

Figure 3 The percentage of sites at which hedgehogs were recorded. The 'east of England' comprises the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands and East of England Government Office Regions; the 'west of England' comprises the North West and West Midlands regions; and the 'south of England' comprises the South West, South East and London regions.

the biggest decline is apparent in the east of England. These findings mirror those of two other recent surveys: *HogWatch* (funded by MTUK and the British Hedgehog Preservation Society, and analysed by Royal Holloway, University of London) and *Mammals on Roads* (run by MTUK). *Mammals on Roads* has highlighted a decline in abundance in the broad landscape, outside the built environment. The indication from *Living with Mammals* is that hedgehogs are faring no better in urban areas – a habitat that, it might be hoped, could support hedgehog populations.

The data collected in *Living with Mammals* includes information about the site: its size and age, the types of plants and features present, and whether it has a boundary. The more features that were present, such as bird feeders, ponds and compost heaps, the greater the number of species that there was likely to be (sites with 0-3 features had an average of 2.8 species; those with 4-7 features had an average of 4.0; and those with 8-11 features had an average of 4.9 species). Compost heaps, wood piles and the like, are a good way to encourage invertebrates and, in turn, the mammals that feed on them. If

you have a garden, putting food out occasionally, leaving an area untended, and allowing small gaps at the base of fences, will also make the urban landscape more 'user-friendly' to the hedgehogs that may increasingly rely on it.

A partnership

There are about 60 terrestrial wild mammal species in the UK. Many are predators, near the top of food chains, and their presence is an important indicator of the health of the environment. Surveying all of them is beyond the resources of any single organisation. The efforts of many of the academic groups, government agencies and NGOs involved are linked through the Tracking Mammals Partnership (TMP), funded by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. At the heart of the Partnership are many thousands of volunteers whose enthusiasm and experience underlie the many surveys that take place. It is the efforts of everyone involved that informed the recent review of the UK *Biodiversity Action Plan* and have gone into shaping conservation policy at the highest level.

Find out more about UK mammals

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Living with Mammals Survey Update 2007



LIVING WITH MAMMALS SURVEY

DECEMBER 2007

Thank you for taking part in *Living with Mammals*, whether you took part for the first time this year or are an experienced hand at it, our thanks go to everybody who helped to map the mammals that share our built environment.

Last year's update began with the words: "Spring arrived a little late this year. The average temperature for the first four months of the year was the lowest that it has been since 2001..." Well, this year was very different indeed: record temperatures in April produced the warmest spring since records began for the whole of the UK almost a century ago, and many species, including hawthorn flowers and migrating swifts, appeared a month early. In May and June, the rains came in force. East Anglia experienced its wettest May on record and in June many places in Yorkshire were deluged with over three times the average rainfall for that month.

The extreme weather in recent years has highlighted the changing nature of our climate and the susceptibility of the natural world to the pressures upon it. As our environment changes, so the need for surveys to identify the effects on wildlife is paramount, and it is in this respect that *Living with Mammals* and the support of everyone involved is so important.



A wood mouse. Picture courtesy of Christine Brown.

Survey coverage

Ninety-eight percent of sites recorded at least one wild mammal species, and two-thirds of sites were home to between three and seven species. The average number of species recorded across all sites was 4.4. Twenty-three wild mammal species were recorded in total, in addition to species groups such as bats and shrews. Fifteen of these were 'species of conservation concern' (shown in the table opposite), those species that conservationists believe should be monitored.

Figure 1 shows the proportion of sites (as a percentage of the total) at which particular species were recorded. Grey squirrels and foxes continue to be our commonest neighbours, with the latter spotted at about 60 percent of survey sites (figure 2A). Foxes began to colonise suburban areas of London in the 1930s and caught the public eye in the early 1960s. Today, there are about 5,000 adult foxes within the M25, and perhaps seven times as many in urban areas nationally. In cities, foxes typically have home ranges of 50 to 100 acres (20 to 40 hectares), about a tenth of the size of those in farmland areas, and take advantage of a wide range of food sources: earthworms, insects, fruit, wild animals and pets are all on the menu. Inner city foxes tend to eat less caught prey than those in the suburbs, feeding more on scavenged food. There are also foxes that enjoy the pickings of the town while living in rural areas, commuting in at night to forage.

Species of Conservation Concern	Number of sites
Bat species	315
Hedgehog	213
Badger	108
Shrew species	82
Roe deer	56
Brown hare	36
Weasel	17
Stoat	13
Red squirrel	11
Water vole	6
Otter	5
Hazel dormouse	4
Polecat	3
Red deer	3
Fallow deer	1

Table 1 The number of sites recording 'Species of Conservation Concern'. Those highlighted in pink are 'priority' species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Unlike their grey counterparts, red squirrels have much less of an urban reputation. Since the 1930s, they have disappeared from much of their former range in the UK and their numbers have fallen drastically. Of the 160,000 or fewer individuals remaining, three-quarters are restricted to coniferous woodland in Scotland, a habitat

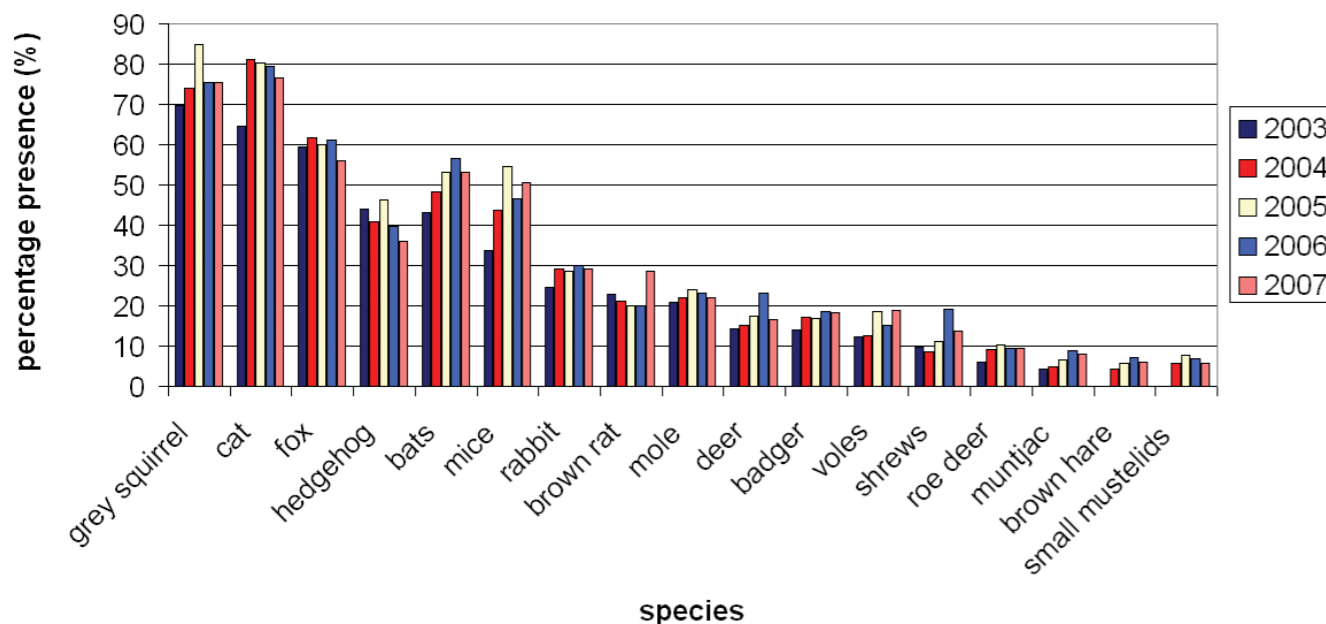
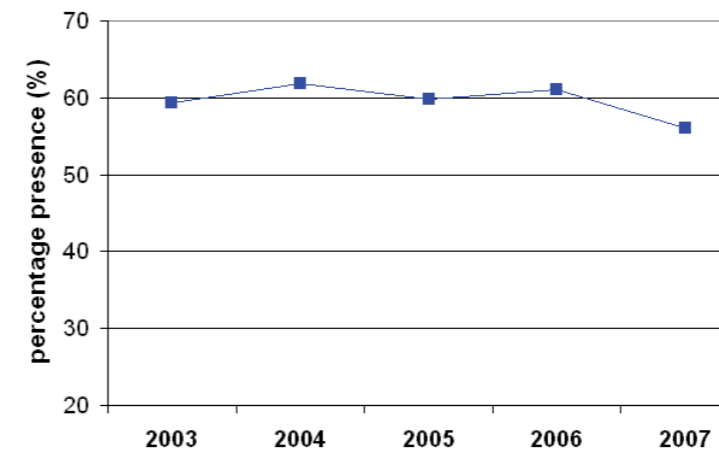
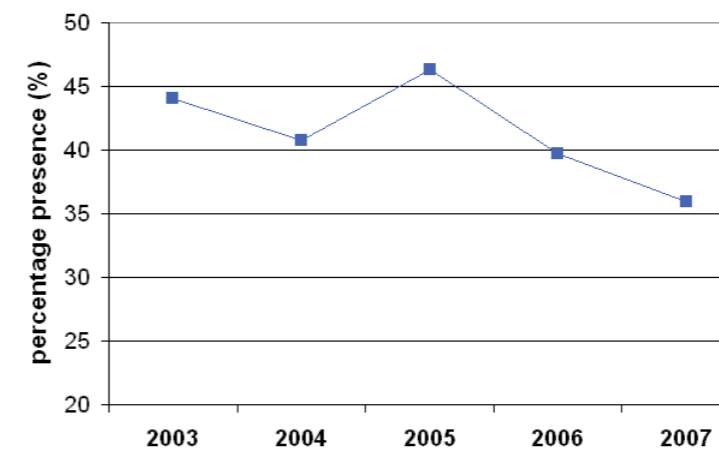


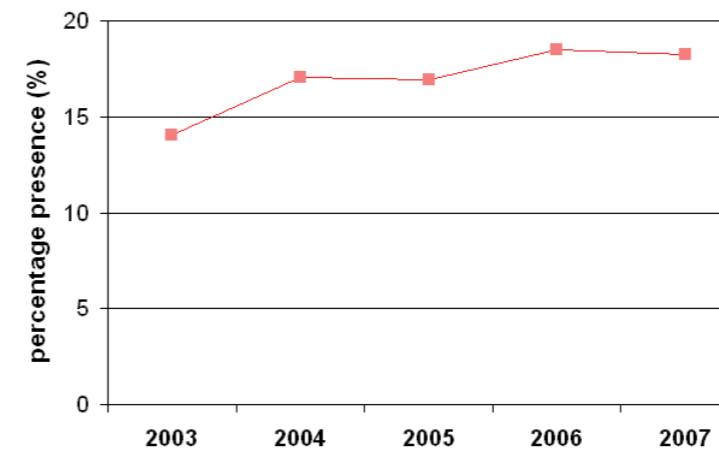
Figure 1 The percentage of sites at which particular species were recorded in the five years of the survey to date.



A The percentage of sites recording foxes.



B The percentage of sites recording hedgehogs.



C The percentage of sites recording badgers.



The built environment offers rich pickings and a comparatively easy lifestyle for urban foxes over their rural counterparts. Picture courtesy of Gill Filer.

Figure 2A, B, C (left) The percentage of sites at which foxes (A), hedgehogs (B), and badgers (C) were recorded in the five years of Living with Mammals to date.

Red squirrels can breed twice a year, producing litters in early spring and again in summer. If food is scarce though, they are much less likely to reproduce. Putting food out every few days – such as sunflower seeds, hazelnuts, cob nuts, carrot and apple – provides a valuable supplement to their diet, particularly in the summer months before fruits and nuts are ripe, and can help to support a breeding population.

Hedgehogs, though still widespread, are declining in number nationally, and in a review of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan earlier this year, were made a 'priority' species for conservation efforts. In large part, habitat loss over the last fifty years is likely to be responsible, as arable land has replaced pasture, and larger field sizes have led to the loss of hedgerows. But hedgehogs are also one of our urban neighbours, making use of the diversity of habitats that green spaces, such as allotments, playing fields and gardens, provide. Here too, though, there is concern that their numbers are declining.

Fewer sites recorded hedgehogs this year than in any previous year (figure 2B), and if the findings are looked at regionally (figure 3, overleaf),

that grey squirrels favour less, and those in England and Wales, make up only a few isolated populations. Where they are present though, red squirrels will make use of the built environment. Eleven records of red squirrel were reported in Living with Mammals this year, from sites in England and Scotland.