



# Mammals of Bog Meadows



# Map

Each point on the map corresponds with a point specific to the area



Grazing animals on site



Dogs must be on lead at all times



1.27 miles



3,000 steps



Easy Terrain





## Introduction

When we think of the wildlife at Bog Meadows, mammals are not the first animals that come to mind. This is because they are usually most active at night and not often spotted during a casual walk.

Nonetheless, they have very important roles in this habitat.





## **1. Bats**

**Perhaps not the first animal that comes to mind, bats are the only true flying mammals.**

The two most common species of bat found at Bog Meadows are the leisler's and pipistrelle. You can see them flying above the fields and pond at sunset munching on midges, moths, and other flying insects.

Bats use echolocation to find food and can accurately fly along the hedges in the darkness, they will never get tangled in your hair. They roost in tree holes, bat boxes and even rooftop spaces, often together in colonies.



The pipistrelle bat has dark, golden-brown fur and a flight pattern with lots of twists and turns. It is tiny, weighing no more than a pound coin.

Leisler's bats are larger with reddish-brown fur and long fur over their shoulders giving a lion's mane appearance. They are first to fly at night and have a straighter flight pattern.



## **2. Cats & dogs**

**Household pets like dogs and cats can have a negative impact on wildlife.**

In the UK it is estimated that free-ranging domestic cats kill around 55 million birds per year.



While dogs may not directly kill as many wild animals, when off lead they cause disturbance and stress. There are rare birds at Bog Meadows that spend a lot of time on or near the ground, they are very well camouflaged so you may not see them but often your dog does.

Loose dogs can trample nests or force adults away from their young causing the young to perish.

Bog Meadows is a small haven for these rare birds, its important that all dogs stay on the path and on lead in the nature reserve.



### **3. Pygmy shrew**



**An incredibly active little mammal, the pygmy shrew needs to eat every 2-3 hours to survive.**

Its metabolism is so high it can eat 125% of its body weight per day.

A small, insectivorous mammal, the pygmy shrew has tiny eyes and a large nose giving it a keen sense of smell. Shrews hectically snuffle through the undergrowth for their prey, which includes spiders and woodlice.

They are dark brown with small ears and a pointy face and have the fastest heartbeat of any animal around 1,200 beats per minute.

Pygmy shrews are an important source of food for the birds of prey that can Bog Meadows home, including common buzzards and sparrowhawks.





## **4. Red fox**

**One of our most iconic mammals, the red fox is the only wild member of the canine family in Ireland.**

Foxes are opportunistic feeders eating rabbits, birds, eggs, insects, and fruit. They have adapted very well to urban life and eat household and restaurant food waste.

They are heard more often than seen due to their loud calls during mating season. They have a vocabulary of around 30 different calls for communication.



Foxes live in a burrow called an 'earth' scenting their territories with urine creating a recognisable odour.

With incredible hearing they can hear a rodent digging well underground. They are distinctive and easy to identify with an orangey-red fur on the back, white stomach, black ear tips, and a bushy orange tail known as a 'brush'.

Foxes are vulnerable to rat poison, with many being found dead due to eating poisoned rats.



## **5. Brown rat**



**Everyone has seen at least one rat in their lifetime.**

Although they have a bad reputation, they are highly intelligent and social animals. The brown rat is a super adaptable mammal, now found all around the world. They are not native to Ireland, its thought they arrived on ships in the 1700's. They can breed quickly and become damaging to native wildlife e.g. eating bird eggs. Rats live in loose colonies in underground burrows, have grey-brown fur, pointed nose, and a long, scaly tail.

Although commonly living amongst rubbish they keep themselves clean spending a lot of their time washing and grooming. Despite this they do carry serious diseases such as Leptospirosis, Salmonella and Listeria that can be transferred to humans.





## **6. Badger**

**Badgers are Irelands largest land predator and are a well-known species across the country.**

They are famed for their black and white stripes, short fluffy tail, and big strong paws used for digging burrows.

Badgers eat anything from small mammals, bird eggs, worms, fruit, and plants. Badgers are the only predator of hedgehogs, able to get past their defensive spines.



Highly social animals, badgers live in large family groups underground in setts. They are very clean, having areas outside their setts where they use the toilet, and frequently airing or replacing the bedding used inside their setts.

They don't hibernate but they do have duvet days down to a fine art, often wrapped in dry leaves and resting for weeks at a time after feeding up as much as possible during the autumn.



## 7. Hedgehog



**The ever-popular hedgehog is round, brown, and famously known for their ability to roll themselves into a ball covered with spines when threatened.**

These small mammals have yellow tipped spines over their back and a tiny fur-covered face. These spines are actually modified hairs and the average hedgehog has around 7,000, which are raised by powerful muscles on the back.

These nocturnal animals love long grass full of insects to feast on eating all kinds of invertebrates, as well as frogs and birds' eggs. They are quite noisy so can often be heard snuffling through the undergrowth. They hibernate over winter in a nest of leaves or logs.

The numbers of this iconic little animal are well down for every 30 hedgehogs in the UK in 1950, there was only 1 left in 2020 however a recent report suggests the actions that people are taking in their own gardens could be making a real difference.

[www.ulsterwildlife.org/hedgehogs](http://www.ulsterwildlife.org/hedgehogs)





## **8. Field mouse**

**The tiny, brown field mouse is one of our most common rodents.**

The field mouse lives in complex underground burrows often including nesting chambers where collected moss, leaves and grasses are used as bedding, and food stores where berries and seeds collected in autumn are stored for the colder months.

In studies these small animals have proven to be extremely intelligent, planning strategies before doing something, judging whether the situation is too risky or dangerous.



A mostly nocturnal mammal, predators of the field mice in Bog Meadows include foxes, badgers, and buzzards if they happen to venture out during the day.



## **9. Rabbit**

**Distinguished from the native irish hare by their smaller size, shorter legs, and smaller ears, rabbits live in large groups in underground burrows known as ‘warrens’.**



Active from late afternoon to early morning, rabbits make a tasty meal for some of our resident predators meaning they are always on alert and prepared to scurry to their warrens for safety.



## 10. Cattle

**Bog Meadows is home to wet meadows, a now rare habitat due to the loss of much of the world's wetlands.**

Our wet meadows host a wide variety of plant and animal life, improving biodiversity in the nature reserve.



At the end of summer these meadows are grazed by hardy, native breeds of cattle that can tolerate the wintery conditions. These cows 'mow' the fields, pulling up the grass with their long tongues. This creates pockets of space in the fields for flowers to bloom next Summer.

These flowers provide nectar for a range of insects, including butterflies, which in turn, provide food for our summer birds like house martin, swallow, and swifts.



Among mammals we are in the minority with most being mainly nocturnal.



Many of the Bog Meadows mammals roam the wet meadows and soar over the ponds and reed beds once the lights go out.

We hope this walk has shed some light on the elusive mammals that call Bog Meadows home and maybe you will join us next time on our next nocturnal bat walk.



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