

**Small mammal trapping on Stockbridge Meadows Nature Reserve Melbourn, TL379445 overnight on 05/10/2019 – Cambridgeshire Mammal Group Jo Chesham, Lorraine Jobson, Sharon Erzinciloglu, Pippa Keynes, Martha Keynes, Gary Green, Rachel Apperley, Les and Maureen Brierley.**

**Context:** Small mammal trapping was conducted as a first time presence/absence survey of the nature reserve. Stockbridge Meadows was opened in 2009 as a new nature reserve of 13 acres for the public following development of the houses on land adjacent to the site. It includes a variety of habitat types; woodland, scrub, long grassland, wildflower meadow as well as marshland and riparian habitat along the chalk stream when it flowing.

**Method:**

39 Longworth traps were set up with bedding (hay) and bait (museli, casters and diced apple) around the site from 5pm on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October spaced randomly c8 metres in areas representing the various habitat types across the site. Trap locations were marked with canes and/or biodegradable tape. Then traps were opened the following morning from 8am, small mammals captured were identified, weighed, sexed and released.

<b>Trap No</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>6/10/19 – c8am</b>
1	Through fencing scrub edge RHS path	WM – f – j – 8.5gm
2	Through fencing end scrub edge RHS path	WM – m – 21.5gm
3	Underneath tree RHS path	WM – f - 18.5gm
4	By trees RHS path	o
5	Underneath tree RHS path	WM – 17.gm - e (not sexed)
6	Through nettle patch RHS path	WM – m – 16.5gm
7	Under hedgerow LHS path	veo
8	Under hedgerow at end LHS path	WM – m – 21gm
9	Next to grass heap RHS path	o
10	By large ash tree LHS path	WM – m – 19gm
11	Base of tree LHS path	WM – f – 16.5gm
12	Base of tree LHS path	BV – m – 16.5gm
13	Base of hawthorn LHS path	WM – m – 17gm
14	Underneath trees RHS path 5m back	WM – f - 21gm
15	Undisturbed long grassland near bushes LHS	WM – f – 19gm
16	Down in undergrowth RHS path	WM – f – 17gm
17	Base of tree down in undergrowth RHS path	WM – f – 16gm
18	Near reptile refugia LHS 5m back	WM – m - 18gm
19	In dip RHS path	WM – f – 17gm
20	Under tree in dip RHS path	WM – m – 18.5gm
21	Under hazel tree RHS dead end	WM – f – 19.5gm
22	Behind tree LHS dead end	WM – f – 16.5gm
23	Under trees RHS dead end	WM – m – 19.5gm
24	Behind trees and netting LHS dead end	WM – m – 16gm
25	LHS path near badger sett	WM – m – 17gm
26	Behind peeling bark on tree LHS	WM – m - 16.5gm
27	Under berry tree LHS path	WM – f – 15gm
28	By log pile LHS path	WM – m – j - 14gm
29	By fence post pile LHS path	CS – f – 7gm - fd
30	Base of tree RHS path	BV – m – 17gm
31	Behind tree stump RHS path	WM – m – 17gm

32	Under broken tree stump LHS path	WM – f – 24gm
33	By logs from fencing LHS path	WM – m – 19.5gm
34	Under tree roots/stump LHS path	BV – m – 24.5gm
35	Near fencing far RHS path	WM – m -23.5gm
36	Under twisted log LHS path	WM – f – 18.5gm
37	Under big tree RHS path	o
38	Under scrub RHS path	WM – f – 16gm
39	Middle open long grassland	WM – f – 15gm

WM – Wood mouse

BV – Bank Vole

CS – Common Shrew

m – male

f – female

j – juvenile

e – escaped

o – open, and not tripped

veo – visited (exterior bait taken, not necessarily small mammals) and empty and open (not tripped)

fd – found dead

#### **Summary:**

Trapping results demonstrated a very healthy population of small mammals on the site – the numbers of three species positively identified were 30 x wood mice, 4 x bank voles and 1 common shrew, and trapping success was 89.7%, 35/39 traps. A further study next time would not require as many traps across the site and a more defined spacing of traps could be used instead. Suggest trapping again October 2020.

Other mammals seen during trapping included muntjac, rabbits and evidence of badgers at the sett, and newly formed mole hills across the site. Conversations with a dog walker post survey identified badgers seen on site near the sett within the past 6 weeks, and evidence of them crossing the (now dry) river with badger hair and hedgehog remains found. The Ranger has also seen badgers earlier in the year on site.

#### **Concerns:**

Dogs are being walked off lead on site – despite not being allowed to, more signage needed on site to enforce this to avoid disturbance to wildlife.

Water levels – the River Mel is currently dry and has been since July; this is detrimental to both water vole and water shrew populations that may be restricted either side of the site unable to disperse and limited in suitable habitat. The marshland habitat on the site is consequently depleted of water too. Neither of the aforementioned species were subject to this survey – but presence/absence of these species should be assessed next year, particularly given the water shortage.