

# NATIONAL SMALL MAMMAL MONITORING SCHEME

## SPRING & AUTUMN 2010 SURVEYS



Bank Vole by John Rae

by  
**Berwick Wildlife Group**

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## **A Report on the 2010 National Small Mammal Monitoring Scheme**

### **Acknowledgements**

This work grew out of a conversation in 2009 between John Rae of Berwick Wildlife Group and Veronica Carnell of the Northumbria Mammal Group, during which it transpired that the Mammal Society were undertaking a national small mammal monitoring scheme.

John contacted Simon Poulton of the Mammal Society and obtained details of the scheme. Berwick Wildlife Group decided it wanted to take part in the survey. During 2010 a programme of surveys were undertaken in two tetrads in May and November.

The following members of the Group took part in the fieldwork:

Fiona Aungier, Stephen Block, Molly Hardie, John Inglis, Jenny Prince, Sally & John Rae and Enid Turnbull.

Credit should go to all who took part in the two intensive periods of surveying with at least one activity being undertaken every day.

Finally we would like to thank the following people for readily giving permission for the surveys to go ahead –

- Mr and Mrs MacPherson of Castle Hills Farm, for the survey in Tommy the Millers Field.
- Mr Andrew Ayre, for the survey on Mill Farm.
- Northumberland County Council for the survey in the Plantation.
- Mr John Whiteford, Borewell Farm, the manager of the land for Greenwich Hospitals, for the surveys on Cocklawburn Dunes.

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### Aims of the Surveys

“Within the UK there has been an urgent need to establish a multi-species monitoring programme that can provide long-term data on small mammal population trends to inform sustainable land management and conservation decisions” *National Small Mammal Monitoring Scheme Volunteer Handbook - Mammal Society*. The Mammal Society’s National Small Mammal Monitoring Scheme has been developed to collect this data.

Due to the very limited information known about small mammals in north Northumberland, the Mammal Society were very keen for the Berwick Wildlife Group to take part in their scheme.

15 tetrads (2km x 2km) were randomly generated by the Mammal society. Two tetrads were chosen by BWG to survey. Both tetrads are well known to us as BWG have undertaken both small mammal and butterfly transect surveys on them. Also the tetrads have very different habitats, with NU04J, Cocklawburn Dunes being mainly dune grassland with some marshy areas, spoil material and scrubby wild rose, whilst NT95W includes TtMF, a varied habitat of dry, semi-improved grass and scrub land with wet flushes on a steep south-facing slope, as well as deciduous woodland at the Plantation and “wildlife friendly” farmland at Mill Farm.

The aim of the surveys is to build up a picture of changes over time, without introducing variations due to different sites and to pass this information on to the Mammal Society

The same tetrads/sites/transects are to be monitored for years to come.



A friendly bank vole.

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**Summary of surveys undertaken during 2010**

**NU04J**

<b>Bait-tube transect 1</b>	<b>Cocklawburn Dunes</b>
<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
Faeces recovered from 7 tubes. (Awaiting the results of DNA testing)	Faeces recovered from all tubes. (Awaiting the results of DNA testing)

<b>Field Vole Sign transect 1</b>	<b>Cocklawburn Dunes</b>
<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
Evidence of field voles in 8 quadrats of the transect. Area heavily grazed. All sign old.	Evidence of field voles in 7 quadrats of the transect. Area heavily grazed. All sign old.

<b>Low Density Live trapping 1</b>	<b>Cocklawburn Dunes</b>
<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
1 Wood Mouse 3 Common Shrew	3 Bank Vole 6 Wood Mouse

**NT95W**

<b>Field Vole Sign transect 1</b>	<b>Tommy the Miller's Field</b>
<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
Evidence of field voles in 8 quadrats of the transect.	Evidence of field voles in 5 quadrats of the transect.

<b>Low Density Live trapping 1</b>	<b>The Plantation</b>
<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
3 Bank Vole 5 Wood Mouse	1 Bank Vole 6 Wood Mouse

<b>Low Density Live trapping 2</b>	<b>Mill Farm</b>
<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
7 Bank Vole	5 Bank Vole 1 Wood Mouse 2 Field Vole

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**Bait-tubes at Cocklawburn NU04J**



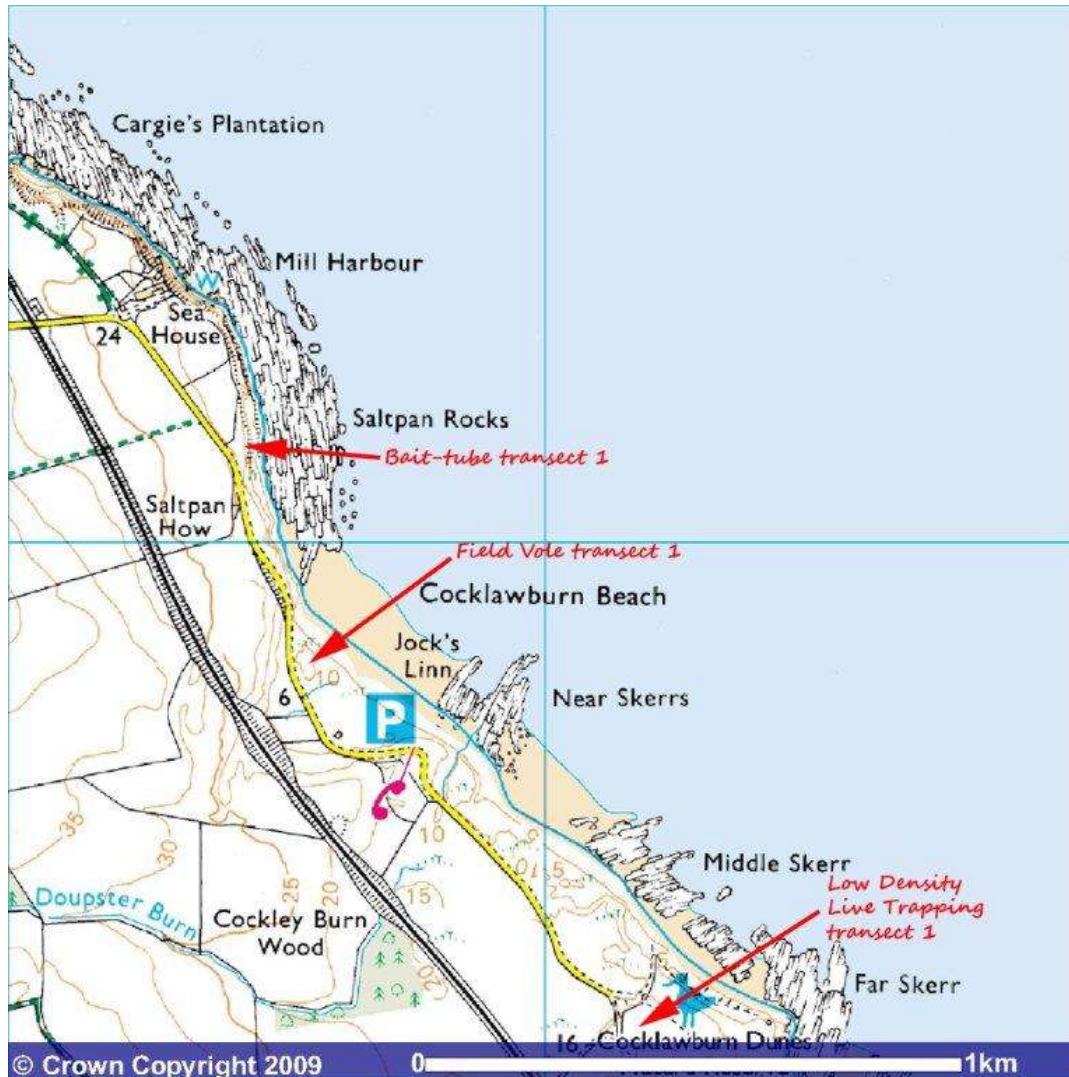
**Everyone busy at Mill Farm NT95W**

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## Description of Surveyed Sites

### **Tetrad NU04J - Cocklawburn Dunes**

This tetrad covering Cocklawburn Dunes is situated on the coast 5km south of the river Tweed at approx. NU 028 485



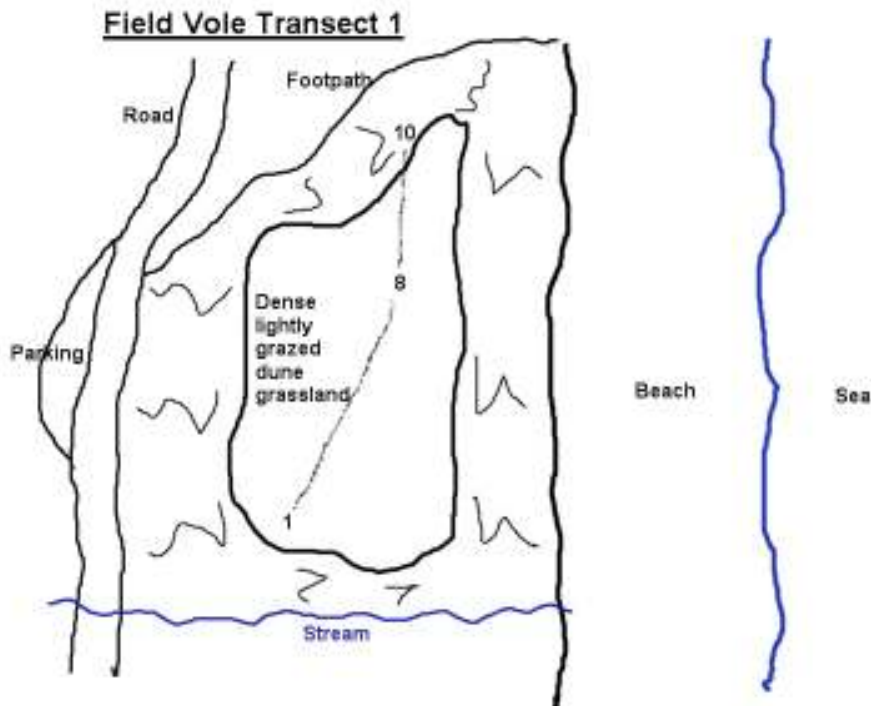
**Location map of the survey area.**

Although at first glance the area is normal dune grassland (newest grassland near the sea) and rough pasture, the site includes lime kiln spoil heaps, an old brick pit, clay areas, tracks, etc. as well as a natural dune. It is part of the Lindisfarne Site of Special Scientific Interest (and is contiguous with the Lindisfarne National Nature Reserve which covers the dune and intertidal areas as far north as Cheswick Black Rocks).

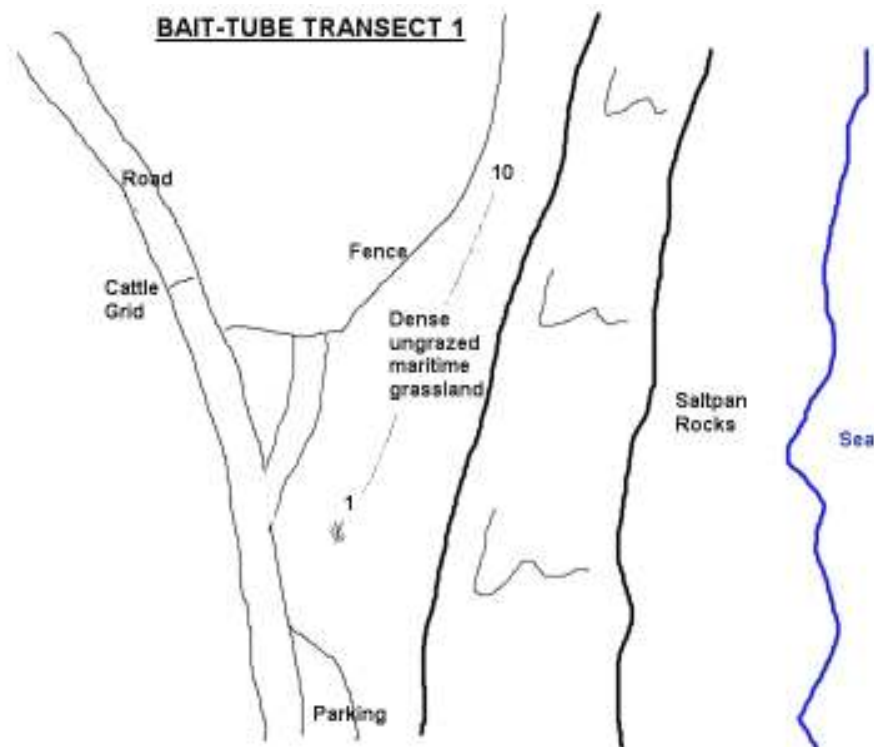
The area is the subject of an Environmental Stewardship Agreement, including light grazing by Aberdeen Angus cattle, the effects of which are being monitored by Natural England and Berwick Wildlife Group.

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The **Field Vole transect 1** survey was undertaken in an area of slack dune grassland lying between the road, a small stream and Cocklawburn Beach.

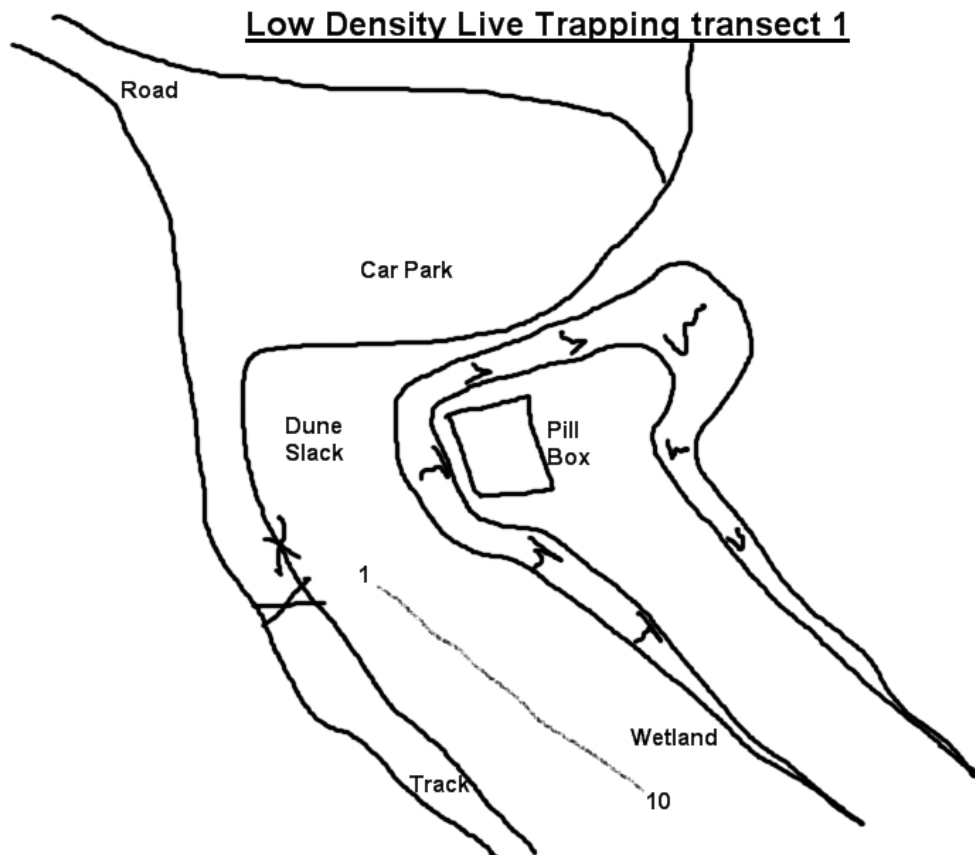


The **Bait-tube transect 1** survey was in an area of dense ungrazed maritime grassland lying between the road and stock field, and the top of the cliff dropping down to Saltpan rocks and the sea.



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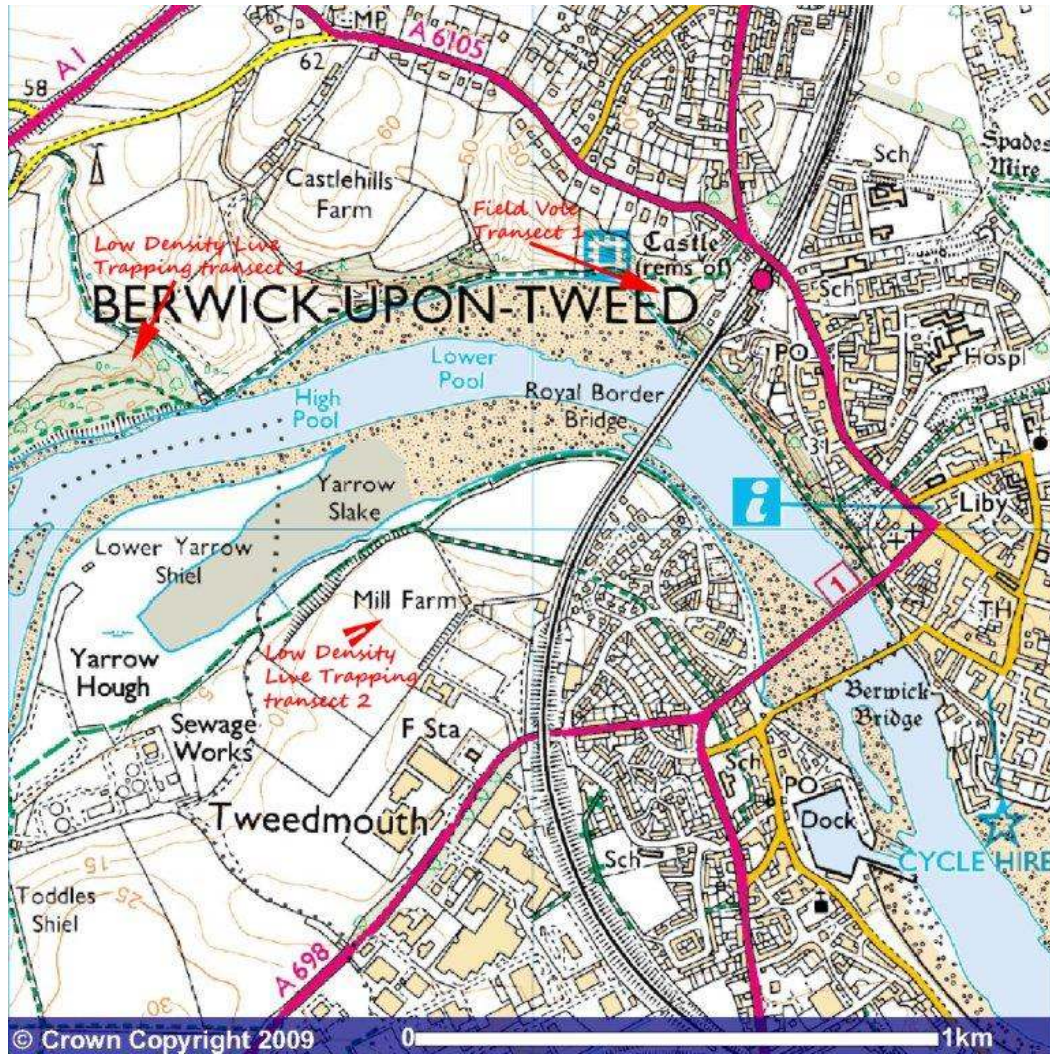
The **Low Density Live Trapping transect 1** survey followed parallel to the base of the slope on the southwest side of an artificial incline built in the early part of the 19th C to enable tipping of lime into railway wagons, and in World War II was used for a raised bunker and gun emplacement.



The habitat is mature dune grassland and rough pasture, marsh and limestone spoil with some shrubby wild rose. Very variable substrate and hence varied flora.

**Tetrad NT95W – Outskirts of Berwick-upon-Tweed**

This tetrad lies just south of Berwick-upon-Tweed and covers either side of the River Tweed. Outside of the urban area the habitat is varied with the river environment, grazed and ungrazed grassland, two areas of mixed woodland, and large areas planted with a conservation mix.



**Location map of the survey area.**

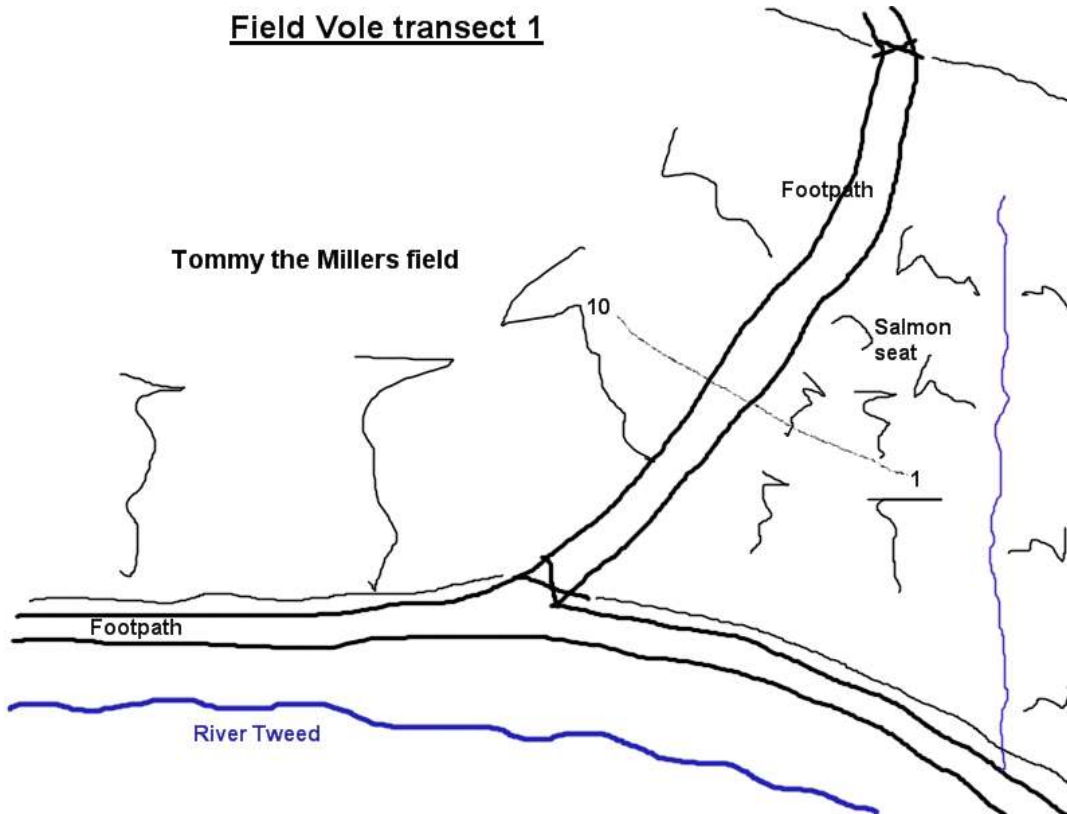
Details of the three transects surveyed:

**The Field Vole transect 1** survey was undertaken in Tommy the Millers field, an area that Berwick Wildlife Group have surveyed for small mammals previously.

The field is situated on the north shore of the River Tweed, just upstream of the Royal Border Railway Bridge, and below Castle Terrace. It is south facing and is sheltered from north winds and is exposed to the sun throughout the day. Much of the ground underfoot has been pitted by the hooves of grazing cattle, although the grazing is light and the grassland is still tussocky. The habitat consists of dry, semi-improved grass and scrubland with wet flushes on a steep south-facing slope.

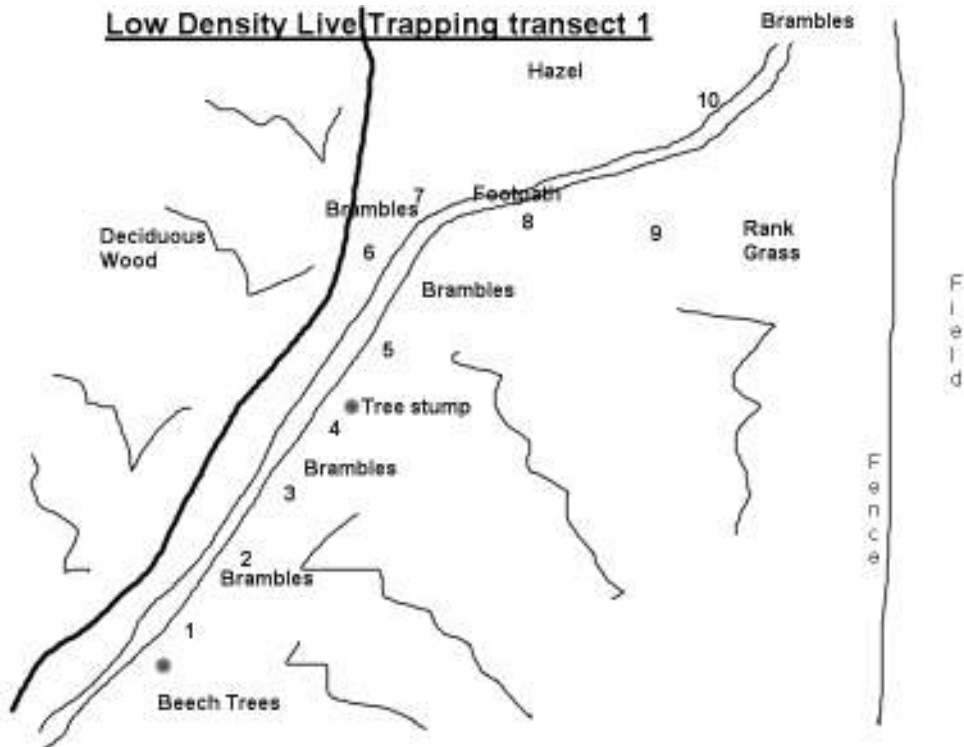
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## Field Vole transect 1



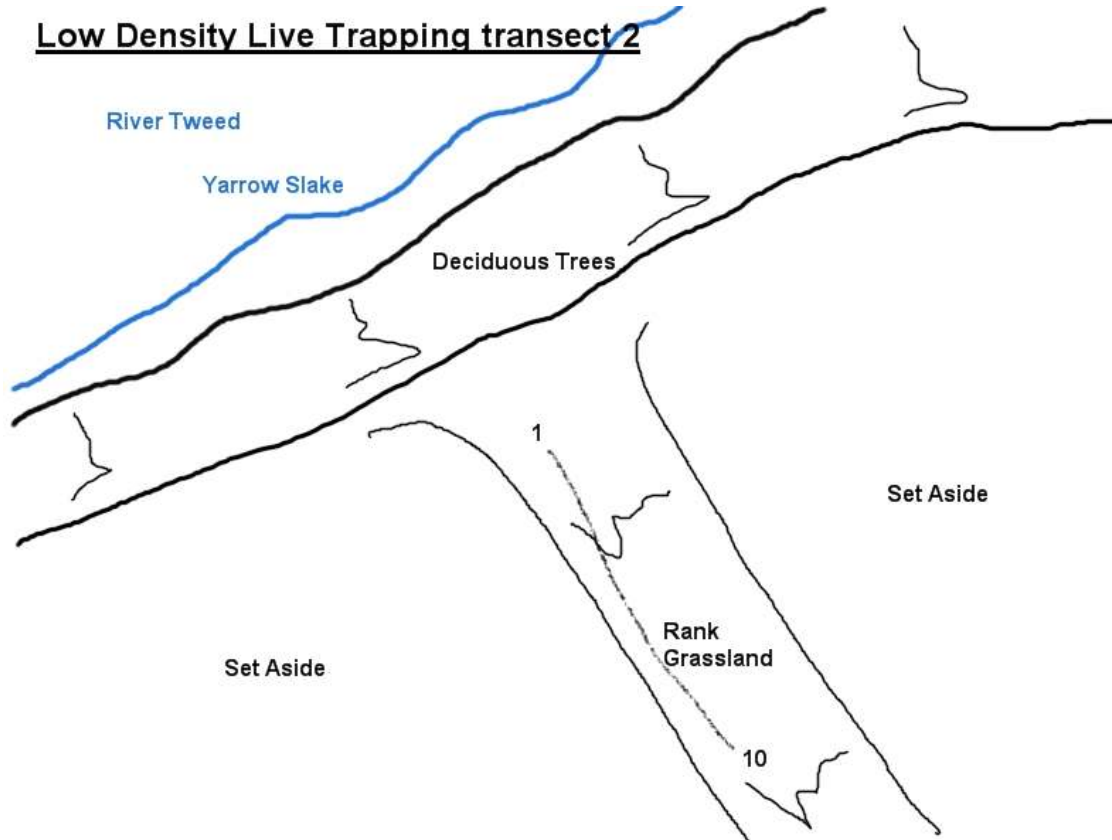
**The Low Density Live Trapping transect 1** was undertaken in the Plantation, an un-managed deciduous wood situated to the west and 2.5 km upstream of the Royal Border Bridge. Steep banks covered in brambles and deciduous trees bound the survey area. At the north end of the transect was an area of hazel.

## Low Density Live Trapping transect 1



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The **Low Density Live Trapping transect 2** was situated south of the River Tweed on farmland located on a bench raised above the river and just to the west of the Royal border Bridge. The transect was undertaken on an east facing bank covered in rank grassland and surrounded by fields planted with conservation mix.



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## **Methods**

### **Preparation for Fieldwork**

#### **Sites**

- The sites are permanent, to be monitored for years to come.
- Volunteers should monitor the same sites in spring and autumn.
- The aim is to build up a picture of changes over time, without introducing variations due to different sites.

#### **Site Selection**

- 15 Tetrads were generated randomly by the Mammal society in our area.
- All the chosen survey areas are within two of these random tetrads.

#### **Transects**

- Transects are 100 m long and employ a single field survey method such as bait-tubes or Longworth trapping. (See below)
- Each transect is a permanent unit revisited each subsequent season using the same survey method.

#### **Numbers of Transects per Site**

- A maximum of two transects of each field survey method per site is permitted. i.e. up to ten transects for each site.

#### **Location and Placement of Transects**

- Each transect is set up in a single habitat type.
- Transects must be kept at least 250 m apart.
- Transects must be numbered sequentially, 1,2,3 etc, within each site. The transect number remains the same from season to season.
- Record an accurate grid reference for the start and finish of each transect.

#### **Habitats**

- Each transect must be set up entirely within a single specific habitat.
- The Mammal society is interested in all types of habitat.
- Classify each transect into one of the 23 specific habitats defined in table 2, page 5 of the Volunteer Handbook.

#### **Timeframe**

- Two survey periods per year.
- Spring – 1st April to 31st May
- Autumn – 1st October to 31st November
- Visit each transect as near as possible to the date of the visit in the previous year.

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### **Field Survey Methods**

- 1. Field Vole Sign Transects (FV)**
- 2. Bait-tube Transects (BT)**
- 3. Low Density Live Trapping (LDT)**

#### **1. Field Vole Sign Transects (FV)**

- This consists of a single survey visit.
- It consists of a transect 100 m long, subdivided into 10 sections, numbered 1 to 10.
- A 1 m by 1 m quadrat is placed in the middle of each section.
- Each quadrat is searched for field vole runs, latrines and feeding signs.
- Each quadrat is searched for 10 minutes or until all 3 signs are recorded.
- Transects are only placed in suitable habitat such as most rough, rank, uncut grassland or dwarf scrub. See page 10 in Volunteer Handbook.

#### **2. Bait-tube Transects (BT)**

- This consists of two survey visits, placement followed by revisit after 5 to 7 days to collect tubes and faeces.
- The aim is to collect samples of faeces deposited by the animals in the tubes.
- The survey consists of a transect 100 m long, subdivided into 10 sections.
- A single bait-tube is placed in the middle of each section. Bait-tubes are numbered sequentially 1 to 10.
- The bait-tubes are placed on the ground, tightly wedged under covering vegetation.
- Bait the tubes with mealworms plus 10 mm cubed piece of vegetable or fruit.
- Revisit the transect after 5 to 7 days to collect the tubes and to check for faeces.
- Place the faeces into a plastic bag together with details of the transect and tube number and send to the Mammal Society for identification.
- Transects should be placed in any habitat suitable for small mammals. See table 2 page 5

#### **3. Low Density Live Trapping (LDT)**

- This consists of three survey visits.
- The survey consists of a transect 100 m long, subdivided into 10 sections.
- A single Longworth trap is placed in the middle of each section, with the traps numbered sequentially 1 to 10.
- Use hay or local vegetation for bedding and bait with 2 tablespoons of mealworms, 1 tablespoon of kibbled oats or wheat and 3-4 pieces of fruit or vegetable.
- If it is cold wrap the traps in bubble wrap or re-schedule trapping.
- Place and pre-bait the traps on the evening of day 1.
- Visit to set and re-bait the traps on the evening of day 2.
- Soon after dawn on day 3 visit to check the traps, identify any catches and lift the traps.
- Release all catches at the point of capture.

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- Low density live trapping can be carried out in any habitat. See table 2 page 5

### **Health and Safety**

- Basic hygiene is essential as small mammals can transmit leptospirosis
- Always wear surgical gloves.
- Wash you hands after fieldwork.
- Ensure that your tetanus inoculation is up to date.

The Mammal Society has public liability insurance for all volunteers taking part in one of their surveys or monitoring schemes.

After each survey the observations were given to John, who entered them into a standard Mammal Society form for evaluation.

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## Summary of Observations

### NU04J - Cocklawburn Dunes

#### **Field Vole transect 1**

Site Code – NU04J	15 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	Search time - 50 mins
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Field Survey Units (1m x 1m Quadrats)

Quadrat	Used	Runs	Latrines	Feeding Signs
1	Yes	Y	N	N
2	Yes	N	N	N
3	Yes	Y	N	N
4	Yes	Y	N	N
5	Yes	Y	N	N
6	Yes	Y	N	N
7	Yes	Y	N	Y
8	Yes	Y	N	Y
9	Yes	N	N	N
10	Yes	Y	Y	N

#### **Field Vole transect 1**

Site Code – NU04J	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	Search time - 50 mins
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Field Survey Units (1m x 1m Quadrats)

Quadrat	Used	Runs	Latrines	Feeding Signs
1	Yes	Y	N	Y
2	Yes	Y	N	Y
3	Yes	Y	N	Y
4	Yes	N	N	N
5	Yes	N	N	N
6	Yes	N	N	N
7	Yes	Y	N	N
8	Yes	Y	N	Y
9	Yes	Y	Y	Y
10	Yes	Y	N	N

#### **Bait-tube transect 1**

Site Code – NU04J	10 <sup>th</sup> –15 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	Search time – 5 days
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Field Survey Units (200mm x 40mm tubes)

Bait-tube	Used	Faeces Collected
1	Yes	No
2	Yes	No
3	Yes	Yes
4	Yes	Yes
5	Yes	Yes
6	Yes	No
7	Yes	Yes
8	Yes	Yes
9	Yes	Yes
10	Yes	Yes

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### **Bait-tube transect 1**

Site Code – NU04J	8 <sup>th</sup> - 13 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	Search time – 5 days
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Field Survey Units (200mm x 40mm tubes)

<b>Bait-tube</b>	<b>Used</b>	<b>Faeces Collected</b>
1	Yes	Yes
2	Yes	Yes
3	Yes	Yes
4	Yes	Yes
5	Yes	Yes
6	Yes	Yes
7	Yes	Yes
8	Yes	Yes
9	Yes	Yes
10	Yes	Yes

### **Low Density Live Trapping transect 1**

Site Code – NU04J	10 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	
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Field Survey Units (Longworth traps)

<b>Trap</b>	<b>Used</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Dead</b>
1	Yes	None	No
2	Yes	None	No
3	Yes	None	No
4	Yes	None	No
5	Yes	None	No
6	Yes	None	No
7	Yes	Common Shrew	No
8	Yes	Wood Mouse	No
9	Yes	Common Shrew	No
10	Yes	Common Shrew	No

### **Low Density Live Trapping transect 1**

Site Code – NU04J	8 <sup>th</sup> - 10 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	
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Field Survey Units (Longworth traps)

<b>Trap</b>	<b>Used</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Dead</b>
1	Yes	Wood mouse	No
2	Yes	Bank vole	No
3	Yes	Bank vole	No
4	Yes	Bank vole	No
5	Yes	Wood mouse	No
6	Yes	Wood mouse	No
7	Yes	Wood mouse	No
8	Yes	Trap packed with leaves/grass	No
9	Yes	Wood mouse	No
10	Yes	Wood mouse	No

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### NT95W

#### **Field Vole transect 1 – Tommy the Millers field**

Site Code – NT95W	11 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	Search time - 55 mins
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Field Survey Units (1m x 1m Quadrats)

Quadrat	Used	Runs	Latrines	Feeding Signs
1	Yes	Y	N	Y
2	Yes	Y	N	N
3	Yes	Y	N	N
4	Yes	Y	N	N
5	Yes	Y	N	N
6	Yes	N	N	N
7	Yes	Y	N	N
8	Yes	Y	N	N
9	Yes	N	N	N
10	Yes	Y Nest?	N	N

#### **Field Vole transect 1 – Tommy the Millers field**

Site Code – NT95W	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	Search time - 50 mins
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Field Survey Units (1m x 1m Quadrats)

Quadrat	Used	Runs	Latrines	Feeding Signs
1	Yes	Y	N	Y
2	Yes	Y	N	N
3	Yes	N	N	N
4	Yes	Y	N	Y
5	Yes	N	N	N
6	Yes	N	N	N
7	Yes	Y	N	Y
8	Yes	Y	N	Y
9	Yes	N	N	N
10	Yes	N	N	N

#### **Low Density Live Trapping transect 1 – The Plantation**

Site Code – NT95W	10 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	
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Field Survey Units (Longworth traps)

Trap	Used	Species	Dead
1	Yes	Bank Vole	No
2	Yes	Wood Mouse	No
3	Yes	Bank Vole	No
4	Yes	Wood Mouse	No
5	Yes	Wood Mouse	No
6	Yes	Bank Vole	No
7	Yes	Wood Mouse	No
8	Yes	Wood Mouse	No
9	Yes	None	No
10	Yes	None	No

## A Report on the 2010 National Small Mammal Monitoring Scheme

### **Low Density Live Trapping transect 1 – The Plantation**

Site Code – NT95W	8 <sup>th</sup> - 10 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	
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Field Survey Units (Longworth traps)

<b>Trap</b>	<b>Used</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Dead</b>
1	Yes	Tripped but empty	No
2	Yes	Bank Vole	No
3	Yes	None	No
4	Yes	Wood mouse	No
5	Yes	Wood mouse	No
6	Yes	Wood mouse	No
7	Yes	Trap packed with leaves/grass	No
8	Yes	Wood mouse	No
9	Yes	Wood mouse	No
10	Yes	Wood mouse	No

### **Low Density Live Trapping transect 2 – Mill Farm**

Site Code – NT95W	12 <sup>th</sup> - 14 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	
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Field Survey Units (Longworth traps)

<b>Trap</b>	<b>Used</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Dead</b>
1	Yes	None	No
2	Yes	None	No
3	Yes	Bank Vole	No
4	Yes	Bank Vole	No
5	Yes	Bank Vole	No
6	Yes	Bank Vole	No
7	Yes	Bank Vole	No
8	Yes	Bank Vole	No
9	Yes	None	No
10	Yes	Bank Vole	No

### **Low Density Live Trapping transect 2 – Mill Farm**

Site Code – NT95W	10 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> November 2010	
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Field Survey Units (Longworth traps)

<b>Trap</b>	<b>Used</b>	<b>Species</b>	<b>Dead</b>
1	Yes	Bank vole	No
2	Yes	Field vole	No
3	Yes	Bank vole	No
4	Yes	Bank vole	No
5	Yes	None	No
6	Yes	Bank vole	No
7	Yes	Bank vole	No
8	Yes	Wood mouse	No
9	Yes	None	No
10	Yes	Bank Vole	No

## A Report on the 2010 National Small Mammal Monitoring Scheme

### Summary of surveys to date.

The data from these surveys have been sent to Mammal Society. Very few surveys on small mammals have been undertaken in north Northumberland so there is a shortage of records. Berwick Wildlife Group hope to help remedy this lack of knowledge by undertaking surveys as part of the Mammal Society scheme throughout the area around Berwick-upon-Tweed.

This is our second year concentrating on two tetrads that we know well from the Group's previous small mammal surveys and butterfly surveys.

A summary of the results of the surveys for 2009 and 2010 are below.

#### Summary of surveys

<b>NU04J</b>	<b>Bait-tube transect 1</b>	<b>Cocklawburn Dunes</b>
<b>November 2009</b>	<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
Faeces recovered from all tubes. (Awaiting the results of DNA testing)	Faeces recovered from 7 tubes. (Awaiting the results of DNA testing)	Faeces recovered from all tubes. (Awaiting the results of DNA testing)

<b>NU04J</b>	<b>Field Vole Sign transect 1</b>	<b>Cocklawburn Dunes</b>
<b>November 2009</b>	<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
Evidence of field voles all along transect.	Evidence of field voles in 8 quadrats of the transect. Area heavily grazed. All sign old.	Evidence of field voles in 7 quadrats of the transect. Area heavily grazed. All sign old.

<b>NU04J</b>	<b>Low Density Live trapping 1</b>	<b>Cocklawburn Dunes</b>
<b>November 2009</b>	<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
7 Bank Vole 2 Wood Mouse	1 Wood Mouse 3 Common Shrew	3 Bank Vole 6 Wood Mouse

**A Report on the 2010 National Small Mammal Monitoring Scheme**

<b>NT95W</b>	<b>Field Vole Sign transect 1</b>	<b>Tommy the Miller's Field</b>
<b>November 2009</b>	<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
Evidence of field voles all along transect	Evidence of field voles in 8 quadrats of the transect.	Evidence of field voles in 5 quadrats of the transect.

<b>NT95W</b>	<b>Low Density Live trapping 1</b>	<b>The Plantation</b>
<b>November 2009</b>	<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
4 Bank Vole 6 Wood Mouse	3 Bank Vole 5 Wood Mouse	1 Bank Vole 6 Wood Mouse

<b>NT95W</b>	<b>Low Density Live trapping 2</b>	<b>Mill Farm</b>
<b>November 2009</b>	<b>May 2010</b>	<b>November 2010</b>
8 Bank Vole 1 Wood Mouse	7 Bank Vole	5 Bank Vole 1 Wood Mouse 2 Field Vole

## **A Report on the 2010 National Small Mammal Monitoring Scheme**

### **References**

Gurnell & Flowerdew. *Live Trapping Small Mammals – A Practical Guide* by (Mammal Society)

Corbet & Harris. *Handbook of British Mammals*.

Kevin O'Hara for the Northumbria Mammal Group. *Water shrew survey booklet*

Northumbria Mammal Group  
Website – <http://www.nwt.org.uk>

The Mammal Society  
website - <http://www.mammal.org.uk>

Mammals Trust UK  
website - [http://www.mtuk.org/index.php?page=mammal\\_facts](http://www.mtuk.org/index.php?page=mammal_facts)

Wikipedia – mammals  
website - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_British\\_mammals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_British_mammals)

Identify British Rodent Skulls  
website - <http://www.skullsite.co.uk/Skullkeys/Rodentkey.htm>

Further information may be obtained from the Mammal Society.

## **A Report on the 2010 National Small Mammal Monitoring Scheme**

### **Appendix 1**

Species details and status in the Mammal Society database.

**Mammal Society** – <http://www.mammal.org.uk>

#### **Common Shrew -**

[http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=214&Itemid=247](http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=214&Itemid=247)

#### **Pygmy Shrew -**

[http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=215&Itemid=248](http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=215&Itemid=248)

#### **Water Shrew -**

[http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=216&Itemid=249](http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=216&Itemid=249)

#### **Wood Mouse –**

[http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=219&Itemid=252](http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=219&Itemid=252)

#### **Harvest Mouse –**

[http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=221&Itemid=254](http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=221&Itemid=254)

#### **Yellow-necked Mouse -**

[http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=220&Itemid=253](http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=220&Itemid=253)

#### **Field Vole –**

[http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=222&Itemid=255](http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=222&Itemid=255)

#### **Bank Vole -**

[http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=318&Itemid=353](http://88.208.205.92/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=318&Itemid=353)