

AMPHIBIANS AND MAMMALS AT THE EYES

MAMMALS

Most visitors to the Eyes probably do not realise the amount of mammal activity that occurs in and around the Reserve; in itself this is not unusual as most animals are, after all, either very shy or nocturnal.

Rabbits, for example, are not particularly numerous, and are found in only two localised areas, sometime indicated by the protective strips around the bases of some trees! One of their control factors, amongst several, is probably that of the wide-ranging Fox, although its diet is primarily that of smaller prey and the inevitable carrion found amongst concentrated numbers of wildlife.

Mink, until recent times, were seen more often than was felt desirable, particularly during daylight hours. It could well be that they have reverted to their nocturnal habits for they are rarely recorded now and certainly do not appear to cause any undue harm or damage.

Stoats and Weasels, as expected, are fairly common, and if the opportunity arises can be fascinating to watch. They are inquisitive creatures and unless startled will usually reappear for another look at you. They frequent all four beds, which reflects the amount of available food, usually in the form of Mice, Voles, Shrews, nestling birds and

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rabbits. It would be interesting to hear from anyone who has had any encounters with either animals at Woolston - remember the Stoat is the larger and has a black-tipped tail.

Of the smaller mammals Common Shrew and Short-tailed Field Vole appear to be quite common, especially on No. 3 bed where, due to management work there is more disturbance. The Woodmouse is, however, seldom noted and indeed of the two I have seen, one was taken by a Kestrel. Water Voles have been observed, among other places, in front of the Hide on No. 3 bed on several occasions by both Wardens and Permit Holders: it is a vole and not a 'Water Rat' as it is often called. It is a very endearing creature as it unhurriedly swims by or is seen weaving itself around the stem of a tasty reed. Brown Rats are not normally seen on the Reserve, but are confined mainly to the Ship Canal and adjacent buildings.

The status of Hedgehogs on the Reserve is not clear, it is after all mainly a nocturnal animal by habit, which may explain why very few have been noted. The only one I have seen was on No. 4 bed where all that remained of it was the skin, which smelt strongly of Fox!

Two unidentified species of Bat hunt along the River Mersey and around the Reserve. I suspect that they are Pipistrelle and Daubenton's but if anyone can positively identify them I should be pleased to hear, and if possible also where they might roost.

Lastly, it takes only a few seconds to jot down a mammal record and where the animal was seen; all such records are valuable indicators and much needed.

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