



# 2015 Mammals on Roads update

people's trust for endangered species

Britain, perhaps more than any other country, has a long tradition of wildlife recording—from the observations of Gilbert White, in the 18th century, to the public surveys of bird behaviour (such as paper-tearing and pecking milk bottle tops) organised by the British Trust for Ornithology in the first half of the last century. Housed in natural history societies and local environmental record centres nationally are tens of millions of records submitted by individuals—including some of roadkill. Tullie House Museum in Carlisle, for example, has over 2,500 incidental records of mammal road casualties in Cumbria, collected between 1986 and 2001\*. Collecting observations of the natural world is perhaps peculiarly British: as much as we are a 'nation of shopkeepers', we are surely a nation of naturalists.

began, the number and scale of citizen science projects have grown enormously—from 'crowd sourcing' activities that use the time and effort of people to help solve a problem or analyse a large amount of data, to collecting records on a scale that couldn't be done otherwise.

Powering the rise in citizen science has been more accessible technology—mobile devices with GPS, big screens to display information, cameras, and that can run specialised apps that help to identify species or recognise bird songs and insect chirps, even connect to a ultrasound detector to record bat calls. Over the last few years, this aspect of the *Mammals on Roads* project has really grown—although not without its glitches and gremlins. To everyone who has persevered, shared their experience and

helped us improve things, a very big thank you!

## Mammals on Roads online

This update focuses on the results from the online and smartphone records, but all the data, from the printed forms as well, will be number-crunched and will feed into the survey.

In total, over 54,000km (34,000 miles) were recorded, either online or with the app, in the four years that the survey website and app have been developed, with over 3,800 mammals spotted.

The count of hedgehogs, which has shown a long-term decline over the last decade or so, was up last year on the previous two years, and was similar to that in 2011 (Fig.1, right). The pattern of annual counts mirrors that

*Mammals on Roads* began 15 years ago, continuing work originally carried out by Dr Pat Morris at Royal Holloway, University of London, in the early 1990s, with the help of volunteers from The Mammal Society. Since then, for hedgehogs alone, 14,000 records have been collected by 2,400 volunteers. It has played a key role in alerting us to a decline in hedgehogs and has been the impetus for conservation efforts. Thank you to everyone involved, it is an extraordinary achievement! And it is one that continues. Even in the time since the survey

The iOS and Android app was chosen by BBC Wildlife magazine as one of the best citizen science apps (right) and was app of the week in the Sun newspaper (below).

APP OF THE WEEK  
KEEP your kids quiet on a journey, entertain them AND do a bit of good? Download the People's Trust for Endangered Species monitor Britain's wildlife. Free from App Store or Google Play.

\* Tullie House Museum records are described in: 'Mammals in Cumbria: examples of what publically collected records can tell us about the distribution and ecology of our local species', vol. 13, issue 1 The Carlisle Naturalist (2005).

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**OF THE BEST**  
CITIZEN SCIENCE APPS

**AshTag**  
Android/iOS, Free  
This initiative is being led by the University of East Anglia's Adapt Low Carbon Group. It aims to help scientists understand how ash dieback spreads, and allows them to identify potentially resistant trees. Tag an ash tree (five tags cost £4.99 plus P&P), log its location and document its condition.

**Mammals On Roads**  
Android/iOS, Free  
Do your bit for UK conservation by counting roadkill. The information you record assists the People's Trust for Endangered Species' effort to monitor how wildlife populations are changing every year. Findings from the annual survey have helped launch campaigns to save species, such as Hedgehog Street ([www.hedgehogstreet.org](http://www.hedgehogstreet.org)).

**BirdTrack**  
Android/iOS, Free  
This exciting project looks at migration movements and distributions of birds throughout Britain and Ireland. You can collect records offline to be verified and uploaded later. To connect with the database users must have a BirdTrack account (sign up for free at [www.birdtrack.net](http://www.birdtrack.net)).

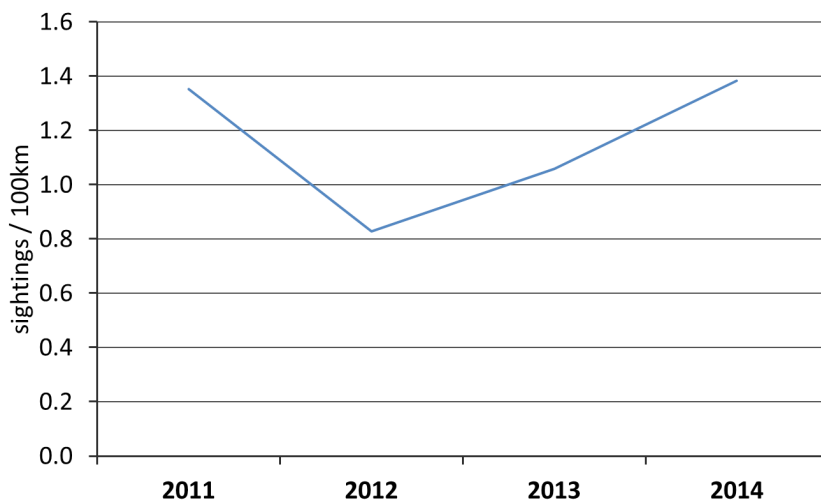
**iRecord Ladybirds**  
Android/iOS, Free  
The Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the University of Bristol have joined forces to help map species of ladybird in the UK. Use this app to identify and record the beetles that you discover. Your data is sent to the UK Ladybird Survey, where it's verified and used by the National Biodiversity Network.

from *Living with Mammals*, PTES' survey of green spaces in towns and cities, and suggests that last year was a better one for hedgehogs. Continued monitoring will show how hedgehogs fare in the long-term, and if you are on the road this summer, please help us again with the survey.

Rabbits, which were introduced at least as early as Norman times, are one of ten or so non-native but naturalised species that are an integral part of our wildlife. On the Continent, rabbit numbers have declined and they are listed as 'Near threatened' on the IUCN Red List, almost qualifying as 'Threatened'. In this country too, there is evidence that their numbers are falling. The count in 2014 (Fig. 2) was close to the average for the survey since it started, but so important are rabbits as prey for raptors and other predators, and in maintaining some grassland habitats, that long-term monitoring is valuable to wider conservation efforts.

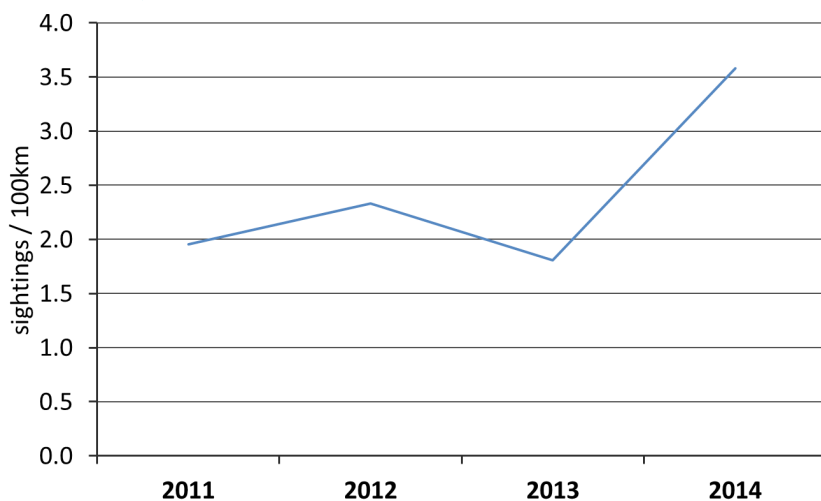
### Helping us monitor Britain's wildlife

Recording wildlife and understanding how it is changing is important, so, please, grab an app or go online. Thank you for your support!



**Figure 1 (top) Counts of hedgehogs per 100km (62mi) along journeys in Great Britain.**

**Figure 2 (bottom) Counts of rabbits per 100km (62mi) along journeys in Great Britain.**



## TAKING PART

Surveys can be anytime in July, August or September and should be routes of 20 miles or more (not including stretches of dual-carriageway or motorway, or in built-up areas). Even if you don't spot any mammals, please send us your journey, as knowing when something is absent is just as important as knowing when it's present.

If you can survey a route made in previous years, then it is particularly useful, but remember that you should not record the same route more than once in any 14-day period. Whether you survey a single journey or numerous ones, every record is valuable to us.

Register online at [www.ptes.org/mor](http://www.ptes.org/mor) or download the free app from the App Store or Google Play.



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