



Mercia Marinas Mammal group Newsletter

January 2017

Issue 1

Our First Venture

Well, what an evening! On December 18th, the newly formed Mammal Group got together for a workshop on 'Identifying Small Mammals'. You all had a good time learning about differences between shrews, voles, mice etc. However, investigating the contents of owl pellets seemed to be a source of great interest. You threw yourselves into it whole-heartedly and got rather competitive about who had the most skulls or the best bones. What was truly amazing was just how much



there was to find in each pellet and how many of our small mammals get taken by owls.

One of the items we discussed was the importance of being able to identify what creatures we have here either by sight or other indicators. Imagine our delight when Pat visited us the next day with a recently died little creature. She had already identified it as a shrew and female. Very well done Pat, top marks. Just one word of caution, please do not try to bring us bags of animals from New Zealand, customs may not be too happy. On a more serious note, what Pat did is exactly what we need. Please keep your eyes open and if you do not want to handle things then photos are fine, it all helps identification. We have been in touch with Derbyshire Mammal Group (DMG) and they are delighted with what we are doing and we shall be submitting a spreadsheet of our finds every month or two when we have things to report. SO, come on all of you, eyes open and let's start spotting.



Pat's common shrew was not marked at all so probably died of natural causes. They will die of shock quite easily because of their extremely

high metabolism. However, the natural life span is very short as we know. When found, she was still slightly warm so was only just deceased.

In order to help us with identifying, before the end of January, weather permitting, we will be planning some walks round the marina to help you to look for signs and how to identify them in the field. We will be bringing the bat detector and trying to pick up the shrew's calls now we know the frequency to tune into.

Another chance to get involved and hands on will be when we continue the work in the woodland, thinning out and making habitats. When we did live trapping in here earlier we had great success putting the traps beside two of the newly created habitats. Wood mice in three of the four traps. These piles of sticks, leaves and brambles are absolutely perfect for all kinds of creatures.

Another venture we want to try is using footprint traps. We can take small sections of the marina and use the traps over a number of nights/days, checking each day to see what we get. Cameras can also be incorporated making ID even better. This is actually perfect for seeing if we have any of the elusive hedgehogs, which would be a real bonus if we have. It is fairly easy to carry out specific surveys on various species using these traps.

Will let you all now details of walks and woodland dates as soon as arranged.

HAPPY NEW WILDLIFE YEAR TO YOU ALL.