

Small mammal trapping on Countryside Restoration Trust land at Barton overnight from 06/12/2019 - Peter Pilbeam, Jo Chesham, Joy Dingley, Lorraine Jobson, Heather Mathews, Vince Lea and members of CRT's monitoring team*.

Context: This exercise was conducted to determine the species of small mammals present immediately adjacent to hedges laid during the National Hedgelaying Championships in October 2018. A previous exercise had been conducted immediately before that hedgelaying - using the same hedgerows. One 'control' length of field margin (next to an unladen hedge) c50m from the laid hedges was also trapped to provide further comparisons with the trapping prior to the hedgelaying.

Protocol: 3 sets of 10 Longworth traps each were set up with bedding (hay) and bait (muesli, casters and diced apple) in two different habitats from 3pm on 6 December 2019 and checked from 8am on 7 December 2019. One set of traps (the 'control' set) was placed at 10m intervals along a field margin about 5m from an unladen hedge c50m from any hedge laid in October 2018. The second and third sets were placed immediately under two different lengths of hedges laid in October 2018 (the same as those trapped pre-hedgelaying) - again at 10m intervals. Most of the trapped animals were weighed and sexed - the traps were then removed.

'Control' set:

Trap No.	Location	07/12 - c8am
45	In uncut field margin adj. unladen hedge	o
44	10m north	WM - m - 18gm
50	10m north	WM - m - 17gm
49	10m north	WM - f - 24gm
41	10m north	o
42	10m north	WM - f - 15.5gm
43	10m north	vo
48	10m north	WM - f - 17.5gm
47	10m north	WM - f - 15.5gm
46	10m north	WM - e

Second set (under laid hedge A):

Trap No.	Location	07/12 - c8am
52	Under hedge laid in October 2018	vo
54	10m east	FV - m - 20gm
56	10m east	FV - f - 20.5gm
58	10m east	t
60	10m east	FV - m - 21gm
62	10m east	WM - f - 16gm
72	10m east	WM - f - 14gm
70	10m east	FV - f - 19gm
68	10m east	FV - f - 20gm
66	10m east	WM - f - 16.5gm

Third set (under laid hedge B):

Trap No.	Location	07/12 c8am
51	Under hedge laid in October 2019	FV - ? - 22gm
53	10m south	t
55	10m south	WM - m - 16gm
57	10m south	WM - e
69	10m south	WM - f - 19gm
59	10m south	WM - m - 17gm
61	10m south	FV - f - 22gm
63	10m south	WM - m - 17.5gm
71	10m south	FV - m - 21gm
65	10m south	WM - f - 15gm

WM -- Wood Mouse

FV -- Field Vole

m -- male

f -- female

e -- escaped

v -- visited/external bait removed - not necessarily by a small mammal

o -- open (not tripped)

t -- tripped/empty

Conclusions:

In summary, out of 30 traps, there were 16 wood mouse catches and 8 field vole catches - an overall catch rate of some 80%.

The 'control' set of traps caught only wood mouse (70% catch rate) whereas the other two sets of traps caught roughly equal numbers of field vole and wood mouse (c95% catch rates each). The former were set in the field margin near an unladen (and quite wide) hedge and the latter were set under hedges laid in October 2018.

The results from the 'control' set nearly mirror the pre-hedgelaying results from 2018 (albeit a lower catch rate - c60%) - that resulted in 8 wood mouse, 1 yellow-necked mouse and 1 field vole being caught in 17 traps. Those 2018 results and those from the 'control' trapping would tend to show a more 'woodland' type of habitat rather than the laid-hedge habitat (linear and very narrow at present).

One very clear conclusion - any disturbance of the small mammal population by the hedgelaying competition was short-lived - they have 'returned' in abundance. The relative numbers of the two species in the hedges does appear to have changed with the change of habitat, but it is entirely possible that this will gradually change back as the recently-laid hedges grow up and out.

The trapped areas themselves were in general wet underfoot (whereas the tracks and pathways were very wet and very muddy) - the conditions overnight and when the traps were checked at c8am were overcast, cold and very wet. During the morning it became windy and began to rain.

Peter Pilbeam

14 December 2019

* CRT's monitoring team - Tom, Catherine and Lucy O'Toole, Roger and Rebecca Buisson, Val Perrin and Rachel Bates



