

'New Volunteer' event overnight from Thursday 3 April 2025 into midday Friday 4 April 2025 in Lower Wood, Weston Colville - Peter Pilbeam, Lorraine Jenkins, Duncan Mackay (Warden of the reserve) and 15 members/potential members of the Cambridgeshire Mammal Group.

3 April 2025.

Twenty (20) Longworth traps were set to catch with bedding (hay) and bait (oats, excess casters and excess diced apple) at various locations (alongside a ride between coppice plots) in Lower Wood from about 6.15pm on Thursday 3 April 2025. The temperature at the time was around 14 degrees C.

An additional six (6) traps were set up in and around a recently coppiced plot.

Two tracking tunnels were set up in likely locations for small mammals and hedgehogs. Near one a trail cam was set up to observe any mammal action.

A second trail cam was set up to observe any activity along a recently re-opened track away from the tunnels.

While the above were taking place the Warden gave extensive details of the wood, its management, and its problems.

4 April 2025.

All twenty-six (26) traps were opened from 8am on Friday 4 April 2025. All except one had not been tripped and all were empty, with no signs of any small mammals having entered (i.e. no droppings on or in the traps and no tunnels made in the hay). The one tripped trap was thought to have been accidentally tripped when being set out.

[For information - any trapped animals would have been identified to species level, weighed and sexed before being released immediately where they were caught - the traps would then have been removed.]

The trail cam photos were checked - no mammals had been recorded.

One of the tracking tunnels had bank vole tracks.

After opening the traps and checking the tunnels and trail cams the group went round much of the rest of the reserve to look for tracks and signs of (wild) mammals. Tracks of muntjac (and a few droppings), roe and fallow were seen and possible fallow fraying of a woody stem. One (1) live roe deer was glimpsed briefly. Cracked hazel nuts and dreys indicated the presence of grey squirrels, and molehills and sub-surface-level mole tunnels were found. While finding the first trap to open it a harvest mouse nest was found.

Non-mammals - a large number of bee flies were seen and several species of butterflies. Plant-wise - of particular note oxlips were coming into full flower (despite being browsed by muntjac in places), and lots of wood anemones and male and female clones of Dog's Mercury (an indicator species of ancient woodland) were seen. Large quantities of King Alfred's Cakes (fungal fruiting bodies) were seen on decaying ash timbers.

The records of mammals (at least) will be entered on iRecord.

The weather overnight and when the traps were checked was sunny with patchy cloud, cold, breezy, and dry.

Peter Pilbeam
6 April 2025

After note - the Warden set out six (6) traps on the evening of 4 April - one (1) bank vole was trapped.