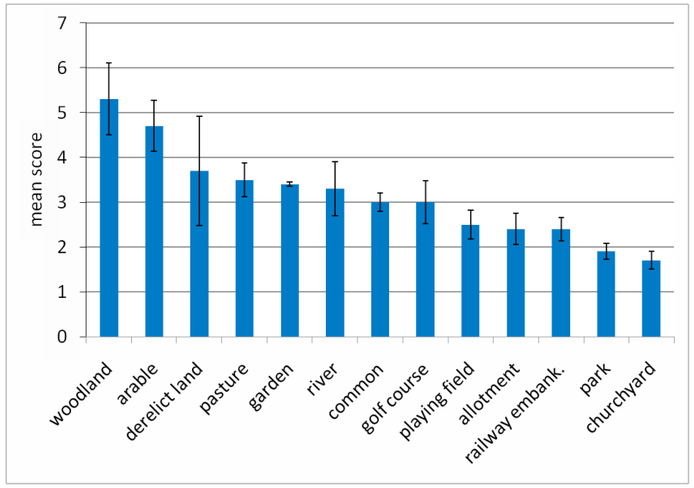
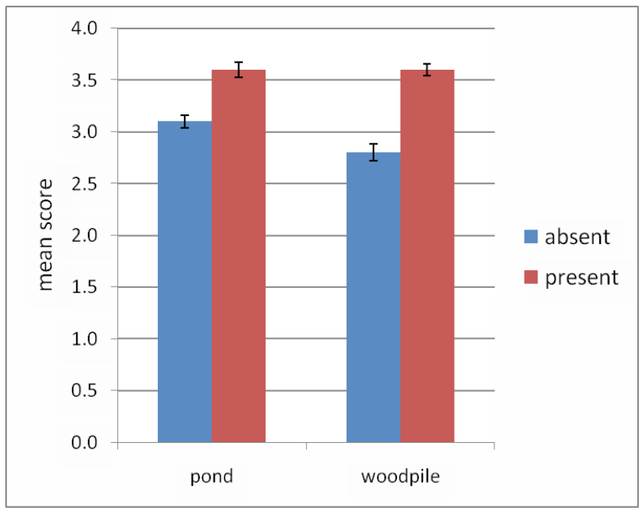


Figure 4 (*left*) Mean score (a measure of the number of species present and the abundance of each species) at different types of site for the results from the first five years of the survey.

Figure 5 (*below*) Mean score (a measure of the number of species present and the abundance of each species) at sites where ponds or woodpiles were present (red bars) and absent (blue bars) for the results from the first five years of the survey.



The Tracking Mammals 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), co-ordinated by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. At the heart of the Partnership are the many thousands of volunteers whose enthusiasm and experience make the work possible. The efforts of everyone involved have informed the UK *Biodiversity Action Plan* and have gone into shaping conservation policy at the highest level.

TRACKING Mammals PARTNERSHIP

More information about mammals and their identification is contained in these two field guides produced by the Field Studies Council and The Mammal Society

Key to British land mammals

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Living with Mammals

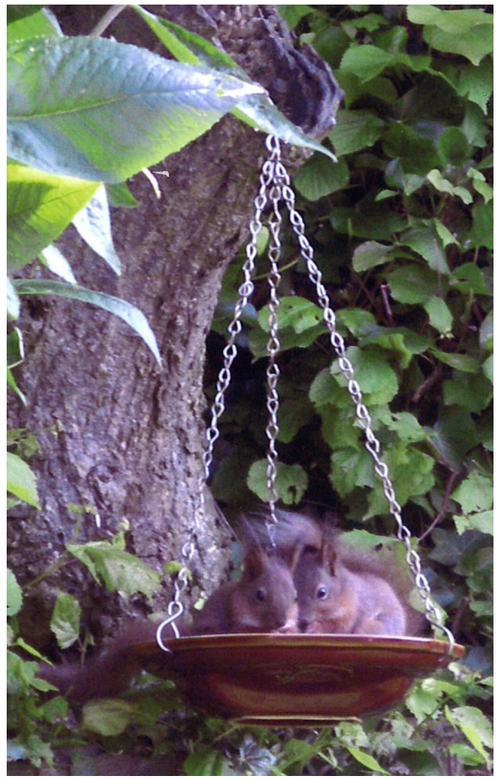
Survey Update 2008

The survey in 2008 was the sixth year of *Living with Mammals* and built upon the tremendous achievement to date – thank you for taking part! As the survey continues, long-term trends in how populations are faring will become apparent from the data, and as we understand more about the relationship between wild mammals and the built environment, so conservation plans around urban areas can be better informed.

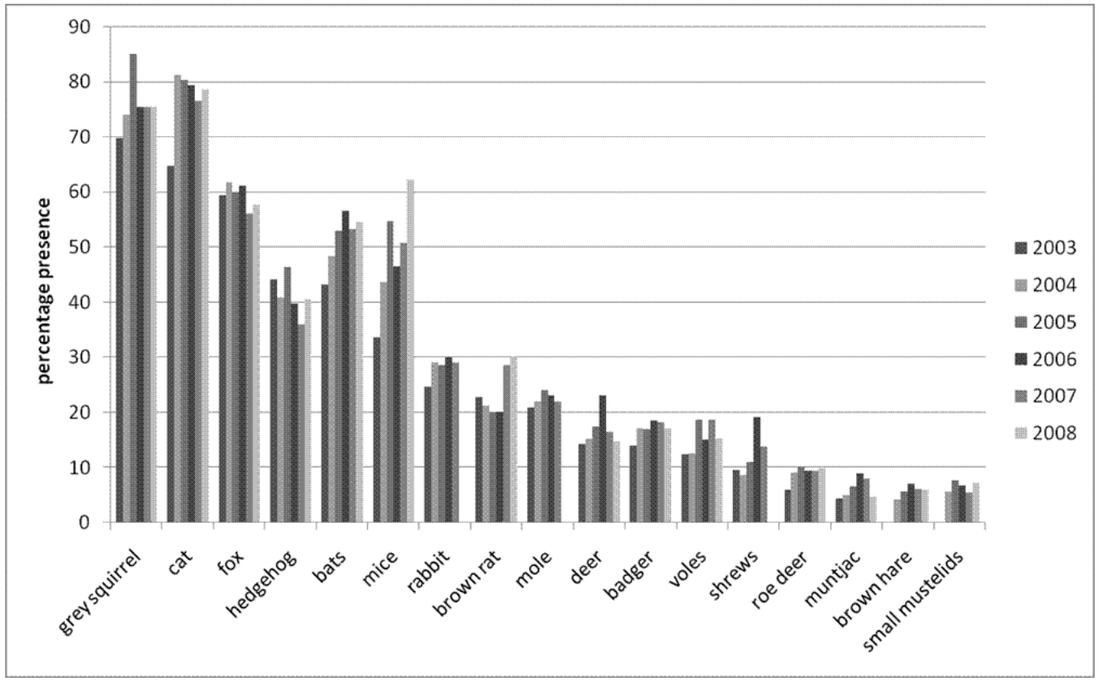
Around ninety percent of the UK population lives in urban or suburban areas. For most of us, it is here – in the green spaces of our towns and cities – that we experience biodiversity, and there is growing evidence that access to urban nature has a positive effect on our health and well-being. Neighbours do, on occasion, fall out with each other: badger excavations undermining property, or muntjac deer eating prize roses are real enough problems, but ensuring that urban habitats can support wildlife has measurable benefits to ourselves as well as to wild populations.

Survey findings

Grey squirrels, foxes and bat species remain our commonest neighbours (Figure 1 overleaf), adapting easily to urban environments. In total, twenty-six wild mammal species were reported, in addition to species of bat, which were recorded as a single group.



Red squirrels. Picture by Diana Ward



Among the twenty-six, five species of deer were recorded, along with several species such as red squirrel (at ten sites) and otter (at eight sites) that are the focus of conservation efforts.

Figure 1 (*above*) The percentage of sites at which particular species (or groups of species, such as deer and bats) were recorded in each year of the survey.

Hedgehogs were recorded at 40 percent of sites but an approximation of the trend for the six survey years to date shows a downward slope (Figure 2 below). The last three years have had a lower proportion of sites recording hedgehogs than any of the first three years, though this year's figure was very similar to that in 2004. A better estimate will be possible with further years' data but the indication is that gardens may not be a refuge from the pressures hedgehogs face in the wider landscape.

The data for small mustelids (weasel, stoat, polecat, pine marten, mink and otter) show no overall trend (Figure 3A opposite), while bat species look to be increasing (Figure 3B). The presence of otter in the built environment puts conservation firmly in an urban context and highlights the benefits of improvements in water quality. Indeed, a letter in the national press at the start of the year reported the encouraging sight of a seal with a large salmon in the Thames near Hammersmith Bridge.

In addition to building-up a dataset to identify long-term trends, an aim of *Living with Mammals* is to identify those features of urban sites that encourage wildlife and that are associated with a greater diversity of wild mammal species.

Habitat features and species abundance

An analysis of the first five years of the survey was carried out earlier this year to look for these features and was presented at a symposium of The Mammal Society in November.

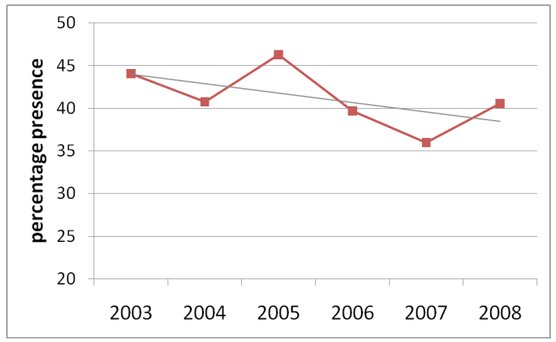
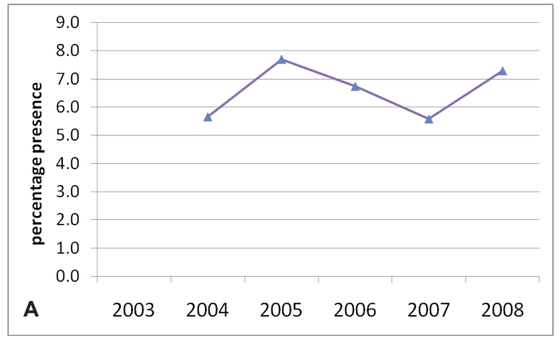


Figure 2 (above) The percentage of sites recording hedgehogs. The overall trend for the six years of the survey to date is shown by the grey line.



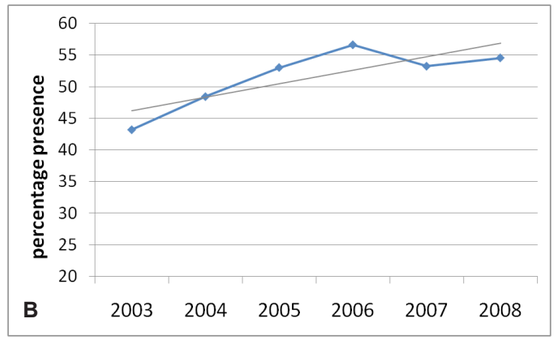


Figure 3 (*above*) The percentage of sites recording (A, *top*) small mustelids; and (B, *bottom*) bat species.

Over 1,900 separate locations were surveyed and each identified as a particular type of site. Gardens and derelict or waste land had the highest abundance of wild species among the typically urban sites. In comparison, parks and churchyards had relatively low scores (Figure 4 overleaf).

Most species were 'weakly related' to gardens – that is, they were slightly more likely to be present there than at other types of sites. Given that gardens make up between a third and a half of the green space in urban areas, their potential to support a number of mammal species makes clear their importance in urban biodiversity plans.

Sites that produced berries or seeds, or that had a bird or other animal feeder, were associated with a greater abundance of species, as were those that had a shed, pond or woodpile (Figure 5 overleaf). The importance of access was also evident in the findings, the idea that, for mammals, unlike birds, sites can be easily enclosed and made inaccessible. Partially enclosed sites – those with gaps in their boundaries – had a higher score than those that were entirely enclosed. The areas over which animals forage each day typically might extend across many gardens, and maintaining the 'connectivity' of sites, ensuring that animals can move from one to another, is vital if urban habitats are going to be used by wild mammals.

For most people, urban green spaces are where they experience wildlife. The results of *Living with Mammals* show that action by individuals – planting food plants or building a woodpile – need not be on a grand scale, and can increase biodiversity in urban habitats. And welcoming the neighbours in, enriches our towns and cities.

A bat, possibly a greater horseshoe, spotted in Devon.
Picture by David Elvin