

## THE MAMMALS OF CHUDLEIGH PARISH

The following annotated checklist has been prepared by Dave Smallshire on behalf of Chudleigh WILD. All records up to the end of 2020 known to him and other local naturalists, including those from the National Biodiversity Network Atlas (<https://nbnatlas.org/>) that can be allocated to the Parish, are summarised. It should be regarded as work in progress and will be updated periodically as new information comes to hand. It does not necessarily represent all areas of the Parish equally and anyone who can add, correct or update this information is asked to send details to [davesmall@btinternet.com](mailto:davesmall@btinternet.com).

The taxonomic sequence and scientific and vernacular names follow those used by the Mammal Society ([mammal.org.uk](http://mammal.org.uk)). To jump to a particular species, try using the 'Find' function (click the magnifying glass search icon, or use <Ctrl+F> on a desktop computer, and type in the species you want to look for).

### **Grey Squirrel** *Sciurus carolinensis*

Widespread and fairly common. Present Puttshills Wood spring 2020; rare in Twindle Beer garden.

### **Hazel Dormouse** *Muscardinus avellanarius*

Probably widespread, though typically scarce and rarely encountered, in woodlands and hedgerows, including young plantations in Haldon Forest. Found to be present in pre-development survey at Oldway, Chudleigh: Hazel nuts opened by Dormice were found by the stream at the bottom of the central field (now part of Oldway Batfields Reserve) and an adult Dormouse in a nest was found in a hedgerow in the eastern field on 20/6/08; a second adult occupying a nest was found in a hedgerow near the stream in the western field on 12/8/08; and a further (unoccupied) nest was found in the hedge adjoining Oldway on 12/9/08' (Bioscan report). Ten monitoring tubes were put out in late April 2020 along the 'bat-run' in Oldway Batfields Reserve: one contained a Dormouse nest on 2/5/20, but only Field Mouse nests were found subsequently. One seen in tubes in 2020 at Deer Park Farm, where an old nest was found in a bat box in autumn 2020 and hazelnuts with characteristic gnawing have been found in the past. One found by a dog in April 2020 at Chudleigh Woods Farm. Despite the species' alleged inability to cross open ground, it is known to occur – in one of the densest populations known in the country – in the wide A38 central reservation at Haldon Hill.

### **Water Vole** *Arvicola amphibius*

Recorded from Kate Brook, near Harcombe, in 1991.

### **Field (or Short-tailed) Vole** *Microtus agrestis*

Likely to be widespread and common, especially in areas of long grass. Caught in live traps at Oldway Batfields Reserve.

**Bank Vole** *Myodes glareolus*

Likely to be widespread and common. Caught in live traps at Oldway Batfields Reserve.

**Wood Mouse** *Apodemus sylvaticus*

Probably very common and widespread, including in buildings and gardens, where they may be attracted to bird feeding stations. Caught in live traps at Oldway Batfields Reserve and Glen Cottage garden.

**Harvest Mouse** *Micromys minutus*

Localised, due to the species need for tall, dense vegetation, typically grass. Two nests were found along the Oldway Batfields Reserve 'bat-run' on 24/1/17 (but none subsequently) and two nests found at Hams Barton in 2017. May be present elsewhere in stands of tall grass/herbage.

**[House Mouse** *Mus musculus*

Although this species is highly likely to be present, there are no known records in the Parish, despite this being the world's most widespread land mammal, apart from humans! Known records of indoor mice all seem to refer to Wood Mouse.]

**Common (or Brown) Rat** *Rattus norvegicus*

Probably common, including in buildings and gardens (especially around, and sometimes on, bird feeders). Bred in a Twindle Beer garden in 2020.

**Rabbit** *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Uncommon, probably having declined in recent years due to Viral Haemorrhagic Disease. One juvenile in a Twindle Beer garden on 19-22/5/07; three close to route of the old railway line and at least two at Heathfield in 2020; [three just outside the Parish at Haldon Racecourse on 12/5/20]; cat casualty in Twindle Beer on 18/9/20; one Watercress Farm 24/11/20.

**Hedgehog** *Erinaceus europaeus*

Chudleigh became a 'Hedgehog Friendly Town' in 2020. Occurs regularly in some town gardens, where mating activity is sometimes seen. One hibernated under a rabbit hutch in Twindle Beer in the winter of 1997/8 and in a purpose-built feeding station in 2020/1.

**Water Shrew** *Neomys fodiens*

Known to occur along Bramble Brook and at Watercress Farm, and one was found dead near Kerswell in spring 2020.

**Common Shrew** *Sorex araneus*

Probably widespread and common. Singles found dead near Palace Quarry on 19/5/12, in a Twindle Beer garden on 11/8/12 and 18/6/13 (probably cat casualties) and in Oldway Batfields Reserve on 10/8/20.

**Pygmy Shrew** *Sorex minutus*

Probably widespread and common, but there are few records. Recorded in SX8982 in 2012. Occurs indoors (and elsewhere) at Deer Park Farm!

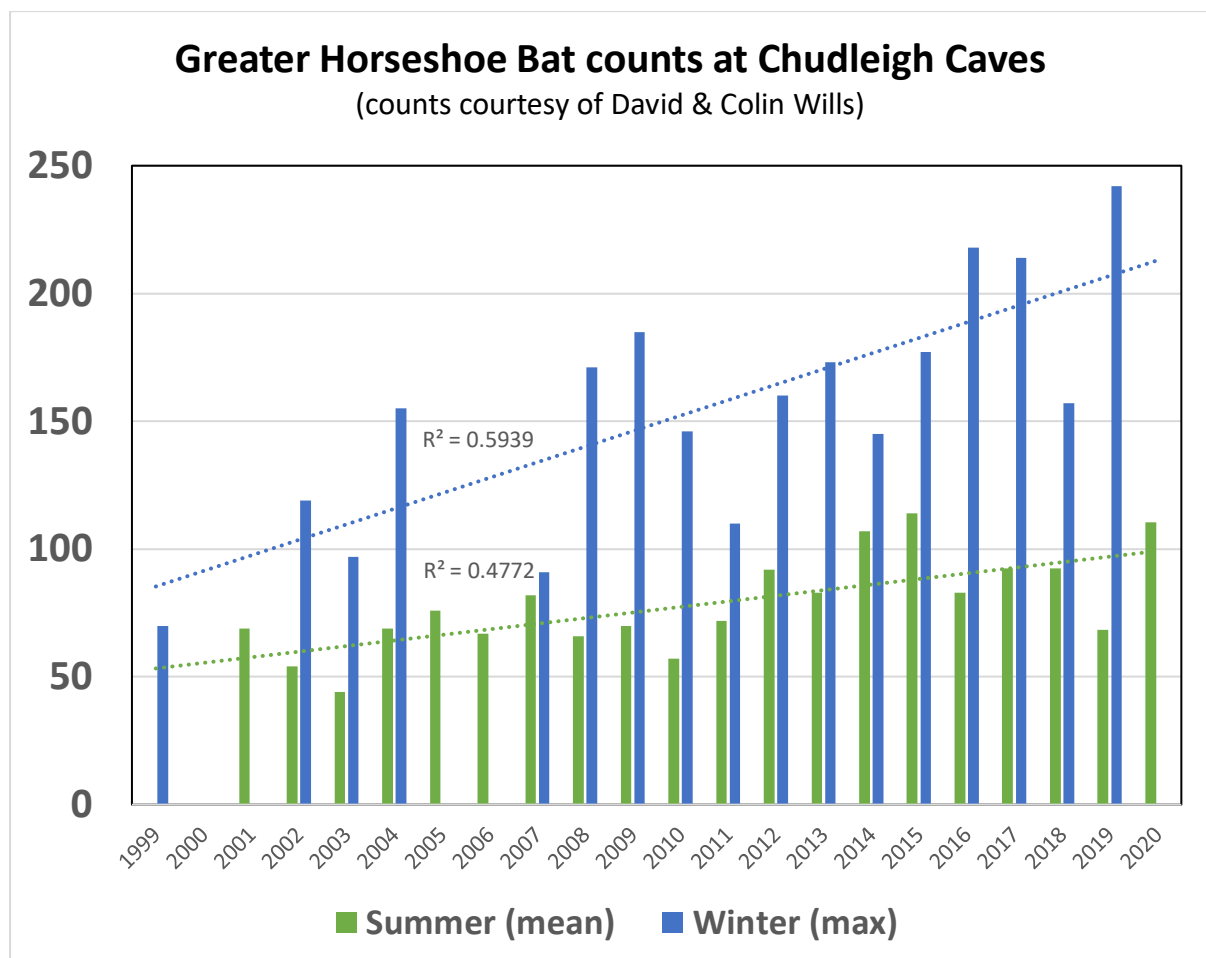
**Mole** *Talpa europaea*

Probably widespread and common, despite persecution in silage fields, sports fields and gardens, although rarely seen. Recorded from the town centre in 1999 and Woodway Street in 2000. Occasionally killed by cats around town. Molehills are found mainly in the valley floor at Deer Park Farm.

**Greater Horseshoe Bat** *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*

All bat species are protected under UK law, but this species and its haunts are also protected by the Chudleigh Caves and Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest, which form part of the South Hams Special Area of Conservation (SAC). These designations are largely in recognition of the internationally important population of Greater Horseshoe Bats (GHBs).

Several of the caves in Chudleigh Rocks are used for both breeding and hibernation. Licensed winter counts have been carried out at these caves by David and Colin Wills since 1999 (annually since 2007), producing an average of 155 overwintering GHBs (range 70-242); numbers have roughly doubled during this period. Summer counts since 2001 of bats leaving the caves have averaged 78 (range 44-114), with indications of a slight increase. These trends are encouraging, given the cumulative losses of foraging areas and commuting routes to building developments around the town in recent decades.



An important radio-tracking study of Chudleigh's GHBs followed the movements of 20 bats during the summer of 2002. The bats commuted to areas up to 7 km from the caves over an area of at least 120 km<sup>2</sup>. The main commuting routes were north-east and south-west along Kate Brook, south through Gappah, east into Ugbrooke Park and north-west across Coburg; the last used the tunnel under the A38 to reach the Teign Valley. The bats foraged primarily over damp grassland, scrub, around tall overgrown hedgerows and along tree lines, frequently next to watercourses. A total of 14 foraging areas were identified, the most significant in June being between Chudleigh and Sandygate (Kingsteignton) and in August at Chudleigh and Ideford. There is known to be some interchange between the various GHB colonies within the South Hams SAC, but a biopsy sample from the radio-tracking study provided the first evidence of a link between populations in south Devon and north Devon.

Research, into the effects of A-roads (A38) and lighting on GHB behaviour was carried out around Chudleigh (and Buckfastleigh) by Exeter University during 2016-19, with help from local residents. Through the Devon GHB Project, members of the public were loaned bat detectors to help plot the occurrences of bats during 2016-18. In addition, Chudleigh WILD members have used the same techniques to monitor the usage of commuting corridors from the caves to foraging areas further afield; some surveys have been co-ordinated with counts of bats exiting the caves.

These surveys, together with professional surveys carried out prior to housing developments, have painted a good picture of commuting routes, which are now offered some protection through the SAC and development control. Conservation of the species has also focussed on the provision of cattle-grazed pasture where the livestock are not treated with persistent worming agents (which kill the dung beetles known to be an important food source for GHBs, especially youngsters in late summer). The area now known as Oldway Batfields Reserve was given to the Devon Wildlife Trust to be managed in this way in mitigation for the development at Lower Trindle Close (a similar process will see fields west of the A38 given in mitigation for The Oaks development). Chudleigh WILD has organised public awareness events at the Batfields Reserve that have included the licenced trapping of GHBs and other bats and the Town Hall has hosted several public gatherings of interested parties. Chudleigh WILD will continue to keep a watching brief over developments and monitor the use of GHB commuting routes.

**Lesser Horseshoe Bat** *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

Recorded in pre-development surveys off Oldway in 2001 and 2008, and at Rocklands in 2017. Other records include singles resting in a porch at Glen Cottage on 1/7/16 and caught during Chudleigh WILD bat evenings in the Oldway Batfields Reserve on 23/9/16 & 29/8/18; up to seven at Chudleigh Bridge on 7/4/20; one at the end of Oldway Batfields 'bat-run' on 2/5/20. Also recorded from Deer Park Farm and the nearby Ruggadon DWT Reserve.

**Barbastelle** *Barbastella barbastellus*

In pre-development surveys off Oldway (for Lower Trindle Close), recorded in 2001 (maximum 13 passes on 14/6/01) and four passes on 26/6/08. Also recorded in pre-development surveys at Rocklands in 2017.

**Serotine** *Eptesicus serotinus*

Two records from pre-development surveys off Oldway in 2001. One caught during the Chudleigh WILD bat evening on 29/8/18.

**Daubenton's Bat** *Myotis daubentonii*

Recorded in pre-development surveys off Oldway in 2001 and 2008 and on 7/4/20 near Chudleigh Bridge, where it is likely to feed over calm stretches of the R. Teign.

**Whiskered or Brandt's Bat** *Myotis mystacinus/brandti*

Whiskered and Brandt's Bats are hard to differentiate. They were recorded in pre-development surveys off Oldway in 2001 and 2008.

**Natterer's Bat** *Myotis nattereri*

Recorded in pre-development surveys off Oldway in 2001 and 2008; one caught during a Chudleigh WILD bat evening in Oldway Batfields Reserve on 23/9/16.

**Noctule** *Nyctalus noctula*

Probably fairly common, typically using crevices in large trees. Recorded in pre-development surveys off Oldway in 2001 and 2008, and at Rocklands in 2017; regularly recorded in SW Chudleigh during 2020.

**Nathusius' Pipistrelle** *Pipistrellus nathusii*

One recorded in pre-development surveys off Oldway on 13/5/08.

**Common Pipistrelle** *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*

Probably the commonest bat in the Parish. Commonly recorded in pre-development surveys off Oldway in 2001 and 2008, and at Rocklands in 2017. Detected during the Chudleigh WILD bat evening in Oldway Batfields Reserve on 23/9/16 and 29/8/18, with five caught on the second date; 19 passes at the end of the Oldway Batfields 'bat-run' on 2/5/20.

**Soprano Pipistrelle** *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Commonly recorded in pre-development surveys off Oldway in 2001 and 2008, and at Rocklands in 2017. Often detected in southern parts of the Parish during 2020.

**Brown Long-eared Bat** *Plecotus auritus*

Recorded in pre-development surveys off Oldway in 2001 and 2008. One caught during a Chudleigh WILD bat evening in Oldway Batfields Reserve on 29/8/18.

**Unidentified bats**

Bats are sometimes seen flying in daylight, but are not easily identified down to species. One (a Noctule?) was flying at least 50m above Parade/Station Hill over or near a garden bonfire from 14:55 to 16:40 on 6/11/08; a small bat was flying at 15:20 around Kate Brook near Chudleigh Bridge in warm sunshine on 20/3/20.

**Fox** *Vulpes vulpes*

Probably widespread, even coming into gardens at times. A vixen with two cubs were in Harcombe Valley in daylight on 13/9/99; one at Exeter Road allotments in 2003; one in the Harcombe area in daylight on 17/2/09; singles regular in Lawn Drive 2018-19, in a Twindle Beer garden briefly in daylight twice in spring 2018 and in daylight at Chudleigh Bridge on 5/4/20; one near the Highwayman's Haunt on 20/9/20; reported to have bred in an overgrown garden in The Parade.

**Otter** *Lutra lutra*

Recorded from Harcombe Lakes in 2001. There have been road casualties on Chudleigh Bridge and on the A380 near Mamhead Cross. Likely to frequent the River Teign and Kate Brook, and known to occur along Bramble Brook.

**Badger** *Meles meles*

Probably fairly common. The effects of recent culls is unknown. Road casualties are seen frequently along the A38; seen in Twindle Beer on one occasion; a small individual in Oldway (adjacent to the Batfields Reserve) at 22:00h on 12/3/19; and feeding signs in Oldway Batfields in 2020.

**Stoat** *Mustela erminea*

One was seen near Kerswell on 14/4/09. Seen and camera-trapped with varying frequency over the years at Deer Park Farm.

**Weasel** *Mustela nivalis*

Occasionally camera-trapped and one seen at Deer Park Farm in 2020.

**Polecat** *Mustela putorius*

Polecats are hard to distinguish from some feral Polecat-Ferrets. Singles, possibly pure Polecats, have been camera-trapped at Deer Park Farm in each of the last five years. [One was seen in daylight just outside the Parish near Gappah on 20/10/20.]

**American Mink** *Neovison vison*

Known to have occurred along Bramble Brook in the past. Feral Mink are believed to have declined generally as the Otter population has increased in recent years.

**Roe Deer** *Capreolus capreolus*

Probably fairly common. A doe with a very young kid has been seen in a field near Puttshills Wood in spring. Two off Oldway on the site of Lower Trindle Close 2/10/09; three (a buck and two does) in Oldway Batfields Reserve on 25-26/3/20. Said to have increased greatly in Haldon Forest in the late 1970s and 1980s, but fewer seen at Deer Park Farm in recent years.

**Fallow Deer** *Dama dama*

Quite common around Haldon Forest. Groups of up to 25 have been seen grazing farmland on the periphery of Haldon. About 15 are often present at Deer Park Farm. A 'white hart' Fallow buck was with a small group of the typically dark deer that frequent Haldon. Also recorded as far south as Chudleighwoods Farm, where a buck was seen and heard rutting in autumn 2020.