

## Water shrew (*Neomys fodiens*)

This small insectivore is usually associated with clear, fast-flowing, unpolluted streams and rivers and also ponds, drainage ditches and reed beds. Its population status is not clear as data is scarce, but it is likely to be vulnerable to habitat loss and the effects of pollution. The water shrew has been identified as a 'character' species of Suffolk.

### Current Status

#### 1.1 National

Widespread distribution throughout mainland Britain, but nowhere is it common. Insufficient information available on which to assess population changes.

#### 1.2 Local

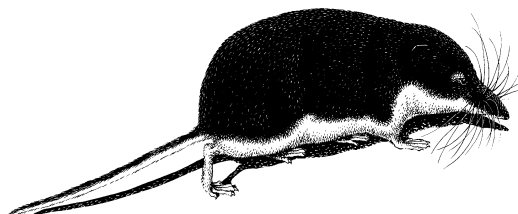
Widespread distribution but few records.

#### 1.3 Natural Areas

East Anglian Plain, Suffolk Coast and Heaths, Breckland.

#### 1.4 Protection

All shrew species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (Schedule 6); it is illegal to capture or kill them except under licence.



- The effects of lowered water quality are unclear, but may be significant in reducing water shrew numbers.

### 2 Current action

- Local surveys to record the presence of water shrews are being promoted by Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the Suffolk

Naturalists' Society/Suffolk Biological Records Centre.

- The Water shrew is listed as a target species within the Anglian Otters and Rivers Project (1999-2001), a joint project between Suffolk and Norfolk Wildlife Trusts, Water Authorities and the Environment Agency.

### Current factors causing loss or decline

- There is recent concern, although lacking in firm evidence, that water shrews may be declining due to habitat destruction and disturbance through modification of riverbanks, and clearance of vegetation. Water shrew populations associated with drainage ditches, ponds and other aquatic habitats may also be similarly affected.

**Recommended management includes: avoiding disturbance during the breeding season; carrying work out from one bank leaving the opposite bank intact or leaving at least one third of the watercourse intact to act as a refuge; where possible, de-silting should not interfere with banksides and spoil should be carefully disposed of.**

### Action plan objectives and targets

- 1 *Identify sites where water shrews occur.*
- 2 *Maintain and enhance water shrew populations at these sites through appropriate management.*

## Proposed action with key local partners

ACTION	KEY LOCAL PARTNERS	TIMETABLE				
		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
<b>A. Policy and Legislation</b>						
Ensure management needs of water shrews are incorporated in relevant agri-environment schemes, WLMPs and LEAPs at consultation	ALL	*	*	*	*	*
Ensure all Suffolk LEAPs incorporate appropriate water quality objectives	EA	*	*	*	*	*
<b>B. Site safeguard and management</b>						
Include water shrew conservation in all LEAPs	EA	*	*	*	*	*
Secure the sympathetic management of wetland sites which are known to or are likely to support water shrew	EA, SWT	*	*	*	*	*
<b>C. Species management and protection</b>						
Continue to licence all studies involving the capture of this species which contribute to objectives of action plan	EN	*	*	*	*	*
<b>D. Advisory</b>						
Advise landowners and land managers on presence and requirements of water shrews	SWT, EA	*	*	*	*	*
<b>E. Future research and monitoring</b>						
Undertake survey to identify sites where water shrews are present using non-captive methods	SWT, SNS, SBRC	*	*	*		
Use survey information to contribute to national research on habitat requirements	SWT	*	*	*		
<b>F. Communications and publicity</b>						
Ensure landowners and agencies are aware of the requirements of the water shrew, particularly when habitat management work is to be carried out	EA, SWT	*	*	*	*	*
Raise public awareness through survey and follow-up action	SWT	*	*	*	*	*