

Welcome to the Summer 2008 Green Shoots in Cheshire newsletter where you can find out more about projects that are running at the moment and catch up on what's new. With the survey season well underway I'll be bringing you more details of what's been discovered and what's planned for the next couple of months. I'll also be showing you how to spot one of the UK's most elusive mammals on your shoot, the dormouse. Green Shoots aims to help you provide for wildlife on your shoot. We can only do this by working with you so please if you would like to get involved with the project don't hesitate to get in touch with me. By supporting the project you can help gain the results we need to ensure our sport and its contribution to biodiversity is recognised by politicians, the media and the general public.

Ben Gregory

The Delamere Dormouse Project

The Delamere Dormouse Project, an exciting new initiative being run in partnership with BASC the Forestry Commission, Cheshire Wildlife Trust and the Farming Wildlife Advisory Group, is now in full swing. The first part of the project aims to survey Delamere Forest and its surrounding area for any existing dormice. We have set out an area around the forest itself and are now in the process of searching for suitable woodlands to put monitoring tubes.

Have I got the right sort of woodland?

Good dormice habitat includes deciduous woodland with plenty of scrub and undergrowth resulting from coppicing. Hazel coppice is normally prevalent along with honeysuckle and a good ground cover of flower bearing species such as hawthorn and fruit bearing

shrubs such as bramble. Good ground cover is very important as dormice will very rarely travel across open ground.

A species-rich hedgerow that is connected to woodland also makes excellent dormouse habitat. The best hedgerows for dormice are wide and tall with abundant mast and fruit-bearing trees.

What are the telltale signs of dormouse presence?

One of the easiest ways to determine whether you have dormice in your woodland is to carry out a nut hunt. This can take the form of just being vigilant when walking through the woodland, picking up any empty hazel nuts you come across and examining them.



The dormouse carves an almost smooth inner rim and the toothmarks are at an angle to the hole on the nut surface.

The wood mouse leaves parallel toothmarks on the inner rim and rough marks on the surface.

The bank vole leaves neat parallel grooves on the inner rim, but no toothmarks on the nut surface.

Images courtesy of Peoples Trust for Endangered Species



If you think you may have suitable woodland or that you may have dormice present in your woodland, please get in touch so that I can come out and put up some monitoring tubes. It does not matter which part of Cheshire the woodland is in, I would be very keen to hear from you.

If you have any questions about the work being done by the Green Shoots project in Cheshire or you think you may be able to help please don't hesitate to contact me.

Email: ben.gregory@basc.org.uk Phone: 01244 573 024 Mobile: 07825 989749

Grey partridge count results

With the wettest summer since detailed records began in 1914 it was clear to see 2007 was never going to be a good year for the grey partridge. So it was with great anticipation that I carried out five spring counts on four separate Green Shoots members, land in April this year. Two out of the five counts delivered a positive result with both greys and redlegs present. It was particularly interesting to note that the farm that gave rise to the most positive result of the week (three pairs of redlegs and a pair of greys) was in fact the smallest area counted during the counting period (an area of just 34 acres). It was clear to see everything was being done to encourage greys to the area including the planting up of five acres of cover crops over three small areas of the holding. I will be carrying out more counts in the Autumn, so if you're interested in carrying out a count yourself, or you would like some advice on how to encourage grey partridges to your shoot, please get in touch.



Out on vole patrol

As you may well be aware water voles are struggling in the UK. Since April 2008 water voles have gained extra protection against being killed, injured or taken from the wild. They join the list of wildlife species such as the otter and grass snake that already enjoy protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

As part of the Green Shoots project I am currently in the process of setting up a programme of American mink control on the River Gowy using a number of rafts as detection and monitoring devices to see what's utilising the river. The rafts can also be equipped with a live capture trap which

enables mink to be trapped and humanely dispatched.

In order to get a better idea of how the water voles respond to mink control it is important to know how they are doing at the moment. Working with the Northwest Water Vole Project Officer, Richard Gardner and Paul Corner from Mersey Basin Campaign we have been out surveying stretches of the Gowy. The work is ongoing and we hope to finish over the next few weeks; however, the initial results don't look good. Water voles certainly appear to be struggling on the Gowy. Once the rafts have been constructed we hope to have them out in operation by the end of the

summer so we can detect and monitor the use of the rafts and despatch any mink that may be inhabiting the River Gowy. Do you shoot on the Gowy or know someone who does? If you do and I've not been in touch with you, please give me a ring.



Otters on your shoot

The Eurasian otter is one of the UK's most loved mammals but it is also one of our most scarce having been nearly wiped out of much of its traditional range during the latter part of the 20th century. Otters in Cheshire are thought to be doing well. A project set up by Cheshire Wildlife Trust which monitors otter activity using infra-red cameras enjoyed enormous success when the first otter was caught on camera on the River Gowy in 2007. I would be very interested to hear from any Green Shoots' members who have otters on their shoot so that I could come out and verify the sighting as well as possibly look at putting an artificial holt (the home of an otter) onto their land so we can encourage this once common mammal back to Cheshire's waterways.

If you have any questions about the work being done by the Green Shoots project in Cheshire or you think you may be able to help then please don't hesitate to contact me.

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