

CHAPTER 2

SOURCES AND METHODS

Howes (1984) identified a wide range of potential sources of information that could be used to provide evidence of the existence, distribution and status of mammals in Yorkshire. The nature, location and methodologies for of these sources were described and their apparent strengths and weaknesses with respect to data retrieval and interpretation demonstrated and discussed.

To provide background information on the origins of Yorkshire's carnivores, particularly whether they were introduced in historic times, archaeological and cave research excavation reports have been examined, the data in Rutter (1956), Jenkinson (1983), Yalden (1999) and Chamberlain (2002) being tabulated in Appendix 3.1.

Moving to the early examples of documented allusions to the occurrence of Yorkshire mammals, use was made of 13th century hunting sources. Following the return his to England in 1274 from his crusade, Edward 1st decided to investigate improper encroachments on royal lands and privileges that had accrued during the previous reign. From 1274 to 1275, from 1279 to 1281 and again from 1293 to 1294 appointed Commissioners held '*Quo Warranto* [by what right] sessions' in each administrative division (hundred) (or wapentake in Yorkshire) and jurors were called to give written verdicts on evidence of rights and privileges claimed by local landowners and clerics. Examples of claimed rights to hunt various specifically identified quarry animals or to claim the 'wreck' of stranded cetaceans or fish provide circumstantial evidence of these species occurring in delineated parts of Yorkshire during the 13th century (English 1996, Howes 1998b).

The legislative origins, and complex social and ecclesiastical history surrounding vermin bounty payments by parish officials is reviewed in detail in Howes (1984). The locations of sources of the churchwardens' accounts containing records of bounty payment transactions, and methods for data abstraction and use were also given. This study has continued to make extensive use of 16th to 19th century vermin bounty records largely from churchwardens' accounts but also in the accounts of parish constables, overseers of the poor, and overseers of the highways in ecclesiastical records. These have been accessed in the Records Offices and Archives Departments in Beverley (East Yorkshire), Bradford (covering the Archdeaconries of Bradford and Craven), Doncaster (Doncaster Metropolitan Borough), Sheffield (Sheffield City),

Northallerton (North Yorkshire), Wakefield (Archdeaconries of Pontefract and Halifax), and the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research in York (York area). Appendix 2.1 provides an index of the 157 data sets of parish accounts examined; it tabulates the parish or township name, its Yorkshire region, 1 km Ordnance Survey grid reference, altitude (of the parish church), name of the archive holding the documents or microfilms, the archive catalogue number and published reference, date range, whether records of bounty payments are present, and finally the total numbers of bounty payments per target species. Appendix 2.2 provides a transcription of all the 10,582 bounty payment transactions encountered set out chronologically by parish. Appendix 2.3 gives a parish by parish review of annual bounty payments for the target carnivore species, and totals for the each parish. Since the location, interpretation and transcription of this form of data, either in the original vellum or paper archive or on microfilm can be extremely time consuming, this resource will serve as a useful resource for further research purposes. Lovegrove, (2007) independently examined 90 sets of Yorkshire parish records, 37 of which have not been examined by the author; of these, 24 contained vermin bounty records. The parish details and species, but lacking number totals, have been added to Appendix 2.1. Species frequency codes tabulated in Lovegrove (2007) have generally been ignored. Specific data collated by Lovegrove have been deposited in the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading. Figure 2.1 shows the distribution of all parishes and townships where payment records have been examined and those that have produced records of carnivore vermin bounty payments.

To investigate the possible impact of 18th and early 19th century landscape changes on the Carnivora details of 183 Parliamentary Enclosure Awards have been gathered and their acreage quantified and tabulated (Appendix 2.4.). The timing and magnitude of this rural landscape upheaval was compared with apparent trends in the status and distribution of selected species.

The annual reports, excursion circulars and scientific journals (*Transactions*, newsletters, bulletins, conference proceedings and *The Naturalist*) of the Yorkshire Naturalists' Union have been extensively used. Cross-referenced tables of excursion circulars and published field reports up to 1984 are provided in Howes (1984), but for convenience of use in this study have been installed into electronic spreadsheet format. Tabulations of mammal records from YNU excursions and YNU annual reports are also available in Howes (1984). Where available, records have been abstracted from journals and annual reports of local Yorkshire natural history societies and from annual or occasional reports of the Nature Reserves of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Royal

Society for the Protection of Birds, Natural England, and other Conservation Trust and Local Authorities. Generally, records are tabulated for later analysis as in Appendix 5.1.

Gamekeeper records and Estate game registers have been examined from estates and game shoots at Campsall (SE/51), Brodsworth (SE/50), Sandbeck (SK/59) and Thirlby Parks (SE/47), but these proved unproductive in providing carnivore records, though Hewson (1972) derived useful data on the stoat trapping numbers from Swinton (SE/27) and Flintoff (1933, 1935 and 1936) by directly contacting gamekeepers on Yorkshire estates (Figures 7.1 and 7.2) in a questionnaire survey, and thereby elicited invaluable data on stoats trapping rates and the phenomenon of winter whitening. For contextual purposes, national reviews of status monitoring by the Game Conservancy (Tapper 1992, 1999) have been used.

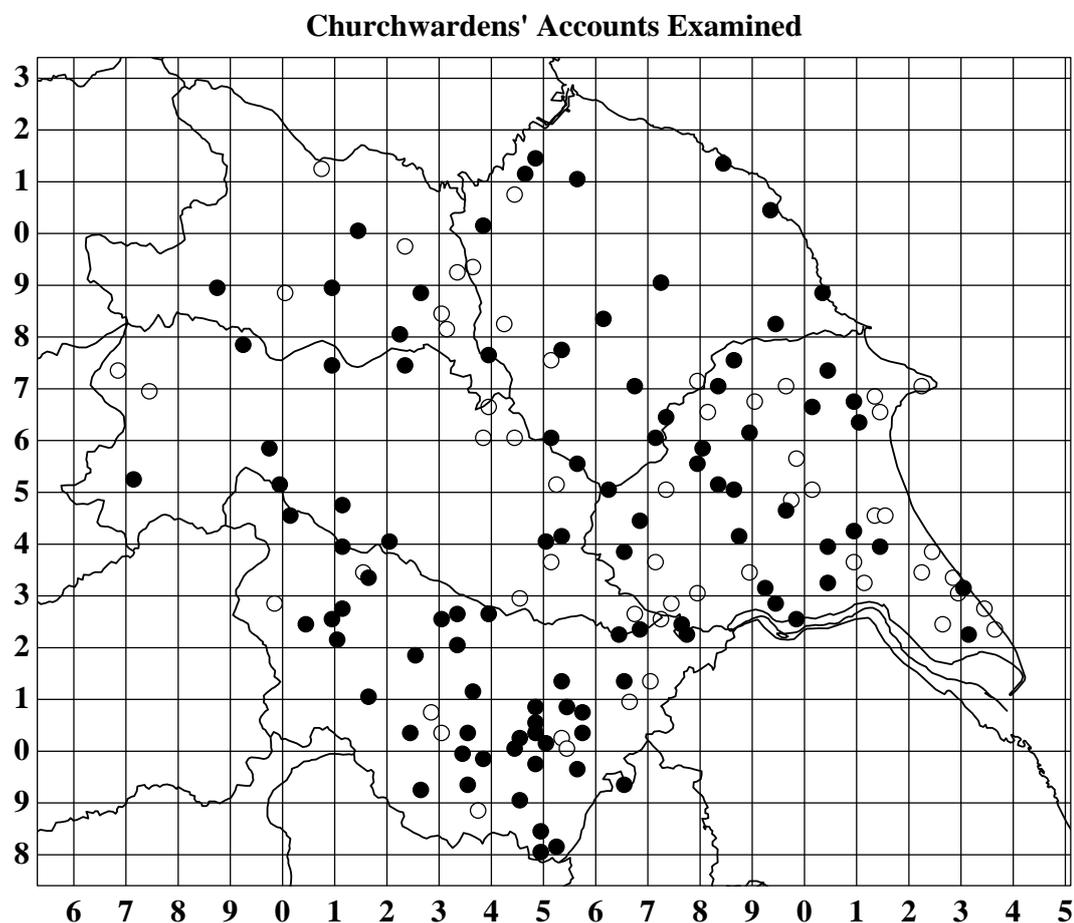


Figure 2.1. Distribution of all parishes and townships where churchwarden's etc. archives have been examined (○) and those that have produced records of carnivore vermin bounty payments (●).

Whereas Howes (1984) abstracted short runs of 19th and early 20th century fox hunting records from three Yorkshire hunts, the current study has examined the literature relating to 23 Yorkshire hunts (see Appendix 3.3 for a gazetteer of the Yorkshire Hunts). Appendix 3.4 provides the annual success rates as expressed in

number of kills per 100 days hunting for the 11 hunts for which historical accounts have been located. These data have been used to generate graphs showing trends in hunting success (as in Figures 3.18 and 3.19). From the descriptions of days in the field, fox find sites have been noted and OS grid references awarded, and the number of finds at each site has also been noted. Where possible the distances, not of the chase but of the search phase (i.e. from the meet site to the first find, or from a kill to the next find) have been calculated as an index of fox density and listed for eight of the Yorkshire hunts in Appendix 3.5. Mean find distances can vary markedly per season and could reflect abundance or scarcity (see Figure 3.9). The locations of hundreds of find sites have been traced, initially on 19th century editions of Ordnance Survey maps, and then on modern editions to produce 1 km map coordinates. From these it has been possible to create maps not only to depict the discrete hunt territories of these eight Yorkshire hunts, but also to generate the recorded distribution of foxes in the landscape of late 19th century Yorkshire (see Figure 3.7). Tracing woodland sites, which through their place-names are associated with fox hunting, has revealed a significant landscape feature which compares closely with fox distribution and the hunting territories.

Otter hunting records have been somewhat more difficult to obtain. Woodroffe (1994) was privileged to have use of the hunting diaries of the Malton and District, Northern Counties and Kendall District Otter Hounds mainly from the 1930s to 1967 and made excellent use of these data in his studies of the rivers of North Yorkshire, particularly in the North York Moors region. The present study has abstracted data from the published otter hunting diaries of Squire James Lomax (1803-1886) of Clayton Hall, Great Harwood, Lancashire who ran a pack of otter hounds from 1829 to 1871 and regularly worked the rivers of the westerly watershed of the Pennines including the Ribble, Hodder, Lune and Wenning within Watsonian Yorkshire. On the eastern watershed the pack visited the Aire (twice in 1840), Wharfe (on 14 occasions from 1831 to 1866), Nidd (in 1832 and 1844), Ure (on 4 occasions from 1841 to 1847), Swale (in 1835, 1841 and 1843) and Tees (in 1835) (Trappes-Lomax & Trappes-Lomax 1910); these abstracted data are in placed in Appendices 5.3 to 5.9.