

## England, July 1-10, 2018

VLADIMIR DINETS

This was a work-filled trip, so I had little time for mammalwatching and almost all of it was late at night. Here are a few tips. The weather was hot and sunny; looks like it's becoming the new normal for the country. The moon was at last quarter on July 8.

1. The Oakley Court Hotel, Windsor. You don't have to stay at the hotel to enter the grounds and park there, day or night. There is a short nature trail that follows River Thames, heading E from 51.489206N 0.669429W. About 100-150 m down the trail, an overgrown shed on the right was intermittently used as a night roost by **Natterer's myotis**. If you turn SW near the shed, you'll see a field where lots of bats of different species were feeding at night. An old brick wall separates the field from the forest; its E end is near the shed and the W end is near a hollow tree which had a roost of **common noctules**. Also near the shed is a forest pond where I saw a **water vole** at night. **Wood mice** and **Eastern grey squirrels** were common in the forest.

2. Coventry is a somewhat depressing city surrounded by deforested countryside. On the university campus there was a colony of **field voles** at 52.383969N 1.557226W. The largest remaining forest in the area is Weaverley Wood, accessible from 52.336290N 1.486494W; the only mammal I found there was a **bank vole**. In nearby Kenilworth Castle I found a small colony of **mustached myotis** in the first building to the right as you walk inside the walls, accessible through a doorway at 52.347590N 1.590800W.

3. Exmoor National Park is a delightful area of moors, forested canyons, fields, and rocky coasts. I spent a few hours of two nights exploring the forest trails accessible by footbridge at 51.221697N 3.834681W (at the lower parking lot of Cottage Inn). The trail N was useless, but the trail S produced a lot of stuff, mostly on the first night which was less windy: at least ten **water shrews** (mostly around 51.219571N 3.838972W), two **badgers**, a **roe deer**, a **harvest mouse** and a **field vole** (both in a clearing at 51.220064N 3.836880W), a **yellow-necked mouse** (near the bridge), and lots of bats I couldn't identify. **Water voles** lived on the riverbank directly below the abovementioned parking lot. Another good area was Valley of Rocks, where I found a **badger** family, a **pygmy shrew** (at 51.233544N 3.848585W), and some **feral goats** of the ancient British Primitive breed (look below the coastal trail). Harbor porpoises are often visible offshore (you can take a short boat trip from Lynmouth for better views). Night driving wasn't particularly productive; all I got in about 3 hrs was another **pygmy shrew** (at 51.180916N 3.897487W), a **hedgehog**, a **fox**, a **roe deer**, a few **red deer**, some **rabbits** in roadside fields, and two herds of **Exmoor ponies** with small foals (at 51.191662N 3.776997W and 51.173941N 3.766959W). These ponies are possibly the closest thing to the extinct tarpan anywhere in the world; they actually might be real tarpans of a small, moor-adapted island subspecies, so seeing them is a high point of any mammal-watching trip to Britain. Note that if you ask about seeing them in one of the park visitor centers, you'd be directed to one of the farms with small, fenced-in herds; the wild ponies roam the moors and prefer the highest elevations, at least in summer.

4. Wytham Woods Nature Reserve near Oxford has the highest density of **badgers** in the world. They are difficult to see in dense undergrowth even with a thermal imager, but I found about ten in one night, plus a few **wood mice**, a **bank vole**, and a baby **Reeves's muntjac** the size of a rabbit (at 51.773375N 1.332489W).