

Trail or wildlife cameras



Plumpton Wildlife & Habitat Group has two ‘trail’ cameras for use around the parish to get a better idea of the distribution and abundance of some animal species, especially nocturnal mammals. So far, they have been used in four gardens and a house porch, but we are still experimenting.

In my own garden in the late summer, foxes were very frequent and up to three of them at a time (two adults with a cub). I have long thought that we are often visited by badger, but none has appeared on the camera. I am also surprised and disappointed not to have seen a hedgehog (it is possible that for some reason they may not trigger the camera). We even tried baiting for hedgehogs, but still no joy. And what I have been able to identify is three different cats (but none of them large enough to count as a puma).

A garden in the south end of the village also recorded foxes frequently (including a mother and cub). A garden at the top end of the parish produced very little (although we had been trying to target hedgehogs). At another garden there was an attempt to see whether anything was visiting the chicken shed – only chickens; and currently an experiment to see if dormice could be picked up in a hedge.

The house porch is in the middle of the village and is used by brown long-eared bats. During the night in the late summer and autumn the bats bring their larger moth prey into the porch, drop the insects’ wings, eat the rest and then fly off to get another. Last year a Plumpton College student studied the moth wings to see what species the bats are eating, but that’s another story. I wanted to know what time of year they did this, how often they visit in a night, what time of night, is each such ‘feeding-perch’ the ‘territory’ of a single bat. Well, the answer to the last question is ‘no’ – quite often two bats are there together.

The bats started using the porch at the end of July and are still there at the beginning of October. They are there at any time of night but there may be a peak in the early hours of the morning. It’s a bit difficult to know how often they come in because there are a lot of blank shots that are probably bats that were too fast for the camera, but sometimes they appear to visit several times an hour.

We have set the cameras to respond to an animal passing between 9.00 in the evening and 5.00 in the morning. The camera takes a picture and then waits a minute before it will take another. The settings can be varied and they can take video clips as well as stills. They can store a lot of pictures and with the settings we have used so far will run for months on the same batteries, so we can use them in much more adventurous situations, but for the time being we thought it would be interesting to get an idea of the nightlife in the gardens around the village. If you want to borrow one, please email us via the website contact link, and if necessary we can help you set it up.

*Tony Hutson
November 2015*