

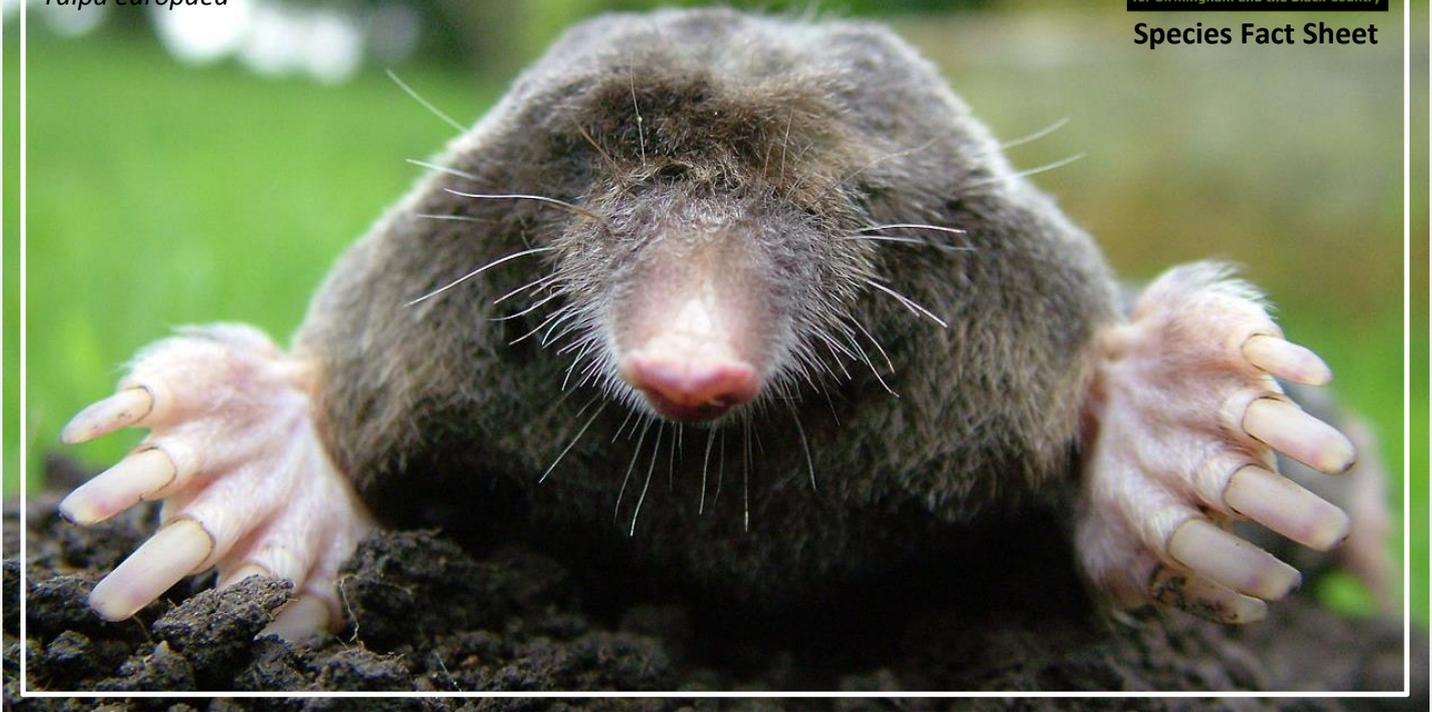
European Mole

Talpa europaea

EcoRecord

the ecological database
for Birmingham and the Black Country

Species Fact Sheet



Ecology

Moles are easily recognised by their distinctive cylindrical body with powerful spade-like front feet.

The fur is short, black and velvety and can lie forwards or backwards allowing the mole to travel both forwards and backwards in narrow tunnels with surprising speed.

The mole lives in an underground tunnel system, which it constantly extends. It uses these tunnels to hunt its prey, which includes predominantly earthworms, but also other insects too which they locate using scent. These tunnels may be up to one metre deep and two hundred metres long and their nest is a ball of woven grass and dry leaves.

The displaced earth resulting from a moles tunnelling activity is pushed to the surface, creating the characteristic molehills, which is often the most obvious visual clue as to the presence of the species in an area.

Though moles spend most of the time below ground, they can occasionally be glimpsed above surface, particularly in the early mornings, drinking dew off leaves and grass.

Moles are solitary and territorial which means that aggressive interactions may take place where the territories of two neighbours overlap. They are active both night and day and they alternate periods of rest and feeding.

The females have a litter of 3 or 4 in the spring. The young are weaned at around a month old and disperse soon afterwards. Most moles do not live beyond 3 years but they can live up to 6 years. Their main predators are owls, buzzards, stoats, cats and dogs.

Habitat

The mole's natural habitat is deciduous woodland but they are present in most habitats where soil is deep enough to allow tunnelling. Their distribution generally reflects that of earthworms, their main prey item.

B&BC Distribution and Status

B&BC Status: **Uncommon**

VR R U F C VC A

Within Birmingham and the Black Country most mole records come from the suburban fringes of Wolverhampton and Dudley, the Sandwell Valley and Sutton Park. While this may represent areas of greatest abundance, it is likely that moles have been under-recorded, not just in rural areas and woodland, but in areas with extensive gardens.

