

Cumbria Harvest Mice Project



Harvest Mice

Micromys minutus

Order – Rodentia

Family – Muridae

Tail – Prehensile – 50mm – 70mm

Body Length – 50mm – 70 mm

Coat – moults/ changes colour

Weight – 4 to 9 grams

Lifespan in the wild – 18 mths

Litter – 2 to 3 litters per year
containing an average of 6 babies





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- The blunt ended nose is the differentiating factor from others of its family.
- They do have eyelids

- Long indexes for grasping
- Tendon-locking mechanism
- Ears are round, smaller than other Muridae
- Highly adapted to hearing 7m away and used extensively as a communication tool.



Harvest Mice Breeding Cycle

- Mating – after a period of chasing and ‘boxing’ or gesturing
- Gestation – lasts for 16 upto 21 days
- Birth – happens over a period of 24hrs, born pink/no fur
- Young appear above vegetation – 11 days
- Fully weaned by Mum – 16 days
- Cusp of adulthood – able to breed from approx. 35 days old.

Nest building –
complete apartment
blocks on different
levels for all occasions





Females will move the pups when temperatures get lower and they are always on alert to any disturbance.



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No bigger
than a pound
coin!

- **8 to 10 days old**
- **Weighed 1.8g**
- **Eyes open**
- **Mobile**
- **Eating seed**
- **Very loud squeaks**



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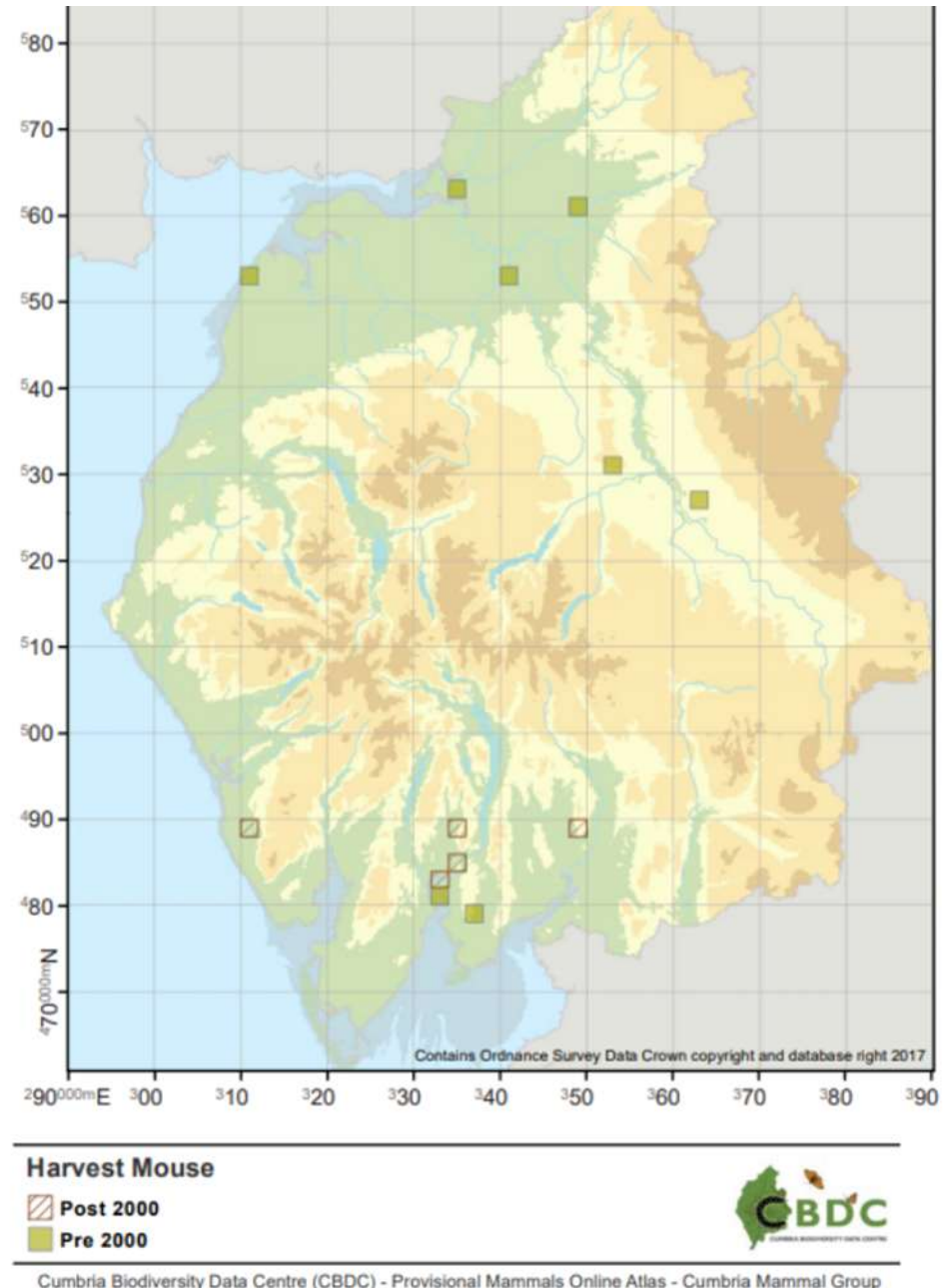
As the babies get older alternative nests are used, in this instance a dying Hazel leaf.

Male –

- After they have mated, they are booted out!
- Female becomes very aggressive towards him.
- Either given a ‘bachelor pad’ or goes on a road trip and holibobs to meet a new female.

Records of Presence

- **33** records in total (CBDC, 2025)
- 1800 – late 1990's in Rockcliffe, Carlisle area and Silloth
- In 2020 the Mammal Society started a five-year project (CBDC, 2025) for volunteers to search and start nest recording which resulted in –
- 2021 – 9 nests Brigsteer, Kendal
- 2022 – 2 nest Underwinder, Sedbergh
- 2023 – 1 nest Allithwaite, Grange over Sands
- 2024 – 2 nests Allithwaite 1 nest Silloth



Why so few finds?

- Lack of recording?
- Extremely difficult to find nests due to weathering and being well hidden?
- Incredibly secretive and smallest Native Mammal

But...the results are telling us that they are **persistent**, they are still here and through captive breeding we have recognised how adaptable they are and hope to build their numbers up.



Who are Cumbria Harvest Mice Project -

- We are Phase 2 of the previous five-year project
- Mouseketeers taking a more direct approach of action
- Dedicated to conservation of our native wildlife
- Project involves breeding Harvest Mice followed by soft release into chosen sites.
- Our husbandry far exceeds the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums husbandry care guidelines (BIAZA, 2023)

- We use natural and seasonal foods and habitat materials to stimulate and simulate their natural habitat and food resources to prepare them for release and better chances of survival.
- Lots of communication/shared experiences and we aren't afraid to ask questions
- Main priority is the welfare of all of the mice whether captive or released
- Gene diversity
- Soft release in to a chosen site
- Monitoring and recording



Meadowsweet



An assortment of grasses



Suitability and Habitat Management

- Prior to release – site surveying, wildcam monitoring and habitat management check

Trialling Soft Release





Proto-type Mark II



With the onset of
Winter straw bales
provided

Trialling Soft Release



Experimenting with different shelter options with Winter approaching



This is what Harvest Mice need!



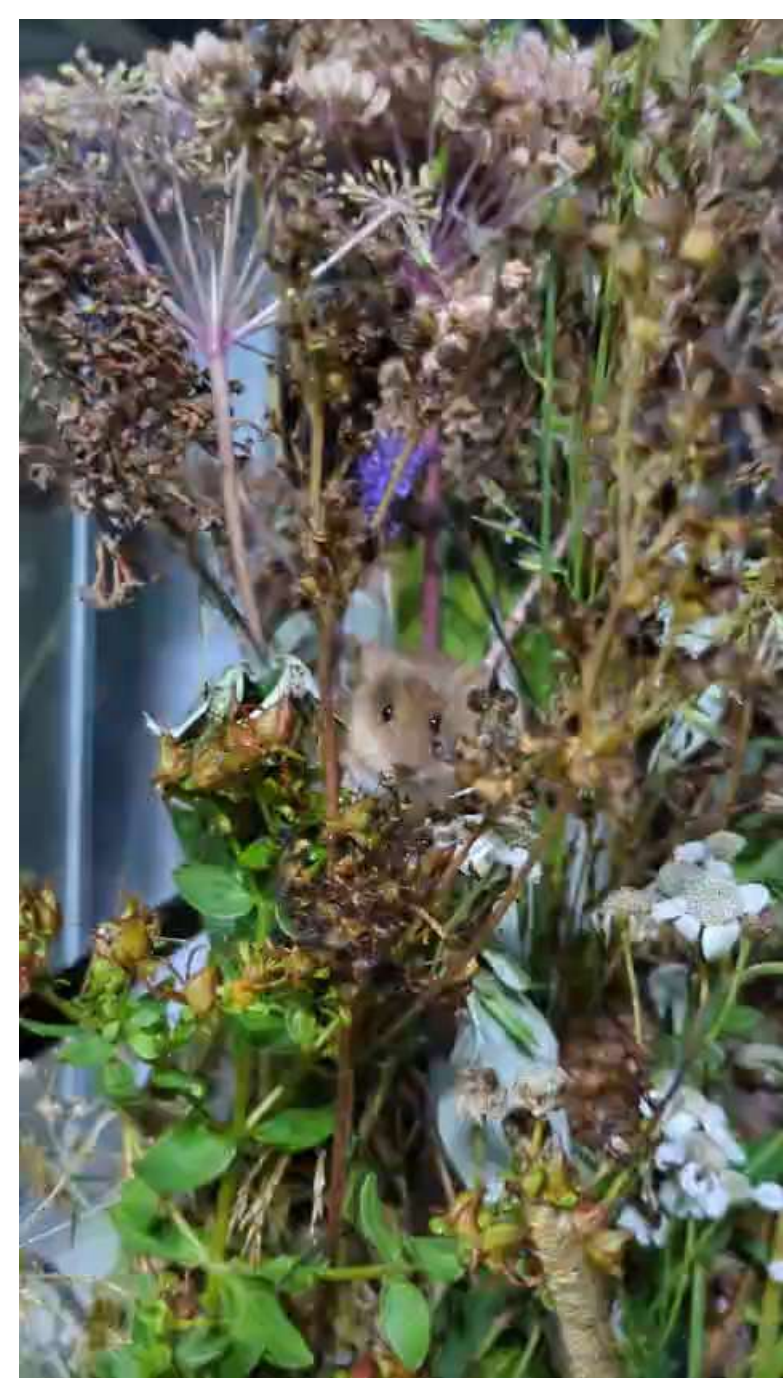


Winter months are great for surveying –

Please submit your records with Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre (CBDC) through iRecord or with the Mammal Society.

Tree Tubes proving to be a perfect monitoring tool







Thank you for coming.
We hope you enjoyed our talk.

If you would like to follow us on
Facebook please search for –

Cumbria Harvest Mice Project



References

Dunn, J., Kynaston, S., Kirk, S., Wildwood Trust (2023) BIAZA Husbandry Care Sheet.

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