



Water Shrew

Neomys fodiens

Quick facts

Order Eulipotyphla

Conservation status

GB *Least concern*

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England *Least concern*

Scotland *Least concern*

Wales *Least concern*

Global *Least concern*

GB trend *Declining*

Size Body 67 - 96 mm; tail 45 - 77 mm

Weight 12 - 18 g

Life span Maximum 19 months

Britain's largest shrew has dense black fur above and contrasting off-white fur underneath. The water shrew is found throughout mainland Britain and larger islands but is absent from Ireland, the Scillies, and the Channel Islands.

Habitat

Semi-aquatic, lives close to water, including banks of rivers, ponds, drainage ditches, fens. Particularly numerous at watercress beds. Young shrews may be found far from water in woodlands, hedgerows, grassland when they are dispersing.

Behaviour

Solitary, but frequently live in close proximity to each other in favoured areas. Has toxic saliva which can be felt by humans as a sore rash even though a bite rarely breaks skin. As with other shrews, does not hibernate - warm, dense fur allows it to dive for aquatic prey even in mid-winter. Low population densities compared to other small mammals.

Diet & Feeding

Freshwater shrimp, caddisfly larvae, occasionally small fish and amphibians, terrestrial invertebrates including worms, snails, beetles.

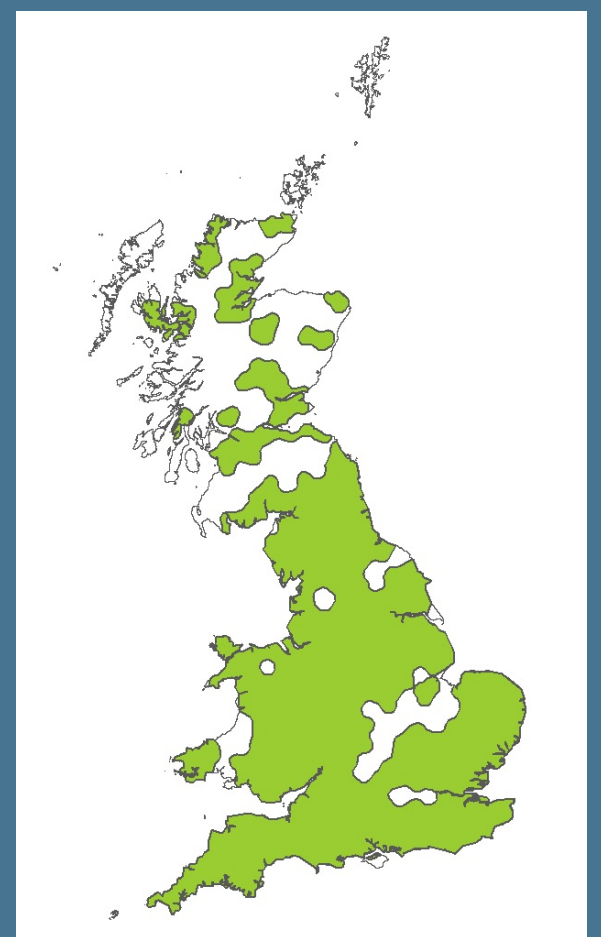
Reproduction

2 or 3 litters of 3 - 15 young born between April and September. Females weave nests from dry grass. Adults often die after breeding season.

Conservation & Threats

Never very abundant, therefore difficult to assess population status. Threats include habitat loss and clearance of riverbanks. They are also vulnerable to water pollution.

Range



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