

MORVILLE PARISH COUNCIL PINE MARTEN & DORMICE INVESTIGATION PROJECT

Our first meeting was held on 11th May 2025 in the kitchen at Weston House. Our project leaders are Stuart Edmunson and Lucy Grove. This first meeting was led by Stuart alone, with 12 attendees in total, five of whom are resident in the parish boundary. After a brief introduction and welcome, Stuart gave a power point talk on native mammals in general, but with an emphasis on pine martens. We were fortunate to have fine weather, so after a refreshment break everyone made the short walk or drive to Weston Wood where we assisted Stuart in installing five trail cameras which had been already purchased with our grant funding from SHCF. Stuart explained the nuances of finding suitable camera sites and said that the wood has great potential for mammal observations.

After the meeting Lesley Moxon-Jones (the project organiser) set up a WhatsApp group so that those who wished to be involved could keep abreast of our latest sightings, through the sharing of footage from the cameras. Also we were able to arrange for volunteers to collect the SD cards every few weeks for downloading.

It was agreed that a 2nd set of SD cards could be purchased within the budget allocation from SHCF, as this makes it possible to collect and replace the cards in the cameras with only one visit to the woods.

Our second meeting took place on 19th October 2025, with eight attendees at the same venue as before. This time a half day had been scheduled, and unfortunately torrential rain and wind limited the time we were able to spend in the field. Our second leader Lucy Grove was able to attend, and gave us a fascinating introduction to dormice. She brought an old dormouse nest with her, and other items which were passed round the group. We did not visit the wood because of the weather, instead we put dormice tunnels in the hedgerows (to record dormice footprints if present) and installed one of Lucy's own cameras in a dense field corner copse. Stuart visited the wood on his own to collect the SD cards so that we were able to look at the highlights of the recordings before the end of the meeting.

Our third half day meeting took place a month later on 29th November 2025. There were four attendees and project leaders Stuart and Lucy. The weather was fair so we walked to the woods, as Stuart wanted to relocate two of the trail cameras. We also checked the dormice tunnels, which contained many footprints – but unfortunately none of them could be identifiable as dormice.

Our fourth and final meeting took place on 18th March 2026, and with fine weather and thirteen attendees it was an excellent afternoon. We were delighted that Steph Hayes was able to join us. Stuart had obtained five dormice nest boxes which we erected at intervals on the western wood boundary. After that we collected the SD cards from the cameras and reviewed the clips over tea and cake in the kitchen. Stuart donated his time as an in-kind contribution.

OUTCOMES:

- We have provided training to interested individuals within the parish who want to further their knowledge on small mammals and make a contribution towards their preservation.

- Although we have been unable to verify the presence of pine martens and dormice, we have found evidence of the presence of badgers, foxes, hares, grey squirrels, small rodents, fallow deer, muntjac, roe deer and polecat. These have been/will be added to the national records for this location. At our final meeting Stuart identified footage of a long haired fallow deer, normally only found in the Mortimer Forest in Shropshire – this individual animal will have travelled from there; this is a good example of our project having made valuable observations to be included in Shropshire’s mammal database.
- We will be able to continue the project into 2026/2027 without further funding, thanks to Stuart and Lucy’s willingness to give up their time without payment. Eg, Stuart plans a ‘Mammal Walk’ in the wood during summer 2026, and to install small mammal camera tunnels at his own expense.
- Lesley Moxon-Jones created an information board and table at MACE – Morville Annual Community Event - to raise awareness within the parish. She found it to be an opportunity to explain misunderstandings such as, some people believed that we planned to introduce pine martens here, rather than simply look for their presence. She also took a table space at SHLT’s Summer Forum held at Rushbury village hall on 5th June 2025.

