

Mammals at Oxford Island

Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

Hedgehogs have been recorded in the past but currently are not likely to be present at Oxford Island (Management Plan, 2000).

Pygmy Shrew (*Sorex minutus*)

The high-pitched squeaking of shrews is often heard in grassland areas in summer and there must be a large population on the reserve.

Pipistrelle Bat (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)

Leisler Bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*)

Daubenton Bat (*Myotis daubentoni*)

Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

Rabbits are common at Oxford Island but their numbers fluctuate due to a number of factors including *myxomatosis*. In recent years over sixty have been counted along the road early in the morning. At the east-shore there are small patches where rabbits have grazed the rank grassland short allowing wildflowers such as lady's bedstraw and creeping cinquefoil to take advantage. Higher densities of rabbits may improve such habitats for wildflowers and associated biodiversity.

(Irish) Mountain Hare (*Lepus timidus hibernicus*)

The Irish hare is a sub-species of the European mountain hare. They were formerly common at Oxford Island with up to fifteen seen at one time (Warden's Report: June 1978). The growth of the woodland plantations on the reserve over the past thirty years has reduced suitable hare habitat and they are rarely seen nowadays. They are still present at Derryinver Moss a few miles to the west. The author knows of no records of the introduced brown hare *Lepus europaeus* at Oxford Island.

Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

Grey squirrels are an introduced American species. They are present at Oxford Island in large numbers.

Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*)

A study in 1978-79 involved the trapping of almost 1000 wood mice on the reserve. The highest numbers of mice and largest percentage of immatures were caught between October and December. There was found to be no preference for any particular habitat (Culbert et al. 1981).

House Mouse (*Mus musculus domesticus*)

House mice were recorded as present in 1981 (Culbert et al. 1981). Numbers are strictly controlled (Management Plan, 2000).

Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*)

Brown rats are present at the reserve but not often seen. Numbers are controlled (Management Plan, 2000).

Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

It is likely that at least one pair of foxes breeds on the reserve in most years but they are not often seen. Early morning is the best time for a sighting but in mid-winter (at the beginning of the breeding season) foxes may occasionally be seen throughout the day.

(Irish) Stoat (*Mustela erminea hibernica*)

Stoats are occasionally sighted along the paths of the reserve. Irish stoats are a sub-species of the *Mustela erminea* found in Britain and Europe.

American Mink (*Neovison vison*)

Introduced mink are occasional breeders at the reserve (Management Plan, 2000). Some control of numbers has been carried out in the past.

Badger (*Meles meles*)

There is a badger sett on the reserve but the animals are not often seen. They have suffered some persecution.

Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

Individual otters are occasionally sighted at Oxford Island and they have attempted to breed in the past. A relatively young (and seemingly confused or injured) otter was caught near the Discovery Centre in summer 2008, indicating that they may have been breeding somewhere in the local area. Raughlan has been identified as a possible breeding site (Management Plan, 2000).

Reference

Oxford Island Management Plan 2000-2005. 2000.