



The Eradication of Coypus from Britain

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What I will cover

- Eradication of the coypu population from Britain
 - The story of two campaigns to control coypu
 - Some of the research that supported the second successful campaign
 - Look briefly at two other successful British eradication campaigns: for muskrat and porcupine
 - Highlight the main elements that contributed to the success of these campaigns

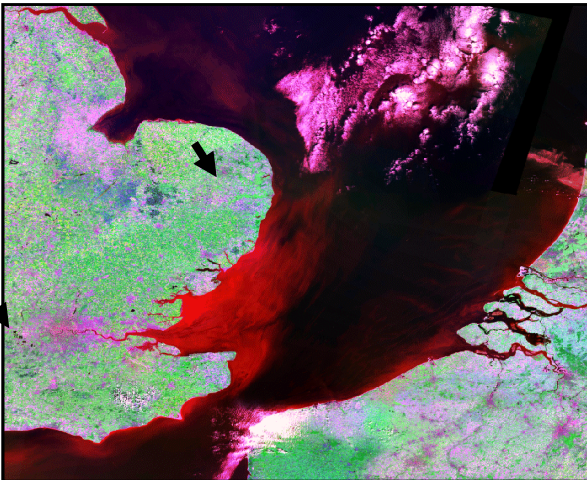


Distribution of coypu holdings 1932-9.
(after L urie, 1946)

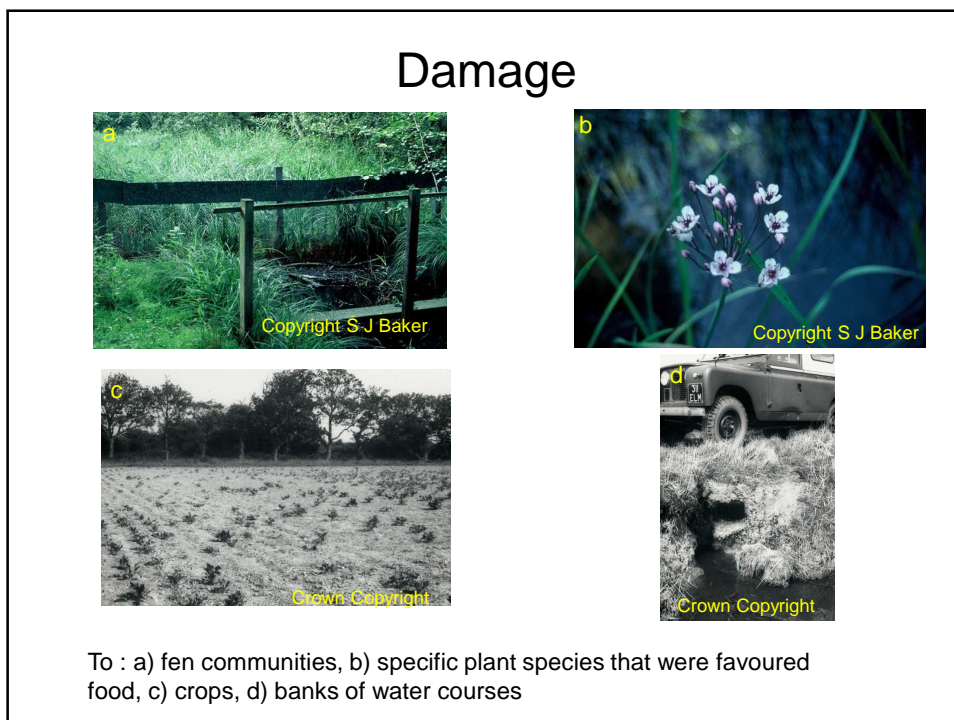
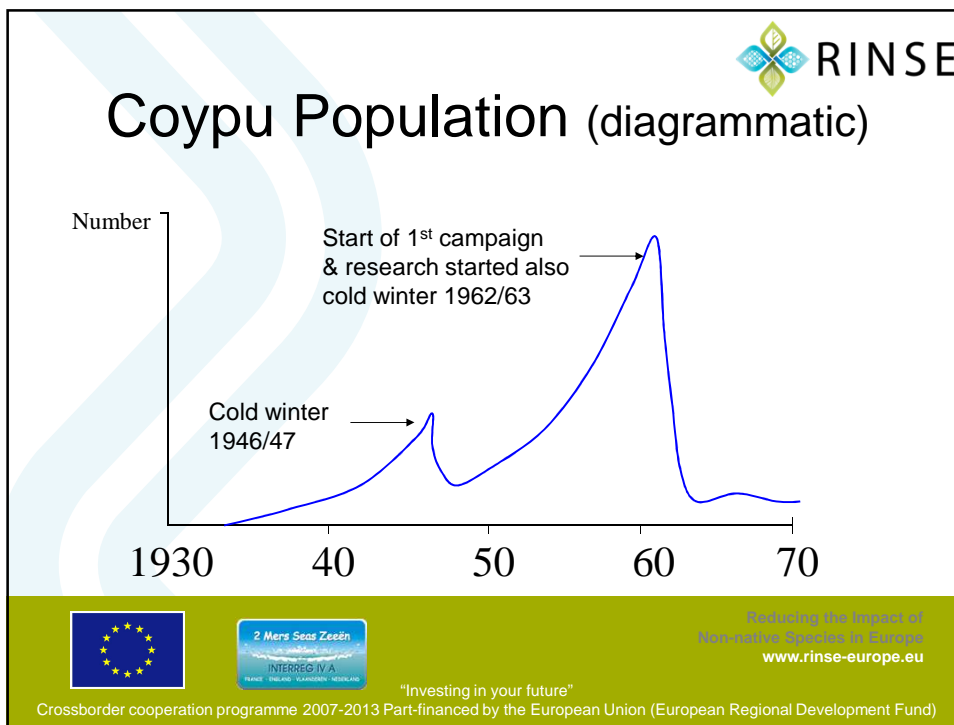



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SITES WHERE COYPU BECAME ESTABLISHED. TWO CENTRES. ONE BASED ON THE SEWAGE WORKS NEAR SLOUGH DISAPPEARED WITHOUT ANY KNOWN CONTROL IN 1956. A SECOND GROUP PROBABLY ORIGINATED FROM THREE FARMS NEAR NORWICH, CLOSE TO THE RIVERS YARE AND WENSUM





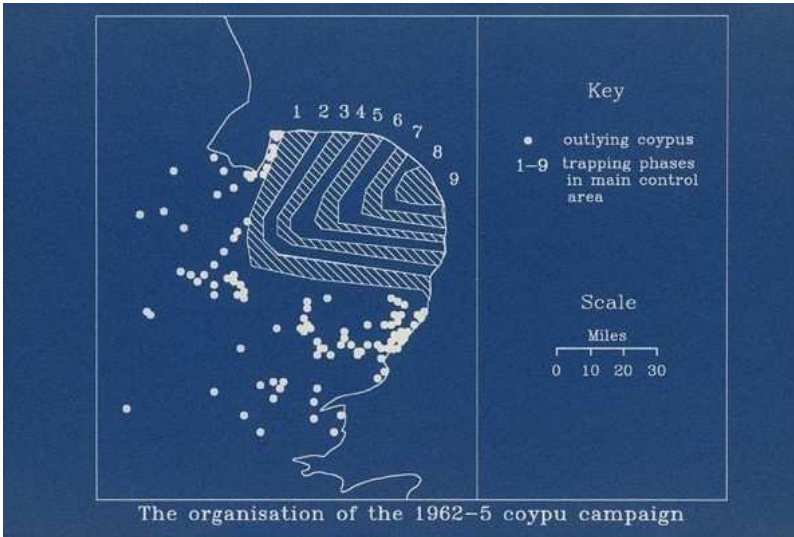
First Control Campaign: 1962 -65

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The strategy for the 1st campaign



The organisation of the 1962-5 coypu campaign

Described by Norris 1964.

Winter of 1962/3
coldest for 200 years



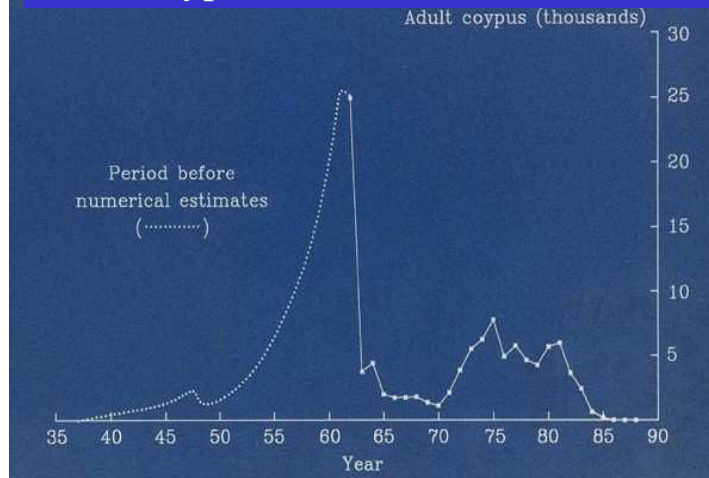
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40,000 trapped.
But not clear at
the time if the
decline was
caused by cold
or trapping.



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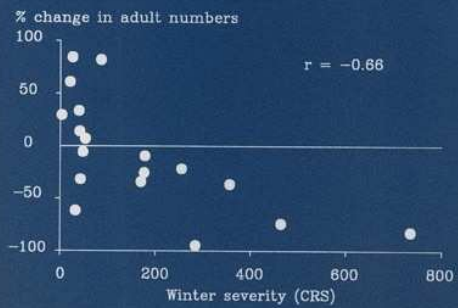
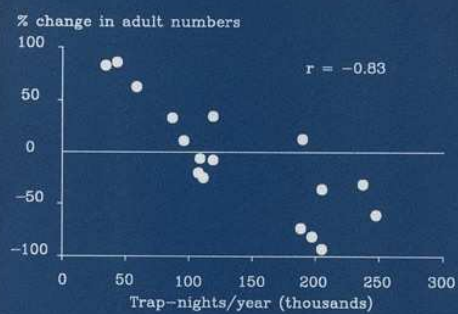
Adult coypus in Britain: 1935 - 1977

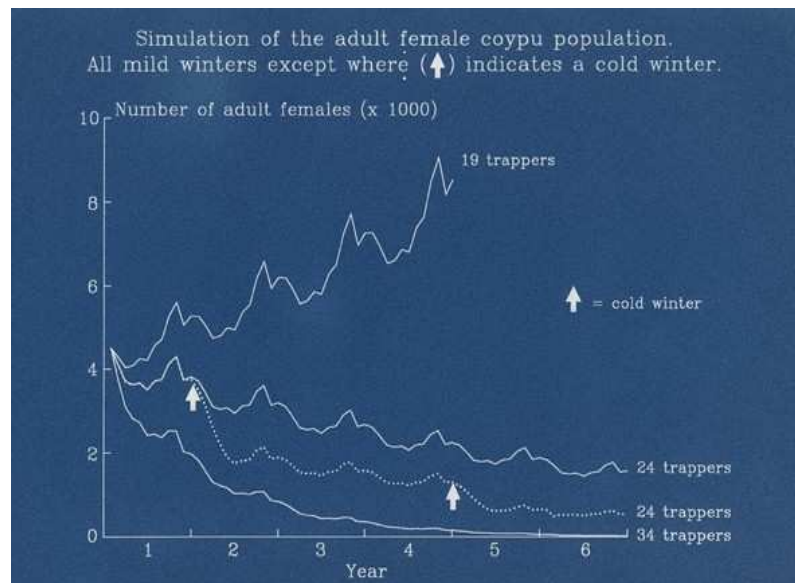


From the initiation of the Coypu Research Laboratory coypu carcasses were available for study; over 30,000 dissected by 1989. Information from these and on numbers killed allowed the population size to be estimated and future population trends to be modelled. Such results were available to the Coypu Strategy Group set up in 1977 to advise on the future options for coypu control (Gosling & Baker 1987).

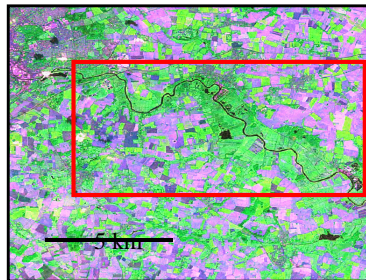
Two outcomes from the research

(after Gosling & Baker 1987)





Simulations available to the Coypu Strategy Group (Gosling & Baker 1989)



It was also possible to show the Strategy Group that eradication was technically possible as it had been demonstrated on a 30 km stretch of the river Yare in Norfolk.

Gosling, Baker & Clarke, 1988)

The technique used was entirely cage trapping.



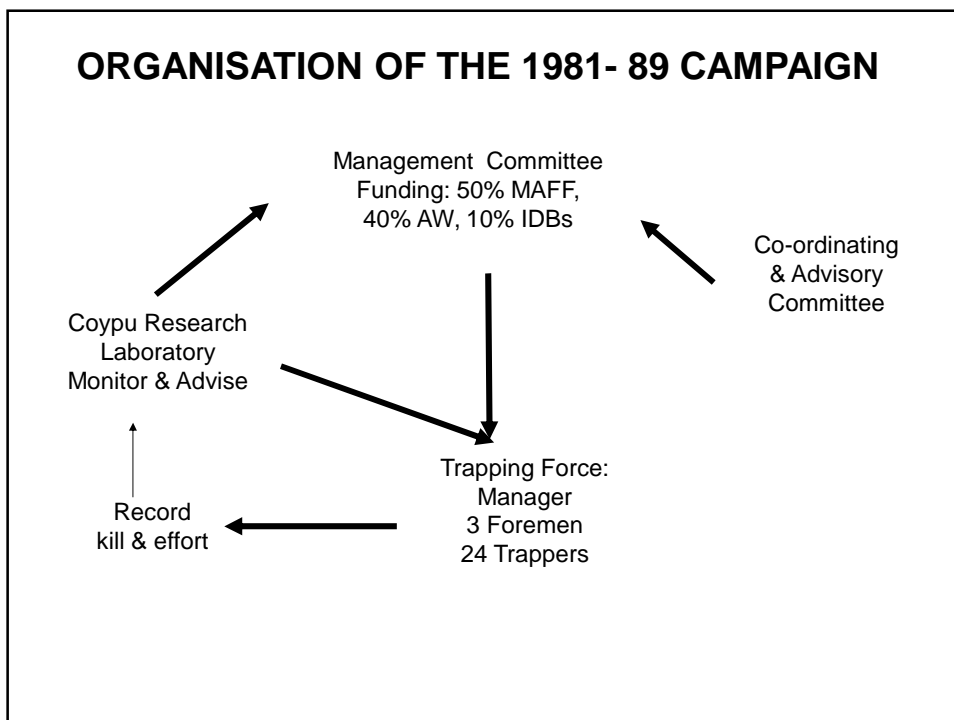
Second Campaign 1981 - 1989

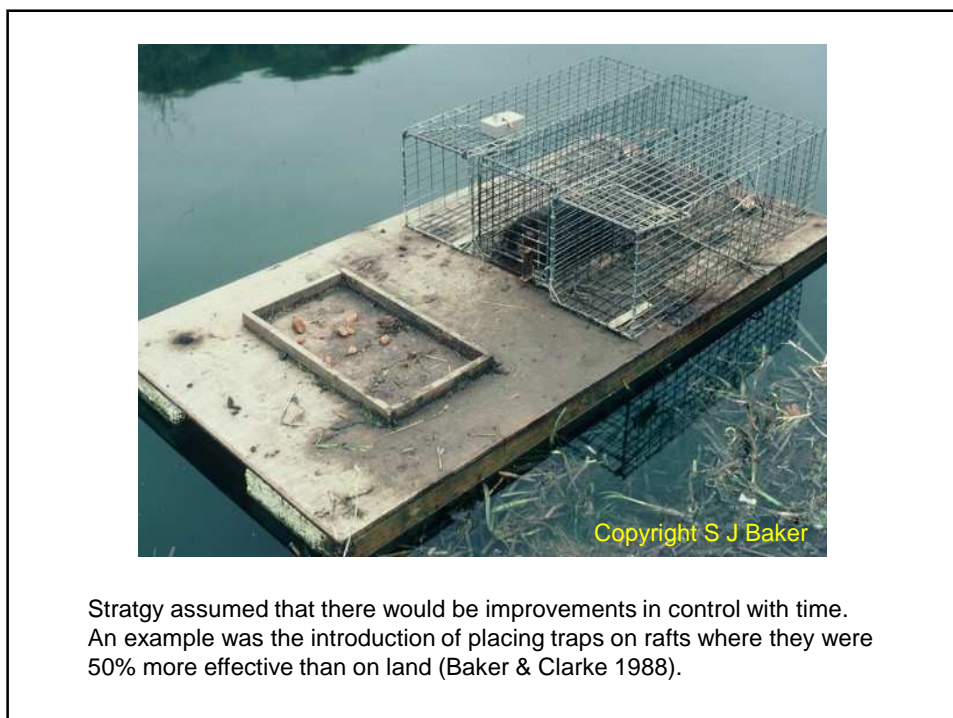
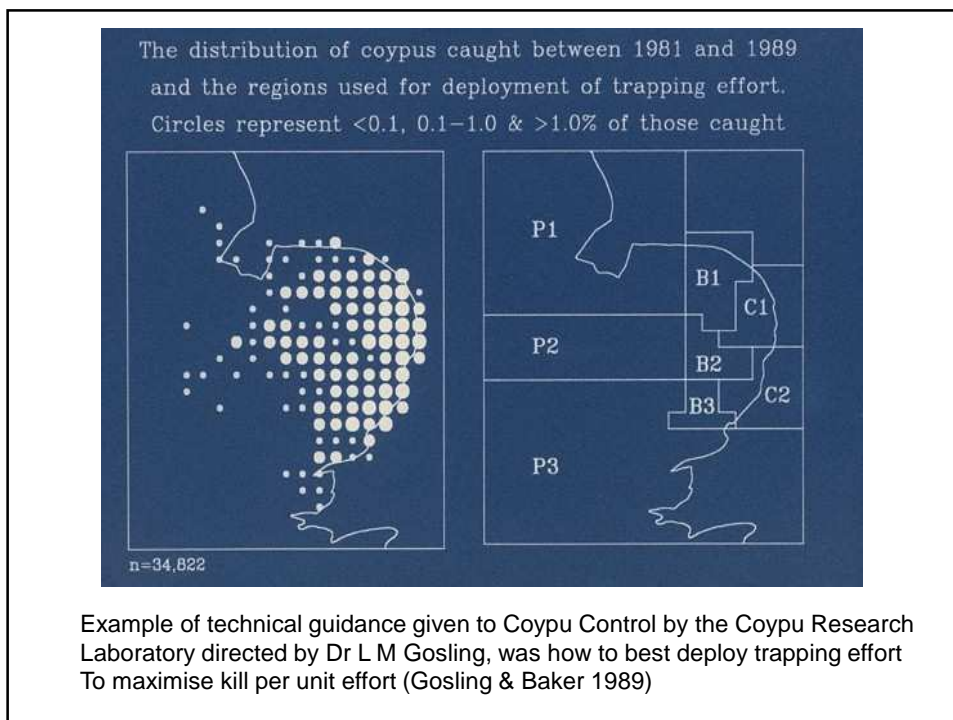
This followed the recommendation of the Coypu Strategy Group.

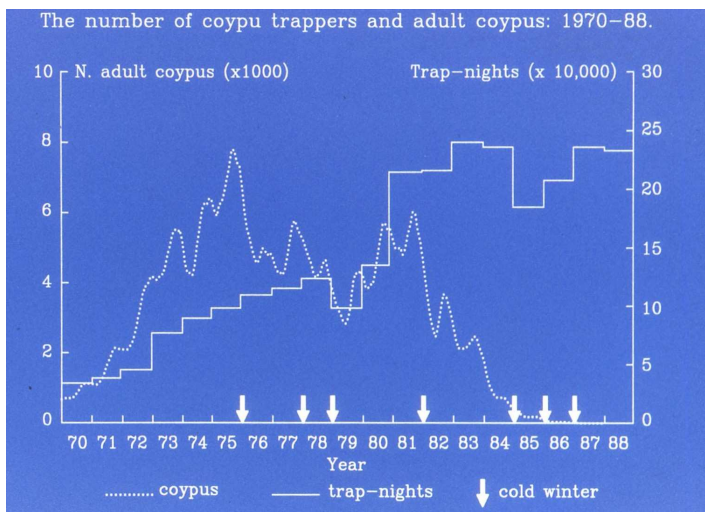



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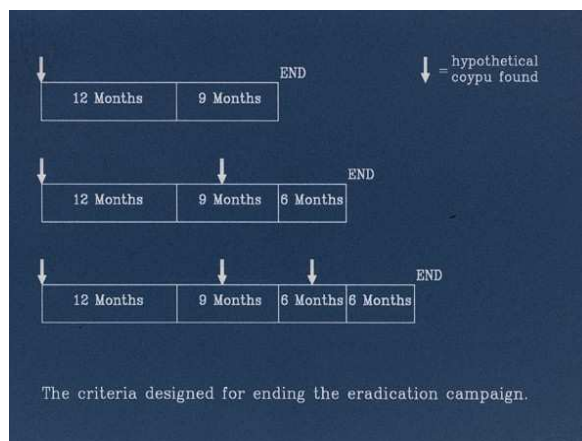






The Laboratory also monitored the progress of the campaign by field checks and Reconstructing the population. Numbers went from some 6000 adults in 1981 to near zero by spring 1987. The reduction in numbers was helped by the above average number of cold winters (Gosling & Baker 1989).

Why should trappers eradicate? The incentive bonus scheme.



An incentive bonus of up to 3 years pay for eradication within 6 years was introduced. This would decline *pro rata* to the end of the campaign in 1991 (Gosling & Baker 1987).

The success of the campaign was monitored using bait and camera rafts.



The final evidence!



Although the trapping has finished, it was believed that it was likely that a few coypus remained. To help find any remaining animals, three field staff were retained to search for them, and indeed it was this team which in November 1989, confirmed the presence of a coypu near Feltwell after a report from a member of the public. This slide is the raft as it was found. One old adult was subsequently caught some 4 miles away in the river Little Ouse. The organised field effort ceased in march 1990 but reports continued to be followed up by government wildlife biologists.

Muskrat



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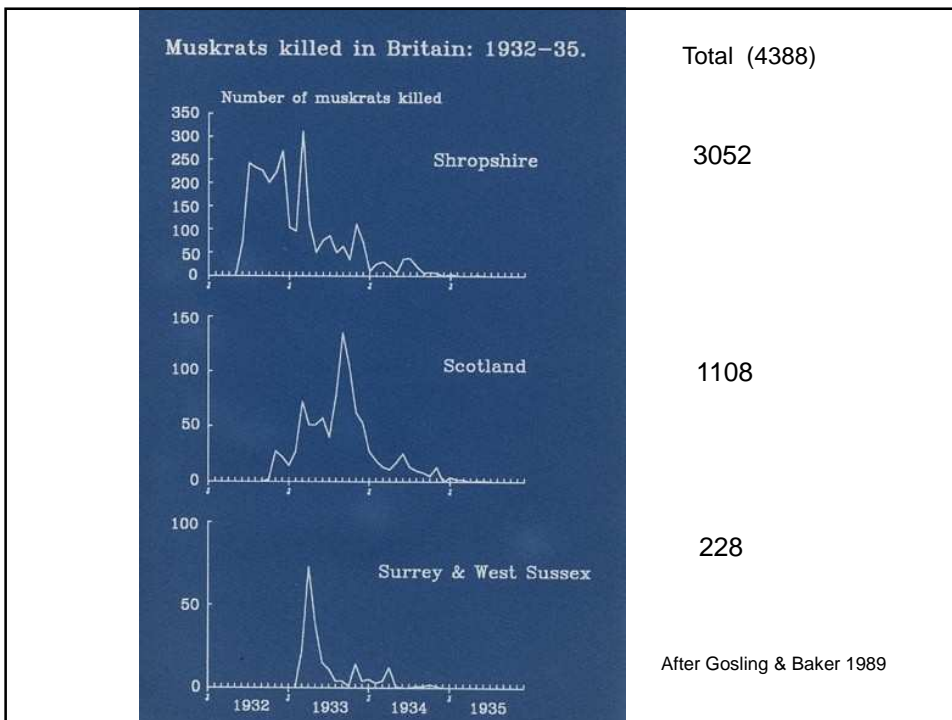
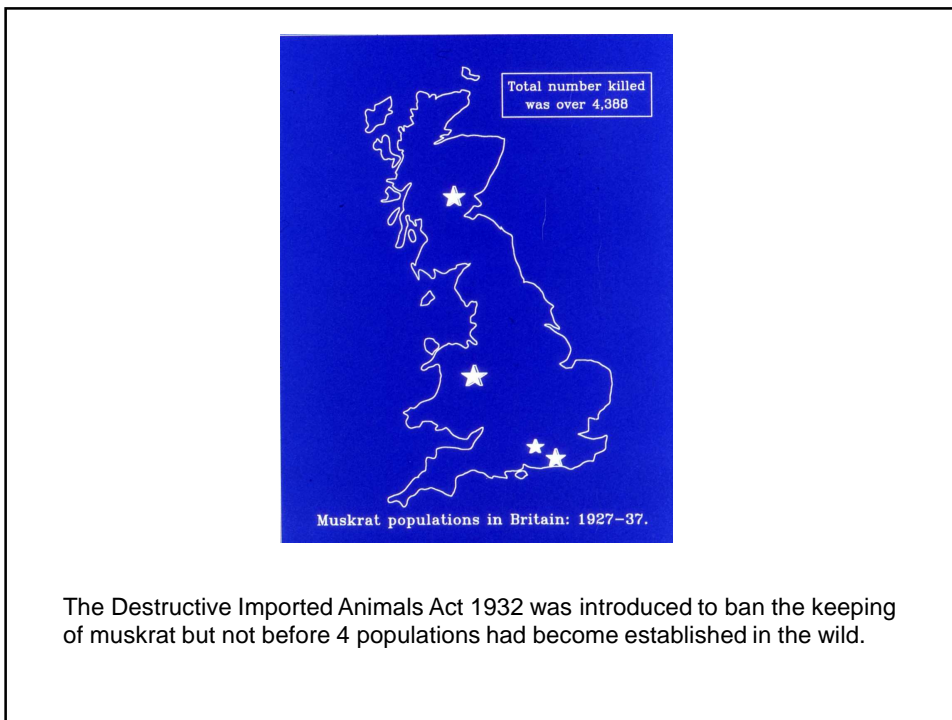
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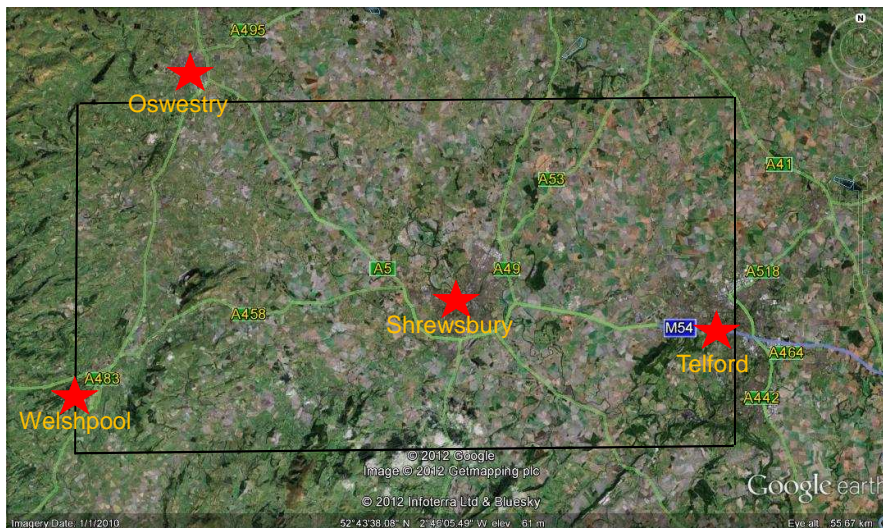
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Distribution of muskrat holdings 1929-33.
(after Warwick, 1934)



Area over which muskrat were trapped in the Shropshire campaign 1932 – 33. Initially 300 miles²



1 trapper was employed for each 10 miles². Trapping used leg-hold traps which also resulted in high non-target mortality. After Gosling & Baker 1989

Himalayan porcupine



A pair escaped from a wildlife park near Oakhampton in Devon in 1969. They bred out of captivity and field sign was found over an area of 280 km² during the 10 years that the population was established in the wild. Four of them were trapped during 8 staff years of trapping by the Ministry of Agriculture using cage traps. A total of 6 are known to have been accounted for, the last one was caught in 1979. (Smallshire & Davey 1989)



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The approximate relative cost of eradication schemes in Britain

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| • Coypu | 5,000,000 € |
| • Muskrat | 3,100,000 € |
| • Porcupine | 175,000 € |
| • Mink | 1,200,000 € |

Based on original data given in Baker, 1990.

Lessons



- Establish a clear case and objectives
- Have support from sound biological research
- Appropriate legislation in place
- Have a viable, costed, strategy and an acceptable technique
- Have sound management and finances
- Can monitor progress and continually improve
- Have an incentive to succeed, can recognise when you have and do not relax control too early.
- Public support – not an issue in 1980s – now!
- Act at an early stage.



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Acknowledgements

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