

Common Mammals

A series of ID guides to help you discover more of Leicestershire's wonderful wildlife

Most of our mammal species are nocturnal and secretive so can be hard to spot. However some have adapted to living near to humans so may be seen in towns and villages. The easiest way to spot many mammals is from their tracks and signs (eg. mole hills, footprints, droppings, burrows).

When viewing online, simply click on the species name to find out more.



[Grey Squirrel - *Sciurus carolinensis*](#)

ID: grey fur with reddish tinge, long bushy tail

Where: trees, hoards nuts in the ground in Autumn

Similar: Brown Rat (hairless tail)

Fact: carries the squirrel pox virus which has decimated the UK's native Red Squirrel population



[Red Fox – *Vulpes vulpes*](#)

ID: size of a small dog, red fur, bushy tail

Where: gardens or crossing roads after dark

Similar: domestic cats (smaller, shorter legs)

Fact: fox population density is much higher in urban/suburban areas than in the countryside



[Hedgehog – *Erinaceus europaeus*](#)

ID: grey/brown with prickles

Where: hedges, gardens – snuffling through vegetation

Similar: none

Fact: hibernates in winter. Eats slugs, beetles, worms, bird eggs and will scavenge dead animals



[Badger – *Meles meles*](#)

ID: black & white stripy face, short legs

Where: woodland, visits gardens for food

Similar: none

Fact: have become more urbanised in recent years. Controversially being culled because of TB links to cattle – but vaccination is an alternative.

Become a citizen scientist! If you can spot any of these species, why not submit your sighting at www.naturespot.org.uk and contribute to our scientific knowledge of local wildlife. Record data submitted by the public is vital to conservation. Simply register online then follow the guidance on the Submit Records page. Note – you can record mammals by observing their tracks and signs.

Other Leicestershire mammals to check out:

[Bats](#), [Water Vole](#), [Bank Vole](#), [Common Shrew](#)



Rabbit – *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

ID: sandy fur, hopping gait with bobbing white tail

Where: woods & hedges near to their burrows

Similar: Brown Hare (larger, long ears with black tips)

Fact: introduced to the UK by the Romans then 'farmed' for food and fur



Brown Hare – *Lepus europaeus*

ID: long ears with black tips, long legs – fast running

Where: in open fields

Similar: Rabbit (shorter ears without black tips)

Fact: Hares do not live in burrows and live all their lives in the open



Wood Mouse – *Apodemus sylvaticus*

ID: red/brown but pale belly, long tail, big ears & eyes

Where: woods, hedges, gardens and inside buildings

Similar: Bank/Field Vole (have short tails, rounded snout)

Fact: has replaced the House Mouse as the species most frequently found in houses



Brown Rat – *Rattus norvegicus*

ID: grey/brown, long hairless tail, pointed snout

Where: near water and human habitation

Similar: Water Vole (rounded face, tiny ears)

Fact: native to Asia, introduced to the UK around 1720. Eats almost anything, even diving for shellfish.



Muntjac – *Muntiacus reevesi*

ID: albatross-sized but with short legs, males with short antlers and black face markings

Where: areas with dense cover, occasionally gardens

Similar: Roe Deer (longer legs, black nose, white rump)

Fact: native to Asia, escaped from Woburn Abbey in 1925



Mole – *Talpa europaea*

ID: hamster-sized, black with huge front paws

Where: animals rarely seen but mole hills everywhere

Similar: none (but mole hills similar to ant hills)

Fact: mainly solitary, only leaving burrows to find new territory or to escape flooding

Find more Leicestershire
Wildlife ID Guides at:
www.naturespot.org.uk/IDguides



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