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The pygmy shrew, *Sorex minutus*, our only shrew is often killed by cats and then left. They were probably imported with livestock or hay. Research suggests that they are more successful when they do not have to compete with the larger common shrew, *Sorex araneus*.

Bats, in most cases pipistrelles, *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, are present in small numbers. The Stornoway population is regularly seen and noted, and there have been some on Barra since at least 2000. There are occasional records from Harris, the Uists and Benbecula. Some, like the Nathusius' pipistrelle recorded on St. Kilda, will be different species and will certainly be vagrants.



This drawing was made from a film that confirmed the presence of pipistrelles in Barra in 2017.

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Other mammals include the American mink, *Mustela vison*, feral cat, *Felix catus*, feral ferret, *Mustela putorius furo*, (which can resemble the closely related polecat, *Mustela putorius*) and the hedgehog, *Erinaceus europaeus*.

Hedgehogs were introduced to the Uists around 1974-75 in the mistaken belief that they would be a useful biological control for slugs. Their devastation of the internationally important breeding wader population eventually led to a programme of removal. North Uist has been cleared, but monitoring and continuation of effort southwards depends on long term funding.



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The islands vary in the diversity of mammal species and we will be interested in all your records. Mammals generally are under recorded; some species have a detrimental effect on our environment and wildlife and it is important to have information on their numbers and where they are found.

Further information: www.ohbr.org.uk



Outer Hebrides Biological Recording

Terrestrial Mammals of the Outer Hebrides

There are probably only two mammals that are here in the Outer Hebrides of their own volition, the otter, *Lutra lutra* and bats of various species. All the other terrestrial mammals were brought here, either accidentally or intentionally, by another mammal, *Homo sapiens*.



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Otters are common throughout the Islands in both freshwater and the sea. After hunting in the sea they need to bathe in freshwater to help maintain the condition of their coats. The largest part of an otter's diet is small fish, like butterfish, with some crabs and eels. They will sometimes take waterfowl especially young birds.

They are solitary except in the mating season. Usually when two or three are seen together it will be a female with her cubs. Otters have regular sprainting places where they deposit their scented droppings or spraints. A scent that to the human nose is not unpleasant; certainly when compared to other species like mink or ferret.



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Red deer, *Cervus elaphus* occur throughout the islands from the Butt of Lewis to South Uist.



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Field voles, *Microtus agrestis* are absent from the Isles of Lewis and Harris, but common in the southern isles of North Uist, Benbecula and South Uist including Eriskay.



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There are no doubt many who wish the rabbit, *Oryctolagus cuniculus* had never been introduced but it once provided a good source of food. Since the arrival of myxomatosis and a temporary reduction in numbers they are now as numerous as ever and only a few people want to eat them.



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There are not many records for wood mice, *Apodemus sylvaticus* but they are found throughout the Outer Hebrides including on some of the smaller islands.

The house mouse, *Mus musculus* has been recorded between the Butt of Lewis and Barra, but there is little information on its current distribution. It may now be quite rare. A subspecies on St Kilda became extinct after the human population left in 1930.



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The common rat, *Rattus norvegicus* is not everyone's favourite mammal. Despite constant efforts to reduce their numbers they are still common throughout the isles including most offshore islands.

The last remaining ship rats, *Rattus rattus* in the isles were culled on the Shiant Isles in 2017. It was considered by some that they were detrimental to the bird life.



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Mountain hares, *Lepus timidus* are only recorded from the Isle of Lewis and North Harris. There have been no recent sightings on Harris south of Tarbert. It was introduced to Harris in 1859 and to North Uist between 1890 and 1913 where it was less successful and is no longer found.