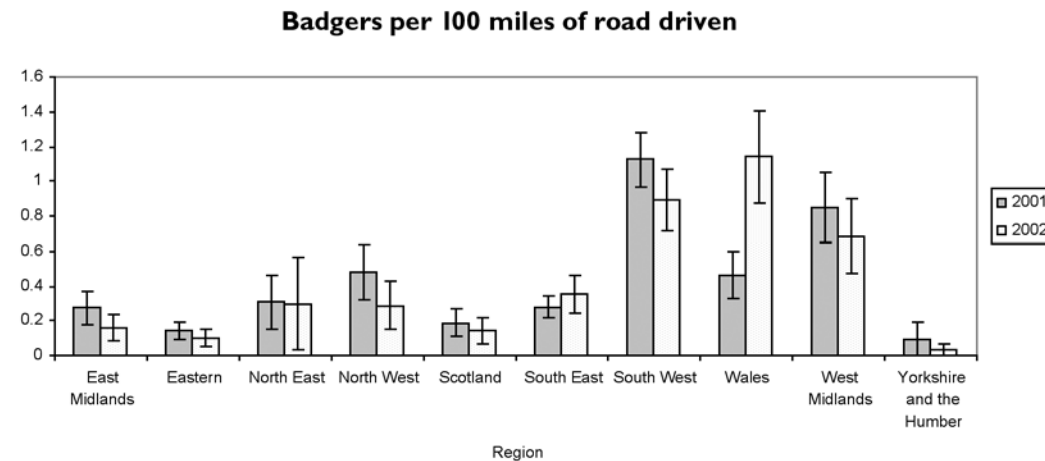


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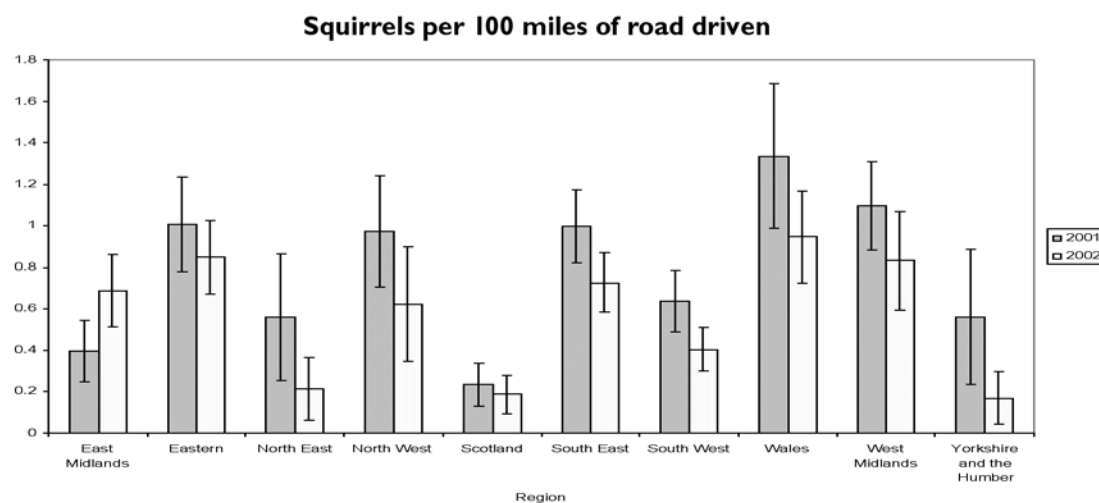


# Mammals on Roads Newsletter

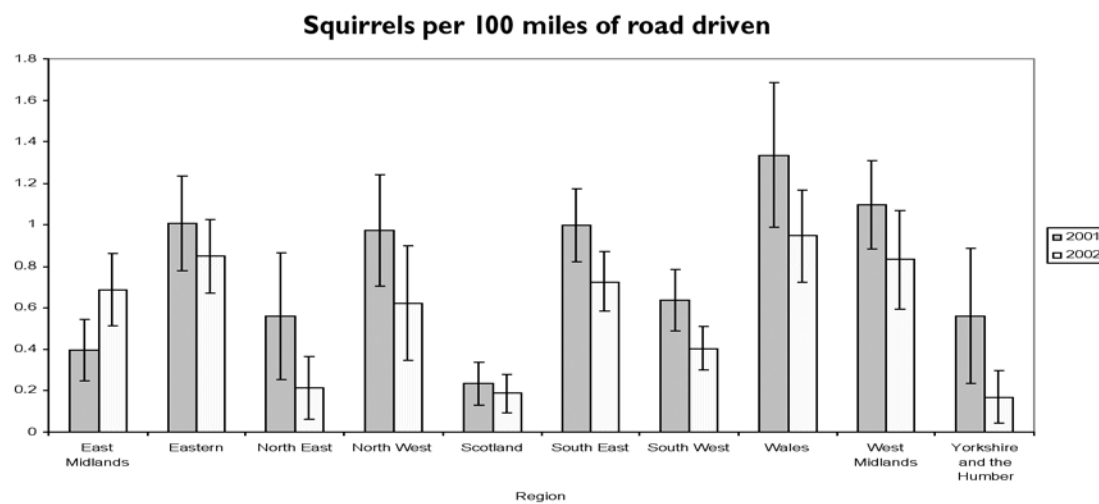
The average number of badgers sighted per 100 miles travelled in each region. The vertical lines in each bar (standard error bars) give an indication of how confident we can be about the average badger count for each region.



The average number of squirrels sighted per 100 miles travelled in each region. The vertical lines in each bar (standard error bars) give an indication of how confident we can be about the average squirrel count for each region.



The average number of foxes sighted per 100 miles travelled in each region. The vertical lines in each bar (standard error bars) give an indication of how confident we can be about the average fox count for each region.



MAMMALS ON ROADS SURVEY

JUNE 2003

**T**HANK YOU to everyone who has taken part in the Mammals on Roads survey over the past two years. A huge amount of information on mammal numbers has been collected from right across the country. This will be invaluable in helping us to assess long-term trends in mammal numbers, not least in drawing attention to species that may be in decline.

**Quick facts**

Many mammals have been seen and many miles driven during the course of the surveys.

	2001	2002
Number of miles surveyed	94,288	87,620
Number of journeys	2,280	1,909
Mammal sightings	10,501	10,928
Badger sightings	414	343
Fox sightings	399	459
Hedgehog sightings	2,569	2,089
Rabbit sightings	4,999	6,119

**Numbers of journeys**

Mammals were counted on a large number of journeys in nearly all regions, so this should ensure that we have a reliable picture of their numbers along roads in each of them.

It would be very useful, however, to have more journeys recorded in North East England and Yorkshire and Humber side – so if you live in these regions please do help in 2003 if you can. (Please note that we do NOT need more journeys in London, because the Mammals on Roads survey does not cover urban, sub-urban or built-up areas. The small number of London journeys included in the graph refer to the more rural areas of outer London, along the borders with the South-East England region.)

**Mammal sightings**

A remarkably similar number of mammals were seen in the summer of 2002 (10,501) compared to that in 2001 (10,928). →



**Find out more about UK mammals**

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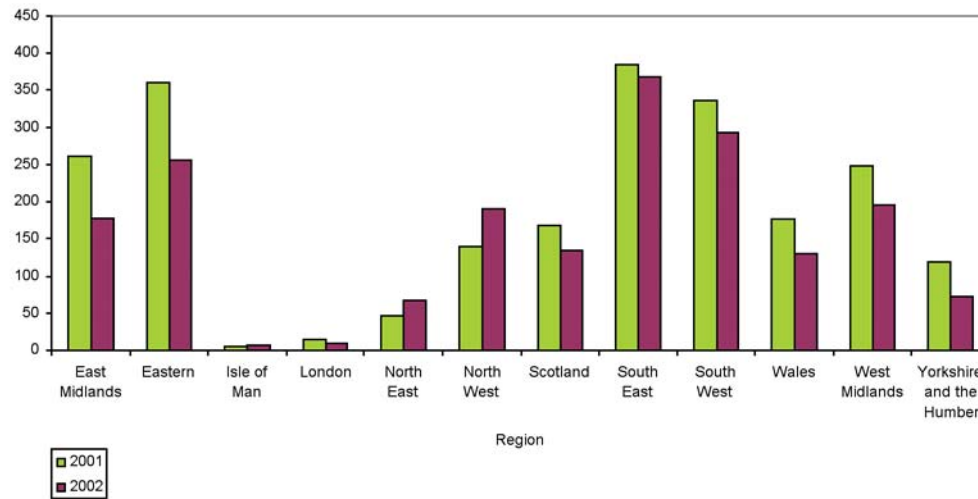
**Mammals UK £5 inc p&p**      **Spotting Wild Mammals £2 inc p&p.**

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The total number of journeys done in Scotland, Wales and in each region of England in 2001 and 2002. Journeys which did not meet the survey criteria (e.g. at least 20 miles long) have not been included.

**NOTE**  
This is the copy for explaining the bars at the bottom of the graphs. Xxxxx xxx xxx xxx xxx xxxx xxxx

Number of journeys in each region - all valid journeys included



As the map shows, there were sightings across nearly the whole of the UK. Notice that there are 'gaps' in urban areas (where the survey is not conducted) and in upland and mountain areas where there are no roads. Of course there are also gaps where surveyors haven't travelled, especially in North West Scotland where more surveys in 2003 would be very helpful.

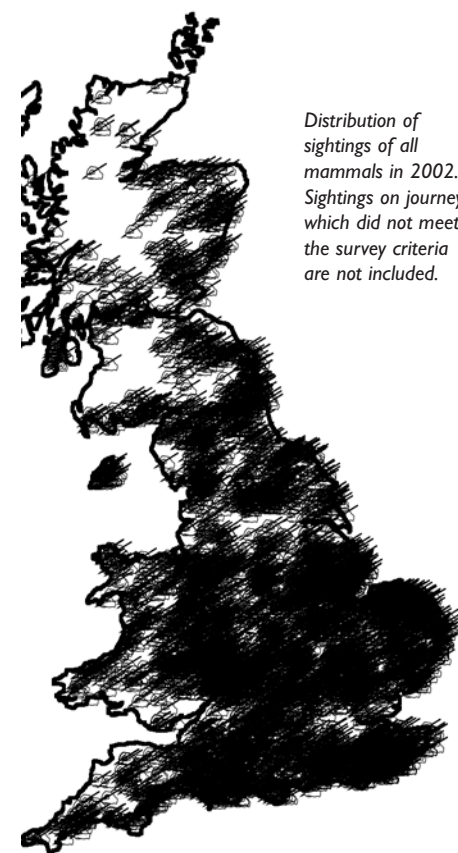
**What's happening to hedgehogs?**

We reported in the last Newsletter that counts of hedgehogs along roads had declined in the eastern half of England between 1991 (when pilot surveys were done) and 2001. Counts for 2002 were similar to those for 2001, suggesting that there really has been a major reduction in the number of hedgehogs seen along roads since 1991. Some caution is needed in interpreting the counts for North-East England and Yorkshire and Humberside, where the number of journeys carried out was not as high as in other regions. As with all monitoring schemes, we need information from this and future years' studies before we can determine whether hedgehog counts are still declining.

So why have hedgehogs, still doing well in many of our gardens, apparently declined in the countryside in Eastern England? The answer, surprisingly, is not known. However, it is likely to lie – as with many problems for wildlife – in the use of current intensive farming methods. Hedgehogs are not especially fussy. They prefer short grass on which to find food. Nests are built under shrubs, like bramble, or in other rough places. Such habitat has probably been lost to tidier management of the countryside. Furthermore hedgehogs are unlikely to be helped by the large quantities of pesticides now used in agriculture. These remove the hedgehogs' prey and may perhaps poison hedgehogs too. MTUK is currently supporting Jo Bunner at Royal Holloway, University of London, to determine just what problems hedgehogs face.

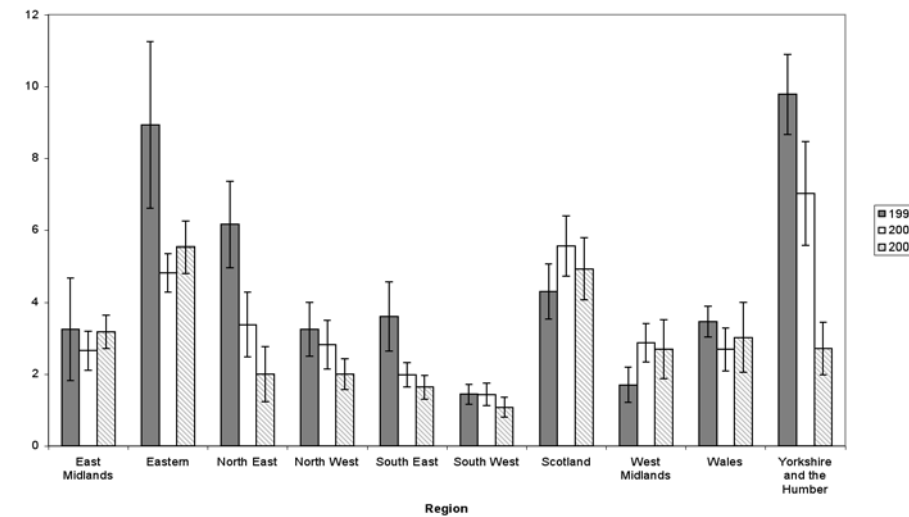
**Comparing counts in 2001 and 2002**

For the first time we now have counts of mammals other than hedgehogs along roads. These show generally quite consistent average numbers in different regions in 2001 and 2002. This applies even to counts of rabbits whose numbers are known to vary greatly from year to year. For example, counts of rabbits were low in Wales but much higher in Scotland in both years. Counts were not very similar between the years in some regions – the West Midlands, for example. Only counts in coming years will show whether or not these apparent differences represent trends in rabbit numbers. However it



Distribution of sightings of all mammals in 2002. Sightings on journeys which did not meet the survey criteria are not included.

Hedgehogs per 100 miles of road driven



The average number of hedgehogs sighted per 100 miles travelled in each region. The vertical lines in each bar (standard error bars) give an indication of how confident we can be about the average hedgehog count for each region.

is interesting to note that counts were slightly higher in 2002 in most regions – was it a good year for rabbits?

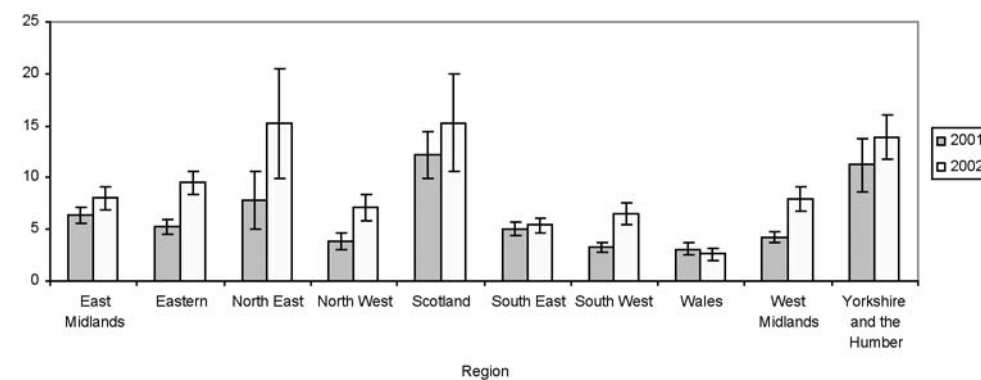
Rabbit numbers are not especially easy to monitor over large areas. We think that the Mammals on Roads survey should provide a good way of doing so. To this end we have now succeeded in relating counts of rabbits along roads to their abundance in the landscape as a whole. This is good news because it shows that counts are closely related to mammal abundance, not just – for example – to traffic flow. It is also important to know about rabbit numbers. Rabbits are crucial ecologically, providing food for many mammal and bird predators and scavengers. They also maintain short lush grass on down land, which is vital to many rare species.

before it is possible to assess exactly what is happening. Counts of (mostly grey) squirrels were slightly lower in all but one region in 2002 compared to 2001. Squirrel numbers are strongly influenced by the abundance of tree seed, their main food. Tree seed abundance one year tends to strongly influence squirrel abundance the following year. In 2000 there was much tree seed and in 2001 little. Squirrel numbers would consequently have been expected to be high in 2001, but lower in 2002. This does seem to be what the Mammals on Roads counts of squirrels show. It will be very interesting to see what this year's results show. 2002 was a year of quite high tree seed abundance, so squirrel numbers should be higher. ■



Counts of badgers do appear to capture some regional differences in badger abundance. Thus counts were high in South-West England in both 2001 and 2002, where badgers are numerous. Similarly, counts were low in Eastern England where badgers are still comparatively scarce. However there was a rather large difference in average counts of badgers between 2001 and 2002 in Wales. This is unlikely to represent a dramatic change in badger numbers in just one year. Again, further years of data are needed

Rabbits per 100 miles of road driven



The average number of rabbits sighted per 100 miles travelled in each region. The vertical lines in each bar (standard error bars) give an indication of how confident we can be about the average rabbit count for each region.