

Mole records, too, have remained largely the same over the period that *Living with Mammals* has run (bottom line in Figure 3). Newspaper reports earlier in the year claimed that the population has soared since strychnine poisoning was banned as a means of control in 2007. These were based on the increased number of call-outs to molecatchers by farmers and landowners who, in the absence of strychnine, sought an alternative control. In fact, nothing is known about the population in the wider landscape since the ban, and data from 2000 up to then, assessed by the Tracking Mammals Partnership, suggests a fall in numbers.

In gardens at least, moles' reputation as a pest is largely unwarranted. Molehills might be unsightly but they are easily raked flat and damage to growing plants is only temporary. Most of the soil pushed up into molehills comes from beneath the seed bank (the top few inches of soil that contains dormant weed seeds) and after the birds have been at it, it is largely free of insect larvae. It is excellent for potting plants or dressing beds.

Bats

Several bat species make use of the built environment, roosting in wall and roof spaces in old and modern buildings alike depending on the species. Serotines along with common and soprano

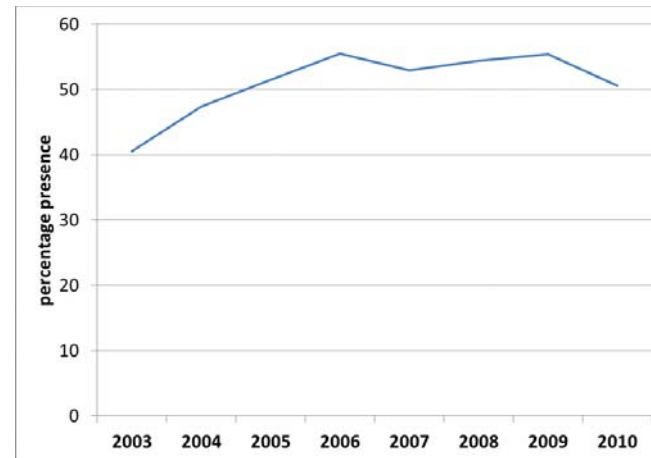
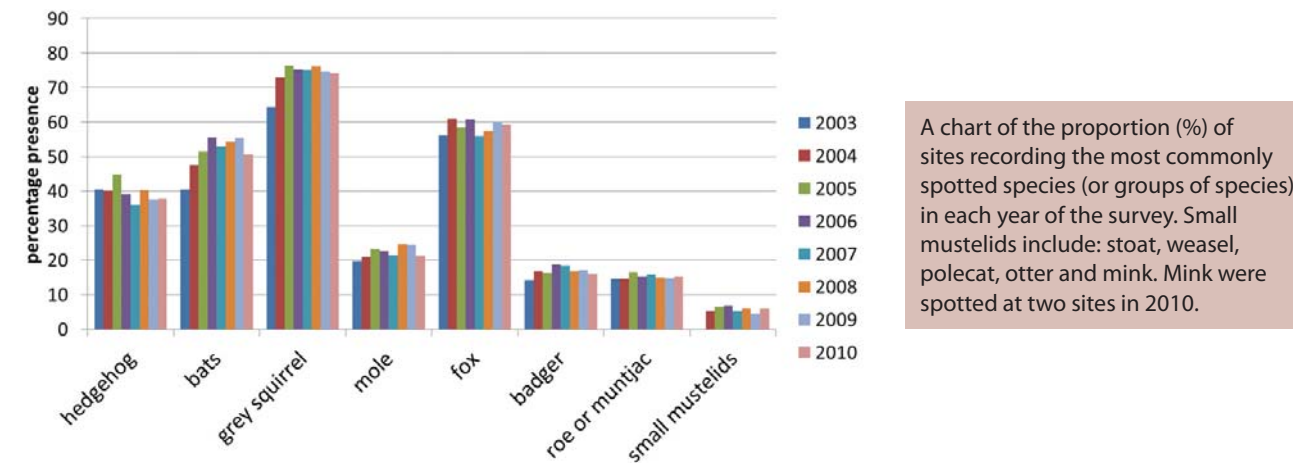


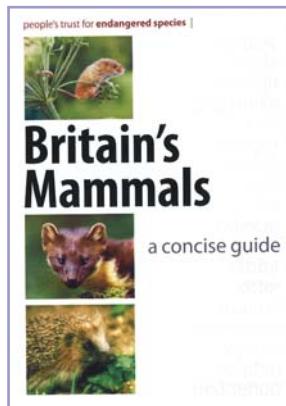
Figure 4 The proportion (%) of sites recording bat species in each year of the survey.

pipistrelles are probably the most likely to be spotted in suburban areas and can be distinguished by their size – serotines are much larger – and by the pattern of flight – pipistrelles have a fast, jerky flight, while serotines are more leisurely, with occasional short glides or steep descents.

The National Bat Monitoring Programme run by the Bat Conservation Trust (www.bats.org.uk) reports an upward trend in the common pipistrelle population and this is mirrored in the findings of *Living with Mammals* (Figure 4, above).



A chart of the proportion (%) of sites recording the most commonly spotted species (or groups of species) in each year of the survey. Small mustelids include: stoat, weasel, polecat, otter and mink. Mink were spotted at two sites in 2010.



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Living with Mammals



Survey Update 2010

Today, half of the world's population live in urban settlements, which cover just three percent of the land's surface. In the UK, four-fifths of us are urban dwellers and built land represents almost a tenth of the land area. In its eight years, *Living with Mammals* has collected records of mammals from almost 2 500 sites in the built environment, recording the species with which we share our habitat.

sidings – 'brownfield' sites that were a priority for development under government guidance. The new classification of gardens makes it easier for local authorities to refuse applications for housing on garden land, safekeeping large, mature gardens, which can be so valuable to biodiversity.

Thank you to everyone who took part this year – from the *Great Stag Hunt* volunteers, who turned their attention from stag beetles to larger beasts and took part for the first time, to the many people who completed the survey again (including the 136 stalwart volunteers who have taken part every year since the survey began in 2003).

Species of Conservation Concern

One hundred and ninety-seven garden sites recorded BAP species – those mammal species for which Biodiversity Action Plans exist to coordinate conservation efforts; a further 121 gardens recorded bats alone, potentially including records of soprano pipistrelles and brown long-eared bats, two of the seven bat BAP species.

Six out of every seven sites in 2010 (84%) were gardens, the importance of which to wildlife was acknowledged by the Government in June. Until this year, gardens had been classified in the same category as disused buildings and old railway

Three of these BAP species, otter, red squirrel and brown hare, were recorded at five, eight and 26 sites respectively. The most urban BAP species, however, is the hedgehog. The species was made a priority for



Colin Mackenzie

Colin Varndell

Over 20 species of mammal were recorded in this year's survey. For animals and plants, the built environment is just an alternative natural habitat, and given the chance, it can support a rich wildlife.

conservation efforts in 2007, as evidence mounted that its numbers are declining. The picture in the built environment does little to quell concerns.

Hedgehog numbers

The proportion of survey sites recording sightings or signs of hedgehogs this year (37.8%) was similar to that in 2009 but overall, since the survey began in 2003, the percentage of positive sites has tended to fall. Separate records for England, Scotland and Wales are shown in figure 1, below.

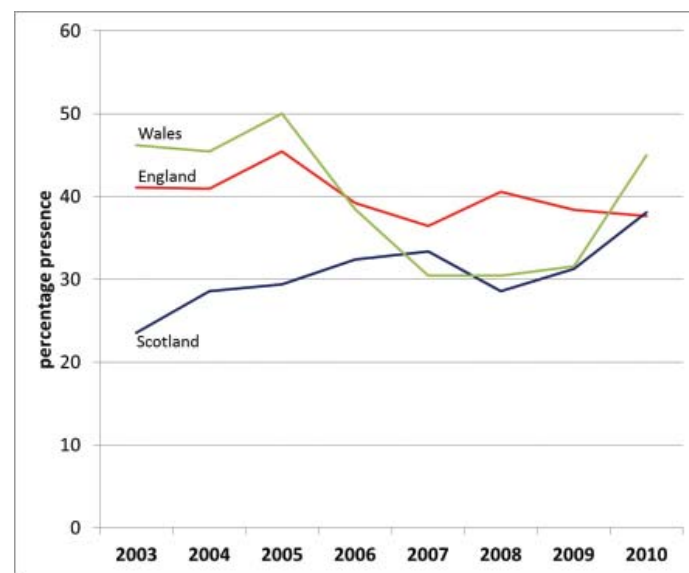


Figure 1 The proportion (%) of sites recording hedgehogs in Wales (green line), England (red) and Scotland (blue) in each year of the survey.

The majority of sites in the survey are located in England, while the numbers of records from Scotland and Wales are comparatively small. This means that chance variations in records from year to year show up to a greater extent in these regions. Although the proportion of sites in Wales that were positive for hedgehogs was a lot greater this year than it was last, the indication over the eight years of the survey is of a downward trend. In Scotland though the proportion of sites has tended to rise.

There are also differences between regional areas: the South East and London regions show the clearest declines (Figures 2a and 2b, opposite). Elsewhere, the proportion of positive sites looks more constant (Figures 2c-f). How this relates to numbers in rural areas is unclear but a report planned for next spring, which aims to draw together all the evidence – from *Living with Mammals* and other surveys – should provide an insight into the bigger picture.

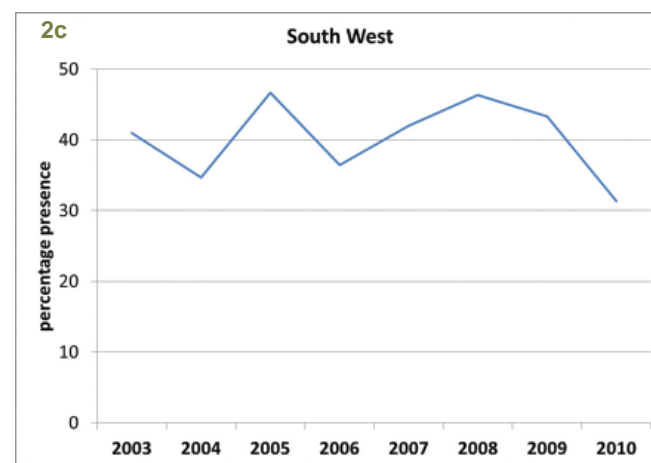
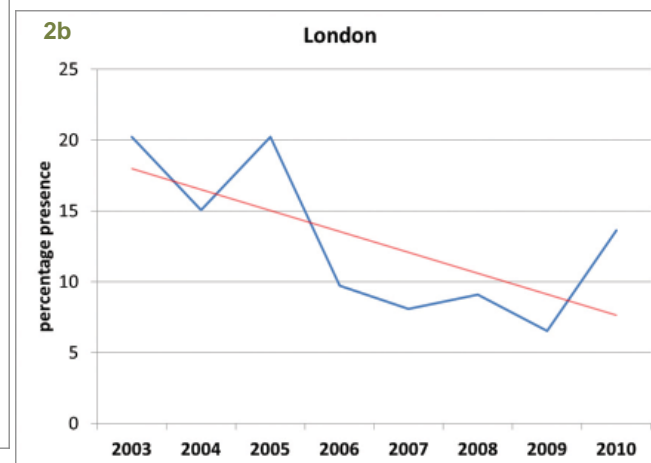
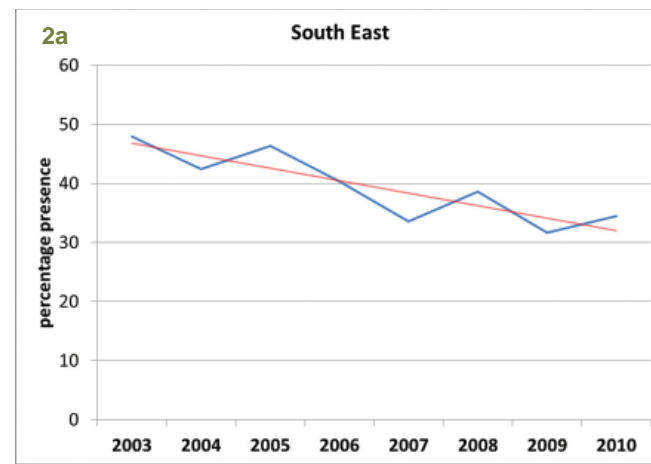


Figure 2 The proportion (%) of sites recording hedgehogs in regions of England. Above: (a) South East; (b) London; (c) South West; facing page: (d) North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, and East Midlands; (e) North West and West Midlands; and (f) Eastern regions.

Foxes and moles

Urban foxes were the focus of media attention during this year's survey with the alleged attack in east London on two young children, while they slept in their bedroom. The attack was not confirmed to be that of a fox however and such attacks are almost unheard of – much less frequent than those by dogs. We are safer with foxes than we are with irresponsible dog owners. Foxes are intelligent, wild predators – demonising them only impoverishes our environment.

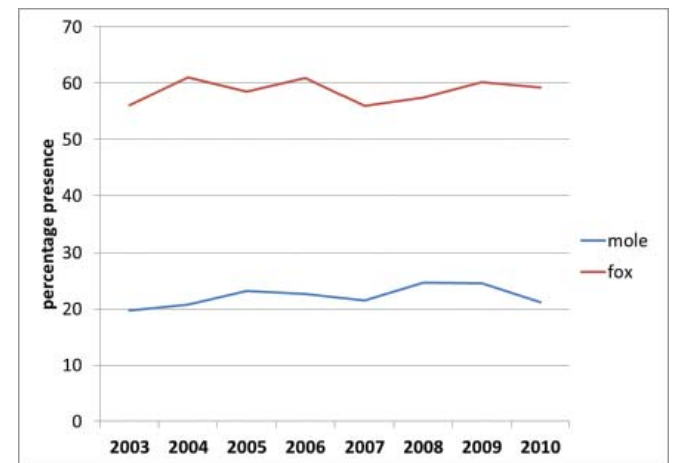
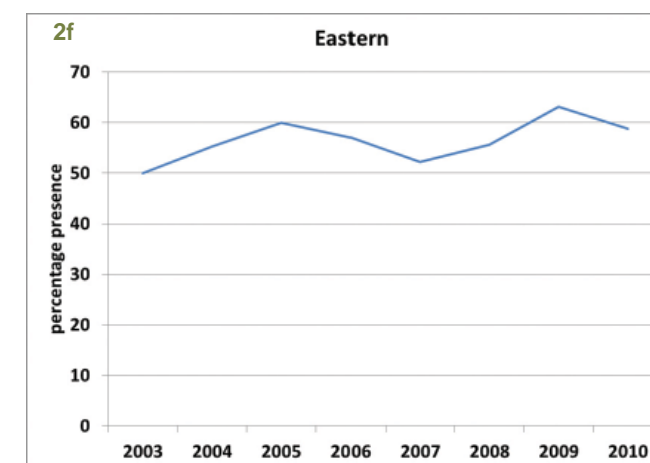
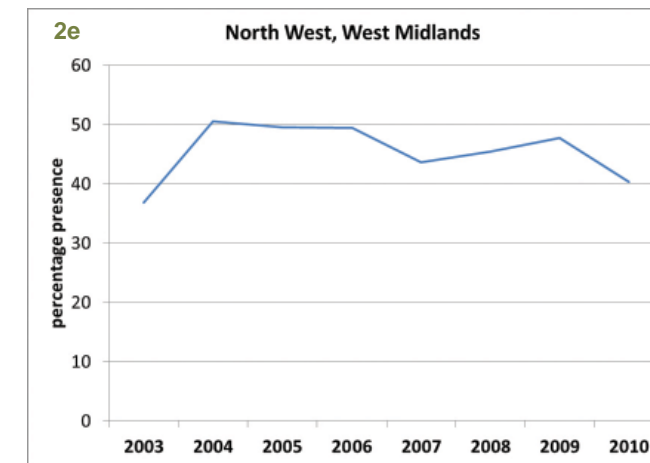
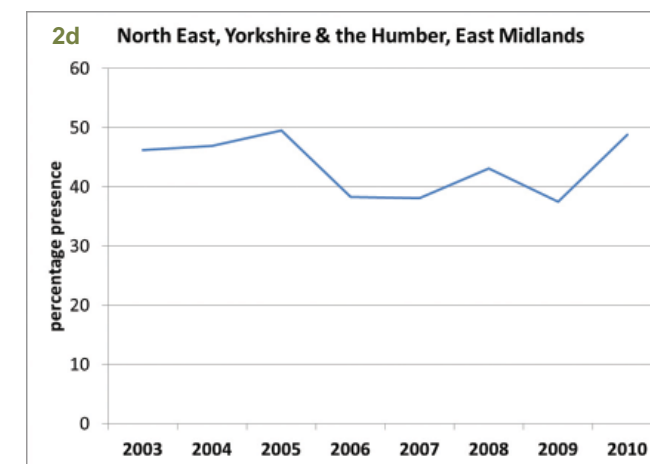


Figure 3 The proportion (%) of sites recording foxes (top, red line) and moles (bottom, blue line) in each year of the survey.

Records since the start of the survey suggest that urban fox numbers have stayed more or less the same since 2003 (the top line in Figure 3 above).



Kathryn Longmuir

A nightly feast. Putting food out for hedgehogs can be a welcome supplement to their diet and doesn't make them reliant on hand-outs or stop them foraging normally. Feeding might be particularly important for individuals born at the end of the summer, who have little time to put on sufficient weight for hibernation.