



British Wildlife

Grey and Red Squirrels

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 details that not all wildlife in the UK is considered to be native. It is this Act that states grey squirrels are not actually considered to be UK wildlife but instead an invasive animal that have been taking over red squirrel territory. Grey squirrels were first brought to the UK in the early 1800's and kept on private land, over the years there were many releases of grey squirrels into UK woodlands with the last release documented in 1929. It is now illegal to release grey squirrels into the wild without a licence.

There are only a few areas of the UK where you are likely to see red squirrels; Aira Force in the Lake District, Allan Band and Grasmere in Cumbria, Allen Banks, Craggside, Wallington and Staward in Nothumberland, Bothwood Copse on the Isle of Wight, Brownsea Island in Dorset, Formby in Liverpool, Mount Stewart in County Down and Plas Newydd in Anglesey.

There are conservation projects in place to help protect the red squirrels.

ACTIVITY: Foraging for food, climbing trees and hoarding nuts.

DIET: Nuts, seeds, some flowers, tree shoots and seasonal fruits

HABITAT: Wooded areas, prefer to live in trees but do dig burrows and systems of tunnels underground.



The Hedgehog

Hedgehogs are recognised by their spines, which are made out of keratin (the same substance as our nails) and they use them to protect themselves. As well as their spines hedgehogs have grey/brown fur.

ACTIVITY: Digging, climbing, swimming and they can run up to 6 mph.

DIET: Insects, snails, frogs, toads, caterpillars, worms, mushrooms, beetles, bird eggs, fruits and vegetation.

HABITAT: Nests are built out of moss and leaves often in hedgerows or in gardens. They hibernate alone from November - April

The Fox

UK foxes have reddish-brown fur but sometimes can have black or silver colouring. They have a long bushy tail known as a sweep which often has a white tip. Foxes are members of the dog family and can adapt to many different environments living almost anywhere.

ACTIVITY: Roaming territory, running/chasing (can reach up to 30 mph).

DIET: Small rodents such as rats and mice, birds, earthworms, fruits and amphibians e.g. frogs.

HABITAT: Foxes make 'lair' under or in hollow trees or in deserted buzzard nests. are

The Badger

The badger is nocturnal and rarely seen. It is Britain's largest land carnivore and is identified by the black and white stripes on the head, white tipped ears and grey body. They have strong arms and their paws are adapted for digging. Their eyesight is poor and but their hearing and sense of smell is excellent.

ACTIVITY: At nightfall the badgers go in search of their food sometimes staying out all night in summer. They spend a lot less time foraging for food in winter but do not hibernate.

DIET: Small mammals, frogs, insects, earthworms and juicy flower bulbs.

HABITAT: Badgers build and live in underground tunnels called 'setts'



The Mole

Moles are rarely seen but are common throughout the UK. They are covered in greyish-black, velvety fur and have tiny eyes, a long pink nose, wide front paws and large claws to help them shovel the dirt.

ACTIVITY: They live alone and spend most of their time underground digging tunnels and hunting.

DIET: Earthworms and insects.

HABITAT: Can be found in grassland and woodland edges.



British wild cats

Wild cats are rare and very endangered. They are found in small areas of the Scottish Highlands and are at threat due to breeding with domestic cats. The wild cat looks like a lighter coloured tabby cat but has a stockier build with dense fur. A wild cat can be identified by the bandings or stripes on its tail and body.

ACTIVITY: They are nocturnal, cautious of humans and camouflage well into their habitat so are very difficult to see.

DIET: Rabbits and birds.

HABITAT: The wild cats live in the moorlands and forests of Scotland, but mostly in Edinburgh and Glasgow.



The Red Kite

Once a very rare bird that was only found in Wales the red kite has now been reintroduced throughout the UK. It is a large bird standing at a height of 58-64cm. The bird has red wings with black tips, white patches underneath the wing and a forked tail.

ACTIVITY: Found mostly over woods and open areas soaring and looking for prey.

DIET: Small prey including rabbits and roadkill.

HABITAT: Red kites nest in dense woodland



The Golden Eagle

Can fly up to 150mph, have excellent eyesight and stand up to 88cm tall. They have dark brown and golden plumage around the neck/nape.

DIET: Rabbits, smaller birds, reptiles and fish.

HABITAT: They prefer mountains, often treeless habitats, although they need large trees or rocks for nesting.



The Kestrel

Is a brown falcon and is one of the most common birds of prey in Britain. They are 34-38cms tall with the female kestrels standing slightly taller than the males. The bird is a chestnut brown colour with a bluish bill and a yellow cere and legs.

ACTIVITY: Often seen perched on high tree branches looking out for prey.

DIET: Small mammals such as voles, shrews, mice and birds.

HABITAT: Live in a variety of habitats but prefer the moors, heathland, farms and urban areas.

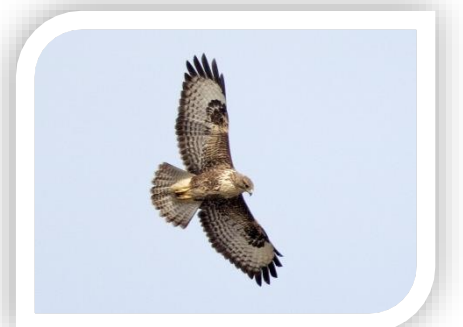


The Buzzard

Is a very large bird of prey that can be found throughout the UK but mostly in the west near open ground. They are 51-57cm tall with the males being slightly lighter than the female. They are often a shade of brown with white flecks but can also vary from pure white to black.

ACTIVITY: Do not normally travel in flocks but can be seen together during migration.

DIET: Mostly rabbits, small mammals, reptiles and roadkill.



The Kingfisher

Is a brightly coloured bird commonly found in the south of England. They stand at 17-19cm tall and their beaks are approximately 4cm long.

DIET: Aquatic insects (insects that live in water) and small fish.

HABITAT: Found by still or slow flowing water such as lakes, canals and rivers. Often found in bushes with overhanging branches.



Mice

All mice have very large eyes, long tails, large ears and a pointy nose. There are different types of mice found in the UK; Field mouse, House mouse, Harvest mouse, Wood mouse and Yellow-necked mouse.

ACTIVITY: Mice are nocturnal so they are most active between dusk until dawn.

DIET: Seeds, fruit, nuts and small insects.

HABITAT: This depends on the type of mouse but mostly found in fields, woodlands and croplands.



Voles

There are three main types of vole in the UK; the Water vole, Bank vole and Field Vole. Water Voles can be mistaken for rats, Bank voles for mice whereas the Field vole is more distinctive with a rounded nose, small ears and eyes and a short tail.

ACTIVITY: Foraging and avoiding predators.

DIET: Grass, tree bark and roots, occasionally berries and nuts.

HABITAT: This depends on the type of vole but their names explain where they like to live.



The Shrew

There are four types of shrew native to the UK; Common shrew, Pygmy shrew, Water shrew and the Lesser white toothed shrew (the Lesser white toothed shrew is only found on the Isles of Scilly, Jersey and Sark). Shrews classically have very small eyes, a short tail, small ears and a pointed snout.

ACTIVITY: To communicate shrews use clicks, chirps, squeaks, whistles and barks. Shrews must eat every 2-3 hours to survive so are often seen foraging for food.

DIET: Shrews are opportunistic feeders which means they eat most foods that they come across e.g. earthworms, spiders, woodlice, snails etc.

HABITAT: Shrews live almost anywhere but are most commonly found in hedgerows, grassland and woodlands. They live in burrows which have often been made by other animals.



The Pine Martin

Is mostly found in the north of the UK. It is a dark chestnut brown colour with a cream/yellow colour under the chin and neck. They have long bushy tails and during the summer can be heard making cat-like calls.

ACTIVITY: They are active during dusk and overnight spending time hunting and marking their territory. The Pine Martin is an excellent climber.

DIET: Small animals and birds, insects and fruit.

HABITAT: They spend most of their time in woodland preferring pine trees (this is where their name comes from). They live in holes within trees and often use an abandoned birds nest or squirrel dreys.

The Stoat

Is related to the weasel but is larger in size, it has an orange body, a cream/white underside and a black tip on its long tail. They can be identified from a distance when they run as they bound and arch their back whilst doing so.

ACTIVITY: Stoats are active throughout the day and night.

DIET: Small rodents such as mice and voles but often also rabbits.

HABITAT: Often seen in open areas such as grassland and heathland. Stoats are solitary and live in dens.



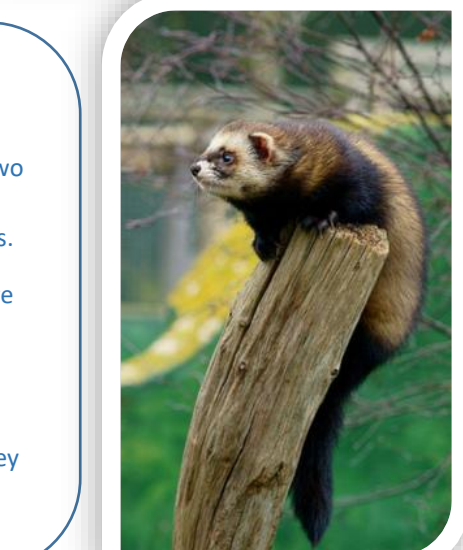
The Weasel

Is smaller than a stoat with a shorter tail. They have a brown back with a cream/white throat and belly. At a distance you can tell the stoat and weasel apart by the way they run; the weasel runs with a straight back close to the ground whereas stoats arch their back.

ACTIVITY: They are very good climbers and will raid bird nests for eggs and young. They can travel up to 1.5 miles to look for food.

DIET: The weasel is the UK's smallest carnivore so they must have meat in their diet. They feed on small animals such as mice, voles and birds.

HABITAT: They live in most places but can be seen in woodland, grassland, hedgerows and heathland.



The Polecat

Is roughly the size of a ferret and can be seen in parts of England and Wales. They have two colours to their coat; light brown/cream short hairs and have long dark brown/black hairs creating a two-tone effect. They have a banded face with a light-coloured muzzle & ear tips.

ACTIVITY: They are solitary animals spending most of their lives alone and although they are nocturnal the females that have young can be seen looking for food during the day.

DIET: Rabbits, rats, birds and frogs.

HABITAT: They prefer lowland areas such as woodlands, marshes and along riverbanks. They often make their dens within abandoned rabbit warrens, fox or badger dens

The Frog

This is the UK's most commonly known amphibian. The colour of the common frog varies, they may be a mix of brown, green, yellow and even red with a dark bands of colour behind the eyes and on the legs. Frogs are particularly special because they don't only use their lungs to breathe but also their skin.

ACTIVITY: A frog jumps or hops rather than walks spending the Spring near ponds and the rest of the year in woodlands, gardens and grassland, it is though important for them to stay moist and have access to water. They are most active at night when the weather is cooler and hibernate during the winter.

DIET: Insects, snails and worms.

HABITAT: Can be found near ponds, rotting leaves, piles of wood or rocks where they will be taking shelter from the sun and hiding from predators.



The Toad

They are amphibians that are dark in colour, have bumpy/warty skin, short back legs and bright orange eyes. Much like frogs' toads also breathe through their lungs and skins.

ACTIVITY: The toad walks rather than hops like the frog. During Summer and Autumn, the toad hunts for food in areas that are damp or have access to water.

DIET: Insects, spiders, slugs and worms.

HABITAT: Can be found in deeper ponds during the Spring and hibernate over the Winter, during the remaining time they feed in woodland and grasslands.

Newts

There are three types of newt native to the UK; Smooth (common), Great Crested (largest species) and Palmate newt. Newts breathe through gills which are found behind their head

ACTIVITY: Newts hibernate underground, can be found in ponds during the spring and in between those times they spend time searching for food.

DIET: Frog tadpoles and water/land insects.

HABITAT: During Summer and Autumn the newt can be found in the damp areas of woodlands, hedgerows and marshes.



Slow worms

Slow worms are in fact legless lizards and not snakes or worms. They come in a variety of colours ranging from brown, gold and grey. Females are large and have a dark stripe down their backs whereas males are paler and sometimes appear to have blue spots.

ACTIVITY: Slow worms hibernate from October to March but during Spring and Summer can often be found basking (sunbathing) to absorb heat.

DIET: Slugs, snails, insects, worms and spiders.

HABITAT: Often found in woodland, grassland or heathland, sometime inhabiting gardens and allotments.



The Adder

There are three types of snake native to the UK; Smooth snake, Grass snake and the Adder. The adder is the only venomous snake in the UK but an adder bite is very rare. An adder bite can be extremely painful and if it is not treated immediately it can be fatal. The adder can be identified by the zig-zag or diamond pattern down its back.

ACTIVITY: They hibernate throughout winter and can most commonly be seen basking between March – October on pathways or warm rocks.

DIET: Mainly small rodents such as mice, voles, sometimes weasels and moles.

HABITAT: Can inhabit anywhere but prefer woodlands, heathland and moorlands.



Lizards

There are two types of lizard native to the UK (if you don't count the slow worm); Sand lizard and Common lizard (pictured to the right). The common lizard is 10-15cm in length and has a brown/light brown/grey colouring with rows of darker stipes/spots down its back /sides and a paler underbelly.

ACTIVITY: Basking in sunlight or absorbing warmth from rocks. These lizards hibernate during winter often in small groups.

DIET: Insects, spiders and snails.

HABITAT: Found in many types of habitat including open woodland, grassland and heathland



There is much more wildlife in the UK that isn't covered in this information pack, but some of our wildlife is considered to be non-native (they do not belong in the UK wilderness). These animals are listed in the UK's Wildlife and Country side Act 1981 in Schedule 9, a good example of a non-native species is the grey squirrel. It is actually illegal to release grey squirrels back into the wild without a licence even if they came from the wild to start with and this is to try and protect the red squirrel population. Another example is mink which were farmed in the UK until the downfall of the fur trade industry and then many of them were unlawfully released into the wild.

Further information on UK wildlife: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/>

Further information on the UK wildlife law: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/9>