British Mammal Society A.G.M. at Ripon

Dr C. Sharp, College of Ripon & St John, York

This year's A.G.M. was held at the Ripon campus of the College of Ripon and York, St. John - the first time it had been held in Yorkshire for 10 years. The Conference was as lively and interesting as usual and the Y.M.G. made several contributions: by arranging the field trips, by having a display of Dr Michael Thompson's bat work and by giving a paper on our work at Black Woods plantation.

The meeting began with the second Cranbrook Memorial Lecture on 'Studies on large mammals', which was given by Dr Laws. He had worked on whales, seals, hippopotami, and elephants: listening to the talk was like a small safari! For me the most memorable slide of his talk and, indeed the weekend, was a picture of an elephant's foetus: tiny and perfect with it's little trunk already formed.

Dr Bob Stebbings opened the proceedings on Saturday with a talk about greater horseshoe bats: Nick Payne closed the session of bat papers with a talk about the trade in fruit bats in the Pacific islands. Although he remarked cooly that the Pacific islands are not so beautiful close to, I am sure I was not alone in wishing I could find out for myself!

The next session was concerned with lagomorphs: finally, hyenas and lynx shared the stage with our own contribution on the long term study at Black Woods (1974-1986). Members of Y.M.G. will be pleased to hear that this was well received and that some members of the audience encouraged us to continue with the projects. This is a decision for the current committee to consider.

On Sunday, a final series of talks covered seals, otters, badgers and foxes. Then the field meetings were held in the afternoon: Bob Stebbings led a bat-tour of Nidderdale; Ron Deaton held a visit at Throstlenest Farm, where a variety of small mammals were observed; Colin Slater led a group along the River Ure looking for signs of otter. For those visiting York, I led a trip to the Viking Centre. All these trips were well supported and seemed to be popular.

Finally the conference ended as it had begun - with a talk on safaris, this time by Ernest Neal. The final slide was of a hippopotamus doing a headstand in water - a difficult slide to decipher! In between these two favourite slides of mine occurred the 1986 conference - a now familiar sequence of talking, meeting and listening to other people equally as besotted with mammals as ourselves.

A visit to be remembered

Edna Shann, 100, York Road, Tadcaster.

During the weekend of 24-25 January 1986 I was privileged to accompany Dr. R.E. Stebbings and a small group of conservationists to the disused railway tunnel in the south of England where the one remaining male mouse-eared bat *(Myotis myotis)* is known to hibernate. I was, of course, full of expectancy and was not disappointed as we discovered he had returned there again this winter. Therefore I was able to get a close look at Britain's largest bat. He is the size of a baby rabbit and a lovely animal, although Dr. Stebbings said he had lost weight since 1985. The bat, of course, is now around 12 years old and no one is sure how much longer he will survive. Sadly when he does die, this species will be extinct in this country.

We scanned the tunnel with torches inch by inch for about 4 hours and along with the mouse-eared bat we also discovered 164 other hibernating bats, namely:-

Brown long-eared *(Plecotus auritus)*
Natterer's *(Myotis nattereri)*
Daubenton's *(Myotis daubentoni)*
Whiskered *(Myotis mystacinus)*
Brandt's *(Myotis brandti)*

It was for me a truly memorable visit and I was most grateful for such an opportunity.

Canned Carnivore

David Gomersall, 51, St. Catherine's Crescent, Bramley, Leeds.

Whilst doing some small mammal trapping in a Leeds field during August 1985, I released my overnight catches and repositioned the traps, leaving them for a few hours. On my return I was aware of a very strong, musty odour from the direction of the traps, which had previously held a field vole.

On approach I was more than surprised to see the trap shaking. The smell was now overpowering. I released the contents into a large plastic bag and out came a full grown and very angry male weasel *(Mustela nivalis)*. It became immediately obvious why these animals are classed as mustelids! Not wishing to lose a finger I decided to let the creature go and off it ran, quickly disappearing into the long grass!