

# Northumbria Mammal Group Newsletter

Newsletter – Winter 2017  
Compiled by Jonathan Pounder



## Follow us on:

- **Website**

For updates on the mammal groups activities please check out: [www.northumbriamammalgroup.org.uk](http://www.northumbriamammalgroup.org.uk).

- **Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/groups/219105621438347/>

## Articles for the Newsletters

If you have any article, events, pictures, interesting walk or talk; or a sighting you wish to share then send the details across. The dates for receiving information are (flexible and may change depending on events).

## Equipment available to borrow

Over the years the Northumbria Mammal Group has been able to purchase equipment to use for mammal surveys, events, etc. This equipment is available to loan to Mammal Group members for mammal related activities. It is now being stored at the offices of the Natural History Society of Northumbria in the Great North Museum: Hancock in central Newcastle. Below is a list of some of the items that we have. If you would like to borrow any of these please contact the Natural History Society to arrange this: [nhsn@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:nhsn@ncl.ac.uk) or 0191 208 2790.

GPS	Ordnance Survey Maps	Longworth traps
Pesola spring scale	Trail cameras	Bat detector
Binoculars	Night 'scope	Head torches
CB radios	Mammal ID sheets	Lots of mammal books

## Mink recording

Durham Wildlife Trust are looking to carry out a project from source to sink total eradication of mink on the Tees, Tyne and Wear. Any records of Mink in Durham and the wider North East will be gratefully received.

## Distance learning: Free courses.

Have you ever wanted to do a course, but don't have time or money, or perhaps aren't able to get to college at the moment?

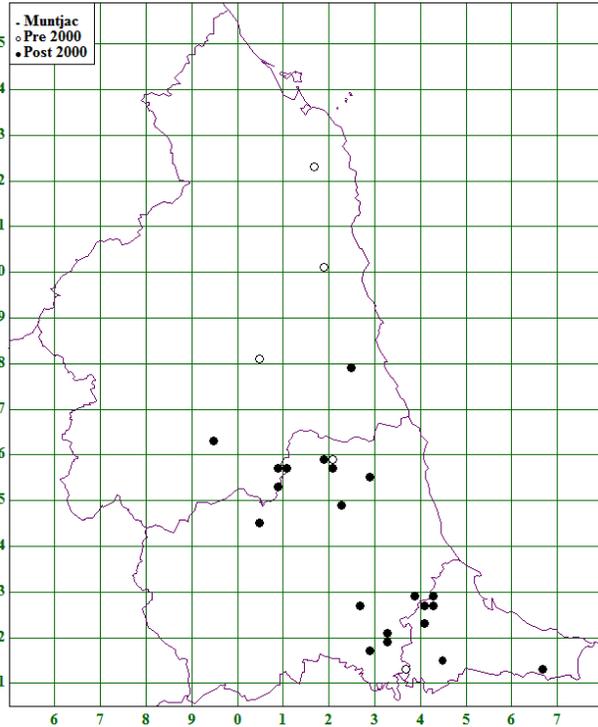
If so, a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) could be for you. They're free, online, don't require previous knowledge or experience, are from top universities and specialist organisations, and there's a wide subject range to choose from (including Nature and the Environment!). For further info just go onto the website: [www.futurelearn.com](http://www.futurelearn.com)

## Roe Deer, where can the Muntjac be?

Deer are our largest land mammal and an encounter with one is always worth a line in anyone's diary. But in spite of their size they can be remarkably cryptic and go unrecorded, so we thought we would have a bit of a drive to see if the mammal group could fill in a few more blanks in their distribution maps.

When the NHSN published "Mammals, Reptiles & Amphibians of the North East" in 2012, the conclusion of the species account on Muntjac stated: "What can be assumed with a lot more confidence is that the species will continue its spread across the North East, either independently or aided by further introductions, and it would probably not be too rash to suggest that its presence will be fairly commonplace, at least as far north as the Tyne, within a decade or so." Admittedly there is still another five years to go on that prediction but since 2012 there have hardly been any new records and those few that

have been seen have been more or less in the same locations as shown on the map below. Interestingly this dearth of Muntjac has also been reflected in Durham Wildlife Trust's "Mammal Web" project, which hasn't recorded a single Muntjac on any of their remote cameras.



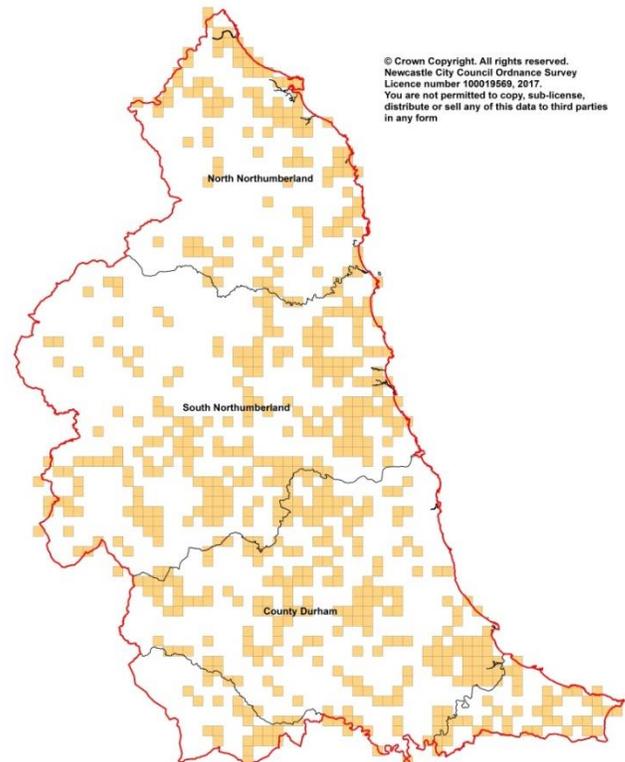
### *Muntjac distribution map to 2012*

While the situation with Muntjac seems to be a bit of a mystery at the moment, the description of Roe Deer as being ubiquitous is probably as accurate as any in the book. Nevertheless the record of its presence is still lagging behind the description a little. The distribution map produced by the Environmental Records Information Centre for all Roe Deer records since 2008 shows quite a lot of gaps, particularly in east, southern and western fringes of Durham and in north-west Northumberland. In fact the corresponding map of all Roe Deer records from any time shows a similar pattern except for a large cluster of pre-2000 records from Kielder, no doubt thanks to the efforts of Gordon Simpson.

### *Roe Deer – all records since 2008*

The two largest deer species, Red and Fallow, were more or less confined to a very few deer parks across the region with no populations independent of those parks. However there have allegedly been recent reports of Fallow Deer living wild at Woodland (the place not the habitat). This is only about six miles from Raby Castle deer park so the odd one escaping to there is not unexpected but an established, feral population would be quite another thing.

So that's three challenges for mammal group members this winter: hunt the missing Muntjac; fill in the gaps for Roe and find the Fallow at Woodland. If you do see any of these at large in the North East or indeed any other deer species (you never know) please send the records to the Environmental Records Information Centre at <http://www.ericnortheast.org.uk/recording-wildlife.html>



## **Teesmouth Seals Research Programme 2017**

The 2017 season was the 29th year during which seal monitoring has taken place at Seal Sands. Monitoring this year was restricted to a total of 40 days, which concentrated on the pupping season from mid June to mid July and the predicted peak moulting period in late August.

A total of 19 live Harbour Seal pups were recorded this year, one more than in each of the previous three years. The first pup of the season was born on 18th June. The highest number of pups was on 7th July, so this is assumed to be the date of the last birth. No deaths of pups were recorded this year.

The maximum number of Harbour Seals increased for the eighth year in succession. After three years of very small increases this year saw an 11% increase in the maximum number, from 115 to 128. The mean number of Harbour Seals across the entire monitoring period was not calculated as the monitoring period differed from previous years. However for June, which was the only month when a direct comparison could be made, mean Harbour Seal numbers increased by 21% from the previous highest figure.

The maximum number of Grey Seal numbers showed another slight increase this year to 71. Maximum numbers of Greys have slightly more than doubled in the past seven years. As with Harbour Seals, mean numbers have not been calculated across the entire monitoring period, but for June the mean numbers were 24% higher than in 2016 (though this was still 9% lower than the highest mean for this month which was in 2014).

Allowing for the fact that not all seals will be hauled out at the same time, even during the moulting period, and that small numbers of seals are known to be elsewhere on the river, the total number of seals using the estuary will be in excess of 200.

Outside of the formal Tees Seals Research Programme, a series of casual counts of seals at Greatham Creek for the period October 2016 to May 2017 showed that seals were present there throughout the remainder of the year, with a maximum of 59 hauled out in November 2016 and a mean across that period of around 16 seals. These were almost exclusively Harbour Seals.

The full report can be viewed at: <http://www.inca.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Teesmouth-Seals-Report-2017-final.pdf>

## **Stormy weather leads to influx of seal pups at RSPCA wildlife centre**

Recent stormy weather has led to an influx of seal pups at an RSPCA wildlife centre in Cheshire.

There are currently 10 seals at Stapeley Grange Wildlife Centre, in Nantwich, who have been admitted after becoming stranded on beaches and separated from their mums due to high winds. It is the largest number of seals the centre has had at any one time.

A diet of fish soup is being fed to them at least three times a day to help them gain weight. It is hoped that all of the seals will be released back into the wild, however it can take many months – sometimes as many as five – before they are well enough to be released.

Lee Stewart, manager at Stapeley Grange, said: “When seal pups arrive they are unable to feed for themselves and have to be tube-fed. The 10 seal pups in our care were all initially tube-fed a ‘rehydrate’ solution and then later moved across to their liquidised fish soup. After some time in care we will then try them on whole fish which can be quite a time-consuming process.

They are initially tube-fed until they work out what they need to do. Once they are taking fish it’s then plain sailing with regards their care, as soon after they will be taking fish by themselves. We always worry for young seal pups at this time of year when the weather is bad because they are so vulnerable and can

become separated from their mothers, as has happened with most of our seals. The storms cause real problems for the seal colonies.”

The RSPCA advises that if members of the public spot a seal on a beach that they observe them from a distance and do not approach them. Seals are wild animals and have a nasty bite. It is also advised they keep dogs on leads on beaches that have seal colonies too.

### **Red squirrels travel on Cumbria cycle route - Sustrans**

A group of red squirrels has been spotted using an off-road section of the popular long-distance Sea to Sea (C2C) path which we maintain.

Our volunteers regularly see four red squirrels (one female and three males) at a feeding and monitoring station in Seaton to Broughton moor section, on the former iron ore railway line. They were a few miles away from their local stronghold in Broughton, which the team says is a clear sign the animals are using the linear path to travel between feeding grounds.

We work with the West Lakes Red Squirrel Initiative, which monitors the feeder and sightings, and reports to a red squirrel data base across the North.

Sustrans Project Officer Nikki Wingfield said: “This is clear evidence that red squirrels are using the cycle and walking route to move away from their stronghold in Broughton. It is exciting as it means the path is acting as an important highway to link up isolated squirrel habitats. In the past we’d had reports that there were red squirrels on the cycle path and it’s brilliant we can now confirm that we are actively part of protecting red squirrels across the whole of the north of England. We really need to help protect red squirrels from the greys in this area so if you do spot a grey squirrel in this area please contact the West Lakes Squirrel Initiative.”

### **The pros and cons of large ears – Lund University**

Researchers at Lund University in Sweden have compared how much energy bats use when flying, depending on whether they have large or small ears.

Large ears increase air resistance, meaning that long-eared bats are forced to expend more energy than species with small ears. On the plus side, large ears generate more lift and provide better hearing. Good hearing is a prerequisite for bats’ ability to echolocate, i.e. sense the echo of the sound waves they emit in order to locate and home in on their prey. The research results therefore show that large ears have both pros and cons.

Christoffer Johansson Westheim, senior lecturer at Lund University, believes that evolution has made a compromise. “The crux is being able to fly as efficiently as possible while also having optimal echolocation ability. Bats can’t be the best at both these things at the same time”, he says.

### **Study offers detailed insight into early-life behaviour of grey seal pups at sea – Plymouth University**

Scientists believe the insights provided could be important for the development of future protection of key habitat for these animals.

Male and female grey seal pups show distinct behavioural differences as they learn to forage in the early stages of their independence, according to new research which scientists believe could be crucial to the future protection of their habitat. The pups are abandoned by their mothers when they are just three weeks old, with many of them never having ventured into the sea, let alone sourced their own food. In a critical period lasting around 40 days after going to sea, pups have to find regular sources of food and perfect their diving and prey-catching techniques before their energy stores run out.

Using data from tracking devices, scientists showed that female pups from Welsh colonies were more likely to dive in shallower water than their male counterparts, reaching the seabed more frequently and likely having greater feeding opportunities as a result. Although adult male grey seals are much larger than females, there is no significant difference in body size at this age and scientists think the differences in behaviour of pups may be driven by underlying physiological processes that prepare them for adult life.

The study also presented data of young seals from Scotland, showing them heading across the North Sea as far as Norway, while individuals from West Wales travelled as far as the northern coast of France. Some of the seals remained at sea without returning to land for up to two months during this early developmental phase. The research was conducted by academics from the University of Plymouth, the Sea Mammal Research Unit at the University of St Andrews and Abertay University, and is published in Scientific Reports.

### **Seal rescued after amazingly CLIMBING 60 foot away from shore - RSPCA Cymru**

A seal has been rescued by RSPCA Cymru after he amazingly climbed 60 foot up a steep cliff near Bull Bay, Amlwch in Gwynedd. RSPCA Cymru was contacted on Monday, 20 November following concerns for the grey seal pup which had been spotted close to the cliff edge on the coastal path. Edmund the climbing seal RSPCA animal collection officer (ACO) Will Galvin said: "The seal had somehow climbed up 60 foot which would have been really difficult for him. It isn't normal behaviour for them to move so far away from the water, so he must have been confused or in distress. He looked quite lost.

We were gobsmacked when we saw him there." The seal, nicknamed Edmund – after Sir Edmund Hillary who climbed Mount Everest – has been transferred to a specialist facility at RSPCA's Stapeley Grange Wildlife Centre where he will be cared for until he is well enough to be released back into the wild. "Edmund is very lively so he wasn't too tired after his massive climb, but he was underweight," said ACO Galvin.

### **European experts demand better dolphin and porpoise bycatch measures - Sea Watch Foundation World**

leading scientific experts have called for European fisheries legislation to be strengthened to ensure protection for whale, dolphin, and porpoise and turtle species threatened by fishing. For decades, incidental catches of dolphins, seabirds, seals and turtles in fisheries have been a major cause of concern, with tens of thousands continuing to die each year in European waters.

Despite existing EU legal requirements to monitor and reduce bycatch (the incidental entanglement of marine life in fishing gear), monitoring and mitigation has been insufficient in most fisheries. Legislative requirements are currently being revised, with the European Commission's proposal for a Regulation on the Conservation of Fishery Resources and the Protection of Marine Ecosystems through Technical Measures (2016/0074(COD)), currently under scrutiny by the European Parliament and Council of the European Union. The reform of fisheries legislation provides a critical opportunity to improve existing EU measures.

However, proposals have been made in the European Parliament to remove the ban on driftnets in the Baltic Sea – even though recent scientific assessments found that bycatch in gillnets continues to adversely affect the critically endangered population of Baltic Sea harbour porpoises, estimated to number fewer than 500 individuals. Other amendments propose to remove all bycatch monitoring and mitigation measures in South Western Waters despite evidence of high bycatch. The European Parliament's Committee on Fisheries (PECH) voted on amendments on the 21st November.

Read the full report from WDC and Sea Watch Director, Dr Peter Evans, 'Cetacean Bycatch Monitoring and Mitigation under EC Regulation 812/2004 in the Northeast Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic Sea from 2006 to 2014'

## **Orcadians to help shape wildlife project - Scottish Natural Heritage**

A lottery-funded project set up to protect Orkney's native wildlife from invasive non-native stoats is encouraging the community to get involved and help shape the development of future work. The Orkney Native Wildlife Project has launched a community consultation today (23 November) to gather the thoughts and ideas of Orkney's residents and invite people to give their views on a range of proposed opportunities for people to engage with the project, including wildlife surveys, workshops, family events, evening talks and cultural events.

Amy King, the Project Development Officer, hopes the consultation will also encourage Orcadians to find out more about the project and why Orkney's incredible native wildlife needs protecting. During the consultation Amy and the project team will be travelling around the islands talking to local community groups and holding a range of public events. Amy said: "We all need to work together if we are going to successfully safeguard Orkney's fantastic native wildlife and so I am really keen to hear if people have additional ideas that we might add to the project plan.

We also want to hear people's thoughts on the activities we are developing as part of the project to give as many folk as possible the chance to get involved." The Orkney Native Wildlife Project is a partnership between Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and RSPB Scotland, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project aims to ensure that Orkney's native wildlife is protected from the impact of invasive non-native stoats and continues to provide benefits for the islands' residents, visitors and economy.

## **The Pine Marten**

The VWT's current flagship project is the Pine Marten Recovery Project which aims to restore the pine marten to Wales and England.

Once common and widespread across Britain, the pine marten has suffered one of the most dramatic declines of any UK mammal. The VWT undertook the first survey of the pine marten in Britain in 1983, providing evidence that subsequently helped to achieve legal protection for the species.

Since then, the VWT has continued to investigate pine marten distribution and status in England and Wales, document their range expansion in Scotland and develop field techniques for monitoring pine martens. Following extensive research, it became clear to all involved that the pine marten was on the verge of extinction in England and Wales. In collaboration with other conservation bodies, the Trust developed a long-term Pine Marten Conservation Strategy, and in 2014, launched its Pine Marten Recovery Project to help restore the pine marten to England and Wales.

To date, just over 50 pine martens have been translocated from Scotland where they are doing well, to mid Wales where they faced extinction. The animals are radio-tracked daily during their first year and also monitored with remote cameras. With evidence of breeding success, the future looks bright for this growing population.

## **Volunteering with VWT**

Today, the VWT is using an increasing number of volunteers to help with its work and we are hugely grateful to all of our supporters. Voluntary work, although often seasonal, includes helping to manage and monitor the bat roosts in south-west England, Wales and Ireland and, in Wales, helping to monitor the translocated pine marten population. We are very keen to hear of any recent sightings of pine martens in mid Wales and have a remote camera loan system for people living in the area.

If you would like to become a friend of the VWT and to receive newsletters and other updates on the Trust's work, or would like to volunteer please go to our websites: [www.vwt.org.uk](http://www.vwt.org.uk) and [www.pine-marten-](http://www.pine-marten-)

[recoveryproject.org.uk](http://recoveryproject.org.uk) . You may also like to visit us at [Facebook.com/vincentwildlifetrust](https://www.facebook.com/vincentwildlifetrust) or follow us on Twitter at [@vincentwildlife](https://twitter.com/vincentwildlife). Alternatively email us at [enquiries@vwt.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@vwt.org.uk) or telephone 01531 636441.

### **Wildlife crimes going unpunished without proper reporting - Wildlife and Countryside Link**

Crimes against wildlife are going unpunished, as crime figures aren't properly recorded and assessed, warns a wildlife coalition as it launches a new report 'The Recording of Wildlife Crime in England and Wales'. Wildlife and Countryside Link and Wales Environment Link are major coalitions of wildlife and environment NGOs.

The coalitions have commissioned new research among key stakeholders revealing frustration with the current system and overwhelming support for wildlife crime to be made recordable. The research also collates and reports on data collected by NGOs on various types of wildlife crime, which provides an idea of the scale and nature of offences. Wildlife crime is a significant threat to conservation, animal welfare and the wider environment. However, unlike in Scotland, most wildlife crimes in England and Wales are currently recorded as 'miscellaneous' offences and they are therefore invisible crimes in police records. Enforcement officers are working hard to tackle this area of crime, but they are hindered by the lack of a proper recording and reporting process.

The research shows that there were more than 4,000 wildlife crime offences between 2010 and 2015.

However this figure vastly underestimates the scale of the problem as details of many types of offences are not collected by NGOs, and they use different methods to collect the data.

Dr Elaine King, Director of Wildlife and Countryside Link, said: "Wildlife crime officers do a great job, but they are being forced to fight wildlife crime with one hand tied behind their backs. The lack of proper recording, reporting and analysis of wildlife crime figures hampers the setting of priorities and allocation of resources. Animals are paying the price with their lives and criminals are going unpunished. We want to urgently discuss these findings with ministers and get firm commitments that wildlife crimes will be properly recorded and assessed."

As part of the research for this report, the views of law enforcement and Government representatives, environment and wildlife organisations and academics were sought on these issues. This research showed that:

- 87% of stakeholders believe that all wildlife crime should be recorded
- Experts said that the current practice of recording wildlife crime under a 'miscellaneous' crime category was 'of no use at all'
- These stakeholders, including police officers, said that recording by specific wildlife crime codes would cause very little extra administrative burden.
- There is a clear case for more effective recording of, and reporting on, wildlife crime in England and Wales. These actions are essential to help safeguard wildlife and nature and to enable more effective enforcement. The coalition is seeking meetings with Home Office ministers and officials to discuss the report's findings.

### **Cleveland Bat Group**

We now have a new Bat Group in the North East. One of the main aims of the Heritage Lottery Funded East Cleveland Batscape project was to create a bat group local to the Cleveland area. The area had previously been overlooked with regards to bats as it is right on the edge of both Durham and North Yorkshire Bat Group areas. However, we now know for sure, following on from the East Cleveland Batscape surveys that the Cleveland area is fantastic for bats, not only for the more common species, but also producing records of the more elusive species.

The Cleveland Bat Group is affiliated with the Bat Conservation Trust and has already undertaken several surveys within the area and cared for 3 individual bats. The next event is a talk on Bats and woodlands, alongside the work of the Woodlands Trust. This is to be held in the education centre in South Park, next to the cafe, at 3pm on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December. There are also more events in the planning. A website is currently under development, as well as social media accounts. We will be sure to let you know as things develop and progress. Anyone interested in joining the mailing list please email [clevelandbatgroup@gmail.com](mailto:clevelandbatgroup@gmail.com)

### Information and surveys

- **Have you seen a stoat in Orkney?** Stoats are thought to have first arrived in Orkney in 2010 and reported sightings give us an insight into their distribution across the islands, including the location of population 'hotspots'. If you have seen a stoat in Orkney, either dead or alive, we would really like to hear from you. <http://c-js.co.uk/2om5mau>
- **Red squirrel sightings** play an important part in our conservation work to protect endangered red squirrels in South East Cumbria. Please report any red squirrels you see to us on our website which outlines the further help needed to save our reds, and also shows annual maps of local red squirrel range. <http://westmorlandredsquirrels.org.uk/sightings/>
- **Hedgehog Survey** The Wildlife Information Centre's Hedgehog survey aims to gather up-to-date information on the distribution of hedgehogs in our region. If you see a hedgehog in the Lothians, Borders, Falkirk, Stirling or Clackmannanshire Council areas or the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park please let us know. <http://c-js.co.uk/2f8RPS4>
- **National Water Vole Monitoring Programme** Our fastest declining mammal needs your help. For the first time we are carrying out an ongoing national monitoring programme that will guide the way for urgent action. Can you survey a site for water voles? <http://c-js.co.uk/2f8Qfj3>
- **Have you seen a hedgehog?** Worcestershire Wildlife Trust needs your help to find out how Worcestershire's hedgehogs are doing. Please report sightings online: <http://www.worcswildlifetrust.co.uk/hedgehogs>
- **DeerAware** Road traffic accidents involving deer present a major problem in the UK as well as in many other countries in Europe. This web site exists to offer basic advice on how to avoid a collision and to collect data on the number of accidents. <http://www.deeraware.com>
- **Cardiff University Otter Project** Otters are still vulnerable to pollution and are useful indicators of water contamination. We have been collecting otters found dead for over 20 years, from across the UK and perform post mortem examinations to investigate pollution, health and ecology. Report an otter found dead to <http://c-js.co.uk/2fTa66k>
- **Living with Mammals survey** PTES is calling for volunteers to take part in next spring's survey of wild mammals in gardens and local green spaces. Choose a site close to home or place of work, and spend a short time each week looking out for wild mammals or the signs they leave behind. To receive a survey pack next March (2018), contact PTES. <http://cjs.co.uk/2nchGlf>
- **Mammals on Roads survey from PTES** We want to know about your route and what you see along the way, dead and alive. This information is compared year to year, alerting us to changes in the wider population. Journeys should include twenty miles or more on single-carriageways and should be outside of towns or built-up areas. <http://c-js.co.uk/2sEW3lt>
- **The BIG Hedgehog Map** – please help us by recording your sightings of hedgehogs (dead or alive) as well as find out where others are seeing the nation's favourite wild animal. You can also pledge to make a Hedgehog Highway in your fence and add it to the map. <http://bighedgehogmap.org/>
- **The Big Bat Map** Bats can be seen in cities, woodland, parks, fields and gardens all over the UK. Help us record where when you see bats as well as find out where others are seeing these wonderful flying mammals - join the bigbat map family today <http://www.bigbatmap.org>

- **North East Harvest Mouse Survey 2017** The survey looks for Harvest mouse nests, but any records of Harvest mice including any historical ones that you might come across, for example by talking to farmers, would be greatly appreciated. Find out how to get involved on <http://c-js.co.uk/2INGefw>

### **Group Contacts**

Want to get more involved with the mammal groups, please contact:

Newsletter: Jonathan Pounder, 88 Durham Street, Hartlepool, TS24 0HE Tel: (07980 581 437

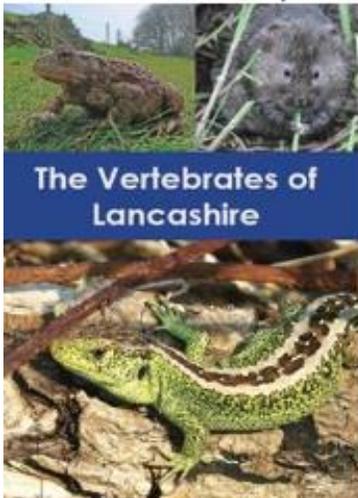
Email: [jonathan\\_pounder@hotmail.com](mailto:jonathan_pounder@hotmail.com)

Membership: Paul Stevens at the Great North Museum: Hancock, Barras Bridge, Newcastle, NE2 4PT. Tel. 0191 222 5031 Email: [katherine.pinnock@twmuseums.org.uk](mailto:katherine.pinnock@twmuseums.org.uk)

### **Mammal Recorders**

If you have any records from walks, events or live trappings, please forward them onto the county mammal recorders, even the small piece of information can prove to be very useful. The county recorders are:

- Northumberland: ERIC (Environmental Records Information Centre North East), Great North Museum: Hancock, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PT Tel: 0191 222 5158 Email: [eric.ne@twmuseums.org.uk](mailto:eric.ne@twmuseums.org.uk)
- Durham: Don Griss, C/O Durham Wildlife Trust, Rainton Meadows, Chilton Moor, Houghton-le-Spring, Tyne & Wear, DH4 6PU Email: [dmgriss@btinternet.com](mailto:dmgriss@btinternet.com)
- Cleveland: Jonathan Pounder, 88 Durham Street, Hartlepool, TS24 0HE Tel: (07980 581 437) Email: [jonathan\\_pounder@hotmail.com](mailto:jonathan_pounder@hotmail.com)



### **And finally.....**

Published in October 2017, vertebrates of Lancashire details the distribution of The Freshwater Fish, Amphibians, Reptiles and Mammals of Lancashire and North Merseyside. Lancashire Bat group's own Charlie Liggett and Ben Deed have been involved in the development of the book which can be bought directly from Charlie ([chaslig95@gmail.com](mailto:chaslig95@gmail.com)) for £12. Please contact him directly if you would like one, other retail outlets are available...