



Derbyshire Mammal Group News

Autumn
2013

(Issue 23)

Forthcoming Events:

Sunday 15th December:
DMG Christmas Social
Contact: Liz Lonsdale

Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th April:
Mammal Society 60th Conference, Aston
University, Birmingham

The DMG 2014 Programme should be available in
December.

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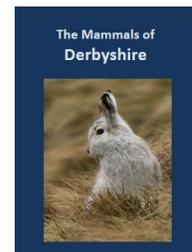
- Liz Lonsdale

- Jo Bissell

The Mammals of Derbyshire

The mammal group have now sold some 320 copies of 'The Mammals of Derbyshire'. It will continue to be sold at many DWT and other local natural history events over the coming months for £10.

If you wish to have a copy posted to you, please send a cheque (payable to 'Derbyshire Mammal Group') for £12.50 (includes P&P) and your full postal address to me at: Steve Lonsdale, 31 Caroline Close, Alvaston, Derby DE24 0QX



If You Go Down To The Woods Today ...

During a small mammal trapping survey at Carvers Rocks I pierced my finger on a large thorn and cut my head on a small branch. Whilst both cuts were insignificant the amount of blood spilt made the injuries look quite dramatic. These incidents prompted me to put together a brief reminder of sensible precautions to take whilst working 'in the field':

- Wear footwear appropriate to the terrain – stout shoes / boots.
- Wear clothing that can withstand brambles / nettles.
- Use gloves if working with rough wood, undergrowth, nettles, brambles.
- Wear insect repellent, especially if you react to insect bites.
- A hat or cap protects your head (!) and shades from sun or protects from rain.
- When bending down be aware of stalks / twigs near your eyes.
- Wash your hands or use wipes before eating or drinking.
- Avoid working alone if possible, or let someone know where you are going and when you expect to be back. (The group also walkie-talkies available for working across difficult habitats).
- Carry a small first aid kit – tissues / wipes, plasters, small bandage.

Liz Lonsdale

Derbyan Eland

A DNHS member Brian Gough lent me a book called Nature Parade. First published in 1939 it contains some information which seems a little quaint by today's standards. One item describes the Derbyan Eland of Senegambia as a splendid animal with a rich reddish fawn coat and horns which are larger, more massive and divergent than those of common Eland. It is a forest dwelling animal rarely coming out into the plains. It lives in small herds and is very shy. It is claimed that the male sometimes hooks down branches of trees with its horns in order that its family can nibble at otherwise unattainable foliage. As I had never heard of this species and with the 'Derbyan' connection I delved further.

It is now called Giant Eland, but is also known as Lord Derby's Eland in honour of Edward Smith-Stanley, the 13th Earl of Derby. He sent the botanist Joseph Burke to South Africa to collect animals for his menagerie, and as a result the Giant Eland was first introduced to England between 1835 and 1851.

The scientific name is *Taurotragus derbianus*. *Tauro* comes from the Greek for bull and *tragus* from the Greek for a male goat, referring to the tuft of hair in the Eland's ear which looks like a goats beard. The ending of the species part indicates that it 'belonged to' Lord Derby.

The Giant Eland is the largest species of antelope in the world. Males can measure 6 foot at the shoulder and weigh up to a ton. However the size range generally overlaps with common Eland. The 'giant' relates more to the horns, which in males can be up to 4 feet long, and are tightly spiraled, so they appear thick and heavy.

There is a small population of western Giant Eland on Senegal which is listed as Critically Endangered. The eastern Giant Eland occurs in uninhabited areas of the Central African Republic and south west Sudan and there may be about 15,000 animals.

John Bland



Mammals In My Garden

Having recently moved to Derbyshire to start a new job with the National Trust at Calke Abbey, I have been familiarising myself with my new surroundings and the wildlife that is on offer.

My new abode is located within Calke Abbey's grounds, as well as being located on the greatly prized edge habitat between woodland and grassland, and so has provided me with some great opportunities for spotting the local wildlife.

Eager to discover what nocturnal activities were taking place in my back garden I decided to install a trail camera on a tree. My first location attempt was not the most successful, returning only a few shots of waving thistles and myself walking off having set the camera in position.

Like all things in life, if at first you don't succeed... and so the camera was removed of fruitless photos and placed upon a different tree with a new perspective. This time proved much more successful with the camera capturing 31 short videos brimming with wildlife happenings. Whether this is because the new location was prime trial camera positioning, or the second night gave the wildlife a much more desirable climate for socialising in my garden I could not tell you. I'm sure it can't have anything to do with the small sample of sheep nuts that I carefully placed in front of the camera.

The pictures included here are stills taken from 20 second videos captured by the camera. The majority of the videos captured were of Fallow Deer (pictured), munching away right in front of the camera. There was one of a young Fallow buck (pictured) slowly approaching the camera after the fallow does had left, sniffing the ground for various scents as he went. A couple showed some of my resident Rabbits, and a prime show given by a Badger (pictured) where it reclined onto its back and proceeded to give it's belly a thorough scratch using both fore legs. A later attempt has also revealed a Fox skulking around in the depths of the night.

All in all the mammal activity has provided me with a great deal of enjoyment, and I hope to continue to delve into their goings on throughout the seasons.

Ben Robinson



Small Mammals and Small Islands

A study has shown that small mammals marooned on small islands are vulnerable to extinction. When Thailand flooded a rainforest to build a dam for the Chiew Larn reservoir in 1986, it resulted in around 100 islands of tropical rainforest within the reservoir. William Laurance from James Cook University in Cairns, Australia, and colleagues measured how quickly small mammals on 16 of the islands, ranging from 0.3 to 56.3 hectares, became extinct.

Five years after the flooding, the nine fragments under 10 hectares had lost almost all their small mammal populations; twenty years later, populations on the larger islands had met the same fate. The only small mammal left in any abundance was the Malaysian Field Rat, an invasive species that had colonised the islands. The native species had declined due to competition with the rats and in-breeding.

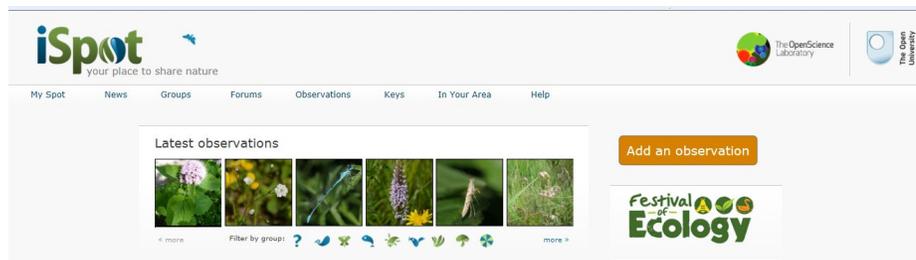
This is important as ecosystems around the world are being sectioned as human activities encroach upon them.

(From New Scientist, 5 October 2013; Science: www.doi.org/n2r)

Steve Lonsdale

iSpot – Online Help With Wildlife Identification

Do you see lots of wildlife when you are out and about, but don't know what you are seeing? Have you seen something specific, taken a photograph and are now trying to find out what it was? Are you good with one aspect of your wildlife identification such as birds, but need some help with another? Have you taken photos of wildlife on your holidays and have now forgotten what the species was called? Whatever your wildlife identification needs, iSpot is here to help you!



iSpot.org.uk is a free to use website developed by the Open University. It helps you learn about wildlife and how to identify it. At iSpot you can pursue your wildlife interests, joining a friendly community that includes more than 80 wildlife experts. Add your wildlife photos and get help with identifying what you've seen, and help others at the same time. All you need is a camera (or mobile phone with a camera), plus a computer with internet access, and you have all the tools necessary to tap into a huge network of wildlife experts, ready and willing to share their incredible knowledge with you. It really is that simple and there is an iSpot mobile app to help you do your observations in the field.

Once you've registered as an iSpot user, which is a very straightforward process, you can add an observation to the website using a digital photograph, and suggest an identification yourself, or see if anyone else can identify it for you. You can also help others by adding an identification to an existing observation. You might do this as your knowledge grows, or if you are an expert in a particular group of species.

Your reputation on the site will grow as people agree with your identifications. There are also online web forums, which offer lively debate around observations and other more general topics. There have been well over 150,000 observations, with over 22,000 registered users of the website. But the iSpot phenomenon is not resting on its laurels; it is evolving. Recent additions have been an ecological interaction function, which shows the complex web of life and the relationship



between species and an enhanced species dictionary (the tree of life). You can also use the interactive observations maps to see what has been recorded in your area.

The project has for the past four years employed a keen group of Biodiversity Mentors, across the country, who have worked with a huge number of local communities, to help them appreciate and learn more about nature. Groups have ranged from homelessness charities, young people, minority ethnic communities and nature conservation community groups. This work has been very successful, and shows that using social media to engage those new to science, nature, and potentially even recording can bring new audiences into our world of biodiversity conservation. I am the iSpot Biodiversity Mentor for the East Midlands.

In summary, what iSpot can do for you:

- Help with your identification of wildlife both in the UK and abroad. Users can post helpful identification tips to help you improve your skills.
- Improve your confidence in your own identification, by allowing others to agree with your identification.
- Allow you to start building up a 'reputation' for species identification skills.
- Search for wildlife sightings in your area via the interactive observations maps.
- Use the easy to use interactive identification keys which are part of the site.
- Use the iSpot discussion forums to raise queries or interesting observations.

Go on give iSpot a try, you have got nothing to lose and an awful lot to gain as others are out there and eager to help you. There are a couple of short onscreen videos on the website to help you get started and make the most from the site.

iSpot is now funded by the Garfield Weston Foundation, the British Ecological Society and is part of The OpenScience Laboratory, an initiative of The Open University and The Wolfson Foundation. Some of our outreach work (iSpot Biodiversity Mentors) is also funded by the Ernest Cook Trust.

Debbie Alston Debbie.alston@open.ac.uk.

East Midlands Biodiversity Mentor for iSpot

Staring at a Woodpile

In May 2013 Jo Bissell, Ian Wildbur, Steve, and I stayed at the Kindrogan Field Centre in Scotland. There is an established feeding area for Pine Martens and we were keen to set up our 'stealthcam' to try and capture some images.

The first night we all wrapped up warm and crept out to the viewing point but our timing was a little late and the Pine Marten was already there, and soon disappeared. We stared at the woodpile each evening, and usually the Pine Marten materialised. Often it sneaked round and under the logs and stayed in the shadows which meant we had to stare really hard to see it!

However we did eventually get good views of the marten in reasonable light. The marten was wary and disappeared at any unfamiliar noise.

The stealthcam was set up each evening and revealed Pine Martens, Red Squirrels, Hedgehog, Fallow Deer and a Cat - unfortunately not a Wildcat although a hybrid is known in the area.

A few months later I switched on the radio and heard the voice of Martyn Jamieson, the Head of Kindrogan Field Centre, talking about the Pine Martens in the woodpile on the 'The Living World' programme. If you would like to see some of the footage taken by Martyn and the BBC follow the links below.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/KindroganFSC>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01dw6yl>

Further information about Mammal courses at the Kindrogan Field Centre can be found at:

<http://www.field-studies-council.org/centres/kindrogan.aspx>

Liz Lonsdale

Common Dormice at Chatsworth

On Thursday June 23rd 2005, The Derbyshire Times published an article - "Dormice Take Up Residence" - "Dwindling species are bred in captivity and released at secret site on the Chatsworth Estate".

Since that time a small number of DMG members have been monitoring the site and sending data to PTES (People's Trust for Endangered Species) as part of their Dormouse Monitoring Programme.

For the first couple of years dormice continued to be found in the boxes we put up for them. What we didn't know then, but do now, is that they were in good numbers for the site, i.e. managing to get into double figures.

After those initial years, the numbers of dormice that have been found on box-check days could be counted on one hand!



This year the June check produced the same kind of count – 4 dormice out of at least 250 boxes that were checked.

So, time for the October check and we had heard that checks that had been made in other parts of the country had produced lots of late litters of Dormice.

To our delight, and concern, we too had late litters of Dormice. Back into double figures!! It is great that they are still reproducing, but there is a concern that it is so

late in the season that they will not put on enough weight to see out hibernation.

Now our patience is tested as we have to wait until next June to see what numbers we get then!

Jo Bissell



Interesting Notice

They are different in Norway.

Steve Lonsdale



The next edition of this newsletter is planned for Spring 2014. Please forward any articles (on any mammal or DMG related subject) to Steve Lonsdale (Lons57@gmail.com).

Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the individual authors, and may not represent the views of Derbyshire Mammal Group.

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