



Mercia Marinas Mammal group Newsletter

June 2017

Issue 6

OUR ANIMALS SO FAR

As we are now well into small mammal trapping we thought it may be a good time to let you know what we have found.

Since beginning last year we have trapped Field voles, Bank voles, Wood mice and Common shrew. Both sexes, some pregnant females and an immature mouse. Happily, all those caught have had good health and weight.



May 1st and our first Common Shrew to be trapped. Note the long nose, forever twitching.

Lovely Wood Mouse clearly showing the large ears and eyes.



From now on much of the trapping will be carried out by Graeme & Jayne Monie. They have been out in the field for some time and are more than capable in all aspects of trapping and handling of small mammals.

If you see them, stop and have a chat and if you are very lucky they may have an animal they can show you. As mentioned previously everything has to be carried out under the strict rules of the Licence which specifies

what must be put in the traps, how to locate them properly and how often they must be checked. If you happen to come across a trap in the grass, hedgerow or woodland please do not touch it or allow your dogs to turn it over. Some of our mammals, especially Shrews can easily die of fright.

ALL ABOUT THE COMMON SHREW

Shrews are well known for their voracious appetites the common shrew has to eat every two to three hours and needs to consume 80 to 90 percent of their body weight in food in 24 hours. They feed on most terrestrial insects, but will also take worms, slugs and snails. The common shrew is more active during the night, at dusk, and at dawn, and intersperses bursts of activity with rest periods. Shrews do not hibernate, as they are too small to store fat reserves sufficient to see them through the winter.

This solitary species is territorial, but during the breeding season males set off in search of females. His advances may stimulate scuffles and high-pitched squeaks from unreceptive females. Mating begins in March, and one to two (sometimes three or four) litters are produced in a year, each one consisting of six to seven young. By 16 days of age the young begin to emerge from the nest, they can occasionally be seen following their mother around in a 'caravan', usually after the nest has been disturbed. The young grab the tail of the shrew in front of it, so the mother takes the lead and her offspring follow in a train. Juveniles breed in the year after their birth, but occasionally those born early in the year can breed between July and September that year.

Common shrews live for 14 to 19 months, and mortality rates are high; main predators include owls, birds of prey, foxes, cats and stoats and weasels.

How we would love to find we have Pygmy Shrews here as well. All power to Graeme & Jayne they may find them for us yet.