

**Third Meeting of the TMP Steering Group
Thursday 6 October 2005, 11.00am, Linnean Society Meeting
Rooms, London**

Chair: WildCRU

Those present:

Jessa Battersby, TMP Co-ordinator (JB)
Paul Bright, RHUL (PB)
Christina Buesching, WildCRU (CB)
Esther Collis, BCT (EC)
Dave Cowan, CSL (DC)
Juliet Hanmer, BCT (JH)
Melanie Hardie, JNCC (MH)
Laura Hurt, PTES (LH)
Trevor James, NBN (TJ)
Tony Mitchell-Jones, EN (TMJ)
Jill Nelson, PTES (JN)
Chris Newman, WildCRU (CN, Chair)
David Noble, BTO (DN)
Robert Raynor, SNH (RR)
Nigel Sharp, NAW (NS)
Georgette Shearer, TMS (GS)
David Wembridge, PTES & MTUK (DW)

1. *Apologies*

Elizabeth Barratt (Wildlife Trusts)
Tony Dalby-Welsh (BDS)
Matt Heydon (Defra)
David Macdonald (WildCRU)
Robbie McDonald (QUB)
Jean Matthews (CCW)
John Milburne (EHS)
Jonathon Reynolds (GCT)
Roger Trout (FC)
Richard Walmsley (EA)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of previous meeting (attached) SG2.6

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be a true record of proceedings.

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

Action 1 Done.

Action 2. Deadline passed, further comments on the website will be discussed under Agenda item 5.

Action 3. Done, a summary is in paper SG3.4.

Action 4 – 9. All done, the TMP First Report has now been published.

Action 10. Done.

4. Review of Terms of Reference and funding issues

The terms of reference for the Tracking Mammals Partnership, SG3.2, need to be agreed and signed off. TMJ noted that as the first aim of co-ordinating the approach of the Partnership is now successfully underway the terms of reference should reflect the second stage of developing and promoting the TMP further. It was also noted that the funding of surveys was an important part of the co-ordinated Partnership, ensuring there is sufficient funds so partners do not have to compete with each other over different elements of the programme. The meeting recognised the importance for securing core funding for a comprehensive suite of survey schemes. It was agreed this point needs to be made directly to Government and the devolved administrations, however as government bodies and agencies sit on the Steering Group, it was agreed that the NGO and academic partners would draw up a letter on behalf of the TMP. As the NBN Trust is getting together with Defra and country agencies to discuss the issue of funding for UK surveillance schemes, the TMP letter would aid in stressing the point further.

AP1. JB to add to the ToR aims the need to locate the resources necessary to secure a long-term comprehensive programme and stress the need to develop and promote the Partnership further. The updated ToR should then be placed on the website.

AP2. BCT to draft the letter to Government and devolved administrations, on behalf of the TMP, to highlight the need for further support and funding to ensure a long-term comprehensive programme of survey schemes.

Similarly for the TOR of the Steering Group (Paper SG3.3) under the 'Scope of joint working' section an additional aim of assessing resources through a working group needs to be added.

AP3. JB to update the ToR of the steering group as suggested above.

SG3.9 highlights the fact more funds are needed to achieve the aims of the TMP. It was suggested that the schemes at risk, i.e. those without secure funding could be stressed to highlight the issue. All figures need to be checked and where necessary updated to cover the full overhead costs as we need to be realistic about how much is currently being spent and calculate what the deficit is. JB summarised the table of SG3.9 stating where the funds came from and the likelihood of continued funding.

AP4. ALL to send JB full details of costs and information on funding for the TMP schemes to complete the metadata table.

5. Co-ordinator's report (paper SG3.4)

New partners

The proposition of the MOD joining the TMP was raised, the meeting agreed this would be a good collaboration and beneficial to the TMP as a major land owner with dedicated conservation groups. The TMP would like to encourage the MOD conservation groups to join in with TMP schemes and share their data. Ian Davidson-Watts would be the representative to sit on the TMP Steering Group.

TMP Focus Groups

The Focus groups have resumed meeting and the minutes will be placed on the TMP website. The Riparian and mustelids focus group was working well and a proposal had been produced by BCT for multi-species surveillance of riparian habitats. The deer surveillance focus group meeting had been poorly attended and there was no general agreement on the value of UK level surveillance deer. An action from the meeting was for JB to investigate why certain organisations were not attending these meetings before further progress can be made.

The Volunteer and Data Management sub-group had their first meeting in more than a year and agreed a ToR and a workplan. The next meeting is planned for February 2006

TMP Website

The proposed updates to the TMP website were detailed in SG3.5, including the development of new pages and information and possible password section for the TMP representatives to add information and updates of surveys, such as updating the metadata sheet of the surveys, as summarised in SG3.6. The meeting agreed that JB had the authority to update the site without the need for sign off process with the group, with the exception of potentially sensitive or contentious material.

TMP First Report

It is unknown how many people have downloaded the report from the TMP website, but approximately 150 copies have been sold by NHBS and 100 by TMS. Over 300 have been circulated to relevant organisations.

The final draft of the Volunteer Management Handbook has been produced and will be placed on both the TMP and NBN websites. The NBN has interest in the handbook for providing advice on volunteer participation to a wider audience than the mammal community and may look at improving the design of the publication.

The meeting was reminded that copies of reports of the different schemes should be circulated to all partners of the TMP.

Co-ordinators work programme

See paper SG3.7, all actions have either been carried out or are in the process of being carried out. The discussions focused on the data of the surveillance schemes being sent to NBN. The NBN was noted as not the most appropriate place to present the surveillance data. However the records can and are being used well for distributional information. One issue is the

additional cost of preparing data for the NBN Gateway, which may not have been included in specifications for surveillance contracts and this subject is under discussion at JNCC. For future contracts which stipulate the data should be made available for NBN the data manipulation cost needs to be considered in contract bids. TJ was keen to ensure that adding data to the NBN was not seen as a burden, but suggested that the NBN could act as a means for the partners to communicate raw data and makes them available for everyone to use. The NBN is still undergoing development to allow it to be a service for online data entry and possibly provide analysis tools, which will have benefits to all the partners. JB stressed that the surveillance results of many schemes were reported in other ways and often placing data on the NBN was a good will gesture with additional costs involved.

It was noted that a longer term plan is needed for the next 5 years of the TMP and consideration given to producing the next TMP report.. JB suggested a workshop should be organised to flesh out the plan and to discuss areas such as policy, reasons for surveillance, where to concentrate effort, improving surveillance methods etc.

AP5. JB to organise a TMP workshop to discuss the next 5 years of TMP, possibly presenting the talk given to other symposia and inviting someone from NBN Trust to discuss ways of populating and making better use of the NBN.

6. *TMP first report – Review of report content and structure. Future reporting process*

JB was praised for her hard work and effort in producing an excellent first report on behalf of the TMP. The next major report is planned for 2010 and there is a need for some early decision on how the next report will look.

AP6. All to send comments to JB by the end of the year about the First Report and what improvements or additional information should appear in the next major report in 2010.

There will be an annual update on mammal population trends and a small annual report, the format of which needs to be agreed. JB suggested using a similar design to the leaflet used to summarise the information of the first report for the volunteers. This would detail new surveys, have 4 pages of updates of the schemes, the centre page with species trends and the last page with the website details of the TMP organisations.

A discussion followed on the proposed contents of the annual report. It was felt that annual updates to trend surveys were unlikely to show much more than the first report and there was the complication of finding a suitable time to incorporate all the survey information for 2005. Many surveys are run at different times of the year and a true update of all the schemes for 2005 could only be put together in October of each year. There was a suggestion of using this annual update to provide information to volunteers and target areas of poor coverage, the need for more volunteers and coverage of habitats. A separate report should be produced specifically for the government containing annual trends and demonstrating where the money is being spent, highlighting value for money and where there are gaps to be filled. It was agreed that further thought was required on how to deliver the two types of information.

AP7. JB to put together ideas on how to deliver this annual update information to both government and volunteers.

AP8. ALL to send JB ideas and ask volunteers what sort of update information they would like to receive and further suggestion of options.

7. Update on the Surveillance and Monitoring Programme

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and Waterways Breeding Bird Survey (WBBS) - David Noble

Recently sent out the updates of trends to the TMP, the report included a number of interpolated maps which are being done for each of the species covered in the BBS on a rolling programme. Ways of comparing the WBBS and BBS data are being looked into for otter, mink and water vole. A report on the different models for analysis should be produced in the next couple of months.

Deer Distribution survey and deer surveillance – Tony Dalby-Welsh

Tony Dalby-Welsh from the British Deer society (BDS) sent an update on progress with the Great British Deer Survey. BDS are in the process of entering data into the main databases and looking at the gaps and the amount of effort needed to fill them. The first results should be available for the next meeting of the Deer Focus Group.

English House Condition Survey (EHCS) – Dave Cowan

The report of the 2001 survey is now available on the Defra website and is the first report looking at temporal trends. Brown rat has increased significantly from 1.7% in 1996 to 2.9% in 2001 in urban and rural settings (not suburban). The 2002 survey data will be analysed in the next couple of months.

Garden Mammal surveys – Jill Nelson/Georgette Shearer/ David Noble

Living with Mammals (JN) – 2004 survey is complete with 700 volunteers taking part, fewer than last year. The first results of analysis will be produced later this year and reported to the volunteers early next year.

Garden Bird Watch (DN) – is continuing to collect mammal information on 5 - 6000 gardens. 2005 will provide the first full set of survey results for this scheme, which will be put on the website. So far fox is the only species for which seasonal abundance can be determined.

TMS Garden Mammal Survey (GS) has not been undertaken this year as they have concentrated on developing small mammal schemes.

Mammals on Roads/Tracking Elusive Mustelids – Paul Bright

MoR – power analysis has been carried out and it is possible to detect amber alert changes in hedgehog, rabbit and grey squirrel in UK and at country level. For badger the minimum detectable change is 30% in England. The next phase is to look at other variables, such as traffic flow, to assess their impact on the results.

TEM – the track tunnels field trials have been completed (need a minimum of 20 per tetrad). Weasel was the most recorded species, in 6% of tunnels, followed by stoat, polecat and rabbit. Very few hedgehogs were recorded. This technique has very low power to detect species so it would be difficult to justify using this as a method for detecting trends.

However, it may be valuable as a validation tool for other surveys such as the NGC, looking at key predators in the wider countryside.

National Bat Monitoring Programme – Esther Collis

Country trends are in the 2004 annual report that will soon be available online (BCT website). Significant increases have been detected in greater horseshoe bat, Daubenton's and Natterer's hibernation surveys. The bats and roadside survey report, an additional pilot project run by BCT and PTES will be available by January 2006. This survey was found useful in picking up Leisler's and Nathusius' pipistrelles (currently unrecorded on the NBMP suite of surveys). EN are funding an additional survey on barbastelles, as well as some work to standardise the colony count information data for greater horseshoe bat, which should be completed soon.

National Dormouse Monitoring Programme Paul Bright /Tony Mitchell-Jones

The number of sites is still steadily increasing and the power of the survey is high. 2004 trends will be published soon.

National Game Bag Census - Jonathan Reynolds

Updates including the trends and maps for the deer species covered were distributed to the meeting. The results from the NGC broadly agreed with those obtained in the BBS for the same time period, improving confidence in the results of both surveys. There had been concerns over the BBS results, which had shown a decline in both fallow and red deer since 1997, contrary to the generally held view among deer experts of increasing deer populations. The NGC results showed a steady increase in populations since the 1960s, but with some fluctuations and evidence of decline in the 1990s. These results confirmed the necessity for long term surveillance to obtain an accurate picture of population dynamics rather than trying to draw conclusions from a snapshot in time.

Otter surveys - Country Agencies/EA

Scotland Otter survey – completed for 03/04 data collection round. 1376 10km squares were surveyed of which 92% were positive for otter. In the 1st VWT survey in the late 1970's, this figure was 57%. The biggest increase has been in parts of the south of Scotland. All the designated sites (where otters are one of the qualifying interests) were monitored (44 SACs and 1 SSSI) and all but one were in favourable condition. The report will be published soon.

Winter Mammal Monitoring - David Noble

Following production of the final report, a business case has been put forward within Defra to provide continued funding for this project. Comments from TMP organisations on the report had been requested by Defra, but very few had been forthcoming. JB requested additional comments from the group to be forwarded to Defra as soon as possible. See item 8 for further debate on the subject of report review procedure.

Red squirrels

See the update sent from John Gurnell.

Small mammals (Georgette Shearer)

TMS are half way through a 4 month contract and currently on the design phase of setting up a small mammal monitoring scheme, the final report is due before Christmas and will be circulated to the group.

Data validation study

CB advised that work was continuing in Wytham Woods with WildCRU to investigate volunteers' survey and field skills abilities. As the number of deer in the woods are known the volunteers were asked to monitor deer numbers based on dropping counts which worked well. The key is to ensure that they do not get bored. Additional results so far found that bank vole populations suffer from the high deer numbers due to over grazing, but as the deer population is decreasing the bank vole population is recovering. This year Wytham also had its highest recorded badger cub number, >80 (average ~30).

8. Report Review Procedure

Implicit in the TMP terms of Reference was the role of the TMP in deciding whether a pilot scheme, once tried and tested, should be included as an established part of the Surveillance and Monitoring Programme.. However, an issue had arisen as a result of the size and complexity of the final report on the WMM pilot survey, which would require a substantial amount of staff time to review, something in short supply for many of the TMP representatives. There was also the issue of a potential conflict of interests for organisations running one scheme and assessing another that might be competing for funding within the Partnership. JB noted that the TMP consisted of experts in the field of mammal surveillance and it would be difficult to find sufficient experts outside the TMP to carry out the necessary review work. There was also the issue of the TMP existing for the very purpose of assessing the value of schemes and some input from TMP members was, therefore, essential.

Clarification was required of the expected role of the TMP members in cases such as the WMM project. It was noted that there is a difference between peer review and organisational critique and expert opinion. Therefore it may be best to have different approaches and a two stage process in some cases. If a contract has been let and a detailed scientific review of the reported results is required then it could be paid for by the organisation letting the contract. . An internal review of the scheme carried out by a small reviewing group of experts in the field could then assess the value of the scheme for the TMP. A critique based on their expert judgement could then be presented to the TMP Steering Group to make the final decision.

9. Mammal Atlas Project

The first steering group meeting for this project has been held and the minutes have been circulated. The Mammal Society is leading on this project and several of the TMP organisations are involved in developing and potentially providing some funding for the work. The aim is to publish an atlas covering all terrestrial mammals in the UK and Ireland, hopefully with some measure of density as well as distribution, with a dynamic,

comprehensive database of UK mammals available through the NBN Gateway. Currently the project is still at the initial stage of accessing funding to employ a project officer for a minimum of 5 years to source and compile the data.

10. AOB

There was no further business discussed.

11. Date of Next Meeting

It was decided that as the individual representatives of the Partnership have changed since its inception it would be better to have the rotating chair selected by alphabetical order of the organisations rather than surnames.

Therefore the next meeting will be chaired by BCT and held on 2nd November 2006 – venue to be confirmed.