



Mercia Marinas Mammal group Newsletter

February 2017

Issue 2

After a shaky start with having to cancel our first mammal walk at the last minute, we finally got under way last week (Sunday 29th). A little chilly, but everyone soon got well into looking for mammal signs. We looked under the footbridge over the canal, an excellent place to look for otter or mink spraint (droppings). Nothing new to be found. We crossed the canal to look back with binoculars to see if any holes along the canal side were evident, sadly not. This may have indicated water vole but we can keep hoping.

Much evidence of Field Vole was found including poo. One way to identify this commodity is by smell. After some persuasion, a couple of the group gave it a try.



Well done you two. Not as bad as they thought as there is no smell to vole poo.



Big smiles seem to say, 'Thank goodness that's all over'.

However, noses, eyes and ears are all essential in identification.

As regards hearing small mammals, especially shrews, it can be very difficult, more so as we get older as shrew calls are extremely high-pitched. The best way is to use a bat detector around 20-30kHz. Other mammals surprisingly, use ultrasound such as Wood Mice, Field & Bank Voles & Brown Rats.

We did not hear anything on the day but did find plenty of secret runs and evidence of eating. We had reports of a Tawny Owl just at the edge of the Marina by Aqua. So plenty of field Voles would certainly help to keep the owl well fed. It so important we keep in mind that all our small mammals are a dinner for something. This is how ecosystems work and we need to ensure that we do our best to maintain and improve them where possible.

While doing some thinning out work in the woodland we found Wood Mouse nests in some of the habitats which are newly created. If conditions are right they soon make use of them.



Identification of Wood Mouse - large ears, and eyes, white chest, long tail.



Identification of Field Vole - ears hardly visible, small eyes and short tail.

Keep your senses alert, you never know what is under your feet.