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Update

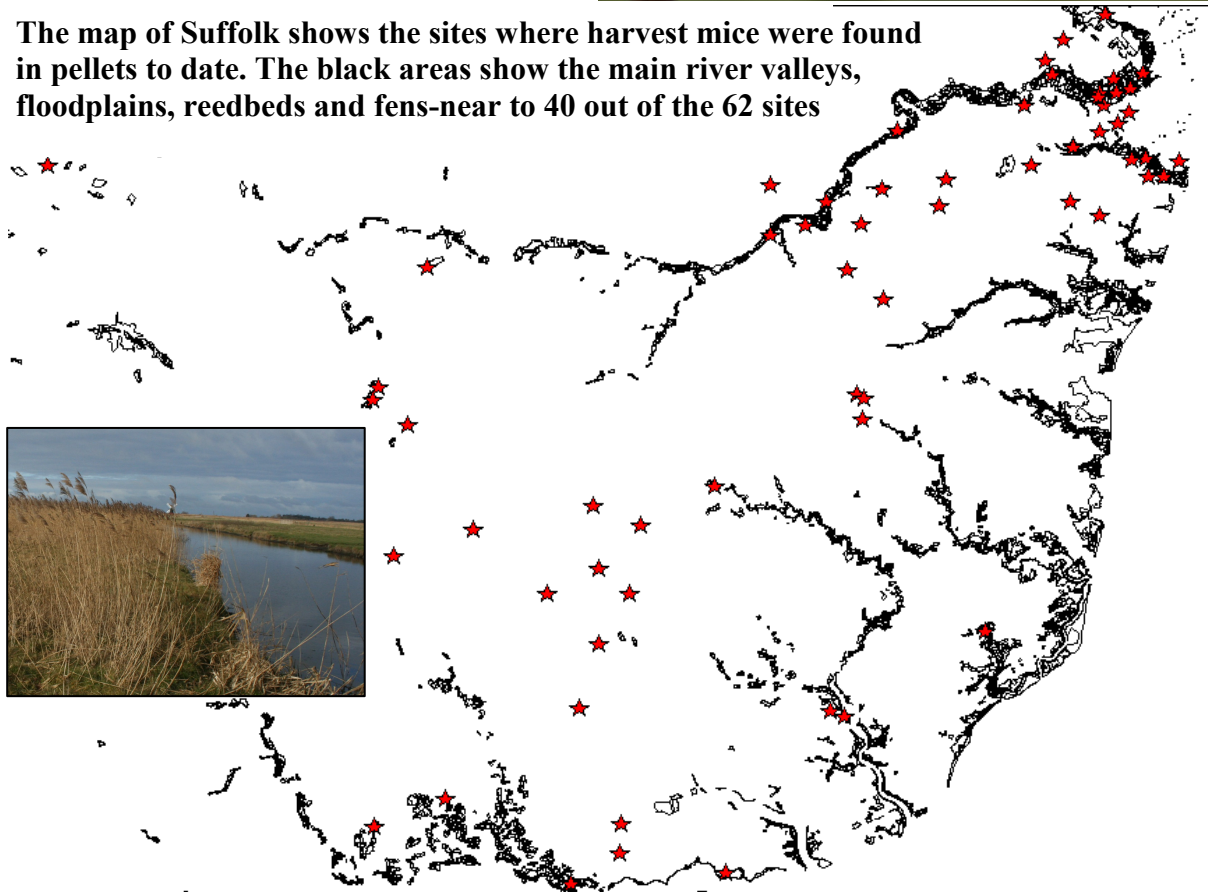
The project now has funding until March 2011, giving another winter to search for harvest mouse nests and plenty of time to write a detailed factsheet on managing land for the harvest mouse.

The last nest searching season saw 37 visits to farms, gardens, wetlands and reserves and nests were found at 31 of those sites.

The map below shows all the sites where harvest mice have been found in barn owl pellets, around 62 sites in total. The latest surprise is that after analysing the data the overall numbers of harvest mice in barn owl pellets seems very similar to figures from the 1970s.



The map of Suffolk shows the sites where harvest mice were found in pellets to date. The black areas show the main river valleys, floodplains, reedbeds and fens—near to 40 out of the 62 sites



Site Visits—Winter/Spring 09/10

From October 2009 to May 2010, 37 varied sites have been visited throughout Suffolk to search for harvest mice nests. The sites were mainly arable farms but included wetlands, river valleys, paddocks & grasslands, SWT reserves and gardens. Nests were found at 31 of those sites in a wide variety of habitats and plant species. A lot has been learnt about what the harvest mouse needs to breed and survive the winters and what landowners can do to help and encourage the mice to breed. The main things were found to be:

1. A good network of well connected habitat throughout the farm such as field margins that are allowed to grow long for at least 3 years
2. Creation of new habitat such as millet planted for wildbirds and beetle banks—which are strips of uncultivated land across arable fields

The next challenge will be to look at how the mice and other arable species can spread to new areas using natural (such as river valleys) and created (such as field margins) wildlife corridors.

“More long field margins could provide important wildlife corridors, allowing the harvest mouse to spread to new areas and giving the species a stronghold in this part of the UK along with the barn owl”



Pellet Analysis

The opportunity to analyse pellets has been attracting new volunteers to SWT from all over the county and shows how much interest there has been in the project. Over 2500 barn owl pellets have now been analysed, a real feat considering one pellet can take up to an hour to analyse. The barn owl box monitors are in the process of collecting pellets as they check owl boxes all over Suffolk, so boxes and bags of pellets are not an unusual sight at the SWT offices in Ashbocking!

The last **pellet training day** for the project is to be held at Foxburrow Farm on **Saturday 4th September 2010** from **2-5pm**. If anyone is interested in attending please contact Martha Meek ASAP as places are limited.

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