

Harvest Mouse, Llygoden yr ŷd *Micromys minutus*



Background

Weighing just 6 grammes as an adult, the harvest mouse is Britain's smallest rodent. It is associated with a wide range of grassland-type habitats, from meadows to grassy hedgerows, reedbeds and riparian grassland, but can also be found in areas of scrub containing brambles and herbs. Breeding nests are built by the female above the ground in the 'stalk zone', and are usually woven out from the leaves of tall grasses. During winter, when vegetation has died back, harvest mice spend most of their time on the ground.

Harvest mice are found in England and Wales, but not in Northern Ireland or Scotland. Following a national survey in the 1970s, harvest mice appeared to be widely distributed, but a repeat

survey in 1996/97 showed a substantial decline in the number of sites still occupied. As a result of concern about the decline in populations, the harvest mouse was added to the UK BAP list and the Section 42 list in 2007.

Survey effort in Wales has been low and so knowledge of their distribution and status is poor.

Status in Wales

| | |
|------------|--|
| Range | Unknown in Wales. There is currently insufficient data to give a baseline range or set targets |
| Population | Unknown in Wales. |

Possible Threats

- Habitat loss / degradation - management practice: Demise of traditional agricultural and land management practices and an increase in grazing;
- Habitat loss / degradation - infrastructure development: Housing infrastructure;
- Global warming: Climate change;
- Habitat loss / degradation - agriculture: Loss of hedgerows;
- Predation: with a lower population the effects of predation is escalated.

Legal status

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, S42 species of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in Wales

UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species

Wales BAP targets (To be agreed in 2014 following collation of existing data)

| Code | Target type | Target | Units | 2012 | 2015 | 2020 | 2025 |
|---|------------------|--|-----------------------|------|------|------|------|
| MmiT1 | Range | Maintain the current range of harvest mouse in Wales | Occupied 10km squares | | | | |
| MmiT2 | Population Range | Gather baseline data to inform population and range | | | | | |
| Initial surveys to be carried out focussing on those areas suggested in recent COFNOD report (Tapping 2013). Biodiversity Officers to undertake annual nest search surveys. | | | | | | | |

Actions

| Code | Action Type | Action | Lead | Ecosystem Group | Delivery Agents |
|-------|-------------------------|---|--|------------------|--|
| MmiA1 | Survey and Monitoring | Develop and implement a survey scheme to determine harvest mouse distribution. | The Mammal Society (TMS) (Becky Clews-Roberts) | | TMS; LBAPs; Wildlife Trust Wales (WTW); Mammals in a Sustainable Environment (MISE). |
| MmiA2 | Surveillance | Develop a national surveillance system with sufficient power to detect population changes at an agreed level. | The Mammal Society (Becky Clews-Roberts) | | TMS; LBAP's; WTW; MISE. |
| MmiA3 | Research | Promote and undertake studies into understanding harvest mouse ecology and habitat preferences in Wales. Identify core areas and habitats for the species in Wales. | The Mammal Society (Becky Clews-Roberts) | Lowland Farmland | TMS; LBAPs; Universities |
| MmiA4 | Communication, Advisory | Develop habitat management and landscape scale conservation guidance for harvest mice in Wales and promote the appropriate habitat management. | The Mammal Society (Becky Clews-Roberts) | Lowland Farmland | WTW; LBAPs; TMS |
| MmiA5 | Communication, Advisory | Use Glastir to encourage and support the creation and long-term maintenance of farmland habitats that support harvest mouse populations | Natural Resources Wales | Lowland Farmland | Welsh Government |

Issues affecting implementation

All actions – some resources have been secured to support the rollout of harvest mouse volunteer surveys in Wales by the MISE project and The Mammal Society. However, further funds will be required to continue this into the future and support the management of a national scheme.

MmiA3 – This research ideally needs to build on at least baseline national survey data.

MmiA4 & 5 – Dependent on the completion of actions Hm1 and Hm2.

LBAP areas where action is required (shaded yellow)

All LBAP areas



References/Links

Tapping, R. (2013) *Harvest Mice in Wales – where might they be?* CCW Science Report No. 1036

Natural Resources Wales (2013). *Harvest mice in Wales. Introduction to the report 'Harvest mice in Wales – where might they be?'*

The Mammal Society <http://www.mammal.org.uk/>

Mammals in a Sustainable Environment (MISE)
<http://www.miseproject.ie>
<http://www.vwt.org.uk/our-work/projects/mise-project>

UK BAP Reporting (BARS) <http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk/>