**Mammals summary 2023**

This is a report on the species present in Rutland, recorded by RNHS members, and we are very grateful to those of you who continue to record and send in your observations of mammal species.

For many years a large number of RNHS mammal records have come from a camera placed in the Langham garden of Marian Markham. Marian has collated these recordings and sent them on to me, and we are very grateful for them. These are very valuable records of the fauna of a rural garden and contribute greatly to the society’s records. However this can seem to show a large number of animals present in the county, but when these reports are removed there are very few records from the rest of Rutland. If any other members have a trail camera in their possession and could carry out a similar exercise that would help greatly to increase and widen our knowledge.

The report this year is further complicated by a new project started in April at RWNR where baited tunnels containing a camera are placed at different locations for two weeks, then moved on to a different site, so that over a longer period a picture of the species distribution of small mammals over the nature reserve will emerge. The total number of small mammals recorded this year will therefore have increased significantly over previous years, and these reports give information only about the specific area being studied, and do not cover the wider countryside.

Animals may revisit the same trap and are recorded many times, and individual animals cannot be identified, so it is impossible to say how many animals are present, only that for example at least the number of shrews in one photo at each site is present. On occasions more than one animal is photographed at one time, and then that number may be recorded.

It would be wonderful to have the resources and manpower to extend this kind of survey as along term project to perhaps record from kilometre squares across the county!!

Any volunteers??

**Hedgehog *Erinaceous europaeus*** 99reports 117 live animals 2 dead 87 reports from single site camera

The first record for 2023 was on 31st January at Langham, where they were not seen again until 4th March, but then regularly until the autumn. In an Oakham garden the earliest view was on was 20th March, and several visited from then onwards, until 16th June when they disappeared, reappearing on 13th August. The latest sight in 2023 was in Oakham on 21st November. Hedgehogs were also reported from Barrow, Barnsdale, and Barleythorpe.

**European Mole *Talpa europaea*** 17 reports2 live animals 15 evidence

Most reports for this under-reported species were molehills seen in many areas of the county, including RWNR, Burley on the hill, Ridlington, Cottesmore, Market Overton and Preston, Langham, Tinwell.

**Common Shrew *Sorex araneus*** 13 reports, at least 15 live animals

One animals was seen at Barndsale in May, and another at Exton park in November. All others were photographed in the camera trapping project along the shoreline at the western end of RWNR from the reedbeds to the EWBC.

**Pygmy Shrew *Sorex minutus*** 10 reports at least 10 live animals

All records came from the CTPR. Pygmy shrews were seen at most sites, from Birch plantation to the shoreline in front of Mallard hide of RWNR.

**Water Shrew *Neomys fodiens*** 7 reports at least 7 live animals

Curiosity about the population status of this animal was in part responsible for the camera trapping project at RWNR, and it is extremely pleasing that at least one water shrew made an appearance at seven different locations at RWNR, from the boardwalk reedbed to shoveler hide.

**European rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*** 30 reports 34 live animals 5 evidence

Rabbits are still commonly seen in many areas of the county, particularly visible at dusk and early mornings, often on roadside verges. Rabbits are reported from Ketton, Great Casterton, Pickworth, Panters’Orchard, Preston, Barrow, Exton, Ridlington, and Langham where they appeared on the trail camera from April to October.

**Brown hare *Lepus europaeus*** 37 reports 90 animals 1 dead

Hares have been seen from January until December in many areas of the county:- Exton, Great Casterton, Pickworth, Ashwell, Cottesmore, Barrow, near Launde, Market Overton and Egleton and Lax Hill RWNR.

**Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*** 49 reports 69 animals.

Many records came from the trail camera at Langham, and several from the camera trapping project at RWNR. They are also commonly seen in woods and gardens across the county. Reports from, Barrow, Egleton, Langham churchyard, Great Casterton, Pickworth, Lyndon, Oakham.

**Bank Vole *Myodes glareolus*** 17 reports at least 20 animals 6 reports from CTPR

In spite of the difficulty in distinguishing between bank voles and the similar species, short tailed field vole (seebelow), we have a good number of reports, from the patio of a Barrow garden, Exton, Ridlington, and under refugia at Burley Wood

**Short tailed field vole *Microtus agrestis*** 9 reports at least 10 animals

All reports came from RWNR trapping project. Sites located from reedbed boardwalk to Mallard Hide

**Water Vole *Arvicola terrestris*** 7reports 3 live animals 5 evidence

There were fewer reports of water voles in 2023, possibly due to the long dry summer and consequently low water levels. The evidence reports came from droppings found on rafts in the water vole monitoring project at RWNR and on mink rafts. Live animals were seen at wader-scrape hide, Lyndon, and at the pollards reedbed, where a video of a healthy water vole feeding on a raft, was made.

**Harvest Mouse *Micromys minutus*** 1 report at least 2 animals

After a harvest mouse nest was found in 2022 in the reedbed we knew there were harvest mice on the reserve, but it was a very pleasant surprise to find active harvest mice on the shoreline in front of Mallard hide in December. An unexpected bonus from the camera trapping project.

**Long Tailed Fieldmouse /Wood Mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*** 99 records, at least 104 live animals, 84 reports from single site camera, 12 from CTPR, 3 dead

Many reports are from regular appearances on the camera at Langham, where single fieldmice visited almost nightly from January until November.

On the camera trapping project fieldmice were commonly found from the eastern reedbeds to Egleton meadows.

In March a dead one was found on the pathway at Egleton RWNR, and April at Langham one was caught by a cat. Another dead animal had been deposited on a Barrow doorstep in December, again probably a prey of a hunting feline!

**House Mouse *Mus musculus*** No reports in 2023

**Brown rat *Rattus norvegicus*** 38reports at least 41 live animals 2evidence 24 from single site camera 14 from CTPR

A single rat was seen regularly on camera at Langham in October and November, and occasionally throughout the year. They made many appearances on camera at RWNR trapping project, sometimes more than one at a time, and were often responsible for clearing all the bait from the traps. Once the food had been discovered the rats returned until it had all disappeared. Footprints were also seen in clay of mink rafts near Fishponds cottage and at Burley fishponds.

**Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes*** 89 reports 94 live animals1 evidence 82 single site camera

Fox footprints were seen in the snow at Pickworth wood in January.

A single fox made visits to the Langham garden 22 times during January. On three dates two different animals appeared separately on the same night and the single fox was accompanied by a female on 5 occasions at the end January and early February. The single animal continued to appear, though less frequently throughout the year, only once, during May, accompanied by the female.

Foxes were also seen at RWNR, lagoon 1, waderscrape hide, N arm, between Cottesmore and Barrow, in a Cottesmore garden in March, in April in Hambleton Woods, and crossing the playing field at Ridlington.

**Badger *Meles meles*** 73 reports,66 single animals 53 single site camera, 5 from CTPR, 6 dead, 6 evidence

Many signs of activity were seen at setts throughout the area, and other evidence for example latrines and diggings along verges where badgers were looking for worms .

Badgers visited the Langham camera every month during 2023, a single animal recorded most nights in April at 1.00am, and also several times in May. One night in October 2 appeared at the same time.

Somewhat unexpectedly badgers appeared at 5 of the camera trapping sites, sniffing out the food used for bait, and peering round the end of the trap tunnel.

**Otter *Lutra lutra*** 57 reports 12 live animals 45 evidence

There is a thriving population of otters at RWNR. The first seen in 2023 was swimming through Burley fishponds on Jan 1st. On April 1st 2 swam together feeding in lagoon 2 and in the same spot 1 was glimpsed 2 weeks later. In May one swam in the channel in front of waderscrape hide, and in December one was observed swimming in front of deep water hide.

Other otters appeared on the camera traps at Shoveler hide, Buzzard hide, pollards, close to EBWC, sand martin channel, and deep water hide.

Evidence of their presence, prints and spraint, have been very frequently observed on mink raft survey.

RWNR reserve is an ideal haven for otters with plentiful feeding opportunities and a protected environment, from which the growing population may move out to colonise other watercourses.

**Stoat *Mustela erminea*** 4reports, 4 animals

As in 2022 few reports of stoats have been received. At RWNR live stoats were reported from in front of the Lyndon visitor centre, where one chased a rabbit, and also on the track near smew hide. In midsummer they were seen at Exton and Burley.

**Weasel *Mustela nivalis 6 reports 6 animals 2 from CTPR***

One very brave individual visited the yard at VTC in May, one was observed at RWNR in March. Another was on the roadside verge between Preston and Ridlington in July , and one crossed Pickworth road in front of Taylor’s farm in September.

Weasels made two appearances on the CTPR camera at Ramsar field and osprey hide, and at the channel between lagoons 1 and 2

**Polecat *Mustela putiorius*** 1 record1animal

The one polecat recorded was photographed by the camera trapping project on Egleton meadows in September. The photograph was verified as being a polecat, the first confirmed sighting for 3 years.

**Fallow Deer *Dama dama*** 21 reports 93 animals

All were reported from the Pickworth/Ryhall area, ( by the same observers) and seen in every month of the year, slightly more reported in the early months. The largest group was of 24 animals in Pickworth Great Wood in January, and 14 were seen in February at Walk farm.

**Roe deer *Capreolus capreolus* 6 reports 9 animals**

In April in Cherry wood RWNR 3 were observed, at Walk farm Pickworth 2, and another seen at Shacklewell Hollow. Also at Walk farm one was seen in June. In July one was observed at Great Casterton S of the river, and in August a fine male, antlers in velvet ran across in front of the pond at Quarry Farm.

**Reeves Muntjac** ***Muntiacus reevesi*** 80 reports 97 animals 65 records from single site camera, 2 evidence

Many of these reports were from recordings on the camera at Langham, where one or two individuals appeared very regularly, particularly during the winter and spring. They were also seen at Wing, Barrow, Pickworth Great wood, Ridlington road Brooke, Cottesmore, near RWNR at Hambleton road, and at Egleton, by lagoon one and the car park.

**Summary sheet mammal reports 2022 2023**

**Please note :-**

**1.Some reports are from photos taken as part of a baited camera trapping programme at sites near to the shore of RWNR, (camera trapping project RWNR -CTPR) and while these may record the same animals more than once, only the minimum number of animals is recorded**

**2.Many reports come from a single site camera in a garden at Langham and therefore may record the same individuals many times**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Species** | **Number reports** | **Number Live** | **Number dead** | **Evidence** | **Number single site trail camera**  **reports** | **Comments** |
| **Hedgehog**  ***Erinaceous europaeus*** | **41 99** | **39 117** | **5 2** | **0 1** | **39 87** |  |
| **European Mole**  ***Talpa europaea*** | **19 17** | **6 2** | **4 0** | **5 15** | **0 0** |  |
| **Common Shrew**  ***Sorex araneus*** | **3 13** | **2 at least 15** | **1 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **12 reports from camera trapping project RWNR (CTPR)** |
| **Pygmy Shrew**  ***Sorex minutus*** | **1 10** | **1**  **at least 10** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **All reports from camera trapping project RWNR (CTPR)** |
| **Water shrew**  ***Neomys fodiens*** | **0 7** | **0**  **at least 7** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **All reports from CTPR** |
| **European rabbit**  ***Oryctolagus cuniculus*** | **13 30** | **42 34** | **0 0** | **0 5** | **0 17** |  |
| **Brown Hare**  ***Lepus europaeus*** | **40 37** | **86 90** | **2 1** | **0 0** | **0 0** |  |
| **Grey Squirrel**  ***Sciurus carolinensis*** | **45 49** | **65 69** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **39 37** | **4 CTPR** |
| **Bank Vole**  ***Myodes Glareolus*** | **6 17** | **7**  **at least 20** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **6 CTPR** |
| **Short tailed Field Vole**  ***Microtus agrestis*** | **3 9** | **3**  **At least 10** | **3 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **All reports from CTPR** |
| **Water Vole**  ***Arvicola terrestris*** | **31 7** | **0 3** | **0 0** | **31 5** | **0 0** |  |
| **Harvest Mouse**  ***Micromys minutus*** | **1 1** | **0 at least 2** | **0 0** | **1 0** | **0 0** | **All CTPR** |
| **Wood Mouse**  ***Apodemus sylvaticus*** | **20 99** | **18**  **at least 103** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **14 84** | **12 reports from CTPR** |
| **House Mouse**  ***Mus musculus*** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** |  |
| **Brown Rat**  ***Rattus norvegicus*** | **19 38** | **19**  **at least 41** | **0 0** | **0 2** | **16 24** | **14 reports from CTPR** |
| **Red Fox**  ***Vulpes vulpes*** | **121 89** | **132 94** | **0 0** | **0 1** | **112 82** |  |
| **Badger**  ***Meles meles*** | **49 73** | **48 66** | **2 6** | **0 6** | **47 53** | **5 reports from CTPR** |
| **Otter**  ***Lutra lutra*** | **60 57** | **21 12** | **0 0** | **49 45** | **0 0** | **Much evidence from mink rafts** |
| **Stoat**  ***Mustela erminea*** | **3 4** | **3 4** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** |  |
| **Weasel**  ***Mustela nivalis*** | **3 6** | **3 6** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **2 reports from CTPR** |
| **Polecat *Mustela putiorius*** | **0 1** | **0 1** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **One seen and verified from photo CTPR** |
| **Fallow deer *Dama dama*** | **18 21** | **94 93** | **0 0** | **1 0** | **0 0** |  |
| **Roe deer *Capreolus capreolus*** | **7 6** | **16 9** | **0 0** | **0 0** | **0 0** |  |
| **Reeves’ muntjac *Muntiacus reevesii*** | **51 80** | **57 97** | **0 0** | **1 2** | **43 65** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |