

Harvest Mouse (*Micromys minutus*)



1. Our Aims

- Identify the overall distribution of the species, including issuing a public appeal for sightings and holding public field meetings to search for nests.
- Maintain or increase the amount of suitable habitat in Havering, such as by giving advice to landowners.

2. Introduction

The harvest mouse is widespread in England, south of central Yorkshire, and also occurs in Wales primarily in the coastal regions. It is widely distributed across much of Europe and Asia, even reaching Japan.

Harvest mice live in any area of tall grassy vegetation, including rough grassland, reeds, rushes, sedges, cereal crops, hedgerows, roadside verges, young plantations, scrubland, brambles and salt marshes. Changes in agricultural practices since the Second World War, however, have greatly reduced the amount of habitat available to the species. The number of sites where it occurs and the size of the total population have been significantly reduced. Worst affected areas include arable habitats in the south of England where 85% of sites with suitable habitat have disappeared and in East Anglia with a 65% loss. The main reason for the decline of the species may be the loss of field margins and wet habitats.

The presence of harvest mice can easily be detected during the autumn and early winter by searching for its characteristic tennis ball-sized summer nests in the stalk zone of tall vegetation. Despite this, and even allowing for the losses described above, the species remains considerably under-recorded.

3. Current Status

Little accurate information is available about the true distribution of this species in Havering, but what is available indicates that Havering contains a significant part of the total population in Greater London, and has the largest number of sites with this species of any London borough.

4. Factors Affecting the Species

Changes in agricultural practices since the Second World War have greatly reduced the amount of habitat available to the species. The principal reason for its decline may be the loss of field margins and wet habitats.

5. Current Action

There is no current action being undertaken for harvest mouse in either Greater London or the London Borough of Havering, other than the collection of occasional casual records and their incorporation into the County Mammal Database for future publication in the forthcoming London Mammal Atlas.

6. Contact

Havering's Lead Partner for this species is London Mammal Group.

Contact: Clive Herbert
tel. (020) 8440 6314