



**Mamaliaid mewn
Amgylchedd Cynaliadwy**
**Mammals in a Sustainable
Environment**



**DO YOU WANT
TO GET
INVOLVED?**

- Are you interested in helping nature and the environment?
- Interested in working with people who share your passion for conservation?
- Interested in learning new skills and improving your CV and experience?

If the answer is yes then **MISE** has some great opportunities.

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Spring E-Newsletter

NO. 1, MARCH 2012

Welcome to our first e-newsletter

This is the first e-newsletter for Wales produced by the Mammals in a Sustainable Environment (MISE) project. We'd like to make it a regular publication to publicise forthcoming MISE events, highlight opportunities for volunteers to join in with the project and report on news and activities throughout the year.

The MISE project was launched in May 2011 as a partnership between Waterford Institute of Technology, Waterford County Council and the National Biodiversity Data Centre in Ireland and The Vincent Wildlife Trust, Countryside Council for Wales and Snowdonia National Park Authority in Wales.



The MISE project area (in green).

The project is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund under the Ireland-Wales Programme 2007-2013 (INTERREG IVA).



The MISE project officers.

From left: Ceri Morris, Jenny MacPherson, Andrew Harrington and Denise O'Meara.

The project aims to raise awareness of mammal conservation in Ireland and Wales through providing training in field survey methods and involving volunteers in mammal survey and monitoring. We are also developing new survey and monitoring methods using DNA from non-invasive samples, such as hair and scats.

Activities for 2012

The diary for 2012 is filling up quickly, with a range of workshops, training days and surveys from otter surveying and harvest mouse nest searches, through to hair tube and bait pot surveys. If you are interested in getting involved please contact Jenny MacPherson or Ceri Morris.



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Red squirrels

46 volunteers gathered near Pumsaint to carry out a red squirrel survey in the Tywi forest in August 2011. The survey took place in Bryn Arau Duon, a commercial timber producing forest, where red squirrel conservation has been carried out over the last ten years. Teams of two or three people walked slowly and quietly along allocated sections of forest tracks to record signs and sightings of red squirrels.



Feeding signs were recorded throughout the wood and although no squirrels were spotted on the day, a



WILDVIEW 08-10-2011 13:03:50

camera trap set up on one of the squirrel feeders had captured some images of squirrels a couple of days before. When a small team returned a week later to complete the survey they spotted a red squirrel feeding at the top of a spruce tree and were able to watch it for about 20 minutes! Volunteers also collected any scats that might be pine marten and these were sent to Waterford for DNA analysis. Of the 16 scats analysed, 12 were fox and 4 were neither fox nor pine marten, highlighting the difficulty in identifying scats by their appearance alone.

*There are only
three viable
populations of red
squirrels known in
Wales:
in Clocaenog,
Anglesey and the
Tywi forest in mid
Wales*

Practical squirrel conservation



In February this year a group of A level students and staff from Amman Valley School spent the day with the MISE project planting trees and putting up nest boxes to benefit the red squirrels in the Tywi forest in mid Wales. Students at the school are growing lodgepole pine and scots pine from seed, as part of their horticulture course. They have chosen to grow these species specifically because they provide a good food source for red squirrels. Students at Amman Valley are also building wooden nest boxes and squirrel feeders for the MISE project.



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Otter diet workshop



Volunteers analyzing spraint

A group of volunteers rolled up their sleeves to find out more about what otters eat in North Wales - at a MISE workshop on the 18th & 19th February at Treborth Botanic Gardens. Over 40 volunteers dissected otter spraints, to see what they could find. The remains of eels, marine and freshwater fish, crabs, amphibians and even birds and mice were all among the findings - more than 23 different prey species in total. The spraints were collected by volunteers last year along the North Wales coast. Mammal Ecologist Rob Strachan helped the volunteers identify fish bones, jaws and even mammal teeth as they picked the spraints apart.

Otter surveys

Ceredigion Coastal
Otter Survey and
Training weekend – 24th
& 25th September 2011

The weather was lovely for the morning of our otter survey training, while we were inside! However, despite torrential rain in the afternoon we still spent an enjoyable few hours with Geoff Liles showing everyone how to spot otter spraint, and several spraint samples were collected at Cwmtedu and Aberaeron. On Sunday, teams of volunteers were each given one or two 1km squares along the coast between Cardigan and Aberystwyth to survey, putting into practice what they'd learnt from Geoff. A



Volunteers
examining
spraint
collected at
Cwmtedu

total of 18 1km squares were surveyed and 13 of those had spraint present. The highest density of spraint was at Aberporth, but Aberarth and Aberaeron also had lots of signs of otter. All 76 spraints collected have

been sent to Waterford and the results of DNA analysis will be available on the MISE website soon.

Otter surveys also took place on Anglesey and the Lleyn peninsula.



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**Harvest mice weave
tennis ball sized
nests from living
vegetation**

*Harvest mice are
very under-recorded
in Wales. If you know
of a site which may
provide good habitat
for harvest mice then
please contact Ceri
Morris or Jenny
MacPherson*

Harvest mice

On 21 Nov MISE ran a harvest mouse survey training day for volunteers in conjunction with Chester zoo. It was great to see so many people enthusiastic about this tiny but charismatic animal, which is Britain's smallest rodent weighing only 5g - the same as a 20p coin. We found nests of harvest mice in fields belonging to Chester Zoo while we were doing the practical survey training. This shows that mice are still here nine years after staff at the zoo carried out a reintroduction.



As part of the MISE project we are also developing new survey methods for small mammals. As well as nest searches, we will be using bait pots at ground level and

in the stalk layer to collect droppings from whatever small mammals are present. DNA will then be extracted from the faecal samples and analysed to determine



which species have taken the bait. Owl and kestrel pellets can also provide information about which small mammals the birds are feeding on. Previously this has been done by dissecting the pellets and examining all the bones, hair and skull fragments present to identify prey species. However, the MISE team at WIT have developed molecular methods to determine which small mammal species are present in barn owl and kestrel pellets. If you know of any barn owl roosts or sites where you could collect pellets, please get in touch with Ceri or Jenny.

Going nuts for Dormice!

**Dormouse
(photo: John
Robinson)**



Volunteers were asked to join a hunt for signs of dormice at several sites including Dolgellau, some sites in Carmarthenshire and at Denmark Farm in Ceredigion.

Dormice leave distinctive tooth marks when they gnaw into hazelnuts and volunteers were asked to comb the woods in search of the discarded kernels that prove that dormice are present. Volunteers were also shown how to tell the difference between nuts that have been nibbled by dormice

and those opened by other small mammals, such as bank voles, wood mice and squirrels. Positive signs were found at two new sites in Carmarthenshire. Nest boxes have also been put up at a site in north Ceredigion and these will be monitored throughout the summer, when dormice are active.



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Coming up in 2012

Weekly Jan - June	Checking pine marten hair tubes	Cwm Rheidol
Saturday 12 th May	Workshop - stoat & weasel hair tube surveys	Denmark Farm (Ceredigion)
21 st May, 24 th June, 15 th July, 22 nd September, 19 th October May, June, Sept & October	Checking dormouse nest boxes	North Ceredigion Conwy & Gwynedd
Saturday 26 th May	Otter survey	Anglesey
May–December (fortnightly)	Red squirrel hair tube surveys	Snowdonia & Denbighshire
Saturday August 4 th	Red squirrel survey day	Twyi forest (Ceredigion)
29 th September	Otter surveys	Ceredigion coast & Anglesey
14 th & 17 th July	Bait pot survey	Denmark Farm
7 th July (TBC)	Scat hunt (fox & pine marten)	Cwm Rheidol
Weekly throughout June - October	Stoat/weasel hair tube survey	Ceredigion
June–September	Bait pot surveys at potential harvest mouse sites	Various N & W Wales
October 5 th , 6 th , 14 th , 15 th & 16 th	Harvest mouse nest surveys	Rhos Glyn yr Helig, Rhos Pil Bach A Phennar Fawr, Rhos Fullbrook, Cors lan & Capel Dewi
November (dates TBC)	Harvest mouse nest surveys	Hafod Garregog, Harlech & Anglesey, Pembrokeshire & Carmarthenshire
17 th November	Wales Dormouse Workers' Day	Aberystwyth

If you would like to take part in any of the MISE events, please contact Jenny MacPherson or Ceri Morris

*Details of these and other events will be on our website
www.miseproject.ie*



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The MISE project is a partnership between the Waterford Institute of Technology, Waterford County Council, the National Biodiversity Data Center, The Vincent Wildlife Trust, The Countryside Council for Wales and Snowdonia National Park Authority. It is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund .



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