



**Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the TMP Steering Group
Thursday, 2 November 2006, 11.00am,
Nobel House, London**

Chair: Bat Conservation Trust

1. Those present

Jessa Battersby (JNCC/TMP); Christina Buesching (WildCRU); Esther Collis (BCT); Dave Cowan (CSL); Amy Coyte (BCT); Ian Davidson-Watts (Defence Estates); Christopher Hussey (Defra); Trevor James (NBN Trust); Robbie Macdonald (Quercus/Queen's University, Belfast); Jean Matthews (CCW); Tony Mitchell-Jones (NE); Jill Nelson (PTES); Chris Newman (WildCRU); David Noble (BTO); Simon Poulton (The Mammal Society); Jonathan Reynolds (GCT); Nigel Sharp (Welsh Assembly Government); Lawrence Way (JNCC); David Wembridge (PTES)

2. Apologies:

Elizabeth Barratt (Wildlife Trusts); Paul Bright (RHUL); Tony Dalby-Welsh (BDS); Julia Hanmer (BCT); David Macdonald (WildCRU); John Milburne (EHS); Ashley Matthews (Defra); Rob Raynor (SNH); Tim Russell (BASC); Roger Trout (FC); Richard Walmsley (EA).

3. Minutes of previous meeting. These were agreed as an accurate summary of the meeting.

4. Matters Arising from the minutes and not covered by other agenda items

AP 1 Carried out
AP 2 Carried out
AP 3 Carried out
AP 4 Carried forward
AP5 On agenda
AP 6 On agenda
AP 7 On agenda
AP8 On agenda

5. Co-ordinator's report (SG 4.2)

New members. Ian Davidson-Watts outlined the reasons for Defence Estates involvement in TMP. The Defence Estates (DE) is one of the largest landowners in the UK, making up 1% of the UK land mass and is the most designated landowner with nearly 50% of land being designated SSSI/ASSI. Of this 40% have international designations. There are a large number of other sites that have significant biodiversity interest. There are also over 200 conservation groups with 3500 volunteers involved in conservation works including over 400 highly trained volunteer deer managers. As part of the sustainable development in Government obligations DE are committed to meeting SSSI and biodiversity targets and wish to work with other TMP members to enable DE to effectively monitor key mammal species. DE also wish to encourage their conservation groups to take part in national monitoring schemes and where

compatible with military priorities, would like TMP members to utilise their estate to further monitoring schemes and for the trialling of methodologies.

TMP involvement with Europe. It was agreed that an agenda item for the TMP workshop in 2007 should address how the TMP could interact with Europe and how TMP data could be used to influence conservation status assessments under the Habitats Directive. It was felt that mammals were a taxonomic group that should be monitored at the European level and that the pan-European bird monitoring initiative had unlocked funding for the NGO community and the same could potentially happen for mammals.

Website. There were no comments.

Reporting and Events. There was considerable discussion concerning the TMP reporting strategy and how it should be taken forward in the future. At present there is one product aimed at all possible users, but this approach needs to be reviewed to consider if it is an appropriate way to report results. There are some links with the issue of reporting and those of data mobilisation and access. It was suggested that in addition to the leaflet there should be a briefing note targeted at policy makers. The reporting should be presented by relevant people as much as possible, those most likely to be heard. There should also be key information available on the website and there should be information on the potential uses of the data.

It was noted that there had been some good feedback from the leaflet and that internal communication within organisations might be a bigger problem than communication within the partnership or externally. There was suggestion that parliamentary questions could raise the profile of mammal surveillance.

The conclusion was that the group needed to think about the use of resources produced by the partnership, considering whether the reporting process was achieving its aims. In order to do this the target audiences and data uses need to be identified and communication by individual organisations needs to be more effective and coordinated as well as the collective output. There should also be a way of monitoring uptake of the information output from the partnership. It was agreed that communication should be a major item for the TMP workshop.

AP1. JB to ensure that communication issues are a standing item on the Steering Group agenda in future.

TMP Co-ordinator's role. There was some discussion concerning the future of this role. Many felt that the coordinator had been very effective initially in bringing the Partnership together and that coordination had been the key to the success of the TMP. Any change in the role needed to reflect change and maturity in the group. Reporting on the work of the group was likely to become more important in the future with the Partnership playing a central role, pulling together mammal surveillance for a wide range of purposes. The type of work required would involve some administration, setting targets and objectives for the group, helping to improve volunteer management and understanding of statistical issues across schemes. Consideration was given to the suggestion of letting a contract for these services by setting aside a proportion of the budget, providing a more equal partnership rather than one organisation funding the coordinator role.

6. UK and JNCC Surveillance strategy and review of mammal surveillance effort (Lawrence Way, JNCC Programme Manager for Surveillance and Monitoring)

Lawrence Way gave a presentation on JNCC's Strategy for Surveillance, Reporting and Research and outlined the effect on JNCC's role in the mammal surveillance area.

Recommendations and comments by members of TMP on the overall strategic approach included:

- A need to explain how a strategy for Nature Conservation surveillance fits with other needs for surveillance information from other sectors. First, explain how it fits with the co-ordination of monitoring across the environment. Second, give an example at an individual scheme level that might integrate needs across Nature Conservation and other sectors.
- A need to emphasise that the UK Strategy is not trying to stop schemes meeting needs beyond nature conservation, just make sure that a basic nature conservation surveillance requirement is articulated.
- A need to make it clearer that the strategy is justifying the minimum background level of detection effort, and that specific policies and management actions will need periods of higher intensity effort or greater precision, i.e.: the strategy is not trying to co-ordinate these more detailed needs but does recognise that they exist.
- The strategy could more explicitly communicate a tiered approach, i.e.: you decide what to detect to meet the needs within the strategy, and then scale up some of the surveillance to meet more specific needs.
- Knowledge of species ecology i.e.: the availability and completeness of the understanding of species ecology, is recommended as an additional rule of thumb for selecting species for surveillance. Good knowledge implies a greater likelihood of understanding what the trends are telling us.
- Complete species coverage should no be lost as an ideal, and was recommended for mammals. However, we should be creative about how we get at least some level of surveillance for all species.

AP2. JB to circulate JNCC document on ‘Ideas for a UK nature conservation framework’ to members of the group who requested it.

AP3. Group to make comments on JNCC overall strategic approach on surveillance.

7. Mammal Surveillance workshop (Jessa Battersby, SG4.3, SG4.4).

There was agreement on the need for a workshop to look at communication issues and the uses of TMP data, target setting and international profile and coordination of the TMP.

AP4. JB to circulate draft objectives for the workshop and specific areas to cover and canvas for dates.

AP5. JB to organise workshop before March 2007

8. Update on the Surveillance and Monitoring Programme

Breeding Bird Survey and WBBS – David Noble

Close to 3,000 sites surveyed in 2006 – 85% return data on mammals. . Count data available for 8/9 common and widespread species, A report on the 2005 results is in preparation. The WBBS has been continued with BTO funding, but recently the EA has provided funding to analyse the data. The survey is still collecting data on otter water vole and mink. BTO are hoping to hold a workshop on indicators for different riparian habitats and hopes to continue collecting WBBS data in the future.

Deer Distribution survey and deer surveillance- comment from Tony Dalby-Welsh

The data have been plotted and some initial maps have been produced for the Game Fair. They are now being refined along with an output that will define the 10km squares for which there are no data. Once that is available, BDS efforts will be targeted to try to get information on those uncovered areas.

English House Condition Survey – commensal rodents element – Dave Cowan

Now an annual survey, in 03/04 8,000 properties were surveyed. Analysis of data will be carried out after the 2005/06 data have been processed, which will give a 10 year trend period. The results can be expected sometime in 2007.

Garden Mammal surveys – Jill Nelson/David Noble

Living with Mammals. This survey has been running for four years and has approximately 689 volunteers returning approximately 700 completed survey forms. (Newsletter for volunteers attached for information).

Garden BirdWatch. There is now weekly recording with some information on 28 mammal species. A paper has been written for Mammal Review providing the main results from GBW and this will be published in December.

Mammals on Roads - David Wembridge

This survey is currently in its sixth year and is ongoing with approximately 350 volunteers returning data sheets and with 10,000 sightings of mammals each year and useful surveillance data for 5-6 species. The data for 2005 will be available next year. A short newsletter is provided for the volunteers, which is focussed on the non-surveillance part of the project this year.

Hog Watch – Jill Nelson

Following concerns about hedgehog declines picked up in the MoR survey, PTES/MTUK are funding and running a nationwide survey to provide detailed information on hedgehog distribution. It was noted that even something as broad brush as MoR had provided sufficient information to warrant looking at hedgehogs more closely.

National Bat Monitoring Programme – Esther Collis

There was a short presentation on the NBMP to date. Currently the programme is in its 11th year and is delivering information on 12 bat species. Of these, lesser and greater horseshoe bats, Daubenton's, Natterer's and common pipistrelle are all significantly increasing. The others are stable at present. In addition to an annual report that is available on the BCT and TMP websites, BCT have produced a leaflet, State of the UK's bats, which is available from BCT on request. EC requested suggestions from the group for improvements to the leaflet. In 2005 1133 volunteers participated in the programme.

National Dormouse Monitoring Programme - Tony Mitchell-Jones

Work is ongoing at RHUL at present to update the trend information for this scheme. Initial analyses suggest a continued decline.

National Gamebag Census - Jonathan Reynolds

Scheme delivering surveillance information on 17 species. Report on 2004 trends available on TMP website. Assessing feasibility of automating web page updates.

Continuing to carry out housekeeping of the NGC database, including error trapping and general cleaning of data, going back to the 1900s and beyond. In the next report, the trends for rabbit, stoat and rat will be extended back to the beginning of 20th Century to assess very long-term trends. The same analysis will be undertaken for other NGC species in subsequent years.

Otter surveys - Tony Mitchell-Jones, Jean Matthews

Next round of surveys due in 2007/8, but still looking for funding. England will do the same as before, but will move to a six year cycle and is interested in carrying out power analysis of the survey to reorganise the sampling to obtain the same detection rate with a smaller sample size, in order to reduce the cost of the survey.

Red Squirrel Surveillance scoping study – comments from John Gurnell

1. The field work for this year, using baited visual transects, has been finished. A small part of the work from the north of England has not been completed; this will be taken into account in the analyses of the data.
2. The data are currently being collated and will be analysed over the next two months.
3. A final report will be written and submitted in February 2007 - a draft of the report should be ready in January.
4. Protocols for volunteers to carry out complementary studies were drawn up in April and took place over the spring/summer. The results from these will be included in the final report.
5. A representative(s) will present the results at a workshop in March/April 2007.

Small Mammal Surveillance scoping study – Simon Poulton

There was a short presentation of the proposed work. The Mammal Society, with funding from JNCC under a MoA, is carrying out a two year small mammal surveillance pilot. The aim of the pilot is to test the feasibility of the recommendations of a scoping study carried out in 2005 by TMS. The pilot will consist of two field seasons with approximately 20 expert volunteers testing a variety of methods.

Winter Mammal Monitoring – Jessa Battersby

JB advised that a proposal for funding the project next financial year had been submitted internally in Defra, but it was looking unlikely because the project was only classed as medium priority and only high priority projects were likely to be funded .

9. Data mobilisation issues – access through NBN and progress with Mammal Atlas Project (Trevor James and Jessa Battersby)

TJ advised that the Mammal Atlas project is on hold at present because of problems with putting the project proposal together and lack of funding commitment to support the work. The Mammal Society is leading on the project, working with BCT and with the NBN Trust acting as facilitator and trying to find sources of funding. The Biological Records Centre has encouraged the production of another mammal atlas, the last being published more than 10 years ago and with large gaps in the data. The intention would be to update the existing atlas and then carry out targeted surveys to fill the gaps. Unfortunately, BRC is in the process of being reorganised and there are difficulties at this point in undertaking new work. However, it may be possible to resurrect the project next year.

- 10. AOB.**
None

- 11. Date of next meeting – Tuesday 6 November 2007.**
JB to request Bristol University, BASC, BDS or BTO to Chair the meeting.