

More cute rodents.....

We arrived back from holiday in November to find that the roof and loft of our home had been invaded by what sounded like partying mini-elephants. Not only did they party – thump, bang, wallop – but they also scratched, scraped and more worryingly, gnawed. They sounded huge so one night we put a humane rat-trap in the loft, together with an automatic trail camera. In the morning we inspected the situation – trap not triggered and food gone. Luckily the trail camera had turned up trumps and on the SD card were large amounts of video footage of two cute little mice running all around the trap, in and out, through the bars, and eating the food.



It was difficult to believe that tiny mice could be the source of so much noise but we rapidly purchased two humane mouse traps (made of orange plastic, simple to use and with plenty of space for the prisoner) and commissioned them. Within a few hours we had our first captive. Expecting a House Mouse (we caught 13 house mice in a previous invasion in 2004) we were really surprised to find a Wood Mouse. Pointy nose, great big eyes, big ears, long tail, brown back and lovely clean white underparts – in fact it seemed to be the mouse that all cartoon mice must be based on! We released it at least a mile away and with a supply of peanuts, as instructed very sweetly in the instructions with the trap. Since then we have caught about 10 more Wood Mice, all released in the same spot.

I am not happy about releasing the poor things a long way from home in the middle of winter in unknown territory - they have no familiar holes to hide in and no food store to rely on. They will probably not survive. However, I cannot bring myself to use conventional mouse traps – not so much because they kill the mice but because of the ones they don't kill – trapping them by the leg for instance.



Anyway, the noise level has seriously reduced and we are now working on removing their apparent source of access – climbers which wind their way up the walls, around the gutter and right under the fascia board.

So what are Wood Mice doing in our loft when they belong in woods? Well Wikipedia says “Wood mice inhabit forests, grasslands, and cultivated fields, tending to seek out more wooded areas in winter. Almost entirely nocturnal and terrestrial, wood mice burrow extensively, build nests of plants and live in buildings during harsh seasons”. Aha, buildings. That must be us!

Our last captive was a surprise – not a mouse at all but a Bank Vole! Now I really don't know what that was doing in our loft!

Rosemary Royle

PS Since I wrote this we have caught about 5 Bank Voles!