

MAKE SPACE FOR WILDLIFE



Leaflet
6

'Wildlife habitat creation in small open spaces and gardens' – a series of leaflets to help manage, enhance and create areas for wildlife in the Vale of Glamorgan

Mammals

This leaflet acts as a basic guide to help you create, enhance and manage wildlife habitats for mammals. Every wildlife area will have a mammal visitor at some point: the trick is seeing them, as most are nocturnal or only active at dusk and dawn. The information here will introduce some background detail and suggest ways to attract and look after your visitors.



Lots of mammal species in Wales are thought to be declining in range and number due to changing management of natural habitats and the increase in urban areas. It's really important that alternative habitats are created if these animals are to survive.

Kevin Lewis



Jean Matthews

To encourage a wide variety of mammals to visit your wildlife area you need a wide variety of habitats. Make sure there are lots of plants and long grass to provide cover for small animals as well as areas of mown lawn to make it easy for hedgehogs and badgers to find worms.

There also needs to be a supply of water for animals to drink from and wash in. This can be provided from a dish of water but a garden pond with a shallow area is a much better idea.

Animals need places to sleep and places to hibernate too. You can build special

houses for them or leave log piles and areas of long grass. Leave some boards or old carpet tiles on the grass to provide shelter for small mammals such as shrews and voles.



Richard Marks

Bats

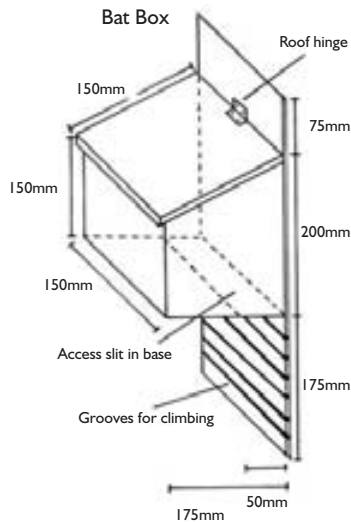
All UK bat species and their roosts are protected from harm, disturbance and obstruction under UK and European law. Lots of these species live in the Vale and ones you're likely to see include pipistrelle, brown long-eared and noctule. If you're really lucky there may also be lesser horseshoe bat in your area; one of the UK's smallest bats (only 9g). This is a rare species that has some of its last strongholds in Wales.

Although bats don't need lots of plants, the insects they feed on do. Grow lots of flowers that attract moths like honeysuckle and ivy (see *Insects leaflet*). Also establish a pond or marshy area for bats to drink from and to encourage insects that need water to breed.

You could also put up bat boxes to provide somewhere to roost. These boxes are either flat to put against walls and tree trunks or cylindrical for hanging from a branch: different bats like different habitats so it's a good idea to have both. Position them in groups at least 4m from the ground to make them safe and make sure that they're facing southwest to southeast.



Melvin Grey



Bats are heavily protected by law so make sure you seek advice before carrying out any work that might disturb them. Never handle bats for health and safety reasons.

Call the Bat Helpline on 0845 1300 228 for further advice.



SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW

It's important to survey all our plants and animals so that we can keep track of their current status. If you want to help then you can get more information from the Mammals Trust UK. (<http://www.mtuk.org/>)



Susan Sharafi

Badgers

Badgers are really easy to identify because of the bright white stripes on their head. They are omnivorous, eating all sorts of things including nuts and fruit, insects, worms and bulbs. If you think they're in your area then start

putting out peanuts, dog and cat food and fruit to make them stay. Badgers are protected from any harm and since 1992 it's been illegal to damage, destroy or obstruct setts.

Susan Sharafi



Foxes

Foxes have adapted well to urban life and should become a regular visitor to your wildlife area. They really will eat anything from voles, rabbits and snails to fruit and nuts. Try leaving some dog or cat food out at night along with a bowl of water – you'll know if they've come to feed from the strong, musky smell they leave. During the winter you might hear an eerie screaming as the foxes try to attract a mate.



Bank Vole - Kevin Lewis



Wood Mouse - Steve Minkin

Kevin Lewis



Chris Moore



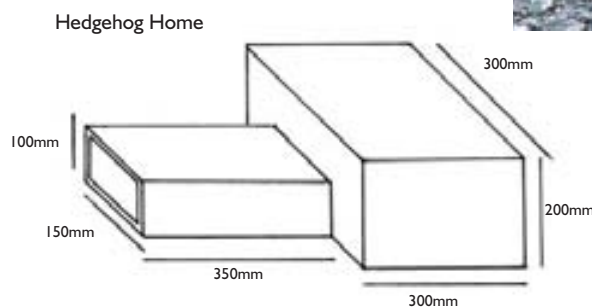
Wiggly Wigglers



Nida Al-Fulaisi

Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs are covered with lots of little spines made from modified hairs that help to protect them from their two main predators: badgers and foxes. They will probably be one of your most common visitors and are great at controlling slugs and snails. Hedgehogs also like fallen fruit so you could plant apple or pear trees. In the winter, hedgehogs hibernate and need safe, warm places like log piles or a hedgehog house.



HOMES FOR HEDGEHOGS

You can build a hedgehog home from untreated exterior plywood.

- Place it in a sheltered corner of the garden.
- Cover it with twigs, logs and leaves.

Dormice

The dormouse is one of Wales' most endangered mammals and is a protected species. There have only been a few sightings in the Vale of Glamorgan but if you're lucky they may be in your area. Dormice live in areas of woodland and overgrown hedgerows; eating flowers, fruits, nuts and small insects. If you want to attract them to your area make sure there's lots of dense vegetation for them to move around in.



These suggestions are great for all the other small mammals you might get in your garden too. Also, try planting native plants like hazel, crab apple and hawthorn. Small patches of bramble are also great for cover and also provide fruit.

HYGIENE

It's important to wash your hands after handling food for animals or cleaning away droppings.

BE WILDLIFE FRIENDLY

Don't use chemical pesticides unless you really need to do so. Poisons can move up the food chain and harm animals like hedgehogs and badgers that feed on slugs and snails. Try using beer traps or biological control. If you're successful in making your area a haven for wildlife you shouldn't even need pesticides – the plants and animals will reach a natural balance.



EASY ACCESS

If your wildlife area is attractive, then lots of visitors will soon arrive. To make it easier for them you could:

- Put a trellis against the fence.
- Make a gap under any gate or hedge.
- Remove some bricks from the base of a wall.



Fox



Cat



Badger



Shrew



Wood mouse

TRACKER TRAINING

If you want to know who your night-time visitors are then you can build a tracking plate by filling a shallow scrape with sand. Any mammals that walk across it will leave clear prints. If you want to keep a permanent record:

- Carefully spray the track with hair spray to hold the sand in place.
- Build a wall around it with cardboard.
- Fill in the tracks with plaster of Paris and leave to dry.



Kevin Lewis

Squirrels

Grey squirrels were introduced to the UK in the nineteenth century and have replaced red squirrels in most areas. Some people think of them as pests, stealing food put out for birds. If you take the time to watch them though, you'll soon find

that they're amazingly agile and entertaining animals that are easy to see. If you want to discourage them from eating the bird food, try mixing in a little cayenne pepper with the seed or nuts (it won't harm the birds) or buy squirrel-proof feeders.

MAKE A MAMMAL TABLE

Lots of small mammals like to eat seeds, nuts and fruit. Some kinds of mice even like mushrooms and voles like porridge oats.

- **Build a low platform by raising some exterior plywood on bricks.**
- **Place it near a hedge, bushes or long grass for cover from cats.**
- **Provide water in a shallow dish.**
- **Keep it clean and always wash your hands.**



Hedgehog

Footprints shown actual size

GENERAL TIPS

- Lots of mammals will visit your area but aren't often seen: try to capture their tracks.
- Put some bat boxes up and establish plants to attract flying insects.
- Leave nuts and fruit on a low table for small mammals next to undergrowth.
- Feed larger mammals dog or cat food and provide some water or a pond.
- Create a range of habitats to attract a range of visitors.

These leaflets are produced by

Ecology Team

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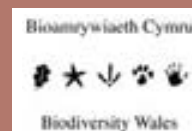
Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)
Government's adviser on sustaining natural beauty, wildlife and outdoor enjoyment in Wales. The national wildlife conservation authority.
Tel: 02920 772400



The Welsh Assembly Government
A devolved government for Wales. Responsible for health, education, economic development, culture, transport and the environment.
Tel: 0845 010 5500



Biodiversity and Sustainability in the Vale



Wales Biodiversity Partnership (WBP)
WBP brings together organisations involved in biodiversity conservation in Wales and provides advice.
Tel: 01248 385743



Mammals Trust UK
Protecting our native animals and their habitats.
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www.mtuk.org

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