

Norfolk, U.K - Big Mammal Day – 1st October 2014

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I had been thinking about attempting a big mammal day for some time and when I was struggling to sleep at 1am I decided to go for it!

First stop was Whitlingham Country Park on the edge of my home city, Norwich, where I was quickly watching a trio of pipistrelle bat species: Nathusius', Soprano and Common, along with a Western Hedgehog foraging in undergrowth by the River Yare. Leaving the country park and heading back through the city I saw a Red Fox cross a street, two Rabbits and then a Daubenton's Bat flew along the river. Satisfied with some quick results from my home city it was time to head southwest to Thetford Forest and the Brecks. Reeves' Muntjac and Brown Hare were easily seen and whilst my Water Shrew stakeout failed to deliver the target, (standing in a muddy stream next to a rotting deer carcass for over an hour at 3am is not a particularly enjoyable experience!) a Brown Rat scuttling by was species number 10 for the day. Western Barbastelle bat, Common Noctule bat and Wood Mouse were next on the list and groups of 8 Red Deer and 7 Roe Deer were surprisingly easy. With daylight fast approaching I headed to a Norfolk Wildlife Trust woodland reserve where I had set down 90 Longworth mammal traps the previous evening. Whilst I failed to catch Yellow-necked Mouse, a species I had caught here previously and a very difficult species to see in Norfolk, I did catch a single Bank Vole and many more Wood Mice. A Grey Squirrel was also seen here. Heading back towards Norwich for breakfast I stopped to collect a further 6 mammal traps at a site I had not previously trapped at and to my great surprise, given the habitat, I had caught two Yellow-necked Mice! So I had 18 species before breakfast (9am) and things were going very well! However, I had to do some work in the office and it wasn't until 2pm that I got outside again. I soon added Brown Long-eared Bat at a site I had been working on (as a consultant ecologist) then Fallow Deer very nearby to make it 20 species for the day. I proceeded to head east to Great Yarmouth where I was soon 'scoping up Grey Seal and Common Seal on the sandbanks at Scroby Sands. Moving north I quickly added Natterer's Bat at another of my work sites then Common Shrew at Happisburgh, where despite perfect viewing conditions, I couldn't pick up any Harbour Seals – they just weren't there that day! Heading into the Broads as dusk approached I soon added Chinese Water Deer (species 25) but dipped on Otter. I then headed home for some dinner and despite my good total and potential for other species such as Serotine bat, Water Vole and Otter, I called it a day at 8pm.

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