

Survey using Hedgehog Tunnel and Trail Cameras on Varteg plots – 2016

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 peanuts. 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, 24/7/16, on path by 'garden' above Syrinx plot, SO 2556 0567. Checked 25/7/16. Camera triggered by mustelid moving along path at 02:57. Judged to be the size of a small cat and is perhaps a polecat or a mink or maybe a stoat. Wood mouse/vole prints at far end of tunnel away from camera. In grass where animals have made a slight path (i.e. the rough line of the public foot path across the site.) Amongst medium-sized, scattered trees including willow that camera was attached to. Before the camera was set a half-eaten mole was discovered a few yards away with only the lower back, tail and back legs remaining.
2. Monday afternoon, 25/7/16, in similar position under willow tree. Checked 26/7/16. Many prints of small rodents (mouse/vole) and some indistinct camera shots of mouse/vole by tunnel.
3. Tuesday afternoon, 26/7/16, in same position under willow. Checked 27/7/16. All the peanuts had been eaten and again there were many mouse/vole prints and indistinct shots.
4. Wednesday afternoon, 27/7/16, in Syrinx, SO 2557 0565. Tunnel and camera in undergrowth under tall trees, mainly alder. Many prints of small rodents (mouse/vole) and many shots, one of small eyes in the tunnel and another possibly showing the ears of a wood mouse.

Equipment

- Hedgehog tunnel
- A4 paper
- Black poster paint powder mixed with cooking oil in closed container
- Spoon to apply ink
- Masking tape to be inked
- Paperclips to fix paper
- Bait of birdseed, dried mealworms and peanuts
- Camera trap with batteries and SD card

Other

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>

and mustelid information from Vincent Wildlife Trust www.vwt.org.uk

Kip D'Aucourt 1st August 2016