

Survey using Hedgehog Tunnel and Trail Cameras on Varteg plots – 2015

Purpose

Informal surveys of the various tree plots to see what mammals could be detected.

Footprint tunnels and trail cameras, also known as camera traps, are non-invasive tools to look for the presence of mammals (and other creatures). They can be used together to help identify which animals leave which footprint tracks.

Method

- Hedgehog tunnel baited with a mix of birdseed, dried mealworms and sliced hotdog sausages. Raspberries were also used! Any foods suitable for insectivorous, omnivorous and herbivorous animals could be used.
- Placed along linear feature that animals might use to move along e.g. a run in the undergrowth, a change in the slope, a change in vegetation, beside a fence or wall.
- Place camera nearby, pointed at one of the entrances, either near ground level or higher up looking down.
- Mark position with coloured wool/string and/or record with GPS.
- Tunnel and cameras checked each morning.
- Tunnel and cameras repositioned each day, refreshing A4 paper, bait and ink if necessary.

Results

1. Sunday afternoon, 19/7/15, in Eirwen plot, SO 256 057. Checked 20/7/15. Nothing detected. Under dead rose thicket, on run, surrounded by tall trees.
2. Monday afternoon, 20/7/15, in Sheila plot, SO 257 057. Checked 21/7/15. Many prints of small rodents (mouse/vole). No camera trap had been deployed. On bare ground under bushes surrounded by tall trees.
3. Tuesday afternoon, 21/7/15, in Sheila plot, SO 257 057. Just scattered bait where tunnel had been and put Pat's camera up. Checked 22/7/15. Many photos – best of which show wood mouse and another of a blackbird. So strong possibility of prints being of wood mouse.
4. Tuesday afternoon, 21/7/15, in Cariad, SO 2555 0575. Tunnel and my camera on grass beside heather, gorse and sparse trees. Checked 22/7/15. Nothing detected.
5. Wednesday afternoon, 22/7/15, in Pan, SO 2556 0571. Tunnel and both cameras on grass under tall trees. Some prints of small rodents (mouse/vole) and a few of possible shrew (as smaller). No photos of animals.

Equipment

- Hedgehog tunnel

- A4 paper
- Black poster paint powder
- Cooking oil in closed jar
- Paintbrush/sponge/spoon to apply ink
- Masking tape to be inked
- Paperclips to fix paper
- Bait of boxes of birdseed, dried mealworms, meat, fruit
- Camera trap with batteries and SD card

Improvements for another year

- Use sealable jar for oil
- Use plain unused A4, not used on one side as shows through
- Check direction of camera more carefully
- Print out example animal prints from online guides
- Try to make the camera settings so that not over-exposed at night.

Other

The skeleton of, probably, a rabbit was discovered at the base of one of the trees in Eirwen where we were measuring.

Hedgehog tunnel constructed with Wilts Mammal Group for use in local Hedgehog Surveys. Online links for construction, print identification etc.:

http://www.mammal.org.uk/footprint_tunnel_survey and <http://ptes.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Guidance-for-detecting-hedgehogs-using-tracking-tunnels.pdf>

Kip D'Aucourt 26th July 2015