

CMG Certificate of Recognition
Cornwall Mammal Survey Records
Coastal Otters
Are Pine Martens Making a Return to Cornwall
Marine Strandings Network
Protecting Cornwall's Mammals



Image by Angie Nash



c/o Cornwall Wildlife Trust, 5 Acres, Allet, Truro, TR4 9DJ.

enquiries@cornwallmammalgroup.co.uk

Cornwall Mammal Group Annual General Meeting

The CMG AGM was well attended and was held at the Cornwall Beaver Project site, a new and exciting project happening right here in Cornwall. We enjoyed a lively discussion of the project with presentations from Chris Jones (Woodland Valley Farm), Kelly Moyes (Exeter University) Pete Cooper, and Tom Shelley (CWT). If you were unable to attend you might have seen the project appearing on the BBC's Autumnwatch programme. This really is very exciting for British wildlife and we will be reporting on the project in more detail in the new year. In the meantime, you can find out more about the project at <http://www.cornwallwildlife.org.uk/beaverproject>.

We also presented Sue Sayer with a 'Certificate of Recognition' for 'the study, understanding and promotion of mammals in Cornwall' and her ongoing work with seals around the Cornish Coast. Well done Sue!



CMG Chair- Dave Groves (R), Vice Chair- Kate Hills (L) present Sue Sayer (C) with her Certificate of Recognition at the CMG AGM in October 2017. Photo taken by Marion Beaulieu

Events for Winter and Spring 2018:

Dates for CMG events are still being confirmed, however, we have some exciting events planned and we will send you full details soon.

- Christmas Quiz, Zelah
Thursday 7th December
- Small Mammal Survey, Bodmin (led by Steve Adams)
- February
- Deer Trailing Workshop (led by Angie Nash)
- March

We're also planning a Photography Day (led by Jack Hicks) in the spring, Kate Hills will be organising another Hedgehog Event. Dave Groves will be organising more small mammal survey events, Angie Nash is organising more track and sign identification and we will of course arrange an event to go and see the beavers and see how they are getting on. In June we are also hoping to organise a mammal surveying trip to the Isles of Scilly and more information will be sent out early in the new year.

Earlier this year, Dr Sarah Hodge stepped down from Chairing the Cornwall Mammal Group due to work and family commitments. We would like to say a big thank you to her for her year successfully steering the helm. We would also like to welcome back Dave Groves, who has stepped back into his comfy CMG Chair slippers and will be keeping us all in check for the foreseeable future.

Notes from the chair: Dave Groves

I think I had better start by welcoming all our new and returning members – I think we now have over 65 paid-up members which is the highest number for some years. I hope everyone will get the best out of their membership by joining us at events and, just as importantly, getting your hands dirty and going out looking for mammals (and letting us know what you find).

We had a great start to the year with a very well attended AGM on a rather wet October 22nd down at Woodland Valley farm to learn about the Cornwall Beaver Project on Chris Jones's organic farm just east of Truro. Organised by Kelly, there was lovely food, some interesting talks, a chance to look around the (muddy) site and admire the bioengineering and an opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new people – what's not to like? We are hoping to return in smaller numbers in the Spring with the idea of actually seeing the beavers – not really possible with 40 chattering mammalogists! The committee was also elected for the forthcoming year – good to see some new additions – welcome to Niki, Jack and Mary - and thanks to Amy and Pete who have moved on after sterling service.

Another excellent presentation was organised by Kate on November 15th at Lanhydrock. Devon vet Stephen Powles talked about his obsession with otters on the headwaters of the Exe. Stephen's efforts to monitor and identify individual otters showed exceptional commitment – I'm pretty sure I couldn't take all the 2 am calls – but the results were extremely interesting. There was some great trail camera footage which allowed several fascinating deductions to be made about the use of ranges by one particular bitch and her cubs, as well as inferences about cubbing and sprainting activity. Even more impressively, Stephen had been able to produce some brilliant video footage under full artificial lighting of this otter which seemed to tolerate his filming activities. We also had an update from James Burke of the Environment Agency on otter autopsies in Cornwall. This was a relatively expensive event to organise but I certainly think it worthwhile and showcased some of the excellent work carried out by amateur naturalists in the South west.

Talking of which, we have organised a couple of 'pop-up' surveys so far this year – trying to take advantage of opportunities or requests and dragging along willing volunteers. We searched for signs of dormice (hazel nuts) near Chacewater in October (no luck, although a promising site – strangely very little rodent activity detected at all although lots of fruiting hazel and grey squirrels). In November we had more success searching for harvest mouse nests near Launceston on a site with historical records. I'm hoping we can do more of this and I would encourage everyone to use the Facebook or Twitter accounts to coordinate surveys – you get extra pairs of hands/eyes, everyone gets more experience – it's a win-win. If the event is organised through CMG then our insurance will be active – providing everyone is sensible!

We have our Christmas Quiz on December 7th at Zelah – excellent bookings already so hopefully we will all have a great evening.

In the New Year we have the Hedgehog Project to look forward to as well as Angie's tracking day. There is also the possibility (again) of organising a trip to the Scillies. If you have a species or an area you are interested in – share it with the Group and use the support. Niki has suggested surveying at Mount Hawke and I'm sure there are other areas worth a look – especially if they are light on mammal records.

We are trying to work more closely with other groups both within the county and further afield – specifically the Seal and Bat Groups and the Strandings Network – as well as the Mammal Society nationally and also the local recording networks. The committee have just agreed to use our Small Grants programme to support the Seal Group's seal skeleton project – what must surely be the first fully portable grey seal skeleton for educational purposes!

We are also trying to formalise the position of County Mammal Recorder, a post which has been in retirement for a good 10 years. The idea is to make sure that we, as the county Mammal Group are aware of all new records of mammals in Cornwall, especially anything new or unusual.

Thank you! For your donation **£500** Nov 2017

CORNWALL MAMMAL GROUP

Cornwall Seal Group Research Trust aim to: respect and protect Cornwall's precious marine environment and to put seals on everyone's planning and policy agendas. Your donation will be used towards articulating Septimus' skeleton.

Hufflepuff aka Hufflebrush and her first pup!
Rescued north coast 2007 by CSGRT and British Divers Marine Life Rescue
Rehabilitated at the Cornish Seal Sanctuary before release back to wild
Pupped south coast 2015 – monitored by CSGRT and National Trust.

CORNWALL SEAL GROUP Research Trust

Bodwannick Reserve – February 2017

Last February, CMG held a trapping event at the Gaia Trusts Bodwannick Reserve, just to the west of Bodmin. On a rather wet Sunday morning I met up with Tony and Mary Atkinson to check the Longworth traps and hedgehog tunnels. Well Tony and I checked the traps, Mary stayed around the Farmhouse and gardens looking at the bryophytes.

I had tried a slightly different method for setting the hedgehog tunnels. I had put them out the previous weekend with food in but no ink and paper, hoping that this would give animals longer to find them. The night before checking them, when I put the Longworths out, I put fresh food in them along with the ink pads and paper. It sort of worked, we still didn't have any hedgehogs or stoats/weasels but we had plenty of mice prints and a newt.



Mouse/vole prints with a newt (red) including tail drag (blue). Image by: Tony Atkinson

The Longworth traps also worked well with 14 animals caught from 20 traps. Along the hedges and in the trees along the stream, was where we caught wood

mice and bank voles, whilst in the marshy grassland on the valley floor we caught field voles. Not only did we catch two field voles in the marshy grassland but there was also numerous field signs in the form of short cut sections of soft rush.



Cut and stripped sections of soft rush. Image: Tony Atkinson

We also had a look along the stream bank for evidence of otters and found both spraints and anal jelly.

On our next visit in February / March 2018 we hope to also have camera traps set up and a remote bat detector to record even more. We also aim to set out a set of 25 dormouse tubes in an area of hazel coppice.

It would be great to see you there and we'll send out more information nearer the time.

- Steve Adams

Harvest Mice in Trebulet – November 2017

Depending on your preferred records database there may, or may not be evidence of harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*) at Trebulet, south of Launceston. When we produced the Atlas of Cornish Mammals in 2012/13, ERCCIS had 2 records in the 10 km square (SX37 – the square with its south west corner at SX300700 on the OS map) in the previous 5 years and 5 records prior to 2007. Both the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) and the Cornish Biodiversity Network show no records for this 10 km square although adjacent areas have records.

Looking at the current county-wide harvest mouse records from ERCCIS it is noticeable that the majority of recent records were collected around Truro when Ali North was surveying as part of her academic research. This is a species that is not easily trapped in the field and although nest searching is an excellent way of identifying presence of the species, it is a painstaking process and needs some degree of training.



Braving the winter weather to look for harvest mice, *Micromys minutus*, at Trebulet. Image: Dave Groves

This survey was carried out to see if we could demonstrate persistence of harvest mice on a mixed farm on the edge of the Inny Valley with a view to training local surveyors and encouraging them to look in similar landscapes to collect further records. Pete Cooper and Tony Atkinson came along to provide the requisite expertise and a further half dozen hardy mammalogists came out despite the driving hail and distinctly wintry weather.

The old records had been collected from nests seen in a fodder turnip crop – little herbicide is used on this crop so there was suitable grasses available for nests. The same field was surveyed by walking the margins, the maize crop having been recently cut. Although there

were only narrow margins between the cut maize and the hedge line, one small area had been fenced for a small copse and a breeding nest was found here in the Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*) held upright by the sheep netting of the fence. A further small day nest was found in a similar situation in the adjacent sheep-grazed field.



Remains of a Harvest mouse nest (woven grass). Image: Dave Groves

This is an interesting demonstration that, despite there being no specific conservation measures in place, this apparently rare animal has persisted in the narrow margins around some rather unlikely looking arable and grazing pastures. It shows it is definitely worth looking for nests over the next couple of months especially in stands of Cocksfoot grass (*Dactylis glomerata*), purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and other tall grass tussocks.

I think it might be addictive, I'm off to have a look around a neighbour's field this very week!

- Dave Groves

Camera Traps – Allett, June 2017

Please remember, if you want to monitor our Cornish mammals or have a particular mammal related project you want to explore, the CMG has trail cameras that are available to loan to CMG members.

If you're limited on time, if you're not confident in your identification or surveying skills, or if you find it difficult to get out into the countryside then these are a great way to still get involved.

I love these amazing images of a roe deer and her fawns provided by Steve Adams, from the trail cameras set up at the Cornwall Wildlife Trust at Allett. What an incredible private moment captured and you can even see the spotted coats of the young fawns!

- Angie Nash



National and Local Action – Get Involved

The Mammal Society holds its National Mammal Week (NMW) in the last week of October. It was a great success this year, with a furry flurry of social media posts and mammal-themed events throughout the country. CMG holds their AGM during this week and had a fabulous attendance of 40 people at the new Cornish Beaver site with Chris Jones.

NMW also saw the launch of the annual photograph competition. Cornwall has many fantastic opportunities and photographers, so do check out this competition

<http://www.mammal.org.uk/2017/10/mammal-photographer-of-the-year-2018/>

The award ceremony will be at the Mammal Society Easter conference which will take place on the 20th – 22nd April 2018 at University of Exeter, the Exeter Campus – not too far to collect an award or to see or buy these amazing photos.

It is the second year of Hedgehog Watch and Chair of the Mammal Society, Professor Fiona Matthews, spoke on a Radio 4 broadcast with John Humphries, explaining how our aim is to try and understand more about the hedgehog decline.

Could all CMG members please support this important research by filling in the hog questionnaire:

<http://www.mammal.org.uk/2016/10/annual-hedgehog-watch/>

by the **1st December 2017** - whether you have seen a hedgehog or not.

CMG is also supporting the Mammal Society's pilot hedgehog and lighting project. The aim of this research is to find out whether lighting affects the feeding behaviour of hedgehogs. Results are expected in the New Year. The hedgehog is also a focus species for the Cornwall Local Nature Partnership and CMG is in discussion with them and Cornwall Wildlife Trust to develop hedgehog action for Cornwall. Watch this space to see how you can help.

As well as looking at new species, CMG held an event on an old favourite – the otter. We were delighted to welcome Devon vet Stephen Powles to Cornwall who did a fantastic talk about 'his' otter Hammerscar and showed stunning footage of her and her cubs in her catchment, with the use of multiple wildlife cameras. Our local vet Vic Simpson was of course there, along with 60 other attendees. Cornwall and Devon are fortunate to be the stronghold for otters in England and we have further otter events planned.

Coastal Otters

If you have ever headed out to look for signs of otters, then you are probably familiar with the usual signs, here in Cornwall; spraints on prominent boulders, sand-castles on little “beaches” alongside streams, prints in the mud, etc. and with all the wonderful wildlife films on television, we are familiar also with “sea” otters especially around Scotland and the Hebrides. Here they are shown in lochs and bays, swimming among the wrack. This is the European otter, *Lutra lutra* that can be found in our rivers, on land and in the lochs further north. The true ‘Sea otter’ *Enhydra lutris*, is a different species and are native to the northern Pacific ocean and rarely come ashore, instead spending most of the time amongst the kelp beds.

But there is another side to European otters and the sea. My daughter lives on the extreme tip of the Llyn peninsula in North Wales, the bit that sticks out towards Ireland at the top end of Cardigan Bay. This is a very rugged coast, with high cliffs dropping into the sea, and a fearsome rip tide between the mainland and Bardsey Island. She walks these cliffs as part of her NEWS (non-estuarine waders and seabirds) survey for the BTO, looking for Purple Sandpipers and the like, but being an artist, she also likes to get near the birds to draw them.

Out on Aberdaron Point there is no shore; just a drop into the maelstrom of the tide. She was engrossed in her work, sitting just above the rocks, when she realised she could smell fish. On looking around she discovered that she was almost sitting on

a little bit of spraint on a bright green tussock of grass.



Otter spraint full of crab remains. Image: Tony Atkinson

This was not the sort of place she expected to find any signs of otters. There was a stream running down to the sea about a quarter of a mile north of her where she had found spraint in the past, but this was right out on the exposed point, with no foreshore, deep water just off the rocks, and an eight knot tide five metres off.

When we were visiting her last September she took me down to show me. It was very steep and with slippery grass down to the rocks, not the place to go if the grass was wet. I felt safer when I got onto the rocks, which started about 5 to 10 metres above the water.



Bardsey Island in the distance, from the mainland at Llyn peninsula in North Wales. Image: Tony Atkinson

At first I didn't know what I was looking at. The spraints were plain enough, and we found several places where they were when we started looking around. Then I realised they were all on raised, bright green tussocks of Red Fescue, *Festuca rubra*, grass. Nutrient enrichment!



Bright green tussocks of Red Fescue, *Festuca rubra*, grass. Image: Tony Atkinson

I then realised I was following runs in the grass, and over the rocks where the lichens were "worn" and then we followed a run down over the rocks and found a holt, in a hole under the boulders, at the top of the rocks where the grass started.



Otter holt amongst the rocks. Image: Tony Atkinson

So this wasn't just an odd otter on a fishing expedition. They were living here. On this very exposed bit of steep coast. As we climbed back up the slope and looked back I could now see wherever there was going to be spraint just by looking for the bright patches of grass.

So they have been here for years, not days or months. It wasn't where I would have gone to look for Otters! It's the sort of place where only fishermen go to spin for mackerel!



- Tony Atkinson

Certificate of Recognition

CMG has always tried to encourage an interest in the County's mammals and to promote the study and surveying of them. Furthermore, we have always strongly promoted the idea of getting the message out to the wider public, to organisations and other workers in the field. There are some people who have gone above and beyond in achieving these aims and the Cornwall Mammal Group has made several small awards to recognise these individuals.



Sue Sayer is extremely well known among the Cornish wildlife world, but also critically amongst the national and international marine conservation world, for her work on seals around the Cornish coast. Sue, along with the support of the Cornwall Seal Group, has made Cornwall's grey seals some of the best studied populations in the world. Driven by a rigorous approach and attention to detail, supported by her ability to recognise hundreds of individual seals from their coat patterns, Sue and her co-workers have been able to monitor seal movements in great detail and to demonstrate connections around the Western Atlantic that have proved extremely important for the conservation of this endangered species.

Sue always seems to be out surveying, organising, analysing data, giving talks and bending the ears of those able to influence Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). She has also written an excellent and accessible book on Cornish seals which gets her message out to the general public as well.

The committee considered several extremely worthy candidates for the award this year and after exercise of the democratic process Sue is a deserving winner.

The committee wishes to recognise Sue's work on the identification and movements of Cornwall's Grey seals and furthermore for her tireless promotion of seals among many interest groups, quite literally putting our grey seals on the map.

- Dave Groves
Chair CMG Committee

Will Pine Martens Make a Return to Cornwall?

Every so often in Cornwall there is a report of a pine marten, *Martes martes*, sighting – sometimes it is a fleeting glimpse of something that might have been a marten, at other times it is a more reliable report and on two occasions recently there has been photographic evidence.

Perusal of the Mammal Society's National Mammal Atlas Project data (<http://www.mammal.org.uk/science-research/record-submission/>) reveals several records for pine marten in the South West. Unfortunately they are all over 150 years old. Considering the long absence, any new reports are subject to a high degree of scrutiny.

The pine marten was probably found throughout the UK and Ireland before the introduction of extensive game keeping and pest control and the intensification of agriculture. It has generally been considered essentially extinct in England for some 200 years. For many years, the only significant population in the UK was in the wilds of North Western Scotland. However, a study by Scottish Natural Heritage in 2013 (Croose et al., 2013) showed that they had spread both north and south from this area reaching as far as Stirling – a distance of perhaps 250 km. Active introductions of pine martens to Glentool forest in Galloway was undertaken in the 1980s. Further introductions have apparently taken place by wildlife rescue charities, specifically around the upper Tweed valley in Peebleshire.

Occasional records from across the borders into Cumbria and Northumberland suggest that possibly pine martens survived in the wilder country of Northern England, but in 2010 a scat collected from the Kidland Forest in Northumberland was identified as pine marten through DNA analysis. A year later, anecdotal reports from Cumbria were also confirmed by a scat analysis. In 2015 a marten was photographed in Shropshire and earlier this year video footage from a trail camera on the north Yorkshire moors also picked up a pine marten.

Meanwhile, in Wales, an animal killed on the road in 2012 near Newtown, Powys (central Wales) was the first pine marten seen in the principality for over 40 years although scat had been identified some 5 years earlier. The Vincent Wildlife Trust has also been translocating animals from Scotland under licence to support this probably small population.

In Ireland, martens have spread from the west into the midlands and to Northern Ireland, a distance of about 250 km. The Irish population was at its lowest at the turn of the 20th century as a consequence of habitat loss and persecution. Pine martens are now present in the Irish midlands in sufficient numbers to be having an impact of the populations of the grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*).



Pine Marten, *Martes martes* caught on camera trap: Dave Groves

Researchers from Queen's University, Belfast have recently reported the use of camera traps to confirm the presence of pine marten in every county of Northern Ireland. There are some great pictures and video clips on their Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/IrishSquirrelAndPineMartenProject/>).

The Vincent Wildlife Trust, which has carried extensive studies of pine martens in the UK, says that natural recolonization in the south of England is unlikely because of the discontinuous nature of suitable habitat and the road network and development. However, there is also some evidence of translocation of pine martens over recent years. It is possible that these are captive animals released, or escaped, from collections.

It is not possible to determine if animals are being kept since, although the law does not permit the taking or holding of animals from the wild without suitable licensing but captive bred animals could, technically, still be legally held. Apparently pine martens do not breed well in captivity so it seems unlikely that large numbers are in collections. It is possible that animals might stow away on lorries, particularly timber lorries, leaving Scotland, only to emerge blinking into the light in some remote location. There is a strong suggestion that pine martens arrived in Mull in 2004 on timber boats from the mainland. This is of some concern as Mull previously had no larger carnivores and the sea bird populations may be vulnerable to increased predation.



Pine Marten. Image: J B & S Bottomley

It is possible that pine martens may spread naturally, after all this is a large animal capable of covering significant distances – the male's territory may cover 25 km². Radio tracking from the

Galloway forest recorded animals travelling over 17 km/night, although this was exceptional, so there is potential for an animal to move from central Wales to Cornwall, however research has also shown that most animals in expanding populations establish their territories adjacent to occupied territories.

On the island of Skye, pine martens appeared soon after the opening of the road bridge in 1995 and spread about 40 km in the first twenty years. A secretive, nocturnal animal would not necessarily be noticed but it is stretching credibility to think there would be no other sightings between Cornwall and the nearest established populations over what would be a period of years as it moved towards the South West. This has been the case with Polecat (*Mustela putorius*) movements recently.

The final option is that pine martens have remained in Cornwall 'under the radar'. There are suggestions that sparse populations have persisted in Wales and northern England although these landscapes are larger and more remote than Cornwall can offer. Cornwall also has relatively low levels of tree cover (about 8% according to the Forestry Commission's report of 2002) and as such is not an ideal landscape for the pine marten. The animal is adapted to exploit a three-dimensional habitat which is usually thought to be woodland but they also occur in rugged, rocky and mountainous terrain. It is sometimes considered that woodland is most important for breeding dens but pine martens do use unwooded country but there is evidence that they avoid open country in Scotland where there is little tree or shrub cover.

In the mid-1990s English Nature, as it then was, commissioned a feasibility study on the reintroduction of pine martens to England. The fringes of Bodmin moor was one of the areas identified as potentially suitable. Pine martens are known to take squirrels and birds, and their eggs, by hunting in trees however their key prey species are terrestrial rodents. They also feed on fruits and nuts, carrion and amphibians. Near to human habitation they will also take domestic poultry and visit bird feeders. This opportunistic approach means they are not entirely dependent on woodland and, as such, could survive well in the wilder parts of Cornwall.

The Cornwall Red Data Book (2009) reports 6 possible sightings of pine martens, all in East Cornwall, between 1996 and 2006 of which 4 were regarded to be good records. Attention is drawn to the long but sporadic history of records from both North and South Devon including 6 apparently reliable records in the 10 years preceding publication. The ORKS website of the Cornwall Records Centre (ERCCIS) includes 3 records, one of which has been validated, all from the Camelford area of North Cornwall over the last 3 years. There have been several other credible reports of pine marten in Cornwall in the last couple of years, two supported by photographic evidence. Two reports are from the Morwenstow area of North Cornwall, the first from a trail camera which unfortunately, although widely reported in the national press (March 2015), cannot be regarded as a full record since the recorder declined to identify the location. Immediately adjacent to this record was a sighting by a local farmer of what certainly sounded like a marten. The recorder was a reliable source and familiar with similar wildlife and had even tried to photograph prints from the animal seen fleetingly as it crossed a gateway. Unfortunately the photograph was too poor to be of any use. Another sighting came from a member of staff at Pydar House in central Truro. Normally this wouldn't have been given much weight because of the site and also the time of day but it was reported as being seen high up in a tree, so who knows? The most recent report is from mid-

Cornwall and combines video footage collected by an established and reliable recorder from a known location. The details are being kept confidential at the moment.

Identifying pine martens – this is a large, cat-sized mustelid with a pointed muzzle, large pointed ears and a long bushy tail, with legs that are much longer than other large mustelids such as the polecat. The fur is dark chocolate brown and there is a pale throat patch. Martens are mainly, but not exclusively nocturnal. Foot prints are large (8 x 6 cm for the fore feet and slightly larger for the hind feet with 5 pads, although sometimes only 4 show) with short blunt claws. Droppings are large (8-10 cm x 1 cm) black and twisted and tapered, often deposited on tracks and trails. The scent is sweetish and faintly floral unlike the smell of fox scat.



Mandatory Credit: Photo by Peter Cairns / Rex Features (1331609v)

If you are lucky enough to see something that may be a pine marten, don't be surprised if the record centre asks plenty of questions. For such an unusual record, photographic evidence of the animal and its prints would be really useful. Road kill is also excellent positive evidence, however the Mammal Group cameras would really earn their keep if we could record such a rare species in the county.

*Croose, E., Birks, J.D.S. & Schofield, H.W. 2013. Expansion zone survey of pine marten (*Martes martes*) distribution in Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 520.

A worrying increase in dolphin deaths has been observed in Cornwall in 2016, highlighted by Cornwall Wildlife Trust 2016 Marine Strandings Network report which was released in September 2017. The report, summarising the work of the vital marine conservation Project in Cornwall and available to download off the Trust website, has highlighted an astounding 100% increase in cetacean (dolphins, porpoises and whales) deaths in 2016 compared with 2015. A total of 205 cetaceans stranded in Cornwall in 2016, compared with 101 animals in 2015.

Amongst the 205 animals recorded, 113 were Short-beaked common dolphins (*Delphinus delphis*) and 61 were harbour porpoises (*Phocoena phocoena*). Of particular stranding interest in 2016 were both a female sperm whale which stranded and was post mortemed on Perran Sands, north Cornwall, in July 2016, and the one bottlenose dolphin which stranded on the Isles of Scilly and was recorded on the 30th November 2016. A minke whale also stranded further north at Compass Point near Bude on the 13th July 2016 in an unrelated incident.



Minke Whale at Compass point, Bude. Image: Alan Rowland

Abby Crosby, Marine Conservation Officer at Cornwall Wildlife Trust, says “The Trust has been collecting data on marine mammal Strandings for over 25 years, so we can clearly identify peak levels of activity. Seeing this increase is a worry to us all here at the Trust, and highlights the importance of ensuring this work continues into the future whilst we discover what is happening out at sea.”

The animals strand for a variety of reasons, from natural disaster to bycatch and boat strike. Of the 205 cetacean carcasses that stranded during 2016, 31 were suitable and accessible for retrieval by the CWT MSN team for post-mortem examination under licence and on behalf of the Defra-funded Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP). Post mortem examinations concluded that bycatch was the cause of death for 7 (23%) of the cetaceans. Of interest, the cause of death of 16% (n=5) of the animals examined was bottlenose dolphin attack, one of which was witnessed by the public near Penzance in January 2016 with the carcass stranding soon after the event.

Abby continues “2016 was a busy year, but 2017 is proving just as challenging if not worse with over 200 dolphins being recorded to date to our 24 MSN hotline. If we have a bad winter, we may pass 2016 total which is a worry to all biologists conserving these special creatures in our waters”

Data is used not only regionally, but shared nationally to the Cetacean Strandings Investigation Programme (CSIP) to better understand the ecology of dolphins, porpoises and whales in our UK waters so we can work towards their management and protection. The Trust is calling out to the public to send in their sightings of stranded, dead marine animals this winter to our 24 hotline, **0345 201226**. For more information please go to our Trust website www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/strandings and download our 2016 MSN report.



Common dolphin, Polkirk Beach. Image: Rob Wells

- Abby Crosby, Marine Conservation Officer CWT

Protecting Cornwall's Wildlife

In this busy, whirlwind lifestyle that most of us have, it's worth taking a moment to press the 'pause' button and ask, 'What does nature mean to me? Does nature matter?'

Cornwall is treasured by many for its powerfully unique landscape and wonderful wildlife. Every day we are treated to the small pleasures it offers us. We love being serenaded by rich birdsong, studying the unpolluted starry night or discovering the small signs that maybe a hedgehog has visited our garden or local park.

The vast array of habitats within Cornwall are a haven for an impressive range of wild animals and plants, both common and rare. Nature matters to all of us; we know that contact with nature is good for our health and wellbeing. Natural habitats also provide us with clean water, carbon storage, fuel and food.



Cornwall is one of the strongholds for otters. Image: Stephen Powles

As another winter approaches, we should turn our attention to helping the wild mammals of our woodland, farmland, open moors, heaths and gardens. Steep declines in hazel dormouse, bat species and harvest mouse numbers are evidence of the fragility of mammals' survival in the face of many modern dangers. We should work hard to help threatened species and aim to make ours a county that is richer in wildlife, cared for and appreciated by everyone.

While there have been success stories, like the otter which always held on in Cornwall and is now recolonising other counties, there is much still to do. Sadly, we have lost many iconic mammals, from beavers in the distant past to red squirrels and water voles in recent times. The hedgehog and the badger are just two of many much-loved species under threat:

The hedgehog:

When was the last time you spotted a hedgehog? As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, The Mammal Society would love you to fill out their simple questionnaire by Friday December 1st at <http://www.mammal.org.uk/2016/10/annual-hedgehog-watch/> whether you have seen one or not. Cornwall Mammal Group would also love you to let them know! The hedgehog population is in severe decline, with one-third lost since 2000 and fewer than one million left in the UK in the wild. Although the nation adores this iconic creature, we are not providing the space and natural cover they require to survive in their natural habitat. Modern environmental impacts include busier roads, building developments, tidy gardens and solid fencing blocking their feeding routes. We have done much to kill off the gardener's friend and we need to take collective action if we are to reverse the downward trend.



European Hedgehog, *Erinaceus europaeus*.
Image: Angie Nash

Cornwall Mammal Group is helping to coordinate 'Operation Hedgehog', a Cornwall-wide initiative to raise awareness about how everyone can take practical measures to make a difference. By working with partners, such as the Cornwall Wildlife Trust, it is inspiring even more people to take positive action.

There are several simple measures which can easily be implemented in order to help the survival of our beloved hedgehogs:

- (1) Leave a space in your garden hedge or a small 13x13cm gap in your fence to create a 'hedgehog highway' (hedgehogs travel up to 2km a night!)
- (2) Avoid the use of slug pellets.
- (3) Never feed hedgehogs bread or milk which are harmful to them. Wet dog food (not fish) and cat biscuits, and the occasional mealworm as an extra treat

- (4) Before strimming any tall and tangled vegetation that could have hedgehog day nests in it's worth checking for signs of hedgehogs.
- (5) Check carefully before lighting bonfires in case a hedgehog is hiding-they do not run away from danger, preferring to stay hidden.
- (6) If you can, leave a bit of your garden wild to encourage pollinators and food for insects which in turn feed animals higher up the food chain including hedgehogs.
- (7) Finally, seek advice before rescuing a hedgehog, there are many instances where a hedgehog should be left alone.

The badger

This stocky, sociable member of the weasel family has an omnivorous diet and no natural predators. Badgers will eat hedgehogs and are often blamed for their decline. Ecological relationships are rarely straightforward however, hedgehogs are in trouble both in areas where there are badgers and areas where badgers are absent so the situation is complex.

Some badger setts may be centuries old, but the future of Cornwall's badger population may depend upon how land managers respond to the bovine tuberculosis (bTB) crisis. Cornwall Mammal Group, as well as partners such as the Cornwall Wildlife Trust, believes that vaccination of badgers against bTB is a viable alternative to culling and offers additional advantages. Cornwall Wildlife Trust is surveying the numbers of badgers on its nature reserves in order to calculate cost requirements of vaccination across their land holdings. Once this preparatory work has been completed, fundraising can begin in order to carry out badger vaccination. Watch this space!

If you would like to get involved with the Cornwall Mammal Group, as well as partners such as the Cornwall Wildlife Trust, and attend one of their Wildlife Education events, please see the 'what's on' page on our websites. Equally, to find out more about the work of Cornwall Wildlife Trust and how you can help them, please visit their 'Protecting Cornwall's Mammals Appeal' online at www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk/how-you-can-help/support-our-appeals Thank you!

- Emma Miller, Fundraising Officer, CWT

Whose Track are you?

With the leaves falling from the trees, creating a rich carpet on the forest floor, signs or tracks of animals can become harder to spot and identify. Below are some mammal signs found in the forest during autumn and winter. Can you identify who made them and what they were doing? It'd be great to see images of tracks and sign that you can find so please post them on our Facebook page.



Image: Angie Nash



Image: Angie Nash



Image: Angie Nash

The answers will be giving in the next newsletter. If you want to know more about identifying animal tracks and sign, then please join us for one of our events.

Answers below to the questions from the last newsletter, (Spring/ Summer 2017). How many did you identify?



A) Domestic cat.

Cats will often take the time to cover their feces completely and its one of their key identifying festures. Similar size feces may belong to fox which tends to defeacate on prominent places such as tussocks of grass, rocks or at crossroads on a path.



B) Roe deer scrape/ bed.

Roe deer will actively scrape away plant material so they are lying directly on the earth. The small size and the scrape of earth helps to identify it from other deer species. If you look closely, you can often see the outline of their legs tucked beneath them in the soft soil.

Deer beds are generally kidney shaped and often they sleep with their bags against a tree trunk.



C) Fallow bed.

Much larger than a Roe deer bed and often found in groups. Unlike the Roe deer, who are usually solitary or in pairs, Fallow will form large groups. If you're unsure whether you're looking at a deer bed or some other animal (including human) activity, then check around for narrow trails and hoof prints leading in, deer pellets which are often clumped when they first leave their beds, and the bed may smell sweet.

Cornwall Mammal Group

Treasurer's report 2nd October 2016 to 19th September 2017

INCOME	2015 – 13 Jan 2016	14 Jan 2016 - 1 Oct 2016	2 Oct 2016 – 19 Sept 2017
Membership fees	329.00	105.00	277.85
Donations	59.00	6.00	Included above
Event fees	755.00	612.00	17.22
Camera battery		10.00	0
Atlas sales	411.00	327.00	Included above
Other		40.00	0.01
Total	1554.00	1100.00	295.08

EXPENDITURE	2015 – 13 Jan 2016	14 Jan 2016 - 1 Oct 2016	2 Oct 2016 – 19 Sept 2017
Mammal society fee	36.00	36.00	36.00
Event (hire)	578.69		355.20
Event (food)			982.20
Printing fees		80.80	0.00
Event speaker cost	140.80		90.00
Webpage upkeep		63.32	111.75
Atlas related			
Insurance	206.43	224.48	229.60
Cardiff university DNA analysis			
Equipment purchase	733.74		
Small mammal grant	310.00		
Contribution to Mammal Soc project			500.00
Contribution to conference attendance			50.00
Other	10.00		
TOTAL	2015.66	404.60	2354.75

Balance (income - expenditure)	-461.66	695.40	-2059.67
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End of statement balance	£6169.81	£6865.21	£4805.54
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Note that this year looks a bit light in terms of income as the year runs from after the previous contribution from the AGM was paid in, but before next year's AGM (and membership was paid).

- Kelly Moyes