



Common Shrew

Sorex araneus

Quick facts

Order Eulipotyphla

Conservation status

GB *Least concern*

RE CE E V NT **LC** DD

England *Least concern*

Scotland *Least concern*

Wales *Least concern*

Global *Least concern*

GB trend *Stable*

Size Body 48 - 80 mm; tail 24 - 44 mm (tail less than 3/4 of head and body)

Weight 5 - 14 g

Life span Usually less than 1 year



Mammal SOCIETY

The common shrew has dense, tricoloured fur, a long nose, tiny eyes, and red teeth. It is native to mainland Britain and has been introduced to many islands, but is absent from Ireland, the Outer Hebrides, Shetland, and Jersey.

Habitat

Urban and garden, deciduous and mixed woodland, grassland, arable land.

Behaviour

Highly territorial. Rests in burrows. Does not hibernate - reduces body size (including skull, brain, liver) in winter to lower energy requirements. Predated on by many mammalian and avian predators, but may be abandoned as it produces a foul tasting liquid from glands on skin.

Diet & Feeding

Mainly insects, also earthworms, small slugs, and snails. Needs to eat every 2 - 3 hours.

Reproduction

3 - 4 litters of 5 - 7 young born between May and September. A litter may have two or three fathers. Mothers move young in a 'caravan', where each shrew grasps tail of shrew in front.

Conservation & Threats

Protected under Schedule 6 of Wildlife & Countryside Act. Therefore, trapping is tightly controlled, and care must be taken when trapping for other small mammals not to cause accidental harm to shrews.

The common shrew is very widespread and is the 2nd most numerous British mammal. It may live at densities of 50 individuals per hectare in woodlands.

Range

