

Introduction

No matter what size your garden, or whether you are in a city or the countryside, you are likely to be visited by native mammals. You may spot a hedgehog ambling across a lawn, or glimpse a wood mouse enjoying a fallen apple, but most small mammals are mainly active at night and often go largely unnoticed.

Did you know...?

- Weasels do not hibernate and will even hunt prey under deep snow.
- Hedgehogs may travel between 1 and 2 kilometres a night searching for food.
- The pygmy shrew is only 6cm long and weighs less than a 2 pence coin.



Weasel

This leaflet will...

Introduce you to some of the small mammals that may visit your garden. Show you how to make your garden more attractive to these creatures.

Making your garden a haven for voles, shrews and other small mammals...

Meet the neighbours...

Most small mammals go unnoticed, as many are nocturnal visitors, but they often leave clues to their presence such as droppings, hairs or burrows. Here are just a few mammals that may call your garden home:



Common shrew - Both pygmy and common shrews frequently visit gardens. They have long pointed noses and eat worms, snails, slugs and other invertebrates.



Bank vole - Bank voles and field voles may both be found in gardens. They have blunt noses and short tails.



Wood mouse - Wood mice have pointed noses, large ears and long, hairless tails.



Weasels - like stoats they prey on other mammals. They are long, thin animals with a ginger-brown body and white belly.



Hedgehog - Our only native spiny mammal. The gardener's friend as they eat many slugs and pests.



Grey squirrel - An agile animal, with a long fluffy tail used for balance.

With just a little thought a garden can become a haven for small mammals, providing food, shelter and cover for these fascinating animals.

Food for all

Small mammals spend most of their time searching for food. The key is to ensure that your garden has a constant supply of food throughout the year, this can be done through:

- Planting native shrubs and trees, for example hazels, hawthorns, spindles, crab-apples, and rowans, which will provide blossom, buds and fruit to eat. Growing honeysuckle, bramble, and ivy will provide cover as well as food.
- Creating a log pile. This will attract a variety of different minibeasts which are an important source of food to hedgehogs and shrews. It can also be a suitable nesting site for a small mammal.
- Areas of long tussocky grass, especially alongside ditches or hedges, make brilliant foraging and breeding sites for mice and voles.

As well as food you should supply a source of water. The best way to do this is with a pond. Site the pond next to cover so that animals can travel easily to it without being seen. Ensure it has at least one shallow end so any animals that fall in can easily climb out again.

Hideaways and shelters

When you are low down in the food chain being able to hide is extremely important. As well as growing bramble and ivy and building log piles you can:

- Plant a hedge. This provides a suitable place to build a nest. Allow long grass to grow at the base to provide a corridor along which mammals can travel safely.



Hedgehog

- Create a hideaway for a hedgehog. This does not need to be an expensive wooden box - a good pile of leaves under a hedge or a log pile with a sheltered cavity are especially good.

Frequently asked questions

How can I stop my cat killing small mammals?

Cats have a predator instinct, so it is not easy to stop them from killing small creatures. However, keeping your cat indoors from dusk until morning, when small mammals are most active may help. You may also attach a bell to your cat's collar, but this usually only works for a short time until the cat gets used to hunting with it.

How can I safely remove a small mammal from my house?

Live traps for small mammals can be purchased from many pet shops or large garden centres. Ensure you check the trap regularly and release any captured mammal well away from the house in an area with lots of ground cover.



House mouse

To find out more about Norfolk's wildlife visit www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/naturalconnections

Alternatively call Norfolk's free wildlife information service on **01603 598333**

Norfolk Wildlife Trust,
Bewick House,
22 Thorpe Road,
Norwich,
NR1 1RY

Tel: 01603 625540

wild@norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk



Wood mouse

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