Opportunity to get your school involved in citizen science for local wildlife:
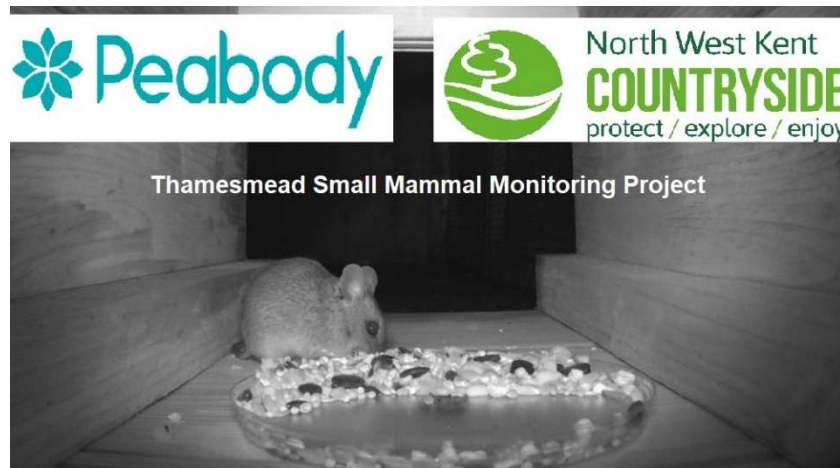

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The Thamesmead Small Mammal Monitoring Project is an online citizen science project looking at populations of small mammals (mice, voles, shrews etc.) in Thamesmead.

The project is part of the implementation of Peabody's biodiversity action plan for Thamesmead. This plan aims to increase biodiversity in Thamesmead and foster community engagement with local wildlife and green spaces. A key component of conservation work is surveying and monitoring – you need to know what's there in order to protect it. We would like to get local people, including school children involved in the monitoring of small mammal populations in Thamesmead.

Mammals are often elusive. Often coming out at night, and not in great numbers, it is hard to monitor their populations, where they are distributed, and how they behave.
Small mammals are an important part of the local ecosystems, dispersing seeds and providing food for larger mammals and birds.

Camera traps are devices that do not actually catch the animals, but detect and photograph any animal that moves in front of them. They are relatively easy to set up, and cause less stress to animals than traditional monitoring methods, like capturing and tagging. Camera trapping can help us to learn what animals occur in an area, when they are active, and how they time important seasonal events, such as reproduction. With careful development and analysis, camera traps can also tell us about the abundance of species in different areas and at different times.

MammalWeb is a 'citizen science' platform, engaging a community of citizen scientists, ranging from school children to enthusiasts, researchers, and the general public, to deploy cameras, and help identify the species present in camera trap images from the UK and Europe.

The Thamesmead Small Mammal Monitoring Project uses a modified camera trap to capture images of small mammals inside a baited tunnel. These images are uploaded to www.Mammalweb.org, where registered users can view the images and help to identify which species are present. This will help to build up a picture of which species are living in Thamesmead and where.

There are two ways your school can get involved in the project:

1)   Host the camera tunnel on your school grounds. You just need an area of long grass, a hedge or some bushes where small mammals might be present. This area must be reasonably secure, so the camera won't be at risk of theft. The tunnel will be left in place for a minimum of 3 days at a time.

2)   Register with MammalWeb and help to identify small mammals, in images from around Thamesmead. This could be done by individual pupils or by a whole class. We will supply you with a Powerpoint slideshow about how to tell different species apart and how to use the MammalWeb website.

If you think you might be interested in taking part in this project, please email lucy.sawyer-boyd@kent.gov.uk

Activity Ideas
Below are some ideas for class activities relating to camera trapping and/or learning about UK mammals:

-Sorting into categories - sorting mammals into different categories e.g. nocturnal/diurnal (comes out in daytime), carnivore/herbivore/omnivore, native/non-native, pet/non-pet, farm animal/non-farm animal, colour of fur, habitat. You could assign categories and get children to sort animals into those categories. Alternatively, you could get the children to sort animals into groups first, and then ask how they have chosen to sort them (focussing on what similarities/differences they have noticed).

-Habitats - learning about what mammals live in which habitats. You could classify photos on MammalWeb from different projects (e.g., within the Hancock museum project there are different habitat categories) and see what different animals you get. As you go through you could get children to write lists of what animals they've found in each habitat.

-Nocturnal/diurnal - similar to above, do some classifying on MammalWeb, get children to write down which animals they see in daytime and which in night-time. You can then determine which are nocturnal and which are diurnal. If you want to add in an extra word, 'crepuscular' means animals that come out at dawn and dusk, which is all of the deer species.

-Adaptations - getting the children to choose an animal that they have seen on MammalWeb and to label/list adaptations of that animal to its surroundings.

-Animal fact files - get the children to make and/or present factfiles of the species you've captured on your camera trap. The factfile can include information on characteristics, diet, lifecycle, when they're active, if they're native/non-native - and if they're non-native then where they've come from!

There are more activity ideas and resources to support them at:
https://www.mammalweb.org/en/community/schools

Curriculum links
The MammalWeb project could help support learning across a number of areas of the national curriculum. Below are examples of some of these areas.

KS1 Yr 1: 'identify and name a variety of common animals including fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.'
KS1 Yr 1: 'identify and name a variety of common animals that are carnivores, herbivores and omnivores.'
KS1 Yr 1: 'describe and compare the structure of a variety of common animals (fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals, including pets)'
KS1 Yr 2: 'identify and name a variety of plants and animals in their habitats, including micro-habitats.'
KS1 Yr 2: 'identify that most living things live in habitats to which they are suited and describe how different habitats provide for the basic needs of different kinds of animals and plants, and how they depend on each other.'
KS2 Yr 4: 'recognise that living things can be grouped in a variety of ways.'
KS2 Yr 4: 'explore and use classification keys to help group, identify and name a variety of living things in their local and wider environment.'
KS2 Yr 6: 'describe how living things are classified into broad groups according to common observable characteristics and based on similarities and differences, including micro-organisms, plants and animals.'
KS2 Yr 6: 'give reasons for classifying plants and animals based on specific characteristics.'
KS2 Yr 6: 'identify how animals and plants are adapted to suit their environment in different ways and that adaptation may lead to evolution.'

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