

# The Garden Mammal Survey

## Report 2001



Thank you to everyone who joined in the Garden Mammal Survey. A total of 3,779 people responded and altogether they sent in records of 19,997 sightings of mammals in their gardens. It was a tremendous response.

As you will recall, the questions you were asked ranged over a wide variety of topics; the mammals you see, your feelings towards them, whether you feed them and how old your house is. Other questions focused on the size of your garden, your gardening habits and even the habitat in your local neighbourhood. The idea was to build up as complete a picture as possible of how wild mammals use our gardens and how important gardens are, and are likely to be, in future. We also wanted to try to find out whether carrying out garden surveys on a regular basis would be a good way of trying to keep track of how wild mammals are doing in the UK in future.

### Over half of Britain's mammal species were spotted in your gardens

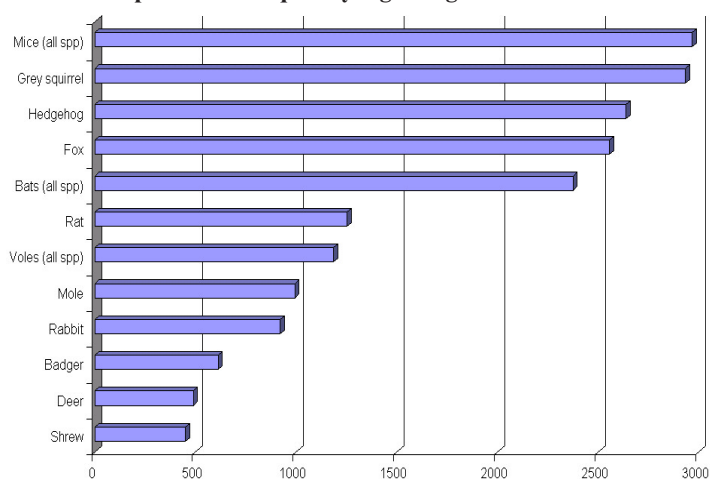
Forty three different species were recorded in total, which represents just over half the total number of mammal species currently in the UK. The most common species found were, unsurprisingly, all mice species, whilst the least common species in your gardens were all the shrews.

The availability of food and shelter for wildlife seemed to be critical; gardens that had fruit and nut-bearing bushes and trees and overgrown areas had more mammals visiting them than others that didn't. Mammals were more abundant in gardens that were larger and surrounded by good natural mammal habitats like woodland and farmland, as opposed to gardens surrounded by urban areas. Householders in East Anglia and Scotland recorded the highest number of mammal species and Wales the lowest.

#### ***Hedgehogs & Red Squirrels Are Our Most Popular Garden Mammals***

*The most popular mammals in the gardens surveyed were hedgehogs and red squirrels, both of which were welcomed by 95% of our surveyors. The wildcat fared even better, and was liked by 100% of surveyors, but as only two records for wildcats were received it is difficult to draw firm conclusions on so little information! Not surprisingly, the least popular mammal was the common rat, closely followed by the American mink.*

Top 12 most frequently-sighted garden mammals



Number of individual animals sighted

One of the questions we hoped to shed light on was whether the presence of one species could affect where another might be found. The results of the survey show that gardens with foxes and or badgers are less likely to have hedgehogs, but the reasons for this are not entirely clear. It could be because one species preys on the other or because one species avoids the other. What was clear, however, was that gardens of households with resident cats were shown to be less likely to have mice, shrews and voles.

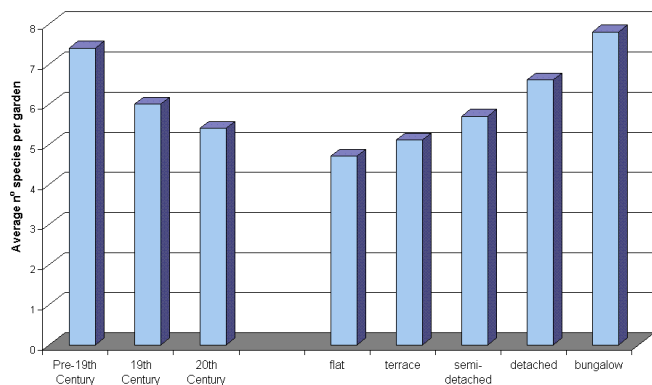
When asked which mammals they thought were increasing in number, more people mentioned grey squirrels more than any other, closely followed by the otter. When asked which mammals they thought were declining, people named the hare more than anything else. Here, the hedgehog came in a close second.

The survey found that providing food and shelter for wildlife certainly does increase the variety of species of mammals that we are likely to see in our gardens. However, there are other factors which have a greater influence on this than any actions that we ourselves can take. The size and age of the garden, and the type of surrounding habitat, for example, are much more important here in determining what we will see.

## Different types of houses and gardens have a significant effect on our mammals

One of the most interesting findings was that the number of species recorded in individual gardens was closely related to the age and the type of house; older, detached houses and bungalows had most, while newer houses, especially terraced ones, had least. Any future building developments, especially for housing,

### Evidence that age and type of house affects species richness



are likely to create more problems for wildlife in that new houses are increasingly likely to be allocated small gardens which will further fragment areas of previously semi-natural habitat. As development extends on town fringes, the large, well-established gardens of older houses may find themselves even further and further away from important areas of semi-natural habitat which are the source of the mammals visiting their gardens. Their value, therefore, from a wildlife point of view is likely to decrease over time in spite of everything householders may do to make wild mammals welcome.

## More work to do

The report will be made available to all those working on conservation issues in the UK for them to discuss. Over the coming months, as you may be aware, several other mammal monitoring surveys will be taking place to discover which methods really do give scientists the most useful and accurate information on the state of our mammals.

Thank you for taking part in this survey. Your records were a vital contribution to the project; every extra one received helped to ensure more accurate results. We do hope that you enjoyed taking part and that you may wish to help us again in the future.

### Results Of The Reptile & Amphibian Survey

We took the opportunity to ask people about the herpetofauna that they see in their gardens. We received 7402 records of 11 species and some very interesting facts were uncovered. Most records per surveyor came from South-west England and the fewest from South Scotland. As with mammals, more species were recorded in larger gardens where there was more food and shelter available and which were surrounded by more diverse habitats, including marshland. The gardens with the most species were in Wales and those with the fewest species, in Scotland. Of all areas surveyed, urban gardens had the fewest species.

Mammalian predators did not have any impact on herpetofauna.

Most people believed the great crested newt has increased most, closely followed by the smooth newt. In contrast, most people believed that both adders and slow-worms have declined.

The Garden Mammal Survey was a joint project between the People's Trust for Endangered Species and The Mammal Society



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