

Mammals in Cork City

Cliona Barry for Cork Nature Network

The biodiversity of Cork City is very important. There is a variety of species found in Cork City. Species of bryophytes, vascular plants, insects, birds and mammals and much more are all found in Cork City. Cork City possess a variety of habitats that support many mammal populations.

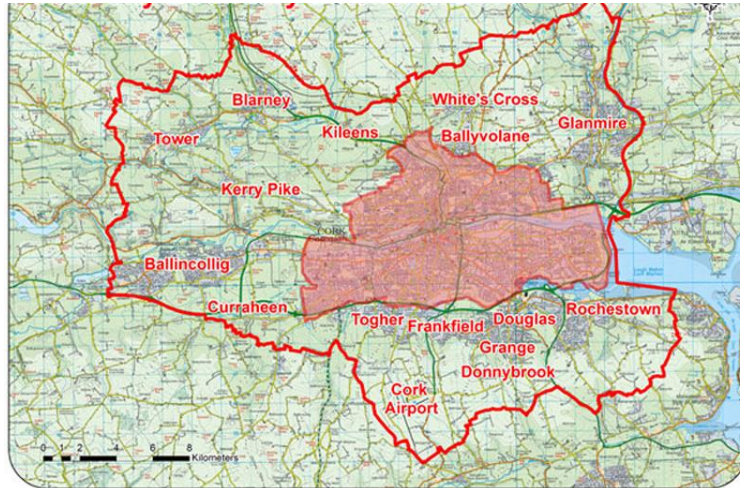


Figure 1: Map of Cork City Administrative Area (CCC, undated)

Cork City is home to many species of rodents. Rodents can be found in both the urban and more rural areas of the Cork City. The brown rat *Rattus norvegicus* is the most common mammal in Ireland and is present in Cork City (Mundy, undated). Many people are likely to encounter a brown rat as they live in close proximity to humans. They can even be found inside many people's homes. Brown rats prefer to stay in close range of humans as they are opportunistic creatures and will take advantage of this proximity for resources, such as food and shelter. Other typical habitats the brown rat tend to be found at are commercial and industrial parks, in sewer systems and near waterways such as canals. The brown rat is an adaptable species and can also inhabit less urbanised areas. When the brown rat inhabits rural areas, they tend to live in hedgerow or agricultural land that is cultivated and managed for arable crops (Anonymous, 2018). The house mouse *Mus musculus* inhabits a range of habitats in Cork City (Mundy, undated). They would be found in houses, shops, warehouses, and factories. Similarly, to the brown rat, house mice living in rural areas will typically reside in hedgerow habitats. House mice are opportunistic omnivores, like the brown rat, and benefit from living near human populations in the city (Anonymous², 2018). Other rodent populations in Cork City include the bank vole *Myodes glareolus*, the wood mouse *Apodemus sylvaticus*, the Eurasian pygmy shrew *Sorex minutus* and the greater white-toothed shrew *Crocidura russula* (NBDC, 2021). These four mammal species each carry out similar roles in their ecosystem and are habitat generalist. Therefore, they populate similar habitats. The overlapping habitats that all four can be found in are hedgerows, grasslands, cultivated lands and woodlands (Montgomery, 2012). Despite the fact that these four rodents are typically rural dwellers, they will enter the city if the conditions are acceptable. For instance, they require dense vegetation cover and would be found in the areas of the city that provide this. The red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris* is a very recognisable rodent in Ireland. The red squirrel is native and can be located in many forests and woodlands in Cork City (NBDC, 2021). They

can even be found in parks and gardens with a sufficient number of trees. Trees are important as the red squirrels are arboreal, meaning they reside in the trees. The red squirrels will feed on the tree seeds within their habitat. In addition, they will consume fruits, buds and fungi when available (Waters, 2011). They are relatively widespread throughout Cork City (see fig. 2). In recent years, Cork City has been home to the invasive species of Coypu *Myocastor coypus*. This semi-aquatic rodent was first spotted in Cork City along the Curraheen River and has been recorded since along the River Lee. The coypu occupies freshwater habitats in Cork City. The coypu does not have a large population in Cork City (Anonymous, 2021). These small mammals may not all be frequently seen but are very important to the biodiversity of Cork City.

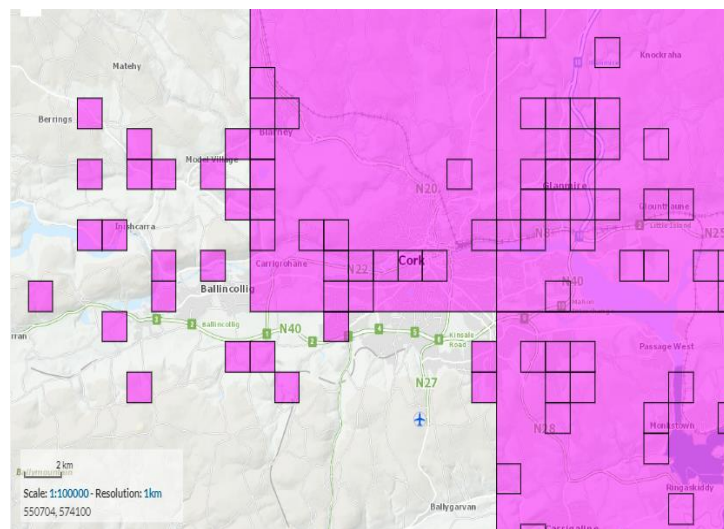


Figure 2: Distribution of Red Squirrel in Cork City (BIM, 2021)

There are many terrestrial mammal species located in Cork City. The Western European hedgehog is a beloved animal in Ireland because of its unique physical features and is found throughout Cork City. The Western European hedgehog favours woodland, agricultural land, and grassland habitats. However, they can also be found in industrial parks, parks, and gardens within Cork City. The Western European hedgehog is vulnerable, like many mammals, to human activity, such as traffic. Road accidents contribute a large proportion to this species' mortality rate. There have been records of hedgehog casualties on roads exiting Cork City (Haigh, 2014). The Irish hare *Lepus timidus subsp. Hibernicus* also resides within the Cork City (NBDC, 2021). This mammal is native to Ireland. They typically live in lowland grassland areas but can occasionally venture into the more urban areas (Anonymous³, 2018). The European rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* also has populations in Cork City (NBDC, 2021). Its main habitat in Ireland is grassland, preferably with adjacent hedgerow. They can also be found in the margins of deciduous woodland. The European rabbit requires soil suitable for burrowing within their habitat (Jones, 2012). The American mink *Neovison vison* is an invasive mammal, found in Cork City (NBDC, 2021). It is a semi-aquatic mammal and adaptable. Therefore, they can easily inhabit most areas in Cork once there is a freshwater river, lakes, ponds or streams. The American mink can be spotted along the River Lee, and its various channels and tributaries, flowing through the city. The Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra* is also found in the same locations as the American mink, along the River Lee and its connected waterways. It is also a semi-aquatic mammal. This species is native to Ireland and is widespread throughout the island (White, 2013). The Eurasian Badger *Meles meles* occurs in Cork City (NBDC, 2021). They tend to live in deciduous or mixed woodland

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