



Devon Mammal Group

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER



www.devonmammalgroup.org

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Contents:

Chair's Chat

Page 1

Quiz Night

Page 1

What's up next!

Page 2

State of Nature Report 2019

Page 2

Mammal Atlas

Page 2

Spotlight on Beavers

Page 3

LIGHT POLLUTION

Page 4/5

Seen a Stoat?

Page 5

Harvest Mouse Project

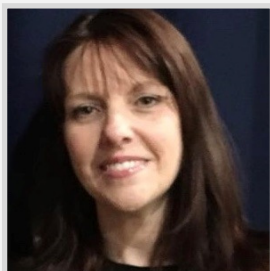
Page 6

Mammal Society Conference

Page 7

Photographer of the Year Competition

Page 7



Chair's Chat

As this is my first Chair's Chat, I would like to start by thanking all of those who have helped to make 2019 such a successful year for DMG. This year saw us celebrate our 20th Anniversary, with a picnic at Langafor Farm Trust. The Harvest Mouse Project has been well supported, with lots of you undertaking Sarah's training events and conducting surveys. We have had many fascinating and educational talks, which continue to be popular. Our special thanks go to all our speakers, to Sarah Butcher our Harvest Mouse Officer, and to those who have hosted and attended events over the past 12 months.

2020 is shaping up to be another busy and exciting year. Our Small Grants Scheme will be available to those of you planning projects, so do please send us your proposals. Applications can be made via our website. We will also be providing many more opportunities for our members to take advantage of free training days. Our talks programme for January to May is available, so you can get those dates in your diaries in advance.



My personal thanks to our wonderful committee for their dedication and energy, especially to my predecessor Sue Smallshire, who served as Chair of DMG for 4 years – I think we would all agree that Sue has been tremendous, and I am very pleased that she will be remaining on the committee.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our members for their continued support, and to wish you all ...

A Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

Helen Calver

Our Next Event: Quiz Night

Tuesday, 3rd December 2019 at 7pm

Wildwood Escot, Ottery St. Mary, EX11 1LU

Join us for supper and a light hearted mammal themed quiz!

Bring your own team (up to 4 people) or simply turn up on the night and join another team

This year we are hosting a sharing supper.

Please bring some food to share and your own drinks

(The Wildwood Café will not be serving food)

FREE EVENT

Tea and coffee will be provided

We hope to see you there!

Let us know when booking if you already have a team of 4 prepared

To book please contact Charly: charlymead91@gmail.com or call 07795337409

January:

Tuesday 14th January: 7.30pm

Jurys Inn, Western Way, Exeter EX1 2DB



Matt Parkins:
**'Dormice of
Dartmoor'**

An insight into how
monitoring the spread
of Dormice in an area
of Dartmoor

woodland, where Larch has been felled, is being
used to study broadleaved tree regeneration
and its impacts on the Dormouse population.

Members: £1.50, Non-Members £3.00

February:

11th February: 7.30pm

Jurys Inn, Western Way, Exeter EX1 2DB



Richard Green:

**'Lesser Horseshoe
Bat Mitigation and
Monitoring' at a
Major Road Scheme
in South Wales**

Members: £1.50, Non-Members £3.00

*To book please contact Charly:
charlymead91@gmail.com or call 07795337409*

State of Nature report 2019



The Mammal Society have worked with many other conservation organisations in the UK to produce the State of Nature report 2019.

The UK's wildlife continues to decline according to this report. The latest findings show that since rigorous scientific monitoring began in the 1970s, there has been a 13% decline in average abundance across wildlife studied and that the declines continue unabated.

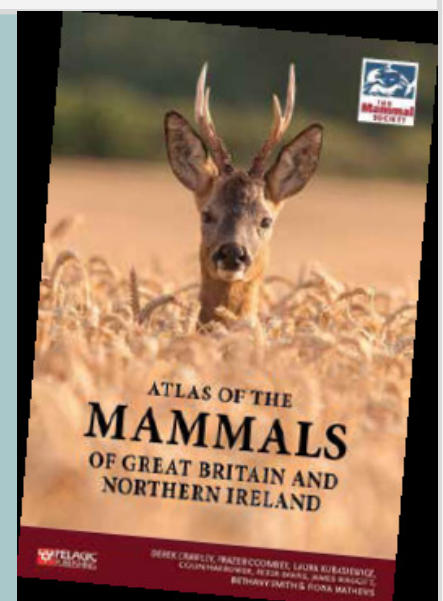
Thousands of records collected by Mammal Society volunteers and the work they have done to assess the conservation status of our mammals underpins the report. There is still a great deal of work to be done to help secure the future of many of the UK's endangered species but it is hoped that the report will have gone some way towards raising awareness.

https://www.mammal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/55654-1_RSPB_State-of-Nature-Report_ONLINE_AW3_v4-1.pdf

The long-awaited release of ... *The Atlas of the Mammals of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

Have you ever wondered how the mammals of Great Britain and Northern Ireland are doing? Do you want to know how their distributions have changed since the last mammal atlas of 1995? If so, you will be interested in the upcoming release of the Mammal Society's latest publication.

The Atlas of the Mammals of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is set to be published this winter, when it will be available for purchase from NHBS <https://www.nhbs.com/>



Spotlight on Beavers

A population of Beavers, of unknown origin, has been present on the River Otter since around 2008. However, when video evidence emerged proving that the Beavers had given birth to kits in 2014, the UK Government initially planned to have them removed from the river.

Devon Wildlife Trust opposed their removal and after consulting with the local community, landowners and public bodies, presented an alternative plan: to turn the situation into a five-year trial to monitor the Beavers' effects on the landscape.



The five-year River Otter Beaver Trial is now entering its final year, and the emphasis is on the completion of the research work and the development of the outputs for government. The compilation of the Science and Evidence Reports has begun, and these will be published towards the end of 2019/20, containing seven main areas of work that are outlined in the ROBT Monitoring Plan.

The population size of Beavers on the River Otter is becoming

increasingly difficult to assess accurately, but based on the most recent winter survey combined with trapping data from 2019, we are able to confirm seven breeding pairs and a further six locations where a focus of feeding behaviour suggests one or more resident animals may be holding a territory. With many young animals in the population, there are likely to be a number of singletons in this second category.

A second Beaver mortality was detected in 2018/19, when the body was recovered from Chesil Beach. Although it was confirmed as originating from the River Otter, the body was too decomposed to provide any useful information.

The ROBT Steering Group are preparing for scenarios where the Beavers are permitted to remain on the river beyond the end of the Trial and are producing a Beaver Management Strategy Framework that outlines how beavers could be managed in the River Otter.

As they colonise new areas of the catchment, the opportunities to study their impacts and interactions with existing land use and river users are increasing. Where issues are raised, often through the 'Beaver hotline' email address, a rapid response is provided, with advice and support to resolve any impacts. Where concerns about Beaver feeding on large trees are raised, fencing and sandy paint are being used to protect those trees. Riverside orchards are high risk areas and proactive work with orchard owners and tree nurseries is ongoing.

A Protocol for Passage Assessment of Beaver Dams (The PAD Protocol) has been developed to guide the manipulation of Beaver dams to aid fish passage during the autumn fish migration season.

As part of the preparations for scenarios where beavers are permitted to remain in the wild on the River Otter, the stakeholder engagement work has become particularly focused on those key stakeholders that may have a role in the future management of Beavers and their effects.

DWT will be publishing the final ROBT Science and Evidence Report in January, so watch this space.

For further information visit: <https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/what-we-do/our-projects/river-otter-beaver-trial>

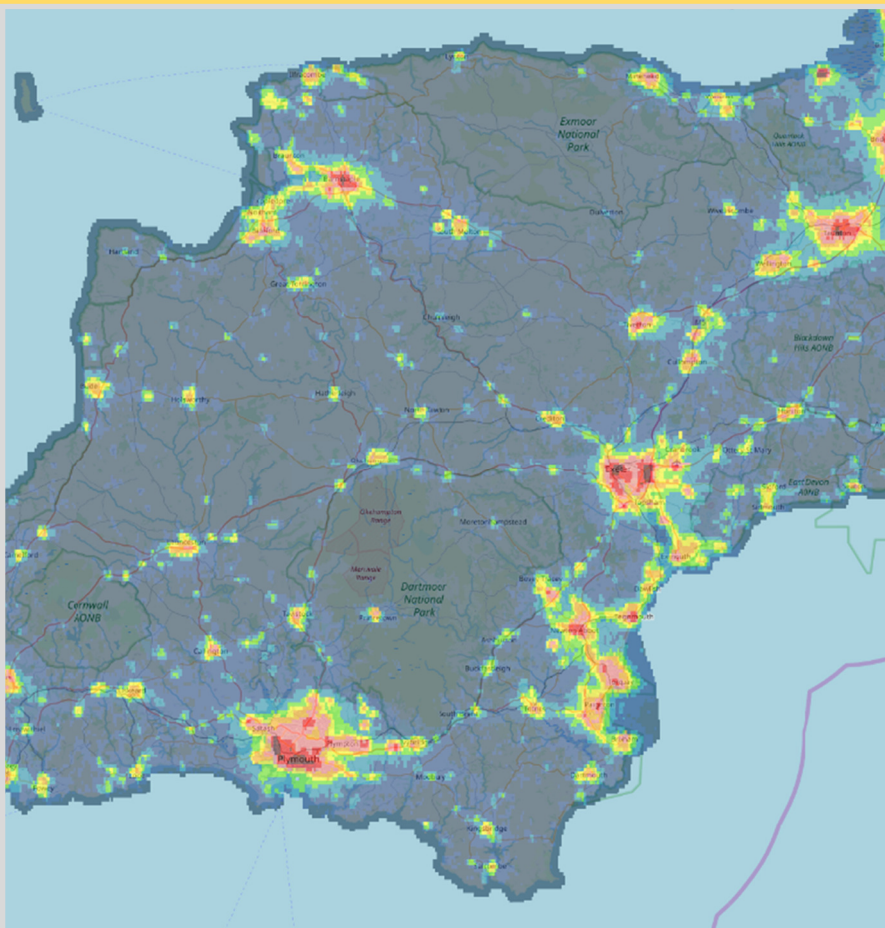
When will we see the light on LIGHT POLLUTION?

Light pollution is a generic term referring to artificial light which shines where it is neither wanted nor needed. In broad terms there are three types of light pollution:

- ***skyglow** – the pink and orange glow we see for miles around towns and cities and deep into the countryside, caused by the scattering of artificial light by airborne dust and water droplets
- ***glare** – the uncomfortable brightness of a light source
- ***light intrusion** – light spilling beyond the boundaries of a property on which the light is located, sometimes shining through windows and curtains

There is an increasing awareness of the impact that light pollution can have on wildlife, by interrupting rhythms such as migration, reproduction and feeding patterns. Light doesn't respect boundaries: security lights, floodlights and street lights all break into the darkness and create a veil of light across the night sky and blur the distinction between town and country. This is also a waste of energy and money: local councils were estimated to spend £613 million on street lighting in 2104/15 and the lights can account for up to 30% of a council's carbon emissions.

All of these facts and more are available from the Campaign to Protect Rural England at www.nightblight.cpre.org.uk and were the subject of two recent events, a 'Devon's Dark Skies' event at County Hall and a 'Bats and Lighting' Workshop at Stover County Park. Both events were fully booked and many interested people, including professional ecologists and lighting specialists, discussed the impact that lighting is having on our wildlife, especially on bats and birds, and what can be done to address this.



Devon lies 4th in the top 5 darkest counties in England. **Exmoor National Park** has 92% pristine night skies and became an International Dark Skies Reserve in 2011, the first in Europe. **Dartmoor National Park** is 81% free of light pollution. On the other hand **Torbay** has only 6% pristine night skies, **Exeter** has no pristine dark nights and **Plymouth** has no dark skies at all! In fact, Plymouth City Centre has the brightest 400x400m square in the entire South West, with a brightness value off the scale.

What is the impact on our wildlife?

Scientific evidence internationally suggests that artificial light at night has negative and deadly effects on many creatures including amphibians, birds, mammals, insects and plants. Nocturnal animals sleep during the day and are active at night. Light pollution radically alters their night-time environment by turning night into day. Artificial lights disrupt nocturnal activity, interfering with reproduction and reducing populations.

... **Continued**

According to research scientist Christopher Kyba, for nocturnal animals, “the introduction of artificial light probably represents the most drastic change human beings have made to their environment.” Glare from artificial lights can also impact wetland habitats that are home to amphibians such as frogs and toads, whose night-time croaking is part of the breeding ritual. Artificial lights disrupt this nocturnal activity, interfering with reproduction and reducing populations. Birds that migrate or hunt at night navigate by moonlight and starlight. Artificial light can cause them to wander off course and toward the dangerous night-time landscapes of cities. Every year millions of birds die, colliding with needlessly illuminated buildings, towers and bridges. Migratory birds depend on cues from properly timed seasonal schedules. Artificial lights can cause them to migrate too early or too late and miss ideal climate conditions for nesting, foraging and other behaviours.

What are we doing to assess the impact on our mammals by proactive research?

Hedgehogs are now increasingly taking refuge in suburban habitats including gardens, where they are often welcomed and fed by members of the public and where they also often come into contact with artificial light. The Mammal Society is conducting a **Hedgehog and Lighting Project**, investigating the effects of artificial lighting on the feeding habits of hedgehogs, using camera traps to film hedgehog visits to feeding stations. **DMG is supporting this citizen science project.** xxxx

Greater Horseshoe Bats, whose stronghold is in the South West of England and Wales, are particularly sensitive to light and will avoid traveling along routes where light impacts. With a huge increase in urban housing, which is predicted to continue and increase, many of their flyways have been interrupted, not only by the destruction of tree-lines and hedgerows, but by lighting, even low level. Many other species of bats are light-shy as well, but Devon’s Greater Horseshoes are of particular concern.



DMG member Professor Fiona Mathews (Chair of the Mammal Society and Professor of Environmental Biology at Sussex University), along with her research students, has been looking into possible alternatives to the white light that so affects the commuting of the Horseshoe Bats. She has been using a ‘red’ (actually a deep orange) light along known flyways to see if the bats are more tolerant of this type of light. It would appear that this has proved to be the case and she is now looking for more sites to trial this type of lighting.

These photos show the experimental lighting erected by Fiona and her students. They were set at the same height as our street lights, along known commuting routes, and bats were recorded over several nights alternately with lights on and lights off.

Sue Smallshire

When did you last see a Mink?



Devon and Cornwall used to be the stronghold for the American Mink, but they seem to have disappeared. We would love to know when you last saw a Mink, especially if it was in 2019. Please send us details: what (dead or alive), when (ideally the date, but month or season would do), where (a grid reference, post code or nearby village), who (your name and contact details, in case we want to discuss your sighting).

Send your records to the DMG sightings page:

<http://www.devonmammalgroup.org/records/>

Kate Hills



Devon Harvest Mouse Project

Welcome back!

Welcome back to a new season for the Devon Harvest Mouse Project. The year seems to have flown by and the evenings are drawing in, but that means it is time for both the project to start again and to get outside looking for nests.

Thanks to all our volunteers for your help last year. Hopefully the mice have had a good breeding season and this season should be even better.



Just as the project started again, we had our first nest record of the season sent in. Phil was at Andrew's Wood helping to clear scrub and found this beautiful nest in a bramble. He knew it wasn't a Dormouse nest, as when he gently squeezed it there was a bit of give to it, whereas a Dormouse nest would be much more solid. Thanks Phil for both the photo and the record.

With most surveyors finding two or more nests so far this season (the most being four nests) it is starting to look like this may have been a better breeding season than last year. In 2018/19, finding nests was often hard work, but hopefully it will be easier this winter, with more nests to be found! Also, note that several of the nests I've seen so far this year have been higher up in the grass, whereas last year virtually all nests were at the bottom of tussocks.

Dates for training sessions and surveys:

Saturday January 18th:

A joint event with Moor Meadows near Buckfastleigh

Friday January 24th:

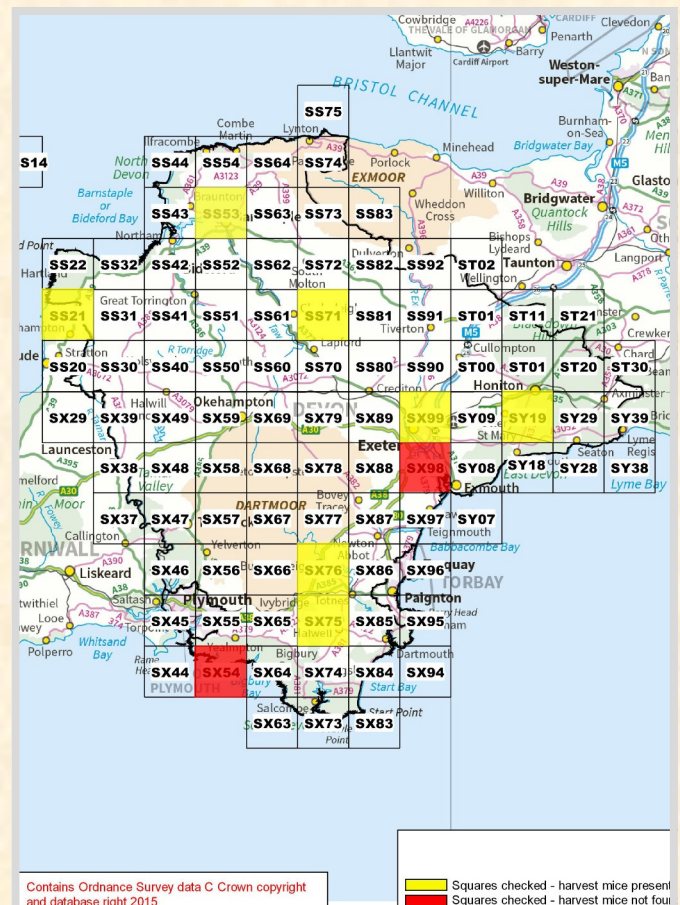
Training session at DWT's Woodah Farm.

Further training sessions are being lined up for the New Year at Braunton Burrows, Brentor Commons, Exeter Valley Parks and the Avon Valley Project in South Devon.

To reserve a place contact Sarah:

harvestmouse@devonmammalgroup.org

This year's records so far



Sarah Butcher: Harvest Mouse Project Officer



Mammal Society Spring Conference 2020

The 66th Spring Conference will take place during Friday 27th - Sunday 29th March 2020

Venue: Robinson College, University of Cambridge

As usual, the Spring Conference will bring together a wide range of mammal experts, amateur naturalists and interested individuals, to meet in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, hear the results of new research, look to future work and discuss contemporary issues in conservation.



The weekend will begin with the annual Cranbrook Memorial Lecture, which will be presented by Andrew Balmford, Professor of Conservation of Science at the University of Cambridge. Andrew's research focuses on the costs and benefits of conservation, how best to reconcile conservation and farming, the reasons why nature is being lost, and examining what works in conservation. Watch a short video about one of Andrew's eureka moments:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zTVC32Bfl-U&feature=youtu.be>

The conference is open to both members and non-members, with tickets available for single day attendance, or as a weekend package. For further information or to book:

<https://www.mammal.org.uk/events/66th-spring-conference/>

The Mammal Society's Photographer of the Year Competition

Have you taken a great photograph of one of Britain's wild mammals in the last twelve months? It could win you a fantastic prize!

Our Mammal Photographer of the Year Competition is now open for entries. This competition is for amateur wildlife photographers of all ages. You can submit up to five photographs of wild mammals of the British Isles to be in with a chance of winning a prize. Prizes announced so far include:

- A master-class in photographing those most elusive of mammals - bats!
- wildlife photography days courtesy of British Wildlife Centre and Westcountry Wildlife Photography Centre
- a camera trap donated by NatureSpy
- binoculars and a squirrel feeder donated by CJ Wildlife
- a £100 voucher from CEWE photographic printing service
- a £50 voucher and subscription to British Wildlife Magazine courtesy of NHBS

Categories for 2020 are Mammals of Great Britain (first prize and runner up), Young Mammal Photographer of the Year (16-18 years and 15 years and under), Mammal Comedian of the Year and Mammal Society Member's photograph. This year we have also added a new "Elusive Mammals" category to also encourage photographers to look out for rarely photographed species such as bats, shrews, stoats and whales.

Judging this year's competition are author, broadcaster and Mammal Society patron, Zeb Soanes, professional wildlife photographer, Brett Lewis and Mammal Society Council member and wildcat specialist, Roo Campbell.

Entry couldn't be easier but please be sure to read the terms and conditions.

Deadline for submissions: 1 February 2020

<https://www.mammal.org.uk/mpoy/>

