details of how to add your photographs are given below.

The interactive map will allow an overall view of North Yorkshire with the facility f homing in to specific locations to see where records have been made. For most species, records will be able to be localised to a 1 km square but for others the finest resolution will be to the tetrad (2 x 2 km square) or, for the dormouse, to the hectad. The reasons for reduced resolution in these cases are varied. For some species there are conservation concerns e.g. badger, and for others e.g. dormouse,

populations may be on private land and we have to consider the landowner's wishes. For the bats, however, we do not want to give high resolution data away for they earn the North Yorkshire Bat Group money!

We will obviously inform YMG members when the Atlas is up and running.

Many thanks to John Ray for acting as our Recorder, and to Dan Jones for his valuable suggestions regarding web design.

Reference

Delany, M. J. (ed.) (1985) *Yorkshire Mammals*. University of Bradford.

How to upload photographs to the YMG Flickr website

http://www.flickr.com/groups/yorkshiremammalgroup/

To upload photographs you'll need to set up a Yahoo account and then ask to be registered on the YMG site. Upload photographs onto your own Flickr site first of all and then transfer them to the YMG site. It might take a day or two for your first photographs to appear on the YMG site – presumably someone at Flickr is checking for pornography (e.g. frolicking naked badgers). So please look out any appropriate photographs you may have and upload them as described. If you experience any problems, please contact me on chairman@yorkshiremammalgroup.org.uk.

Bird pellet studies in the North York Moors and adjacent areas of Cleveland and North Yorkshire: Introduction and sources

Colin Howes
colinhowes@blueyonder.co.uk

Introduction

No need to shoot or trap anything ... no need to delve into stomach contents ... bird pellets are easy to find, easy to open, fun for the kids and contain a cornucopia of forensic evidence for the keen 'nature detective'.

For investigating the feeding ecology of various birds of prey, for monitoring small mammal faunas and even for obtaining bird ring returns,

the analysis of prey remains in bird pellets has long been shown to be highly productive and has the advantage of being non invasive or non disruptive of the predatory birds in question.

So popular have pellet studies become and so prolific and scattered the literature, that the production of a bibliography has become necessary. This review, based on data in Howes (1998) and subsequent literature searches, is an attempt to assemble available data sources for use in monitoring small mammal faunas in the Cleveland Hills, North York Moors and adjacent areas.

History of pellet studies

Diet studies in Yorkshire specifically using bird pellets date back to the 1930's and 40's. With improvements and availability of skeletal identification literature, the technique really took off in the late 1960's and early 70's largely through the work of Ian Massey (1972) on barn owl in the Vale of Pickering and elsewhere around Scarborough.

Of the sixty seven published Yorkshire pellet studies catalogued in Howes (1998) only seven relate to work in or adjacent to the North York Moors region.

Distribution mapping

The genre peaked spectacularly and productively during the mid 1970's and early 1980's with the Herculean quest for small mammal records for the *Atlas of Yorkshire Mammals* (Howes 1983) and *Yorkshire Mammals* (Delany 1985). Not only did this produce many thousands of records, it served to put water shrew and more particularly the harvest mouse on the map.

Current trends

With guides to the identification of small mammal skeletal material being readily available in a range of popular natural history books and in educational leaflets from the RSPB and Mammal Society (see below), the study of bird pellets continues in popularity. With advances made in the weight evaluation and sex and age determination of prey species (Yalden and Morris 1990), the genre has now moved into a new era as exemplified by the work of Roberts, Scott & Hull (1997) where statistical analysis is being pressed into service to provide more rigorous interpretation of prey preference, availability and seasonality.

Bibliography

This body of published information represents the proverbial 'tip of an iceberg'. This is a first attempt at gathering the available data; no doubt additional reports and papers are tucked away in the publications of the numerous local natural history and birding organisations. I would be pleased to receive information on these and will produce a revised bibliography in due course. Also unpublished card indexes, recording sheets etc., will be kept by naturalists and natural history societies. The British Trust for Ornithology and the Mammal Society also have significant holdings of data, which includes material contributed from the North York Moors region.

BARN OWL *Tyto alba*

Brown, R.W. (1995) Common shrew *(Sorex araneus)* in Delany, M.J. (ed) *Yorkshire Mammals.* University of Bradford.

Massey, C.I. (1972) Prey taken by a barn owl. *The Naturalist,* **97**: 11-13.

Massey, C.I. (1978) Mammal reports in *Scarborough Field Naturalists' Society Report for 1977*: 51-54.

Massey, C.I. (1979) Mammal reports in *Scarborough Field Naturalists' Society Report for 1978*: 24-27.

Roberts, J. Scott, G.W. and Hull, L. (1997) Diet of barn owls *Tyto alba* in a lowland area of North Yorkshire. *The Naturalist,* **122**:137-142.

TAWNY OWL *Strix aluco*

Massey, C.I. (1978) Mammal reports in *Scarborough Field Naturalists' Society Reports for 1977*: 51-54.

Wallis, A.J. (1970) Early nesting by a pair of tawny owls. *The Naturalist,* **95**: 56.

Wardhaugh, T. (1997) Prey eaten by tawny owls at Flatts Lane Ormsby. *Cleveland Naturalists' Field Club Records of Proceedings*, **6**: 17-23.

KESTREL *Falco tinnunculus*

Simms, C. (1961) Indications of the food of the kestrel in upland districts of Yorkshire. *Bird Study*, **8**: 148-151.

Prey identification guides & general references

Delany, M.J. (1985) *Yorkshire Mammals.* University of Bradford.

Howes, C.A. (1983) An atlas of Yorkshire mammals. *The Naturalist,* **108**: 41-82.

Howes, C.A. (1998) A bibliography of bird pellet studies in Yorkshire. *Yorkshire Naturalists' Union Bulletin*, **29**: 13-17.

Lawrence, M.J. and Brown, R.W. (1973) *Mammals of Britain, their Tracks, Trails and Signs.* Blandford, London.

Morris, P.A. and Burges, M.J. (1988) A method for estimating total body weight of avian prey items in the diet of owls. *Bird Study*, **35**: 147-152.

RSPB (undated) *Owl Pellets.* Leaflet produced by RSPB, Sandy, Bedfordshire.

Yalden, D.W. and Morris, P.A. (1990) The analysis of owl pellets. *Occasional Publication of the Mammal Society,* No.13. Mammal Society, London.

Bat rehabilitation and bat box projects are worthwhile initiatives

Tony Lane
Secretary and Recorder, East Yorkshire Bat Group

Bat rehabilitation and rescue started in the Hull and East Riding area in 1990, just two years before the East Yorkshire Bat Group (EYBG) was formally constituted in May 1992, and predated the formation of the Bat Conservation Trust by two months. Although there was no obligation to deal with grounded bats the establishment of a Bat Helpline through the local media was welcomed by animal welfare professionals in local veterinary practices and by the RSPCA who do not have bat care facilities of their own. Despite the running costs involved in the collection and husbandry of bats found by concerned members of the public, it was felt that the goodwill generated and the details of the records themselves made it all worthwhile. Very soon bat species that are locally common, like

pipistrelles, noctule, brown long-eared and Natterer's bats were brought to our attention. In the first year it became abundantly clear that the skills needed to be successful with injured and juvenile bats were only to be gained by seeking advice from more experienced sources elsewhere. We were given expert advice from North Yorkshire vet Lesley Helliwell and Maggie Brown at the West Yorkshire Bat Hospital and both sources have been informative and extremely supportive. While the skill and commitment needed for significant success with juvenile bats remains a challenge, success rates of up to fifty percent have been achieved with the introduction of antibiotics and a useful bat milk substitute. The very youngest baby bats have proved to be the most difficult to wean, consequently a priority is to reunite any juveniles with their parent, having located the nursery roost. Despite many failures we were encouraged to persevere. Members of the public, on finding bats and learning that the EYBG caring team would do its utmost to rehabilitate any bat to the area where it was found, have been very supportive of our work and often provided generous financial support.

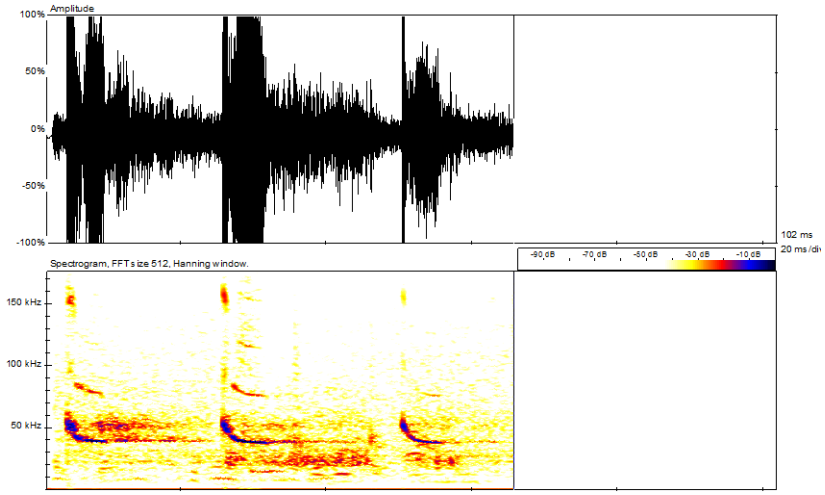
In my role as Bat Recorder for the EYBG I have found the records of the species found, their sex and provenance to be an invaluable resource for the local records centre at York, particularly for planning proposals under consideration by County Hall at Beverley. Environmental consultancies nationally are also eager to glean records from our database for their desk top studies of planning projects and are happy to provide revenue for the EYBG in return.

Dr. Robert Stebbing's studies (Stebbings & Walsh, 1988) on the value of bat boxes in woodland as a means of discovering which bat species are found locally inspired investment in designer homes for bats and fortunately a volunteer was forthcoming from the EYBG membership. Bat box projects were established during 1992 at three sites: Bishop Burton College, North Cliffe Wood Nature Reserve (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust) and Tophill Low Nature Reserve (Yorkshire Water).

In 1993 published studies by Gareth Jones at Bristol University revealed the possibility of a cryptic pipistrelle species in Britain based on differences in echolocation characteristics (Jones & Parijs, 1993). This early discovery of what proved to be a drawn out saga was only settled by genetic resolution of the common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and the soprano pipistrelle (*P. pygmaeus*) in 1997. However, the international agreement for the two species of pipistrelle was not settled until 2003. At the time, 1993, I thought it quite amusing, and not a little ironic, that our

most frequently encountered and familiar bat species should provide such a surprise by confounding the experts. While all this concern over pipistrelles was being played out in the south west and elsewhere, the EYBG bat box project at North Cliffe Wood near Market Weighton had the first recorded presence, in October 1995, of unfamiliar gingery brown pelage pipistrelles with yellowish genitalia. These were quite distinctive from the more familiar "Bandit" pipistrelles encountered in Beverley and Hull district. Subsequent experience has confirmed the pipistrelles found at North Cliffe Wood to be the soprano pipistrelle, comprising the earliest species records for East Yorkshire.

More recently, bat box studies at Tophill Low Nature Reserve near Driffield have provided unexpected records of a third resident species of pipistrelle, Nathusius' pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*). On 17th May 2008 a male and two female Nathusius' pipistrelles were recorded, which may indicate breeding occupancy. Subsequently two males and a female were found in bat boxes during 2009 and again in 2010. Tophill Low Nature Reserve provides a diverse riparian habitat with the River Hull and the Beverley and Barmston Drain, plus numerous still waters as a result of gravel abstraction. Six individual records of Nathusius' pipistrelle from grounded bats found in either coastal or Humber Estuarine locations have accrued since 1998, which supports the notion that Nathusius' pipistrelle is a seasonal migrant. Thus the findings by the EYBG support the conclusion that *P. nathusii* is a resident breeding species in Britain and Ireland with numbers augmented by seasonal migratory movements from Europe (Russ et al., 2001).



Sonogram of *P. nathusii* recorded at Tophill Low Nature Reserve in May 2009. Peak energy output at 39.5 kHz supports the identification.

Provided by Philip Moodie of the EYBG.

During 2010 bats brought to the attention of the EYBG included the first East Yorkshire records of Leisler's bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*). These were from Marfleet Lane, East Hull in June and from Sands Lane, Bridlington in

September. These records suggest Leisler's exhibits limited migratory behaviour, possibly originating from the species' stronghold in West Yorkshire.

A rare national record of the vagrant migratory species, the particoloured bat (*Vespertilio murinus*), was made during September 2010 at Copandale Road, Beverley. This exceptionally attractive bat has been recorded once before in East Yorkshire, at Hornsea during March 2002. There have been less than two-dozen records in total of *V. murinus* in the UK (Harris & Yalden, 2008).

From this account of the EYBG dealing with grounded bats it is abundantly clear that valuable records of bat species found in Hull and the East Riding are steadily being added to. This is from an area where bats had been under recorded prior to 1988, probably due to the absence of resident bat workers. Similarly, the act of faith to participate in bat box initiatives has reaped unexpected dividends and added to the collective understanding of bat species' habitat requirements in an essentially agricultural environment. The status of bat species in the East Riding has now been given a solid platform from which to build future studies.

Acknowledgement

The author wishes to record his thanks to all the EYBG membership who have participated in bat rehabilitation work and bat box projects and without whose voluntary input and enthusiasm our collective knowledge would be diminished.

***V. murinus*, Hornsea, 2002**
Photo by Philip Moodie

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Jones, G. & Parijs, S. M. (1993) Proc. Roy. Soc. London, Series B, 251, 119-125.

Russ, J. M. et al. (2001) J. Zool., London, 254, 91-100.

Stebbings, R. E. & Walsh, S. T. (1988). FFPS, 2nd Edition.

Rehabilitation of the common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)

Jonathan Spencer MSc & Joanne Allen BSc

There are 17 species of bat within the UK. One of the most abundant is the common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), which is a small brown coloured bat that has adapted well to co-inhabiting a variety of residential and commercial properties with humans.

Bats utilise buildings as a convenient place to hibernate, mate and create maternity roosts. Buildings provide the ideal place to shelter from adverse weather conditions and provide safety from common predators. Although such features are relatively easy for bats to access, there are many downfalls to relying on man-made structures.

Human activity can often disturb bats and in many cases, usually unbeknown to the human, can lead to injury or death of the bat. Man-made structures can quite as easily be demolished or refurbished as quickly as they are erected; leading to loss of an existing roost site or habitat loss for bats in general. Bats have adapted well to be able to cope with some level of disturbance, however excessive disturbance in many cases leads to bats abandoning roost sites. This is one of the reasons that all British bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Local bat groups train members to care for and rehabilitate bats that may be grounded or injured. Common problems that arise include individuals that have being attacked by predators such as cats, which in turn can result in broken limbs, puncture wounds to wing membranes and distress. Other common problems include fatigue, abandoned juveniles or adults that have been awoken from hibernation due to disturbance.

Members of the public regularly contact bat workers to collect bats that they have found grounded or found within their homes. An initial assessment is made regarding the state of the bat. Those which are uninjured will temporarily be taken into care, and can be released back to the area they were found, permitting weather conditions are suitable and that the individual is of a sound weight.

As an example, one bat in particular, an adult female known by the name of Britannia, was found grounded in an area within central Hull. It became apparent that she was suffering from fatigue and was a little undernourished. Taking into account the time of year in which she was found it was most probable that she had been awoken from hibernation, and was promptly taken into care by a fellow bat worker. On taking over duty of care for Britannia, it became apparent after two weeks that she had become increasingly inactive and stopped feeding for several days. This in turn required a great deal of time and patience in encouraging her to take mealworm 'innards' directly into the mouth. This gradually progressed to decapitated mealworms that she ate herself, and finally mini mealworms that suited her small size. She is now at a suitable weight and is awaiting release, weather permitting towards the end of March 2011.

A common pipistrelle initially discovered as a juvenile in the summer of 2010, with suspected fatigue and what appeared to be a strained wing, has since made great progress thanks to the combined dedication of bat rehabilitators. Initially unable to fly to a required standard necessary for a life in the wild, he is now able to sustain flight at a distance of at least 4 metres, a great move forward to a hopeful release in the near future. Such success stories highlight the importance of the dedication of bat workers, as well as the education required to inform the public of laws surrounding bats and their importance within wider ecosystems.

Thanks are due to Tony Lane of the East Yorkshire Bat Group for his guidance and advice.

Rodley Nature Reserve Biodiversity Day

Ann Hanson

Introduction

Rodley Nature Reserve is a lovely mixture of ponds, wetlands and hay meadows adjacent to the River Aire in the Kirkstall Valley, near Leeds (Grid ref. SE235364). The reserve is run by a group of very dedicated volunteers, who invited YMG to carry out a small mammal survey on the reserve as part of their Biodiversity Day on 17 July 2010. Other activities throughout the day included bird ringing, moth trapping, outdoor crafts for children, mini-beast hunts, a dragon fly walk, pond dipping, a botany walk

and a bird walk. For more information about Rodley NR see their website at www.rodleynaturereserve.org.

Methods

Thirty Longworth traps were placed in a variety of habitats around the reserve, baited with wheat, peanuts, sunflower seeds, carrots and blowfly pupae, and with a ball of hay for bedding.

Trap locations:

1. Sensory garden around visitors' centre (5 traps). The sensory garden is filled with a wide variety of plants and is separated from a species-rich hay meadow by a hedge consisting of native species.
2. Species-rich hay meadow – banking with shrubs and long grass along one edge (5 traps); centre of uncut meadow (5 traps).
3. Dragonfly ponds (5 traps). A complex of small ponds with native aquatic plants and surrounding wetland vegetation, designed for wildlife, especially dragonflies.
4. Reedbed (10 traps). Traps were set in lines alongside a track cut through the reedbed.

Traps were set on the evening of Friday 16 July and checked on Saturday 17 July from 9.30am onwards.

Results

Summary of small mammals captured at Rodley Nature Reserve.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4
Wood mouse	0	0	1	0
Bank vole	4	1	0	2
Common shrew	0	0	0	1
Water shrew	0	0	0	1

Appendix I shows a comprehensive table of results for this trap.

Discussion and conclusions

Four different species of small mammal were caught at Rodley Nature Reserve, including bank vole (*Myodes glareolus*), wood mouse (*Apodmus sylvaticus*), common shrew (*Sorex araneus*) and water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*). The majority of captures were bank voles, which were found in a

variety of habitats, including the sensory garden, the hay meadow and the reedbed. A single wood mouse was caught next to one of the dragonfly ponds and one common shrew and a water shrew were caught in the reedbed. The water shrew was an especially fine specimen and the reserve would appear to have a good range of small mammals. Other small mammals which may well be present on the reserve, but were not caught on this occasion, include field vole (*Microtus agrestis*) and harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*).

Thanks are due to the Rodley NR volunteers for a most enjoyable day and to Rob Masheder and Mary Youngman of YMG for their help with the survey.

Appendix I

Table of results: Small mammal survey at Rodley NR, 17 July 2010.

Weather: Warm with occasional rain showers on the day of the trap. Heavy rain throughout the previous day, but dry by evening.

Site	**Species**	**Sex M/F***	**Age A/SA/J***	**Weight (g)**
Sensory garden (1)	Bank vole	M	A	19.0
Sensory garden (1)	Bank vole	M	A	24.0
Sensory garden (1)	Bank vole	M	A	21.0
Sensory garden (1)	Bank vole	M	A	22.0
Hay meadow (2)	Bank vole	M	SA	18.0
Dragonfly ponds (3)	Wood mouse	F	A	24.0
Reedbed (4)	Common shrew	?	A	7.0
Reedbed (4)	Bank vole	F	A	22.0
Reedbed (4)	Bank vole	?	J	6.0
Reedbed (4)	Water shrew	?	A	16.0

* M = male; F = female; A= adult; SA = subadult; J = juvenile

A small mammal survey at Old Moor RSPB Reserve, near Barnsley

Ann Hanson

Introduction

Old Moor RSPB Reserve is situated in the Dearne Valley near Barnsley (Grid ref. SE423023). The reserve is a mixture of ponds, wetlands and flood meadows with a visitors' centre and several bird hides. A small mammal trapping course was run on the reserve for members of the public by the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) on behalf of the RSPB on 21 July 2010.

Methods

Forty Longworth traps were placed in a variety of habitats around the reserve, baited with wheat, peanuts, sunflower seeds, carrots and blowfly pupae, and with a ball of hay for bedding.

Trap locations:

1. Native species hedge with adjacent species-rich grassland (10 traps).
2. Ditch edge with abundant bulrush in the water (10 traps).
3. Reedbed edge (5 traps).
4. Lily pond edge, with dense emergent vegetation (10 traps).
5. Dry bank with scattered scrub (5 traps).

Traps were set on the evening of Tuesday 20 July and checked on Wednesday 21 July from 9.30am onwards.

Results

Summary of small mammals captured at Old Moor RSPB Reserve.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5
Wood mouse	0	3	2	0	0
Bank vole	0	1	0	0	0
Common shrew	1	1	0	1	0
Water shrew	0	1	0	1	0

Appendix I shows a comprehensive table of results for this trap.

Discussion and conclusions

Four different species of small mammal were caught at Old Moor RSPB Reserve, including wood mouse (*Apodmus sylvaticus*), bank vole (*Myodes glareolus*), common shrew (*Sorex araneus*) and water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*). The majority of captures were wood mice, which were found alongside the wet ditch and the reedbed. Common shrews and water shrews were caught alongside the wet ditch and the lily pond, with a single common shrew under the hedge and a bank vole alongside the wet ditch. No small mammals were caught on the dry bank, which had less ground cover than the other survey sites. In addition to the trap captures, a pygmy shrew (*Sorex minutus*) was seen running across the path on the way back to the visitors' centre and an owl pellet found during the trapping session yielded the remains of four field voles (*Microtus agrestis*), bringing the total count of different species to six. Another small mammal which may well be present on the reserve, but was not caught on this occasion, is the harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*).

Thanks are due to Kate Thorpe of the RSPB for helping to arrange this survey and to Kate Edwards and Jack Rhodes for volunteering to help FWAG with the trap.

Appendix I

Table of results: Small mammal survey at Old Moor RSPB Reserve, 21 July 2010.

Weather: Warm and dry on the day of the trap. Heavy rain the previous day and overnight.

Site	**Species**	**Sex M/F***	**Age A/SA/J***	**Weight (g)**
Hedge (1)	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
Ditch bank (2)	Wood mouse	F	A	35.0
Ditch bank (2)	Wood mouse	M	A	22.0
Ditch bank (2)	Wood mouse	M	A	25.0
Ditch bank (2)	Bank vole	F	A	26.0
Ditch bank (2)	Common shrew**	?	A	?
Ditch bank (2)	Water shrew	?	A	13.0

Reedbed edge (3)	Wood mouse	M	A	24.0
Reedbed edge (3)	Wood mouse	F	A	25.0
Lily pond edge (4)	Water shrew***	?	A	?
Lily pond edge (4)	Common shrew	?	A	8.0

* M = male; F = female; A= adult; SA = subadult; J = juvenile
** Escaped during handling
*** Dead in trap

Small mammals surveys at Hopewell House Farm – 30 years on

Ann Hanson

Thanks to the Webster family, modern farming and wildlife conservation have coexisted for the last 30 years at Hopewell House Farm, near Knaresborough (Grid ref. SE373587). YMG carried out a long term small mammal survey on the farm from 1980 to 1987 as part of the Countryside Commission's Demonstration Farm Project (Fraser, 1988; Oxford, 1998). In 2000, YMG were invited back and carried out a further series of small mammal surveys on the farm (Hanson, 2000) and in 2010 we were asked once again to survey the farm. The sites chosen for surveys in 2010 were the same as those surveyed in 2000, with the addition of an extra wetland site. The botanical diversity of the survey sites was also recorded, as it had been in 2000. Two weekends of surveys were carried out on 20-22 August and 3-5 September 2010.

Hedgerow survey methods

Three hedges with different adjacent land use were compared. Twenty Longworth traps were placed at 5m intervals along each hedge and checked on two mornings. The traps were baited with wheat, peanuts, sunflower seeds, carrots and blowfly pupae, and had a ball of hay for bedding.

- Hedge 1 (northern boundary of North Close field) is an old species-rich hedge, about 1.5m tall with 2m grassy field margins on both sides and very few gaps. Adjacent land use is a grass ley on one side and a cereal crop on the other. The hedge shows signs of being layed

in the past and is currently cut on a long rotation judging by the abundant berries on the hawthorn bushes.

- Hedge 2 (north-eastern boundary of Elliots field) is another old, species-rich hedge, about 1.5 to 2m tall with 2m grassy field margins on both sides and very few gaps. Adjacent land use is a grass ley on one side and a cereal crop on the other. This hedge also shows signs of being layed in the past and is currently cut on a long rotation.
- Hedge 3 (north-western boundary of Andrews field) runs alongside a bridleway and is about 2 to 3m tall. Adjacent land use is pasture (sheep grazing) on one side and the grassy bridleway and then a grass ley on the other. The hedge shows signs of being layed in the past and would appear to be trimmed annually, probably due to its proximity to the bridleway.

Hedgerow survey results

Table 1: Hedgerow survey small mammal captures

21/08/2010 – Weather dry, warm and sunny. Rain previous night.

Site	**Species**	**Sex M/F***	**Age A/SA/J***	**Weight (g)**
Hedge 1	Wood mouse	F	A	34.0
Hedge 1	Bank vole	M	J	12.0
Hedge 2	Wood mouse	F	A	21.0
Hedge 2	Wood mouse	M	SA	20.0
Hedge 2	Wood mouse	M	A	26.0
Hedge 3	Wood mouse	M	A	28.0
Hedge 3	Bank vole	M	A	21.0
Hedge 3	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
Hedge 3	Wood mouse	M	A	20.0
Hedge 3	Wood mouse	F	A	21.0

22/08/2010 – Weather dry, warm and sunny. Previous night moonlit.

Site	**Species**	**Sex M/F***	**Age A/SA/J***	**Weight (g)**
Hedge 1	Bank vole	M	SA	16.0
Hedge 1	Wood mouse	F	A	31.0
Hedge 1	Wood mouse	F	A	30.0
Hedge 1	Bank vole	M	A	20.0

Hedge 1	Bank vole	F	J	14.0
Hedge 1	Wood mouse	M	SA	18.0
Hedge 1	Wood mouse**	F	J	?
Hedge 1	Wood mouse	M	A	23.0
Hedge 2	Wood mouse	F	A	24.0
Hedge 2	Bank vole	M	J	12.0
Hedge 2	Wood mouse	F	A	27.0
Hedge 2	Bank vole	F	A	20.0
Hedge 2	Wood mouse	M	A	22.0
Hedge 2	Bank vole	F	A	20.0
Hedge 3	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
Hedge 3	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
Hedge 3	Bank vole	F	SA	15.0
Hedge 3	Wood mouse	M	A	20.0
Hedge 3	Wood mouse	F	SA	17.0
Hedge 3	Bank vole	F	SA	17.0

* M = male; F = female; A= adult; SA = subadult; J = juvenile
** Escaped during handling

Discussion and conclusions

Hedgerows: photo by Ann Hanson

The hedge surveys at Hopewell House (Table 1) recorded three different species of small mammal, including wood mouse (*Apodmus sylvaticus*), bank vole (*Myodes glareolus*) and common shrew (*Sorex araneus*). Hedges 1 and 2 yielded only wood mice and bank voles, whereas hedge 3 contained all three species. The ground flora of hedge 3 was also the most botanically diverse (Appendix 1). Land use alongside the hedges once again seemed to be significant, as hedges 1 and 2 have 2m grassy margins on both sides, whereas hedge 3 effectively has a 6m grassy margin down one side due to the adjacent bridle track and permanent pasture on the other side. In the 2000 surveys, hedge 3 had a very open structure due to sheep grazing into the hedge bottom. This did not seem to be a problem in 2010 and the base of hedge 3 was much denser than previously with abundant brambles and thick grass, providing good quality habitat for small mammals.

Long grass & wetland survey methods

Several areas of long grass and a wetland were trapped around the farm, all in locations where harvest mice or their nests have been recorded in the past. Sixty Longworth traps were shared between five different sites, placed at 5m intervals, and checked on two mornings. The traps were baited with wheat, peanuts, sunflower seeds, carrots and blowfly pupae, and had a ball of hay for bedding.

- Site 1 – Steep grassy bank adjacent to track running through fields to the north-east of the farm (15 traps).
- Site 2 – North-east boundary of Smithy field. Traps placed in 2m margin adjacent to young mixed plantation (10 traps).
- Site 3 – Young mixed plantation edge, adjacent to track (10 traps).
- Site 4 – Mature hedge with grassy bottom adjacent to young mixed plantation and track (15 traps).
- Site 5 – Wetland in south-east corner of Ducknest field (10 traps).

Long grass & wetland survey results

Table 2: Long grass/wetland survey small mammal captures

04/09/2010 – Weather dry, warm and sunny.

Site	Species	Sex M/F*	Age A/SA/J*	Weight (g)
Site 1	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
Site 1	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
Site 1	Pygmy shrew	?	A	4.0
Site 2	Wood mouse	M	A	21.0
Site 2	Wood mouse	M	A	21.0
Site 2	Wood mouse	M	SA	18.0
Site 4	Wood mouse***	F	A	?
Site 4	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
Site 4	Wood mouse	M	A	20.0
Site 4	Bank vole	M	A	20.0
Site 5	Bank vole	M	A	21.0
Site 5	Bank vole	F	A	26.0

05/09/2010 – Weather dry, warm and sunny.

Site	Species	Sex M/F*	Age A/SA/J*	Weight (g)
Site 1	Common shrew	?	A	7.0
Site 1	Bank vole	F	SA	18.0
Site 1	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
Site 1	Bank vole	F	A	17.0
Site 2	Wood mouse	F	A	33.0
Site 2	Wood mouse	M	A	20.0
Site 3	Bank vole	F	A	27.0
Site 3	Wood mouse	F	SA	22.0
Site 4	Wood mouse	M	J	14.0
Site 4	Common shrew	?	A	8.0
Site 4	Bank vole	F	J	15.0
Site 4	Bank vole	M	A	19.0
Site 4	Bank vole	F	SA	14.0
Site 5	Bank vole	M	A	26.0
Site 5	Bank vole	M	A	19.0

* M = male; F = female; A= adult; SA = subadult; J = juvenile
** Escaped during handling
*** Dead in trap

Discussion and conclusions

Pygmy shrew: photo by Rob Masheder

Once again, no harvest mice were trapped in the long grass and wetland habitats, despite nests being found in the wetland in the corner of Ducknest (Site 5) and in various ditch banks and field margins over the last few years. However, the various habitats surveyed (Table 2) did yield further records of wood mouse, bank vole and common shrew, as well as a single pygmy shrew (*Sorex minutus*) at Site 1.

Other mammals recorded on the farm during the current surveys include rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculatus*), fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), badger (*Meles meles*) and brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*). Thanks are due to Simon and Henry Webster for allowing us access to the farm and to Rob Masheder and Mary Youngman of YMG for helping with the surveys.

References

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Appendix 1

Botanical survey of hedgerows (August 2010)

Plant species	**Hedge 1**	**Hedge 2**	**Hedge 3**
Hawthorn	A	A	A
Blackthorn	F	F	O
Field maple	O	F	O
Hazel	-	A	-
Holly	-	O	-
Elder	-	O	A
Guelder rose	-	R	-
Ash	O	-	-
Pedunculate oak	-	O	-
Bramble	O	O	O
Dog rose	R	-	-
Field rose	-	-	R
Ivy	R	-	-
Black bryony	-	-	R
White bryony	-	-	R
Annual meadow grass	-	-	O
Bracken	-	O	R
Cocksfoot	A	A	A
Common bent	-	-	O
Couch grass	O	R	-
False oat grass	A	A	O
Perennial rye grass	-	-	O
Red fescue	-	O	-
Timothy	R	O	A
Yorkshire fog	-	O	O
Broad-leaved dock	R	R	R

Burdock	-	-	R
Common cleavers	O	-	O
Common mouse ear	-	-	R
Common ragwort	-	-	R
Cow parsley	O	-	R
Creeping buttercup	-	-	R
Creeping thistle	-	O	R
Dandelion	-	-	R
Greater plantain	-	-	F
Hieracium sp.	-	-	O
Himalayan balsam	-	R	-
Hogweed	O	O	O
Meadow buttercup	-	-	R
Nipplewort	R	-	-
Red bartsia	-	-	O
Red clover	-	-	O
Rough chervil	-	R	R
Spear thistle	R	R	O
Scentless mayweed	-	-	R
Stinging nettle	F	F	F
White clover	-	-	O
White dead nettle	O	-	-

D = dominant; A = abundant; F = frequent; O = occasional; R = rare

A small mammal survey at Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve, near Ripon

Ann Hanson

Introduction

Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve is an area of lakes, wetlands, wet grassland and silt lagoons, located near West Tanfield to the north of Ripon on an area of former sand and gravel extraction (Grid ref. SE278796). The reserve has been created over a number of years and is managed by the Lower Ure Conservation Trust, who invited YMG to carry out a small mammal survey on the reserve. A trap was carried out on Saturday 9 October 2010, with a moth trapping session also being carried out on the previous night by the reserve volunteers. For more information

about Nosterfield LNR and the Lower Ure Conservation Trust see their website at www.luct.org.uk.

Methods

Fifty Longworth traps were placed in a variety of habitats around the reserve, baited with wheat, peanuts, sunflower seeds, carrots and blowfly pupae, and with a ball of hay for bedding.

Trap locations:

1. Area of dense horsetail and scattered willow scrub along the south-west edge of the East Silt Lagoon (8 traps).
2. Area of rush immediately beside the south-west edge of the East Silt Lagoon (7 traps).
3. Dry bank with abundant brambles along the north-west edge of the East Silt Lagoon (5 traps).
4. Poorly vegetated area immediately beside the north-west edge of the East Silt Lagoon (5 traps).
5. Grass roof of the main hide/interpretation building (2 traps).
6. Relatively new, but well established, native hedge along the South Bank of the reserve (8 traps).
7. Dry embankment with trees and scrub alongside the Old Railway Line (10 traps).
8. Small area of rough grass and ash regeneration adjacent to the Old Railway Line (5 traps).

Traps were set on the evening of Friday 8 October and checked on Saturday 9 October from 9.30am onwards.

Results

Summary of small mammals captured at Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve.

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3	Site 4	Site 5	Site 6	Site 7	Site 8
Wood mouse	2	1	2	2	0	6	5	2
Bank vole	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2
Common shrew	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Appendix I shows a comprehensive table of results for this trap.

Discussion and conclusions

Three different species of small mammal were caught at Nosterfield Local Nature Reserve, including wood mouse (*Apodmus sylvaticus*), bank vole (*Myodes glareolus*) and common shrew (*Sorex araneus*). The majority of captures were wood mice, which were found at all the sites that were trapped except for the roof of the main hide. Many of the wood mice were juveniles or subadults, indicating that the wood mice had had a very good breeding season. Bank voles were caught in some of the drier habitats on the reserve, including the bramble patches on the dry bank adjacent to the East Silt Lagoon, the wooded embankment of the old railway line and the area of rough grass adjacent to the old railway line. A single common shrew was also caught on the embankment of the old railway line. Unfortunately, no water shrews (*Neomys fodiens*) were caught on this occasion, although they have been recorded on the reserve along the South Bank in the late 1990s and again in the vicinity of the West Silt Lagoon in 2009. In addition to the above records, Jill Warwick analysed several batches of barn owl pellets from the reserve during 2009 and 2010, which have yielded records of wood mouse, bank vole, field vole (*Microtus agrestis*), common shrew, water shrew, pygmy shrew (*Sorex minutus*), brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) and mole (*Talpa europaea*). The only small mammal not yet recorded from the reserve, which could potentially be in the area, is the harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*) – one to look out for in the future and a species often taken by barn owls.

Stoat's meal: photo by Geoff Oxford

Another interesting mammal record from the morning of the trap was the discovery of a large, dead rabbit which had been pulled half way into a burrow near the West Silt Lagoon. The rabbit was still warm and had been killed by a bite to the back of the neck, leading us to suspect we had disturbed a stoat from its morning meal. We left the rabbit above ground near the burrow and on the way back from checking the traps found it had once again been pulled part way down the burrow. This time we left the stoat to finish its meal in peace!

Thanks are due to Simon and Jill Warwick for all their help with this trap and to Jill for her excellent moth identification on the Saturday morning. Thanks also to all the Nosterfield LNR volunteers and members of YMG who came along to help with checking the traps.

Appendix I

Table of results: Small mammal survey at Nosterfield LNR, 9 October 2010.

Weather: Overcast, warm and damp on the day of the trap. Rain previous day.

Site	**Species**	**Sex M/F***	**Age A/SA/J***	**Weight (g)**
Horsetail & scrub (1)	Wood mouse	M	J	14.0
Horsetail & scrub (1)	Wood mouse	F	SA	16.0
East Silt Lagoon edge (2)	Wood mouse**	?	?	?
Bramble bank (3)	Wood mouse	M	J	14.0
Bramble bank (3)	Bank vole	F	A	19.0
Bramble bank (3)	Wood mouse	F	A	27.0
Bramble bank (3)	Bank vole	F	J	10.0
East Silt Lagoon edge (4)	Wood mouse	F	SA	17.0
East Silt Lagoon edge (4)	Wood mouse	M	SA	15.0
Native hedge (6)	Wood mouse	M	J	15.0
Native hedge (6)	Wood mouse	M	A	26.0
Native hedge (6)	Wood mouse	F	SA	20.0
Native hedge (6)	Wood mouse**	?	?	?
Native hedge (6)	Wood mouse	F	SA	17.0
Native hedge (6)	Wood mouse	M	A	19.0
Old railway (7)	Wood mouse	F	J	14.0
Old railway (7)	Bank vole	F	SA	16.0
Old railway (7)	Bank vole	F	J	13.0
Old railway (7)	Wood mouse	F	A	27.0
Old railway (7)	Wood mouse	F	J	15.0
Old railway (7)	Wood mouse	F	J	15.0
Old railway (7)	Wood mouse	M	J	12.0
Old railway (7)	Common shrew	?	A	7.0

Rough grass (8)	Bank vole	F	SA	15.0
Rough grass (8)	Wood mouse	M	SA	15.0
Rough grass (8)	Wood mouse	M	SA	17.0
Rough grass (8)	Bank vole	F	SA	16.0

* M = male; F = female; A= adult; SA = subadult; J = juvenile
** Escaped during handling

Delights of Duncombe Park, Helmsley

Rob Masheder

The veteran trees of Duncombe Park National Nature Reserve are a feature that is well known in the Region. Although we had driven past for many years, we had never taken the time to investigate further until 23 May 2010. On a glorious sunny day we decide to go around The River Walk, which took a circuit around Duncombe Park House, the surrounding woodland and grassland beside the River Rye. We could not resist a quick search for otters along the river, and were rewarded at a weir referred to as the Cascades, where a quick paddle to the far bank confirmed a pile of fresh spraint. Some of the grassland also had moderate quantities of pignut (*Conopodium majus*), an old meadow indicator, particularly on steeper slopes and old river channels.

Pleased with our finds we retired to The Fountain Tea Room for a cup of tea. After placing our order we turned round to be confronted by a photograph of Adam Gordon, game keeper and naturalist, who used to live in the tea room buildings until his death in 1983. We remembered his name from a YMG meeting in the Yorkshire Museum, where we saw some old specimens of bats, including the last recorded lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) in Yorkshire, which he had shot and stuffed, following the great Victorian naturalist tradition. When we mentioned this to Mr Harrison, the proprietor, he told us that there was a roost of bats in the tea shop roof. Sure enough there were bat droppings on the windows to the left of the main entrance. Mr Harrison explained how they go to great lengths to ensure that the marquee used for wedding receptions does not obstruct access for the bats. A great demonstration of conservation in action. Duncombe Park is well worth a day out, and do not miss the tea room, which does a great prawn and smoked salmon sandwich!

Wild About Wood Festival

Sian Abbey

The 2010 Wild About Wood Festival took place in the Arboretum at Castle Howard near Malton on Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th September. The rather rainy autumnal weather didn't put the crowds off and the YMG tent had plenty of visitors on both days. The YMG had a stall that displayed mammal skulls, droppings, nests and footprints. There was a constant stream of children and adults who came to be "mammal detectives" and identify mammals from bones, droppings and other signs.

Fun also came from other activities such as chainsaw sculpture, furniture-making, willow-weaving, clog-making, pond dipping, lichen hunting, coracle paddling and woodland wonder trails. Visitors could also see a wide range of traditional woodcrafts being demonstrated, including pole lathe turning and heavy horse logging.

Many thanks to Geoff Oxford for organising the mammal activities and to Gordon Woodroff, Mary Youngman and Roma Oxford for their help during the weekend. Thanks also to Copmanthorpe scout group for the loan of some tables.

For more information about the Arboretum Trust and the festival, visit www.kewatch.co.uk or www.wildaboutwood.org.

Inside the YMG tent

Historical records of the dormouse (*Muscardinus avellana*) on the North York Moors and adjacent areas of Cleveland and North Yorkshire

Colin Howes
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Introduction

Due to its rarity, its protected status and featuring as a Biodiversity Action Plan Priority species within the Yorkshire and Humber region (Selman et al. 1999), the dormouse becomes a material consideration in planning and land management decisions of Local Authorities, National Parks, the Forestry Commission, statutory undertakers of all kinds and land managers generally.

Research by the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union into the dormouse's history and status throughout all Yorkshire regions has been commenced by Howes (1984, 1985, 1999 & 2004). The present study reveals a concentration of records centred in the north east Yorkshire uplands (Cleveland, Hambleton, Howardian Hills and the North York Moors). Although records largely date back to the 19th century, there were claims as to its survival through to the 1970s and 80s.

As a foundation for future studies and conservation reviews, this report, compiled for the 'North York Moors and National Park Mammal Forum', has assembled all currently available records of non-introduced populations and presents them geographically and chronologically.

Searches through 19th and 20th century sources (see references) have revealed 35 records or allusions referring to a maximum of 28 localities. If generalised regions (Cleveland, Esk Valley, Redcar area, Scarborough area and Whitby area) are removed, this reduces to 23 more specific localities. These have been grouped into the four geographical areas (see Tables 1-4). The continuity of these records is reviewed in Figure 1 and their distribution is précised in Figure 2.

These data were made available in their unpublished state to Elaine Hurrell in 1979 while she was undertaking the first national dormouse survey for the Mammal Society. Two decades later it also formed the basis of

information available to Pat Morris who had been commissioned by the former English Nature to prospect for suitable candidate sites for dormouse re-introduction schemes in the North of England. Michael Thompson (1996) describes the historic occasion when he and Gordon Woodroffe accompanied Pat Morris and his wife Mary to inspect potential woods in the Helmsley, Glaisdale and Esk Valley districts as a precursor to the current re-introduction programme.

Results

1) DORMICE IN THE CLEVELAND & WHITBY REGION

The dormouse was listed for the Cleveland area as early as 1808, though no specific dates or localities were given (Graves 1808, Roebuck 1884). At Pinchinthorpe one was found by R. Lofthouse in the spring of 1881. They were regarded as 'not numerous' in the Redcar area by T.H. Nelson and as being 'rather scarce' near Guisborough by G. Page (Roebuck 1884). Some years before 1884 a specimen captured at Loftus was examined by J. Carter (Carter 1884, Roebuck 1884, Taylor 1956), and at Grinkle Park (NZ/7414) G. Abbey witnessed one leaving its nest, his only sighting during a lifetime in this locality (Roebuck 1884).

In the Whitby area T. Stephenson did not consider the dormouse to be a common species, though W. Lister and J. Braim reported that *'a few are found at Glaisdale in Upper Eskdale'* (NZ/7705) (Roebuck 1884). 'B.A.' (1877) saw one in the workshop of a Whitby taxidermist in 1877. It had been caught locally and specimens in Whitby Museum, noted by Roebuck (1884) and Grabham (1907) was said to have come from nearby Mulgrave Woods (NZ/8411).

An old specimen, currently on display in Whitby Museum, may be one of the above. On 9th July 1909 the gamekeeper J. Patterson took Mr Oxley Grabham (Curator of the Yorkshire museum in York) to a small wood surrounded by grouse moorland near Goathland, where he knew of 3 or 4 pairs of dormice which were breeding annually. A nest containing 6 half-grown young was located, on which Grabham based his celebrated series of photographic studies (Grabham 1909, Anon 1910). In 1910 the colony was said to be steadily increasing (Anon 1911), a claim presumably based on a visit to the site, when Patterson showed Grabham and E.W. Taylor (Vertebrates section of the YNU) a nest containing 3 half-grown young. Grabham and Taylor again found an occupied nest in the same part of the plantation in June 1911, though at a later date (pre 1956) Taylor,

accompanied by Mr Adam Gordon (Keeper at Duncombe Park), failed to re-locate the species (Taylor 1956).

In 1978 tracks were identified in the Esk Valley, and in 1979 there was at least one confirmed sighting and a lower jaw of a dormouse was found in a barn owl pellet in the same area (Brown 1980).

Table 1 Records from the Cleveland and Whitby Region

Date	Locality	Grid ref.	Source
pre 1808	Cleveland	(NZ/5515; 6515; 7515; etc)	(Graves 1808)
1877	Whitby area	(NZ/8512 etc)	('B.A.' 1877)
1881	Pinchingthorpe	(NZ/5814)	(Roebuck 1884)
1884	Redcar area	(NZ/6219)	(Roebuck 1884)
1884	Guisborough	(NZ/6114)	(Roebuck 1884)
pre 1884	Loftus	(NZ/7217)	(Carter 1884)
1884	Grinkle Park	(NZ/7414)	(Roebuck 1884)
1884	Whitby area	(NZ/8512 etc)	(Roebuck 1884)
1884	Glaisdale	(NZ/7805)	(Roebuck 1884)
1884	Mulgrave Woods	(NZ/8411)	(Roebuck 1884)
1909	Goathland	(NZ/8301)	(Grabham 1909)
1910	Goathland	(NZ/8301)	(Anon 1911)
1978	Esk Valley	(NZ/7804)	(Brown 1980)
1979	Esk Valley	(NZ/7804)	(Brown 1980)

2) DORMICE IN THE SCARBOROUGH REGION

In the 1865 edition of *Theakston's Guide to Scarborough* the dormouse was listed as 'rare in hazel copses'. The suggestion that it be looked for during the YNU visit to Hayburn Wyke on 11th July 1891 indicated its possible presence in that area (Head 1891). A nest containing six young found on 19th September 1896 at Barnscliffe was shown to W.J. Clarke (Grabham 1907), who also recorded its presence at Langdale End and Raincliffe Woods, and on the authority of Mr P. Tissiman at Barnescliffe in 1898 (Rimington 1956). He also listed its presence in Harwood Dale (Anon 1904) and in Hackness, where he judged it to be 'very rare' (Clarke 1936). Clarke (1943) suggested it be searched for during the YNU visit to the Scarborough area, though commenting that 'it is to be feared it is now extinct'.

Table 2 Records from the Scarborough Region

Date	Locality	Grid ref.	Source
pre 1865	Scarborough area	(TA08 etc)	(Theakston 1865)
1896	Barnscliffe	(SE/9393)	(Grabham 1907)
1898	Barnscliffe	(SE/9393)	(Rimington 1956)
pre 1956	Langdale End	(SE/9491)	(Rimington 1956)
pre 1956	Raincliffe Woods	(SE/9988)	(Rimington 1956)
pre 1904	Harwood Dale	(SE/9597)	(Anon 1904)
pre 1936	Hackness	(SE/9690)	(Clarke 1936)

3) DORMICE IN THE SOUTHERN FRINGES OF THE NORTH YORKSHIRE UPLANDS

Several dormice collected pre 1884 from the woods above Pickering were shown to R. Clarke (Roebuck 1884), and Braim (1886) listed the species for the adjacent Newtondale area. According to W. Scoby they were 'frequently met with' about Pickering, Kirby Moorside and Helmsley (Roebuck 1884) and Clarke (1884) referred to the dormouse as a 'denizen of the hazel coppices' of the Helmsley area. Brown (1980) found tracks at Rievaulx (SE/5784) in 1978 and discovered a hibernating specimen close to Kirkbymoorside in January 1980, after finding tracks in the wood concerned the previous autumn.

Table 3 Records from the North Yorkshire Uplands

Date	Locality	Grid ref.	Source
pre 1884	Pickering	(SE/8086)	(Roebuck 1884)
1886	Newtondale	(SE/8289)	(Braim 1886)
1884	Pickering	(SE/8086)	(Roebuck 1884)
1884	Kirby Moorside	(SE/6687)	(Roebuck 1884)
1884	Helmsley	(SE/6082)	(Clarke 1884)
1978	Rievaulx	(SE/5784)	(Brown 1980)
1979	Kirkbymoorside	(SE/6687)	(Brown 1980)
1980	Kirkbymoorside	(SE/6687)	(Brown 1980)

4) DORMICE IN THE HAMBLETON AND HOWARDIAN HILLS

The dormouse was listed as occuring in the Thirsk area (Anon 1882) and on 21st April 1882 P. Inchbald found a specimen asleep in a 'drey' at Hovingham (Roberts 1882, Roebuck 1884). In Nunnington it was regarded by W. Stamper as 'not common' and J. Brigham noted that it was 'sometimes found with its nest in woods' at Slingsby (Roebuck 1884). Its occurrence was listed in Wass Woods (Grabham 1907) and near Brandsby (Taylor 1956).

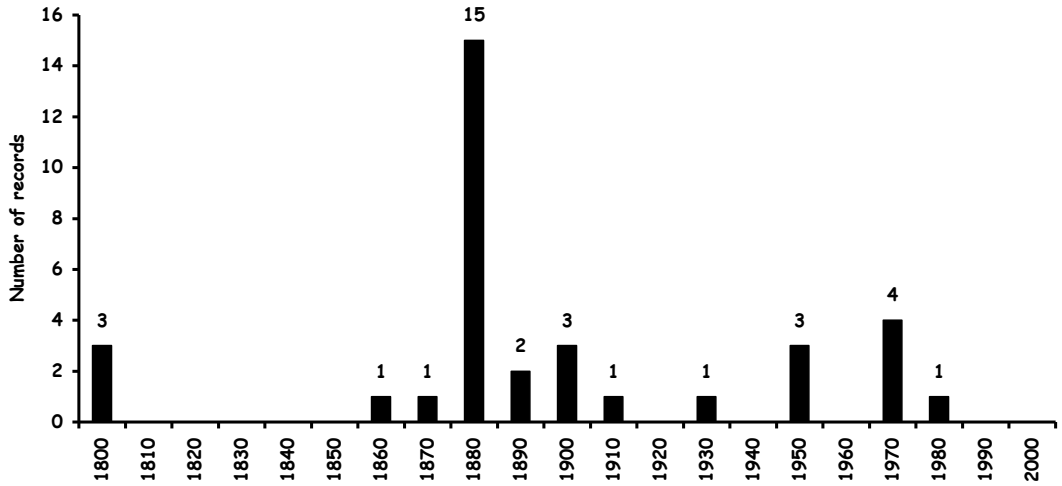
Table 4 Records from the Hambleton and Howardian Hills

Date	Locality	Grid ref.	Source
1882	Thirsk area	(SE/4585)	(Anon 1882)
1882	Hovingham	(SE/6575)	(Roberts 1882)
1884	Nunnington	(SE/6678)	(Roebuck 1884)
1884	Slingsby	(SE/6973)	(Roebuck 1884)
pre 1907	Wass Wood	(SE/5579)	(Roebuck 1884)
pre 1956	Brandsby	(SE/5972)	(Roebuck 1884)

Figure 1, based on data in Tables 1 to 4, shows the number of references or allusions located per decade and is a crude indication of the continuity of records from 1800 to 1980 within the study region. Although some references are of real datable records, literary allusions, particularly status reviews, derived in this kind of study can only be dated as ‘some time prior’ to the date of the published document. The study is therefore even more retrospective than appears at face value.

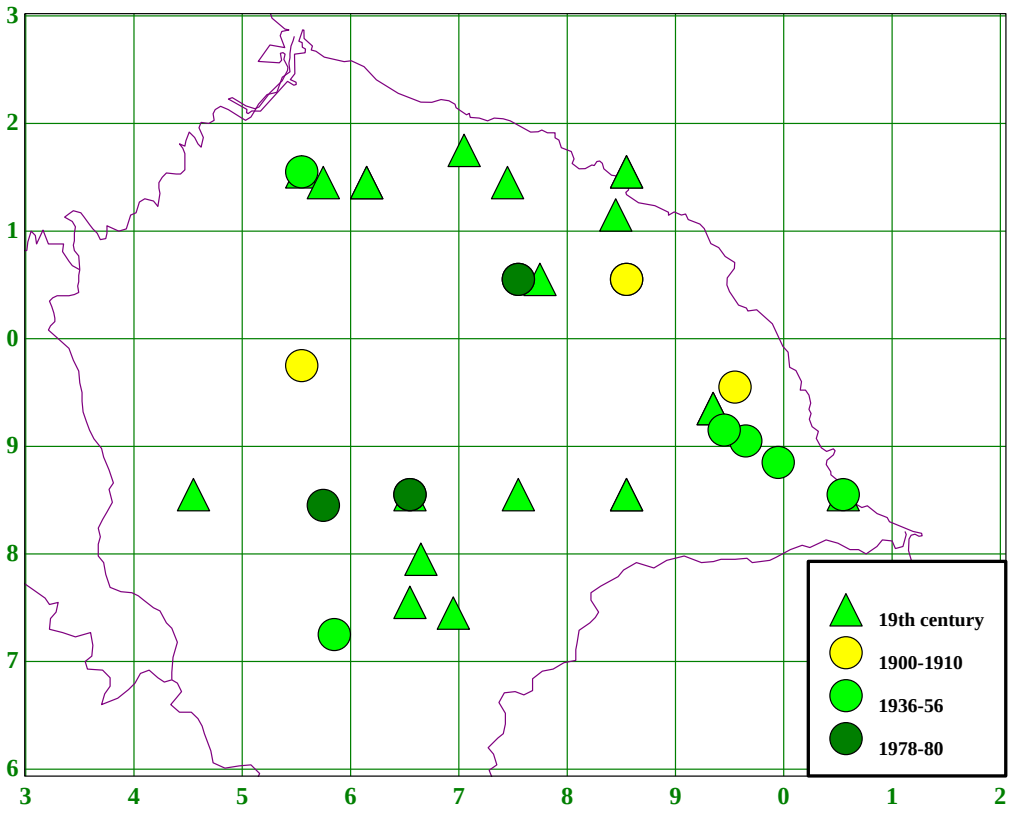
The substantial peak of records for the 1880s was largely the product of what was effectively a base-line survey undertaken by William Dennison Roebuck (1884) who undertook an extensive questionnaire survey of naturalists and gamekeepers throughout the Yorkshire region. Even here a number of the correspondents were recollecting past occurrences. There have been no subsequent concerted surveys up to the ‘Great Nut Hunt’ of 1993, which sought proxy evidence in the form of characteristically chewed hazel nuts. By this time the dormouse was probably too scarce to be detectable or was indeed genuinely extinct within our region.

Figure 1: Continuity of Dormouse records in the North York Moors region



The spatial distribution of sites and allusions, based on 'awarded – best guess' OS grid references is reviewed in Figure 2. The map shows the recorded distribution of occurrences from the 19th century to 1980 across the study region. Generally, this analysis indicates a preference for south-facing valley side sites around the fringes of the tabular uplands.

Figure 2: Dormouse in and around the North York Moors



Attempts to locate current evidence

In the autumn of 1993, in association with the Mammal Society 'Great Nut Hunt', the author visited 25 woodland sites within Watsonian Yorkshire. Six of these, each containing a good component of hazel understorey, were within the target region. Here, some 4½ hours were spent searching for fallen hazel nuts. Of 887 nuts found, 776 had been opened by vertebrates. Of these 762 (98%) had been opened by squirrels (or some by birds), a mere 15 (2%) by bank voles, and none by wood mice. In no instances were hazel nut shells identified that had been opened by dormice (see Table 5). Similar negative results were reported for sites elsewhere in Yorkshire, though wood mice were shown to have also used this food source (Cronin 1994, Lane & Howes 1994).

Collectively, not only did this Yorkshire-wide exercise fail to identify evidence of dormice, it revealed considerable competition between squirrels and small mammals (bank voles and wood mice). Figure 3, using all available Yorkshire data, shows that at most sites squirrels (and to some extent birds) were taking over 90% of the sampled nut crop.

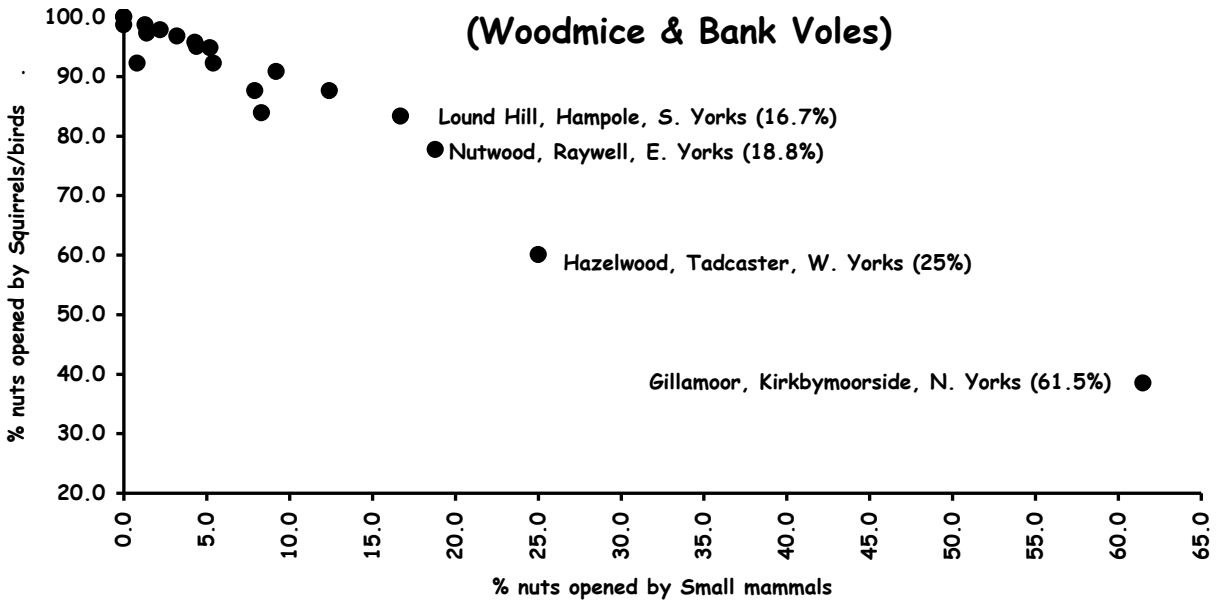
Table 5: YNU GREAT NUT HUNT (North York Moors region) 1993

Woodland	Grid ref.	Effort (mins)	Nuts found	Mean nuts per minute	Opened	Unopened	Dormouse	Wood Mouse	Bank Vole	Squirrel/Bird	Weevil
Hackness Wood	SE/967909	30	50	1.66	50	0	0	0	0	50	0
Langdale End Wood	SE/943914	60	364	6.06	306	58	0	0	4	302	0
Raincliffe Woods A	TA/001888	30	50	1.66	50	0	0	0	0	50	0
Raincliffe Woods B	SE/987879	60	146	2.43	138	8	0	0	3	135	0
Raincliffe Woods C	SE/997889	30	86	2.86	79	7	0	0	0	78	1
Troutsdale Beck Wood	SE/914873	60	191	3.18	154	36	0	0	8	146	0
Totals	**(6 sites)**	**270**	**887**	**2.98**	**777**	**109**	**0**	**0**	**15**	**762**	**1**
*Gillamoor (Cronin 1994)	SE/6889	?	?	?	13	0	0	5	3	5	0

Using the seasonal hazel nut crop as an indictor, Figure 3 shows that a dormouse population (residual or re-instated) would be under severe competitive pressure for a strategically important food resource. However, samples from four sites (possibly where grey squirrel populations were being controlled) showed that small mammals were able to account for above 15% of the nut crop. One of these samples, from Gillamoor, Kirkbymoorside (Cronin 1994), though based on a very small batch of just 13 nuts, showed small mammals taking over 60% of the sampled crop. It

is tempting to construe that it may be possible to manage food competition in favour of dormice by persistent grey squirrel control.

Figure 3: Relationship between proportion of Hazelnut crop opened by Squirrels/birds and by Small mammals (Woodmice & Bank Voles)



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The original dormouse reintroduction – update for 2010

Geoff Oxford

As in 2009, we failed to find any signs of dormice during our box checks. Nest boxes were examined each month between May and October, with the exception of September (when despondency was setting in). In October we checked not only the 142 boxes but also the 46 dormouse tubes put out in mid-April 2009 in peripheral areas to seek animals that may have dispersed from the core wood (Oxford, 2009). Nothing of interest was discovered.

The only satisfying moments during box checks were the regular sighting of a wonderful hare, which seems to be resident in the wood, and a very new fallow deer fawn. We nearly fell over the fawn, which was curled up in undergrowth (Figure 1). This was the first one I'd seen in the flesh and the degree of camouflage was stunning. The mother was calling from a distance so after gingerly photographing it we backed away.

Last year I reported a sharp, and statistically significant, drop in the number of birds using the dormouse nest boxes during May and June (Oxford 2009). The total numbers of nests (in *circa* 142 boxes) in 2007, 2008 and 2009 were, respectively, 39, 40 and 19. In 2010 the number of nests or partial nests was 34, so almost back to the pre-2009 level.

Figure 1. Spot the fallow deer fawn.

Acknowledgements

Roma Oxford kindly commented on a draft of this article.

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West Tanfield dormouse report 2010

Ann Hanson

It's now six years since dormice were reintroduced into woodland near West Tanfield and a very dedicated group of volunteers has been monitoring their progress. Almost 400 dormouse boxes are checked three times each summer and, although the numbers of dormice found each year did decline over the first couple of years, it then seemed to stabilise, all be it at a fairly low level. 2007 found a total of 8 dormice in the boxes, 7 in 2008 and a total of 9 in 2009. However, all the dormice have been in very good health and breeding has been taking place, as the odd litter of young dormice have been recorded. In addition to the dormice themselves, fairly good numbers of distinctive dormouse nests have been found in the boxes

each summer. This leads us to hope that the dormouse population in the woods is doing okay and that they are using natural nest sites as well as the boxes. Some of the original boxes were getting a bit old, damp and squirrel-nibbled, so the People's Trust for Endangered Species kindly provided some new boxes, which we have gradually used to replace the old ones over the last couple of summers.

In 2010 the boxes yielded a total of 9 dormice. Three dormice were recorded in June, two of which were fat, healthy females – hopefully ready to breed! August found two young dormice at two different locations in the woods, so possibly evidence of a couple of successful litters, but neither of them from anywhere near where the females had been found in June. Finally, the October box check found one large female dormouse, two well-grown youngsters and, unfortunately, a dead juvenile in a nest. The dead juvenile was found in the same box which had been inhabited by a large female dormouse back in June and it is hoped that the dead juvenile's siblings had survived and were elsewhere in the woods (there was no evidence of predation, so the young dormouse had probably died of natural causes). Two of the October dormice were torpid, which was not unexpected as the previous night had been very cold. In addition to the dormice themselves, we recorded 15 dormouse nests in the boxes in June, 12 in August and 23 in October – further evidence of a population out in the woods!


Photos from October dormouse box checks. Left: the genuine article, a sleepy dormouse. Right: an imposter inhabiting a dormouse box.

Photos by Andrew Halcro-Johnston

The dormouse tubes that were placed in the hedges to the west of Heslett Wood in spring 2009 were also checked in October, but held no evidence of dormouse activity. However, two of the tubes were obviously being used by roosting small birds, judging by the piles of bird droppings they

contained. We are hoping to put some more tubes along other hedges radiating out from the woods in 2011.

Additional mammal records from the woods at West Tanfield in 2010 include roe deer, brown hare, wood mouse, common shrew and pygmy shrew. The strangest object discovered in a dormouse box this year was a large, old bone (possibly mammalian in origin). We have no idea how or why the bone ended up in one of the boxes, as it was too large to have been carried up into the box by a small mammal. Strange things happen down in the woods…

All that remains is to thank everyone who has helped with the dormouse monitoring this year, especially the dedicated volunteers who turn out for every box check, whatever the weather. If anyone would like to help with the monitoring in 2011, please contact Ann Hanson on 0113 2811286 or by emailing ann.hanson@fwag.org.uk.

"Just for the record" – a report of YMG mammal recording walks 2010

Ann Hanson & Rob Masheder

Londesborough Park, near Market Weighton – 28th February 2010

Following the Wolds Way into Londesborough Park, our first records were some molehills in the old parkland (SE 877448). After good views of red kites, buzzards, greylag geese and abundant redwings and fieldfares, we spotted more molehills in the fields near Easthorpe Farm (SE 877455). Further molehills were located close to the lake (SE 873451) and finally another set of molehills, but this time with a fox scat on top, in the parkland next to Pond Wood (SE 875449). At this point we retreated from the bitterly cold wind to a teashop in Market Weighton and recorded a few more molehills alongside the A1079 ringroad just for good measure (SE 884410).

Haring around Bilsdale in the North York Moors – 14th March 2010

After being assured by Silviu Petrovan of the University of Hull, during his excellent talk to the YMG in March 2010 on monitoring hares in grassland,

that Bilsdale was about the least likely place to see hares in the North York Moors, we took up the challenge and headed for this hare-free zone during the Mad March Hare season.

Otter spraint and footprints in sand under the bridge over Bilsdale Beck beside Chop Gate car-park made a very good start to the day (SE 558993), along with the obligatory molehills on the grass verge. A roadkill rabbit was located on the B1257 just outside Chop Gate village, as well as burrows in the roadside bank (SE 558996). Further otter spraint was found on a stone under the bridge over Bilsdale Beck at Seave Green (NZ 562003). Following the bridleway eastwards, molehills were recorded in pasture near to East Bank Farm (NZ 566003), and rabbits a bit further along (NZ 567003). Grey squirrel nibbled pine cones were found in East Bank Plantation (NZ 572003) with fox scat on a woodland ride and more rabbit burrows (NZ 573004). A couple of roe deer were briefly glimpsed in the middle of the plantation (NZ 574004) with more molehills on the earthworks as we emerged from the trees (NZ 576004). There was still a fair amount of snow on the ground as we walked up onto the edge of the moors and another fox scat was located as we followed the bridleway along the edge of Urra Moor (NZ 574016).

The only 'hare' in Bilsdale?
Photo by Ann Hanson

Descending from the moorland we found molehills and a dead rabbit in the fields near Urra Farm (NZ 574022) and a rather macabre dead brown rat caught in a wire fence close to the farm (NZ 572020). In the woods to the west of Urra we found grey squirrel nibbled pine cones and hazel nuts (NZ 566018) and a rather fine veteran oak tree alongside the footpath near Broadfield Farm (NZ 563019). Molehills were present in the field next to the farm (NZ 562019), followed by more squirrel nibbled hazel nuts in the edge of woodland beyond North Woods Farm (NZ 559015). Further molehills in a field next to some spoil heaps were the last records of the day (NZ 559014). So, no hares in Bilsdale, unless you count the uncanny "hare rock" spotted by Mary up on the moorland!

Gunnerside in Swaledale, the Yorkshire Dales National Park – 24th April 2010

Heading out north-west from Gunnerside, the first records were molehills on the edge of the moorland in Gunnerside Pasture (SD 950985). Further up on the moorland we encountered numerous rabbit skeletons (SD 948987), probably victims of the harsh winter weather in December and January. Crossing Gunnerside Beck, we had some excellent views of wheatears on the spoil heaps at Middle Bank (SD 941998). Walking back down towards Gunnerside through Birkbeck Wood, we spotted our first live rabbit of the day (SD 946989) and found some squirrel nibbled hazel nuts near the river (SD 951985). Last record of the day was otter spraint on a rock under the bridge over Gunnerside Beck in the middle of the village, swiftly followed by a celebratory visit to the local teashop.

Paintings, mammals and orchids in the Yorkshire Wolds – 26th June 2010

After an enjoyable morning visit to the Robert Fuller gallery near Thixendale, a small group set out on a rare summertime recording walk. Following the Wolds Way south through Thixen Dale, we spotted some molehills in the pasture (SE 843597), quickly followed by an impressive badger sett and some rabbits (SE 843596). Following a relaxing lunch stop in the sunshine, we found a brown hare leg and foot (sadly detached from the rest of the hare) on a woodland track in Wayrham Dale (SE 839579). After stopping to admire a plethora of common spotted and marsh orchids on a grassy area next to the A166, we recorded more molehills in an arable field near the road (SE 835566). Making our way back up towards Thixen Dale, we spotted a live hare and some rabbits in fields at the end of Worm Dale (SE 835587). Last record of the day was unfortunately a dead field vole on the road near Thixendale village (SE 845608).

Walking through orchids near Thixen Dale: photo by Ann Hanson

Buckden in Wharfedale, the Yorkshire Dales National Park – 14th November 2010

No prizes for guessing the first record of the day – molehills on the grass beside the car-park in Buckden village (SD 943774). Heading northwards through Rakes Wood, we found some wood mouse and bank vole nibbled hazel nuts (SD 943777) and, rather more strangely, a dead rabbit up a tree (SD 943778). More molehills were found alongside the bridleway on Buckden Rake (SD 944790) and yet more in pasture near the village of Cray (SD 943792). After crossing Cray Gill, we found rabbit burrows outside the village at Hay Close (SD 939791). A little further on, after some diligent searching along the River Wharfe at Hubberholme, we finally found some otter spraint under a small bridge where Gill Beck enters the river (SD 926783). Final record of the day was of course molehills on the west bank of the River Wharfe on the way back to Buckden (SD 938777). And a quick drive back down the Wharfe valley got us to the teashop at Kilnsey Cragg before closing time!

Thanks to everyone who came out with us this year and apologies for the cancellation of the December walk – snow may be good for tracking mammals, but not when it's about 3ft deep…

Ann Hanson (Expedition Leader) and Rob Masheder (Navigator)

"Ferreting in the fog"

Colin Howes

The polecat's return from near extinction, and its stealthy return to those English counties last inhabited during the 19th century, have been carefully monitored by our friends at the Vincent Wildlife Trust. Evidently populations have been massing (Burnham Wood-like) over the borders in Derbyshire, North Lancashire and Cumbria and road kill evidence verified by the VWT indicates that individuals have actually made it back to Yorkshire in recent years.

In times past when ferrets were white or in the words of Conrad Gessner, the 16th century zoologist, 'the colour of urine-stained wool' it was easy to distinguish them from the darker, bandit-masked wild polecat. But then

the ferret fanciers began to cross docile ferrets with colourful wild polecats to get a more attractive animal and the polecat-ferret pet trade took off.

Nowadays, what's a poor mammal recorder to do … when is a polecat not a polecat? Or when does a 'ferrety' polecat score sufficient brownie points to qualify as a 'real' polecat? Since polecats are now legally protected and hold the status of a Biodiversity Action Plan Priority species, correct (racial) identity is a particular problem for the authorities … so what is a poor Police Rural Crime Officer or National Park, Forestry Commission, Local Authority or FWAG Biodiversity Officer to do?

Presumably if 'polecats' (whatever they are?) occur on your patch, BAP officers are obliged to develop a conservation 'Action Plan' for them. However, if 'ferrets' (whatever they are?) are 'at large' on your patch, environmental health officers may well regard them as 'pests' and implement legally under-scored guidance leading to their eradication. With a creature culturally or genetically somewhere in the middle ... what's a poor local authority solicitor to do? And what's going to happen when keepers start catching them in tunnel traps? For the sake of administrative convenience, it's just as well the poor beasts in question have all been accidentally run over!

Surely, with the animal we call the FERRET being the result of selective breeding of the animal we call the POLECAT, the resultant animal is still a POLECAT, albeit a domesticated one. So if you cross a domesticated polecat with a wild polecat, it's not a hybrid … it's a POLECAT ... this is beginning to sound like a David Mitchell rant! When Champaign and other 'cultivated' colour forms of AWOL 'ranch' American Mink started turning up along the river catchments of Lancashire, West and North Yorkshire in the 1950s–1960s, no one ever regarded them as anything other than MINK!

Seems like the concept of ferret (in the sense of *Mustela furo*) being a different taxa (possibly species) to polecat (in the sense of *Mustela putorius*), only came about when it was suggested that ferrets were a domesticated form of the Asiatic or Steppe polecat (*Mustela evesmanni*). Interesting idea … except that rabbit warrening, which gave rise to the need for ferrets from the time of the Norman Conquest, principally took place in France and England where *Mustela putoriu*s rules OK and where there never were any *M. eversmanni*.

The cordon saniterre of major roads and motorways in and around Yorkshire is probably why polecats have been delayed in their re-colonisation here. Looking at the seasonality of polecat road casualties nationally, there is a pronounced March peak, presumably associated with hormone-crazed males (poor deluded things) rampaging around in search of females … they should get a hobby ... perhaps collecting car numbers ... oh no! ... splat!!! Why 'Tufty' the red squirrel led the road safety campaign for school children all those years ago, when wild mammals seem to have precious little road sense, is a mystery.

Yorkshire Mammal Group committee members, 2011

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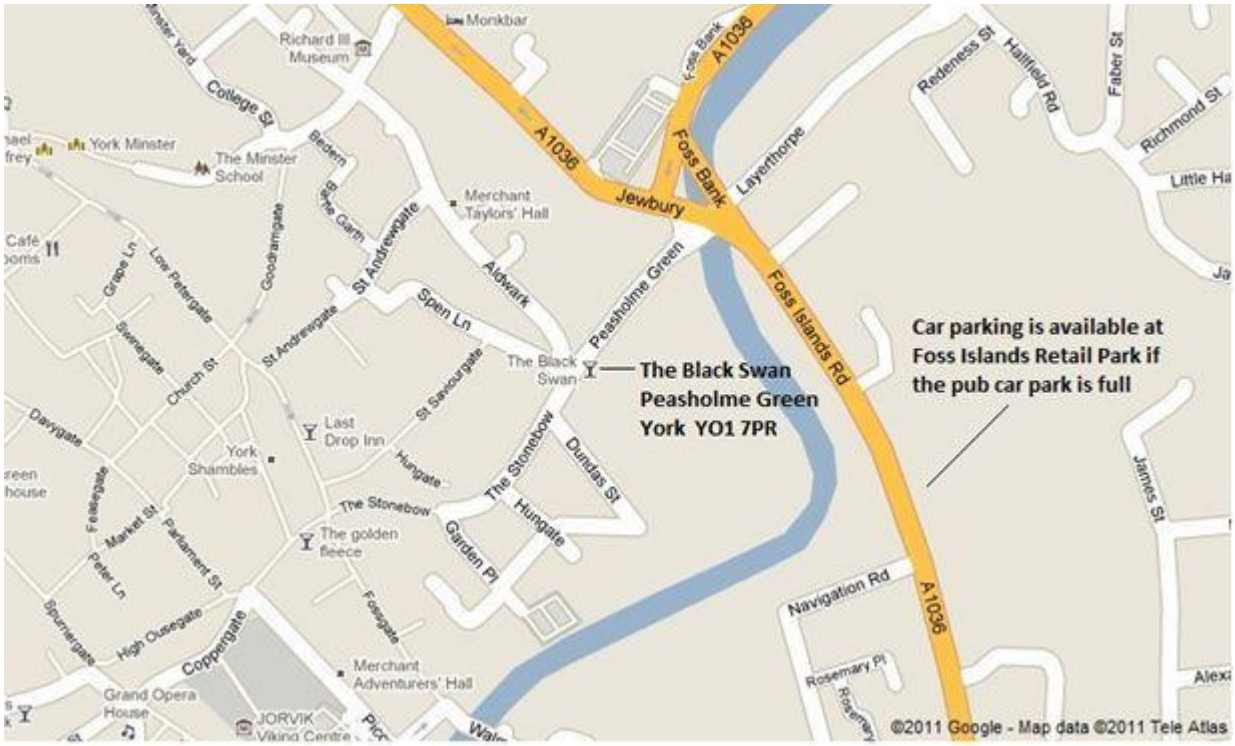
From 2011, YMG indoor meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month, from January to May and from October to December.

Meetings commence at 7.00 pm at the Black Swan pub, Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PR.



YMG Membership: Individual £15; Joint £20; Students/unwaged/OAPs £7.50.

For further details see the Yorkshire Mammal Group website at www.yorkshiremammalgroup.org.uk.