

NOYFULL FOWLES AND VERMYN: PARISH PAYMENTS FOR KILLING WILDLIFE IN HAMPSHIRE 1533–1863

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ABSTRACT

For over 300 years parish authorities were required by law to make payments for the killing of most wild birds and animals. An Act to deal with corvids in the reign of Henry VIII was followed by a much more comprehensive Act against many birds and animals in the reign of Elizabeth. This article is concerned with the implementation of these Acts as recorded in the parish records of Hampshire. It examines the kinds of birds and animals for which bounties were paid, and therefore which were present in the county during those centuries, and the differences among parishes in the way the Acts were carried out. Some light is cast on the distribution of animals within Hampshire and especially of species now extinct in the county, such as wildcats, polecats, and pine martens. The article notes the variations in the spellings of the names of birds and animals and how the targeting and intensity of the persecution changed. It further examines who was rewarded, and the costs of implementation. Finally it considers the extent to which these Acts were responsible for the decline of wildlife of the county that had occurred by the time of the First World War.

‘Innumerable nombre of Rookes, Crowes and Choughs do daily brede and increase throughout this Realme, which do yearly destroye, devoure and consume a wonderfull and marvelous quantitie of Corne and Greyne of all kyndes’. So ran the preamble to an Act of parliament in 1533 against bird pests. The government was afraid that food shortages might cause further social unrest, like the demonstrations of 1525, at a time when national unity was desperately needed. This unity was needed because at the start of 1533 Henry VIII was about to embark on the major political and religious changes that marked his rejection of the authority of the pope. His govern-

ment therefore began to take steps to protect food supplies against competition from wild life and in February passed ‘An Act for the Destrucion of Crowes and Rokes’ against bird pests (24 Henry VIII cap 10; Lehmborg 1970, 173).

The 1533 Act stipulated that every parish was to provide and keep in repair a crow net and maintain a bait ‘with Chaffe or other things for that purpose’. The owner or tenant of the land on which such birds were caught was to pay ‘iid. for every 12 olde Crowes, Rookes or Choughes’. The Act was a careful to emphasise that the law was not to be used as a pretext for taking the pigeons or doves that were the property of gentlemen. The responsibility for providing a net fell on the churchwardens, but they seem to have been exceedingly slow in carrying out this obligation, though there are occasional references in other documents. In Ashley the court roll of 1586 records that ‘a net called ‘the crownett’ within this manor is in decay and has remained in decay for a period of three months. For which the inhabitants are amerced according to the statute’ (Gilbert 1992, 83). The earliest reference to a net in a churchwarden’s account seems to be in Hurstbourne Tarrant, where in 1686 the churchwardens spent 2s. 4d. on ‘a nett to catch birds’ (HRO 68M78/PW1). They followed this up in 1689 by paying ‘ye bird catcher’ 10s. 10d. and then paid him lesser amounts over the following few years for which the accounts survive. In Farnborough, according to accounts that no longer survive, there were occasional payments later of 3s for ‘a sparay net’ (Kinch 1913, 25).

In 1566, in the reign of Henry’s daughter Elizabeth I, against a background of rapidly rising food prices, the pressure on wild life was stepped up and extended to animals as well as birds. The

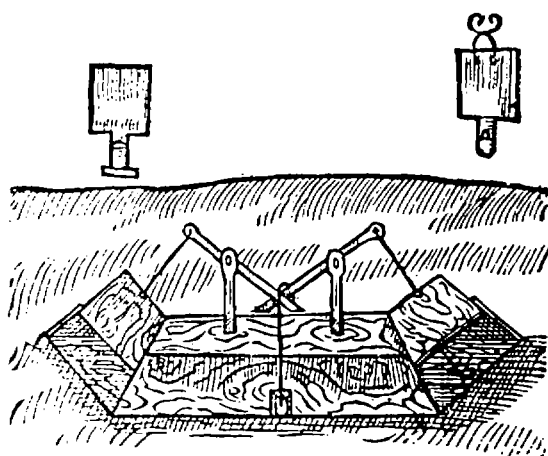


Fig. 1 From L. M[ascall] *Sundrie Engines and Trappes to take polecats, and all Kindes of vermin* 1590

1566 Act 'for the Preservation of Grain' included a whole list of the 'Noyfull Fowles and Vermyn' which were now to be killed (8 Eliz cap 15). Nineteen different birds and 13 species of animals were named. The payment were now to be made not by the landowners or their tenants, but by the churchwardens and to be paid from a rate raised for this specific purpose. Despite the title of this Act, it is clear that its authors were targeting any bird or animal competitors for the available food supply, whether it was grain, poultry or fish, as the terms of the Act make clear. A reward was to be paid not only for crows, rook and choughs, but for various birds of prey, ravens, magpies, jays, starlings, woodwalls (green woodpeckers), finches, herons and even kingfishers. Those who produced unbroken eggs were also to be rewarded. The amounts of the rewards varied between a penny for 12 heads or six eggs up to 4d. for the head of an osprey or heron.

A similar tariff was listed for those wild animals now described as 'vermin'.

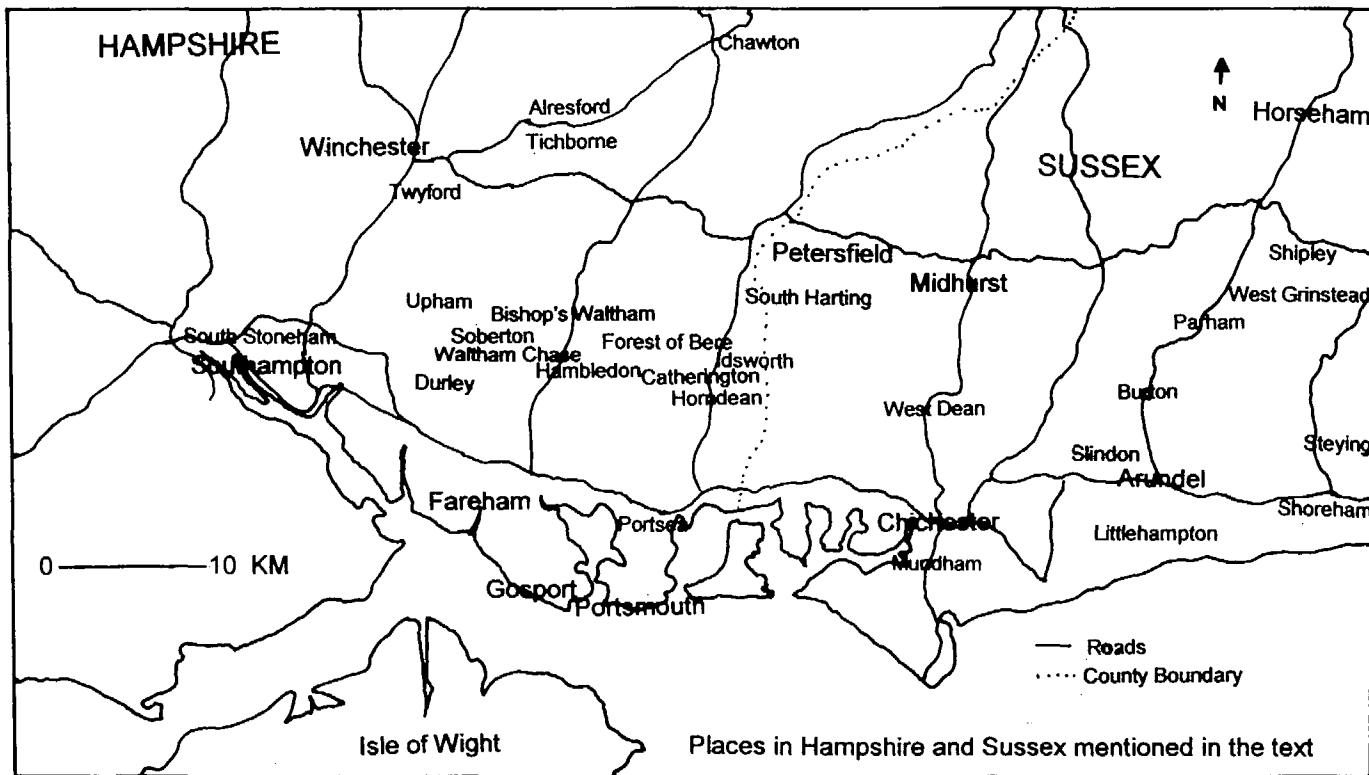
For the Heades of everie Foxe or Gray [badger] twelve pence.
And for the head of everie Fitchers [Polecat], Polcatte, Wesell, Stote, Fayre Bade [probably marten cat] or Wylde Catte one penny.

For the Heades of everie Otter or Hedgehogges two pence.
For the Heades of everie three Rattes or Twelve Myse one peny
For the Heads of every Moldewarpe or Wante [both names for Moles] one half penny.

The heads and eggs were 'to be burned, consumed, or cut in sunder before Churchwardens'. Again it was emphasised that nothing in the Act was to interfere with the breeding of hawks, herons, doves or conies. Doves and rabbits were only supposed to be kept by gentlemen and presumably herons could only be taken where they were not required as prey for gentlemen's falcons. Deer and hare were also reserved for the pleasure of gentlemen for their principal sport of hunting. The only other wild animals alive at the time that were not covered by the Act, therefore, were red squirrels and very small mammals like dormice, voles and shrews. The Act was renewed twice in Elizabeth's reign and only finally repealed in 1863.

Provided that the consent of landowners had been granted, the Act encouraged those who wished to occupy themselves with the killing of vermin 'to use suche Nettes, Engynnes and other reasonable Devyses as are meet and convenient ... (Handgunnes and Crossbowes excepted)'. A small book by L. Mascall published in 1590 entitled *Sundrie Engines and Trappes to take polecats ... and all other kindes of Vermine* provided woodcut illustrations of the traps that could be used (Fig. 1).

The difference between these Acts and current public policy could hardly be greater. Today we have a policy of conservation and are taking active steps to preserve and increase our wild life. The successful project to re-establish otters along the River Itchen is a good example of our concern. In contrast, for three centuries following these Acts everyone was being encouraged to kill off most wild birds and animals in return for a reward. If the churchwardens of every parish had consistently enforced the provisions of this Act, very little wildlife would have survived down to the present. In some parishes large numbers were indeed slaughtered.



Rebecca Jones 2005

Fig. 2 Places in Hampshire and Sussex mentioned in the text

THE SOURCES

Since a separate vermin rate never seems to have been collected, vermin payments were included in the accounts of the churchwardens and this article is based on a study of all the available churchwardens accounts of Hampshire (Fig. 2). No such study of the implementation of the Vermin Acts for a whole county seems to have been made since the work of Brushfield for Devon (Brushfield 1897) or Steele for Bedfordshire (Steele 1936), and these were not concerned with the social and economic background of the Acts' enforcement or based on statistical analysis.

There were usually two churchwardens in a parish, though there might be only one, and in a large parish there could be more than two. They were chosen at Easter and held office for a year initially, though their tour of duty could be continued. At Easter they were supposed to present a list of their 'layings out', as they are usually called before the Restoration, or 'disbursements' as they are usually called later. All the churchwardens accounts in the Hampshire Record Office have been studied, along with all those accounts in the Portsmouth City Record Office and Southampton Record Office. The accounts of two historic Hampshire parishes now in Berkshire have been examined in the Berkshire Record Office and two sets of accounts have been studied in the parishes where they still remain.

There are several problems in trying to draw conclusions from these parish records. There appear to have been about 288 historic parishes in

Hampshire, before new parishes were created in the nineteenth century. Of these 112 seem to have no surviving churchwardens accounts at all for the relevant years. The churchwardens accounts of the remaining 176 parishes were examined. However, some accounts only have totals of expenditure, very few parishes have long runs of accounts, some only have accounts for a few years and for any one period only a much smaller number of churchwardens accounts survive. This can be seen in the following table, which also shows the number of accounts that include vermin payments.

However from the eighteenth century vermin payments were also made in some parishes, not by the churchwardens from the church rate, but by the overseers of the poor from the poor rate. Occasionally payments appear in both sets of rates. Overseers accounts have also been studied, especially for parishes where there are few or no surviving accounts of the churchwardens, or where there are no vermin entries in the latter. Of the overseers accounts examined, 14 included vermin payments, so that in total 151 parishes made some payments for vermin.

The first evidence of payments for the killing of vermin in Hampshire appears to be in 1635, over 60 years after the Elizabethan act was passed, and this is not untypical. Steele found no references in Bedfordshire before 1672 (Steele 1936, 9), though in Kent the churchwardens of Tenterden were vigorously persecuting vermin from at least 1626 (Ticehurst 1935, 73). As the table shows in Hampshire, there are very few vermin entries before 1650. The original purpose of the Acts had been

Table 1

<i>Period</i>	<i>1566-1599</i>	<i>1600-1624</i>	<i>1625-1649</i>	<i>1650-1674</i>	<i>1675-1699</i>
Number of parishes with accounts	8	14	17	29	41
Parishes with vermin payments	0	0	4	15	27

<i>Period</i>	<i>1700-1724</i>	<i>1725-1749</i>	<i>1750-1774</i>	<i>1775-1799</i>	<i>1800-1824</i>	<i>1825-1863</i>
Number of parishes	48	59	82	104	116	121
Vermin payments	39	49	69	89	95	95

Table 2 Number of different kinds of animals and reptiles appearing in vermin payments in parish records 1625–1863

Kinds of animals	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Number of parishes	1	3	8	13	19	21	20	45

to preserve food for the human population and so it is ironic that payments begin to be more common at a time when that population had ceased to grow, and even declined a little between 1655 and 1685, before resuming its growth in the early eighteenth century (Wrigley and Schofield 1981, 208). Improvements in agriculture in the seventeenth century had meant that there was now a surplus of grain, but farmers needed to be able to harvest that grain and export it if they were to pay their rents, so that landlords in turn could pay their taxes (Thirsk 1997, 26). Equally at a time when grain prices were dropping, some farmers increasingly turned to poultry, animal or fruit production, in order to maintain their incomes and the interests of these farmers also had to be protected (Jones 1972, 110). Another factor may be an improvement in literacy and a rapid increase, from the 1640s, in the printing of cheap books and pamphlets (Spufford 1981). Among them were ones denouncing vermin like *A Necessary Family Book* of 1688, which underlined, like the sixteenth century Acts, that any creatures that competed for food must be regarded as vermin, indeed this was then the meaning of the word 'vermin' (Fussell 1999, 4). Writers like J. Mortimer in *The Whole Art of Husbandry* of 1707 urged farmers to campaign against vermin. Foxes were 'very prejudicial' and 'Crows, Ravens, Rooks and Magpies ... great annoyances to Corn' (Hoppt 2000, 357).

Most parishes eventually obeyed the law to a limited extent, in the sense that in only a few rural parishes were no vermin payments were ever paid. But in many others the killing of only a few of the animals or birds listed in the Elizabethan Act was ever rewarded. This can be seen in Table 2 above.

Though it is usually said that payments were only made in rural parishes, it must be remembered that country towns were themselves rural

until the late eighteenth century. Hence there were payments made in towns like Andover and Petersfield (HRO 60M67/PW1, 198M70/PW1). There was even a payment made for a fox in the middle of Southampton in the seventeenth century (Soton RO PR4/2/1) and payments were made in three of the parishes of Winchester in the eighteenth century (HRO 55M81W/PW1, 71M87W/PW10, 3M82W/PW4). Some urban parishes, like Romsey, also included large areas of the surrounding countryside in which vermin could be killed (HRO 10M58APW3). The amount of the payments made did not always follow the guidelines of the Elizabethan Act; they varied, presumably according to local priorities.

Sometimes where payments are made they are lumped together as 'Varments' or 'Verments' or later 'Vermins heads' or under the description 'Vermin Bill'. Nevertheless, despite all their limitations, a study of all the surviving records for the county allows some interesting conclusions to be drawn. Since the month when payments were made is often not given, the year quoted will be that of the end of the accounting year.

NOYFUL FOWLES

As far as birds are concerned, there are fewer entries in Hampshire accounts than for other counties like Cornwall and Kent. In some parishes the uninformative description of 'birds heads' was used and the term sparrows seems often to have been the collective name used for all small birds. There is some information, however, about finches, the crow family and birds of prey. The Act of 1566 had laid down that a penny could be paid 'For the head of every Bulfynche, or other Byrde that devowreth the blowth of Fruite'. The popularity of fruit trees grown from pips, pippins, in Tudor and Stuart England helps to explain the fact that finches are

specifically mentioned. For example in the Isle of Wight in the early seventeenth century Sir John Oglander 'with my own hands planted two young orchards at Nunwell, the Lower with pippins, pearmaines ... and other good apples; in the other cherries, damsons and plums'. (Bamford 1936, 84) The spread of orchards like these meant that birds that were guilty of stripping the buds of fruit trees were a major target. In Lymington in 1693 'a chaffinches head' was included in a collective payment for heads. In 1742 money was paid in the same parish for '2 dozen and 3 Bullfinches heads at a half-penny each' and payments were then made fairly regularly for bullfinches for the next fifty years until 1791 (HRO 42M75/PW2, PW4). In his *Naturalist's Journal* for 7 February for that same year, Gilbert White in Selborne wrote: 'Bull finches make sad havoc among the buds of my cherry, & apricot trees; they also destroy the buds of the gooseberries, & honey-suckles' (Greenoak 1989, 353). Nevertheless, while Gilbert was curate there, only one payment appears to have been made for bird pests, and that just for sparrows (HRO 32M66/PW1).

The crow family, the original group of birds targeted by Henry VIII, is rarely mentioned in Hampshire. In 1687 a jay was killed at Rockbourne in Hampshire and 3 more two years later (HRO 39M68/PW1) In Holdenhurst 'rookes' were killed in 1689, with another dozen 'rukes' in 1707 and '4 duzen and 4 Rookes heades' rewarded in 1715 (HRO 9M75/PW6). In Ovington payments were made for killing of rooks in 1729 and 1730 (HRO 32M69/PW1). As late as 1824 payment for seven magpies was recorded at Millbrook (SRO PR10/7/2). The 'choughs' mentioned in the Act of 1533 probably included jackdaws, as well as the birds we still call 'choughs', which were then far more common. At Broughton the churchwardens paid for killing 10 jackdaws in 1789 and 2 more daws the following year (HRO 38M72/PW1). In the Lechford overseers accounts the payments are said to be for 'Jacks heads' (HRO 45M77/PO1). At Warnford a payment was made in 1798 for 'catching the Jackdaws', and 'killing daws' appears frequently for the next fifteen years. (HRO 5M66/PW4) However the entry of 1809 for 'killing the Daws in the church' indicates that here, and probably at Broughton, the problem was that the birds had taken up residence in the church itself.

In Bishop's Sutton in Hampshire in 1832 there was the unusual payment of 6d for a heron and a shilling for a crane (HRO 42M78/PW1). Herons were on the list of birds to be killed in the Elizabethan Act, but in practice were reserved for the gentleman's sport of hawking. By the nineteenth century hawking had long been in decline. Cranes are usually thought to have died out in England during the sixteenth century, having previously been much in demand for feasting. The date of the payment – 25 January – suggests that this bird was a winter visitor. Uniquely in Beaulieu a distinction was occasionally made between small birds. For example in 1808 a resolution was passed that 'We also agree and Authorise Mr Wm. Carpenter and Mr Richard Warne to pay for all sorts of Birds Head (except Robins, wrens, Larks, Starlings, fieldfare, Dishwashwers (waterwagtails) Swallows and Martins at three pence pr dozen till Contradiction' (Beau Arch Book 3).

The killing of birds of prey is also recorded. Hawks were killed at Yateley in the 1680's and 'hacks' in the New Forest parish of Eling forty years later (HRO 67M8/PW1, 4M69/PW2). The accounts of the overseers of the poor in Broughton record that in 1734 a 'Sparohak' was killed for which 4d was paid and four more hacks were rewarded at the same rate in 1735 (HRO 137M71/PO1). Whether these hacks were also sparrow hawks is not said. In Portsea a sparrow hawk was killed in 1816 and in 1817 (CHU 3/2A1) and five sparrow hawks at Durley in 1801 (HRO 97M82/PW4). Hawks were regularly killed at Millbrook between 1805 and 1825 (SRO PR10/7/3). In Eling in the early eighteenth century over 45 buzzards or 'bussards' were also killed at the rate of 2d a bird. In the same parish payment was made for over 50 kites or 'kits', disliked particularly because of their attacks on poultry. At Broughton in 1733 6 Cites were killed, for each of which 6d was paid with one more killed the next year.

VERMYN

In most parishes, however, more effort was devoted to killing animals than birds before 1800. The authorities in Hampshire agreed with the

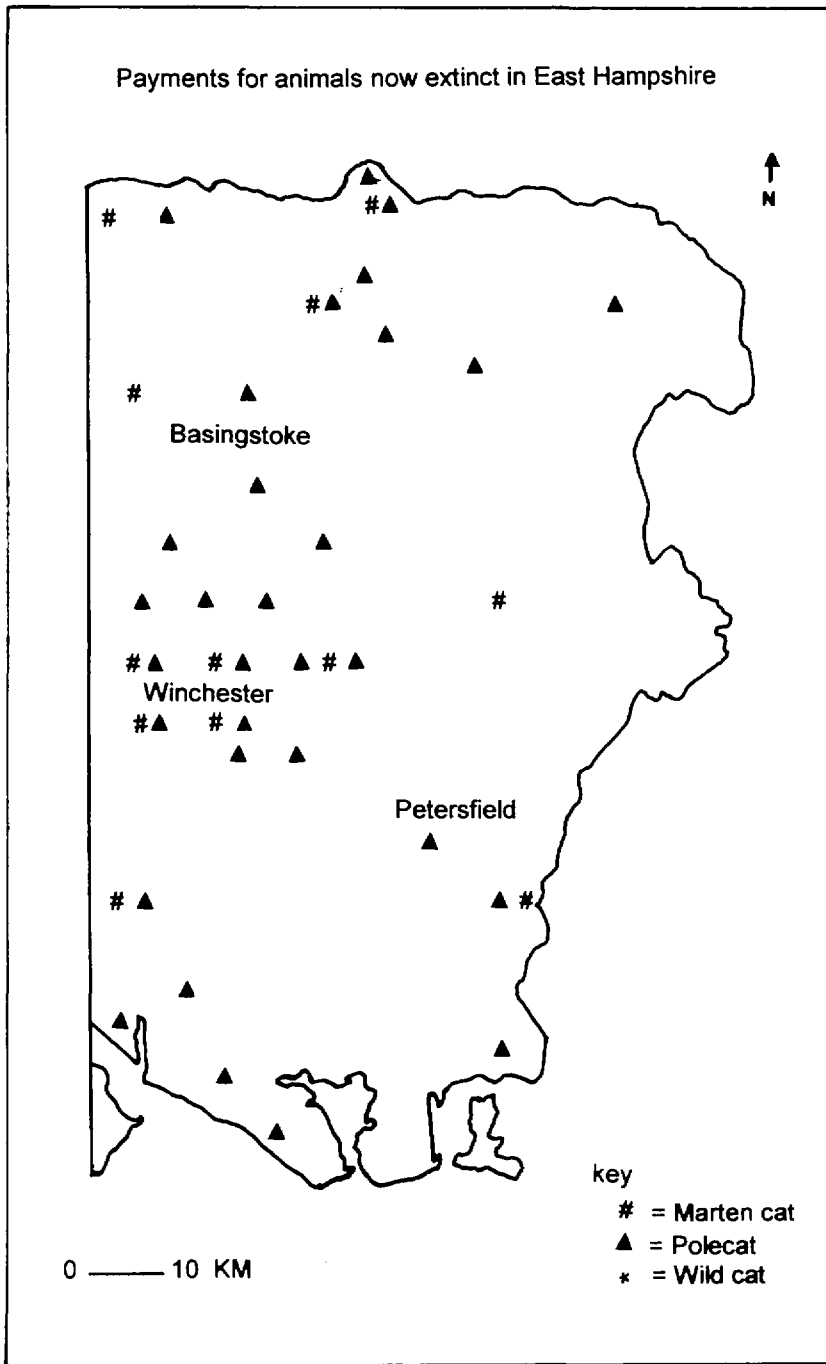


Fig. 3 Payments for animals now extinct in East Hampshire

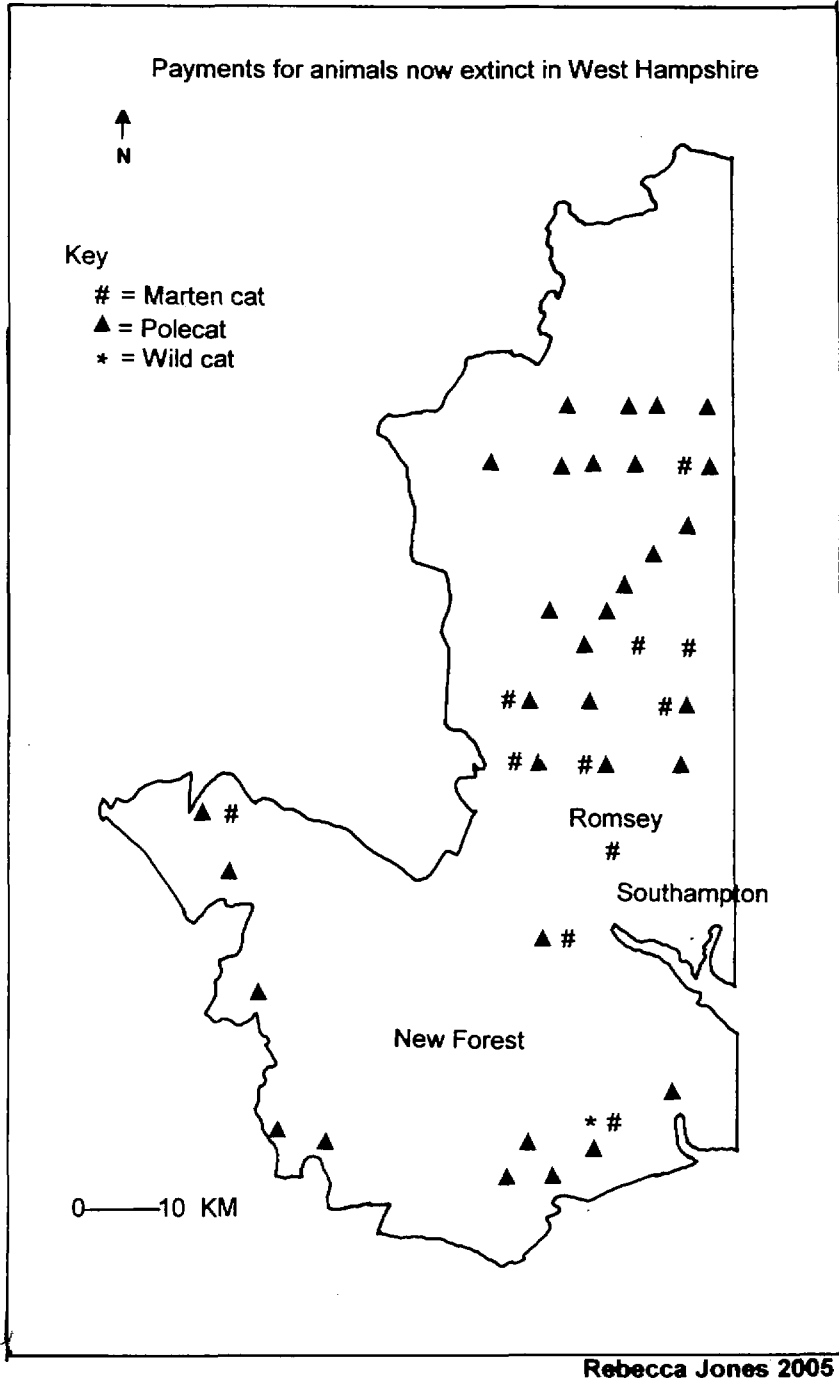


Fig. 4 Payments for animals now extinct in West Hampshire

government that the fox was the worst of the vermin, perhaps because of the large number of lambs as well as poultry in the county. An order of quarter sessions at Easter 1637 declared that 'Frances Smith (is) to be paid 12d a head for 30 foxes he has killed, a very acceptable service tending to the generall good of the whole countrey'. Churchwardens were encouraged to pay him 12d a head for every fox head presented in their parishes (HRO QX1/2). Ten years later it was reported that he was still exercising 'the craft of taking foxes and other Vermyn with Trapps and Ginns', but churchwardens were not always rewarding him and were ordered to pay. Records of payments for foxes in churchwardens accounts first appear in Fordingbridge in the 1630's and 1640's, and in Upham, Hambledon and Beaulieu in the 1640's (HRO 24M82/PW2, 74M78/PW1, 46M69/PW10, Arch Beau Book 1). At Fordingbridge, on the Hampshire Avon, an otter was killed in the same period and also polecats and a badger.

For the second half of the century more accounts survive and, as with bird payments, there is a larger proportion of vermin entries in them. By far the commonest vermin entries are for foxes, for which payments were made in thirty-one parishes. In the New Forest 23 foxes were killed in Minstead in 1658 and 26 at Beaulieu in 1670 (HRO 90M7/PW1, Beau Arch Book 1). While in most cases payment for foxes remained throughout the centuries at the Elizabethan rate of one shilling despite the price inflation of the period between the Elizabethan Act and the mid seventeenth century, payments in the New Forest were sometimes much larger. At Beaulieu in 1660 a fox catcher was employed for 10 weeks and paid the huge sum of 5s. a fox. 'Fox ketchers' were also paid at Old Alresford in 1682 and at Bramshott in 1695, though in both cases they were only paid 6d (HRO 43M74/PW1, 57M75/PW1). At Beaulieu in 1664 Charles Abbot, a former churchwarden, was paid 5s. for 'trayling two foxes and taking them' (Beau Arch Book 1). At Fawley also in the late seventeenth century the killers of old foxes were sometimes given 2s. 6d. and occasionally 5s. (HRO 25M60/PW1).

The parish where the largest variety of

bounties were paid during the seventeenth century was Beaulieu, where six different animals were killed. The most interesting payments are the four made between 1654 and 1676 for 'a wild cat's head'. This animal was on the list in the Elizabethan Act, but no payments were made in any other Hampshire parishes and the Beaulieu entries appear to be the last references to wild cats in Hampshire. There is no reason to believe that these are merely feral domestic cats, because wild cats were still found in parishes in Wales and the North in the eighteenth century and the protected royal hunting reserve in the New Forest would be a relatively secure area for them to survive.

During the eighteenth century foxes continued to be the animal for which rewards were paid most widely in Hampshire and in some parishes they were the only animals for which any payments were ever made. As all readers of churchwardens accounts will know, one of their delights is the idiosyncratic spelling adopted by different writers, and often by the same writer, and this seems particularly true of the spelling used in churchwardens' accounts for vermin. Thus foxes appear under the disguise of 'foucks' at Broughton, 'foaks' at Selbourne and 'fockes' at Thruxton. The spelling may sometimes also be an indication of local pronunciation. Very occasionally we catch glimpses of particular reasons why animals were killed. At Old Alresford in Hampshire £1 1s was paid in 1741 to 'The company that killed ye foxes that destroyed lambs' (HRO 43M74/PW1). Sometimes the payment distinguishes between old and young foxes such as at Chawton, where in 1711 the payment was for 'a bich fox and three yongons'. (HRO 1M70/PW1). In Odiham in 1654 'a fox brood' was killed and in 1804 at Privett a 'brude' of foxes was rewarded with 1s 6d (HRO 37M64/PW1, 32M66/PW1). Occasionally, as at St Mary Bourne in 1733, payments were made for foxes 'cote' in neighbouring parishes like 'Lichfeld, Vernham and Whitchurch' (HRO 96M82/PW1). In 1809 at Steep payment was made 'for 4 foxes out of the parish and 3 in the parish' (HRO 74M80/PW1). Such payments for the killing of foxes caught elsewhere was clearly thought to be worth the extra expense.

Badgers like foxes were singled out in the 1566

Act for the largest reward of 1s. Why this should be so is hard to understand. Badgers may flatten crops in making tracks. They may also consume the grain of wheat and oats, and less commonly barley, but this only happens in the few weeks prior to harvesting. By the cruel sport of badger baiting, which was practised since at least Saxon times, more harm was done to badgers than ever they did to humans. Nevertheless Mortimer's book of advice to farmers in 1707 described them as 'almost as pernicious' as foxes. Perhaps an additional incentive for killing them was that the grease of badgers was believed to have medicinal properties for treating rheumatism and other ailments. Badgers sometimes appear in the accounts as 'brocks', and very commonly as 'greys' or 'grays', and as 'baggers' or 'baggers'. In Farley Chamberlayne 18 baggers were killed in 1774 and 18 the next year, but in most parishes persecution was on a much smaller scale (HRO 135M82/PW1). In Milford, for example, which has a long run of accounts, only 21 were killed over a period of 65 years and the 9 killed in 1737 may represent just the inhabitants of one set (HRO 31M67/PW1). In Chawton in 1721 'ciling a brock' was rewarded with six pence, but a shilling was the more usual payment (HRO 1M70/PW1).

Fish ponds had been very common in the middle ages and fish days continued for a time after the Reformation as a means of encouraging the availability of ships and sailors in time of war. Butchers were still not allowed to kill any flesh during Lent and the sick had to be given special permission to eat meat during that time of year. By an Act of 1562 not only every Saturday, but every Wednesday was to be kept as a fish day. The inclusion of so many animal and bird fish eaters in the 1566 Vermin Act – otters, ospreys, herons, kingfishers, cormorants and shags – is therefore understandable. Fish days did not continue after the 1688 Revolution, but fish ponds continued to be a feature of gentlemen's estates and fish from rivers a source of food for other social groups and so the persecution of otters continued. In Hampshire otters were killed in 15 parishes; six of them on or near the south-west coast, three on the Test and five on the Itchen. Payments were made for over 30 otters at

Christchurch in the early eighteenth century, the only period for which records survive, including one for a 'Hotter's head' (St M L Mus). At Holdenhurst otters were killed regularly from 1700 till 1742 and then again from 1769 till 1815 (HRO 9M7/PW6). At Beaulieu, where, interestingly, the river was known as the Otter river until the founding of the abbey in the thirteenth century, there were payments from 1660 to 1732 including a payment in 1716 for a 'Notter's head' (Beau Arch Book 2). Other otters are recorded at Lymington, at Milford and at Hordle, where two were killed in the early nineteenth century (HRO 42M75/PW3, 31M67/PW1, 26M79/PW1). An otter is documented at Eling at the mouth of the Test in 1724, another at Millbrook in 1811 (SotonRO PR 10/7/2), many more at Romsey in the late eighteenth century (HRO 4M69/PW1). Otters were also killed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in a group of parishes on the Itchen near Winchester, at Otterbourne, Kings Worthy, Martin Worthy, Avington and Easton (HRO 27M66/PW1, 19M78/PO1, 78M82/PW1, 72M70/PW1, 22M69/PW1). One 'auter' was killed in the east of the county, at Steep on a tributary of the River Rother (HRO 74M80/PW1). The Elizabethan Act had laid down 2d as the payment for killing otters, but at Beaulieu 6d was paid, in the parishes on the Itchen, payment for otters was made at the same rate as for foxes, while at Milford and Lymington otters fetched as much as 2s 6d. One possible additional explanation for the persecution of otters was a growing interest in the sport of angling with fishing lines made from horse-hair, in addition to the traditional catching of fish with nets. The sport was popularised by Isaak Walton, who died in 1683, having spent the last years of his life at Winchester.

Four other members of the same family of mustelids were also targeted – polecats, marten cats, stoat and weasels (Figs. 3–4). In 1900 A.Trevor-Battye affirmed that 'no certain record seems to exist of the occurrence of the polecat in the county'. (VCH Hants I 1900, 243). However he had to admit that there were stuffed specimens in local museums and that there was a reference by Gilbert White. Parish records make it very clear that polecats used to be very common in Hamp-

shire, even though they were no longer present by the twentieth century. They are recorded in 64 of the parishes that have records. The name 'Polecat Corner', near Mapledurwell is a reminder of their presence. The Elizabethan Act had specified a penny for the head of a polecat, but churchwardens were aware that, with inflation, such potentially destructive beasts, twice the size of stoats or weasels, needed a larger recompense and polecats more often fetched 4d. Polecats are happy to live in proximity to farm building and are efficient killers of protected species like rabbits and young domestic poultry. They were probably also disliked for the strong smell they release from their anal glands when threatened. That smell is second only to that of skunks, which belong to the same family, hence another of the polecat's names – the foulemart or foul marten. Variations of the name are illustrated at Abbot's Ann in the mid century, where polecat, powlcatt, poult catt and poolcat were all used within the space of a few years (HRO 24M68/PW1). At Otterbourne polecat appears in the late eighteenth century as pulcat, pollicat, polcat, pollicatte and poulcatt (HRO 27M66/PW1).

Another member of the mustelids, that seems to have disappeared from Hampshire in the early nineteenth century, was the marten, which is second only to the otter in size in this family. Today it is known as the pine marten, but in the past in Hampshire it was known as the marten cat and was not confined to pine woods, which were indeed much less common. The writer in the Victoria County History in 1900 believed 'the pine marten never had a southern range', but again parish records show this to be untrue. Hampshire was still in the late eighteenth century one of the most extensively wooded counties in England, as can be seen on Isaac Taylor's map of the county in 1759, providing very suitable habitats for martens (Tubbs 1993, 22). Churchwardens' accounts show that marten cats were still present in at least 24 parishes in Hampshire in the eighteenth century. Apart from the New Forest, they were killed in a belt of parishes around Romsey and Winchester across the centre of the county, but also occurred in other areas. A stronghold of martens seems to have been Farley Chamberlayne, where 43 were killed between

1771 and 1814 (HRO 135M82/PW1). In contrast there was only one payment in 11 parishes, and in five more payments were only made twice. This may be partly because martens are mainly active at night and rarely seen in daytime. However it may also be that they were becoming rarer because they were also hunted for their coats of long dark brown fur. Deforestation, that reached its peak in England in the eighteenth century, is also likely to have affected the numbers of the only arboreal member of the mustelids. Variations on their names are 'martain' at Sherfield English and 'marting' at Wootton St. Lawrence and Farley Chamberlayne (Fig. 5).

The smallest members of the mustelids also sometimes appear in the accounts. Stoats were regularly killed, for example, at Lymington in Hampshire, where 13 were killed in 1754 and 14 in 1755 and in Easton, where 'ceching a stote' earned 4d in 1745 (HRO 42M75/PW3, 78M70/PW1). Usually they were known as 'stotes' or 'stots', but occasionally as 'stocatts', as at Beaulieu, or 'stocats', as at Broughton. Weasels or 'wezels', though the same size as stoats, were caught much more rarely. 'Too whessells' were caught at Easton in 1753.

In some parishes large numbers of hedgehogs were also killed. Even in the seventeenth century 41 were killed at Lymington between 1687 and 1694. Perhaps the widely held belief in rural England that hedgehogs were a pest because they drank milk from the udders of recumbent cows was already prevalent, especially in dairying districts. In fact a cow would no doubt object violently if a hedgehog tried to do so. The story probably originated because when a cow's udder is full, especially after a night's grazing, milk oozes out as it lies down on the grass before milking and a hedgehog will avail itself of the milk there. A cowherd or dairyman seeing the hedgehog slurping up the milk as he came to fetch the cows may well have jumped to the wrong conclusion (Morris 1983, 115). Dead hedgehogs were usually rewarded with 4d, twice the recommended payment in the Act. Hedgehogs are spelled in a delightful number of ways, for example 'headge hoogs' at Rockbourne in 1682, 'heg hogs' and 'hig hogs' at Easton in 1790 and 1799, 'hegogs' at Romsey in 1789, 'edghogs' at Alverstoke in 1795,

May The 4: 1770:1	Paid for 2 Fox heads	0:2:0
June 12	Paid for Bread & wine	0:3:4
July 7	Paid for a Badgers head	0:4:0
July 12	Paid for a Badgers head	0:4:0
October 19	Paid at Spiritual Court	0:14:2
November 10	Paid for a Badgers head	0:1:0
1713	Robbed a Sailor upon The Rode	0:4:0
July 20	Paid for a Badgers head	0:1:0
December 15	Paid for a fox head	0:1:0
July 22	Paid for Bread & wine	0:3:8
July 28	Paid for 2 Badgers heads	0:2:0
1771 January 28	Paid for a martin Cat	0:1:0
July 28	Paid forails & Lime	0:2:9
March 27	Paid for This Booke	0:2:3
July 29	Paid for Repairing The Bells	0:3:5
July 29	Paid for Bread & wine	0:5:9
July 30	Paid for Haishing Church	0:3:1
	Paid for Haishing Church	0:4:6
	The Disbursement of Rich. Wilkins	3:0:0
		1:10:1

Fig. 5 An extract from the churchwardens accounts for Farley Chamberlayne for 1770-1 (by kind permission of the Hampshire Record Office)

hog ogs' at Houghton in 1804 and 'heghhogs' at Crawley in 1806.

John Worlidge of Petersfield described moles in 1687 as 'a pernicious Enemy to Husbandry by loosening the earth and destroying the Roots of Corn, Grass, Herbs and flowers ... and also by casting up hills to the great hindrance of Corn, Pastures etc'. The Jacobite toast to 'the Little gentleman in Black Velvet', whose mole hill was the cause of William III being thrown to his death from his horse, is a reminder of why horsemen disliked them. However apart from one payment in the later seventeenth century at Ovington (HRO 32M69/PW1), moles only begin to surface in the records in the later eighteenth century either under the name mole or their other name 'want'. The overseers accounts of West Tytherley show that one Richard Hacker was employed during a period of fourteen years to deal with moles. In 1758 he was paid for mole catching, in 1767 for 'kicking molles' in 1768 for 'checking of molls', and in 1770 and 1771 'Giffer Hatcher' was paid for 'want catching'. (HRO 85M71/PO1) The 1767 entry presumably refers to flattening the mole hills!

A payment that was not authorised by the Acts, but which would certainly not have been questioned, was that for killing mad dogs. West Meon seems to have been unfortunate for in 1733 the churchwardens gave 'the man that killed the Mad Doge' 5s. and in 1765 the Overseers Accounts record a similar large payment for the same service (HRO 67M81/PW1, PO1). In 1775 at Selborne, where perhaps a dog was regarded as being similar to a fox, the payment was only a shilling. (HRO 32M66/PW1).

The most surprising omission from the payments is that of the most harmful of all vermin, mice and rats, especially after the appearance of the even more destructive brown rat in the early eighteenth century. The Elizabethan Act authorised payments for their extirpation, but they rarely appear in parish records in any county. In Hampshire, Romsey is the only parish where such payments appear. In 1783 'Knowles for killing Ratts' was paid 2s. 6d. and 'old Knowles the ratcatcher' received 3s. 6d. eight years later. Presumably, if this was his main occupation, old Knowles could also offer his services in other areas.

Table 3 The number of parishes with records of vermin payments and the kinds of wildlife killed in those parishes between 1625 and 1863

	<i>Parishes</i>	<i>Foxes</i>	<i>Wild Cats</i>	<i>Badgers</i>	<i>Otters</i>	<i>Mart Cats</i>	<i>Pole cats</i>
1625-1649	4	4	0	1	1	0	1
1650-1674	15	15	1	4	1	0	2
1675-1699	27	25	1	4	0	0	8
1700-1724	39	39	0	13	4	1	21
1755-1749	50	42	0	10	2	3	23
1750-1774	73	43	0	9	2	9	37
1775-1799	94	37	0	7	8	13	36
1800-1824	101	25	0	5	9	4	19
1825-1863	98	7	0	0	0	0	9

PATTERNS OF CHANGE

These then were the animals and birds killed in Hampshire as revealed in the parish records. Let us now consider what changes occurred in the targeting of animals and birds over the two hundred years for which we have sufficient evidence. The preceding chart shows the changes in killing in parishes. It must be emphasised that it does not show the total recorded number of animals and birds killed, because the fragmentary nature of the records for many parishes means that the figures would have little meaning.

It seems that in general a greater variety and, in a few cases, larger numbers of animals and birds were being killed from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards. While it is difficult to know how far apparent changes reflect the increasing number of surviving records, preliminary research by the author in other counties in Wessex seem to reflect these trends. In a few parishes like Binstead, payments only now begin to be made. After a hundred years of records the first vermin payment was only made in 1787 (HRO 1M67/PW1). Similarly at Tadley it is only in 1829, after 64 years of surviving accounts, that the parish began to pay for 'destrowing burds'. At Avington after 45 years of paying for foxes and polecats, the wardens from 1780 began to pay also

for martens, otters and hedgehogs (HRO 22M69/PW1). This increase in the level of persecution may partly reflect the accelerating growth of the human population in the second half of the eighteenth century and therefore the fear of food shortages, especially in the war years. It may also reflect the increasingly low wages of the rural population of Hampshire, particularly clear in the writings of William Cobbett, during the post war depression of the early nineteenth century and the need for poor families to increase their income by killing vermin (Cobbett 1967, 125).

One conclusion from the table is that foxes were killed in a smaller proportion of parishes during the second half of the eighteenth century. Such payments were no longer made, for example, in Thruxton, though other vermin payments continue. This probably reflects the rise in fox hunting. As the Victorian historian of Lymington Edward King wrote of the vermin payments in his parish, 'a fox's head in a hunting parish would now be looked askance at'. (King 1879, 113) The hunting of foxes was gradually replacing the hunting of deer and hare as the number of deer declined, and the hunting of catted deer less appealing and, though more slowly, hare hunting was becoming less fashionable. Though there had been hunting in the New Forest since the late seventeenth century, organ-

Table 4 Smaller wildlife killed in parished 1625–1863

	<i>Parishes</i>	<i>Stoats</i>	<i>Weazels</i>	<i>Hedgehogs</i>	<i>Moles</i>	<i>Adders</i>	<i>Sparrows</i>
1625–1649	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
1650–1674	15	0	0	0	0	0	0
1675–1699	27	4	0	2	1	0	4
1700–1724	39	10	1	4	0	0	17
1725–1749	50	16	0	7	0	0	32
1750–1774	73	19	2	16	3	2	51
1775–1799	94	20	7	34	1	0	75
1800–1824	101	19	9	40	6	5	90
1825–1863	98	7	6	23	8	4	95

ised hunting in the rest of Hampshire is usually said to have begun around 1745 in the country around Alresford and Winchester (Anderson 2003, xv; Hope 1950, 51). Nevertheless it is clear that though in some parishes foxes were being left for the huntsmen, in others they continued to be destroyed as vermin and fox payments only tailed off after 1825.

Polecats continued to be killed up to the 1840's with the last payment at Penton Mewsey in 1843 (HRO 114M82/PW1). The increase in the killing of marten cats may reflect the increase in surviving records, though perhaps deforestation made it less easy for them to hide or there may have been more intensive hunting. The hunting parson William Chafin in his *Anecdotes of Cranbourne Chase*, written in 1816, declared that marten cats 'are nearly extinct; their skins were too valuable for them to be suffered to exist' (Chafyn 1816, 42). The last recorded killing of martens is in 1817, when five were killed at Otterbourne (HRO 27M66/PW1) and the last badger was killed at Hordle in 1808 (HRO 26M79/PW3). Otters were also under increasing pressure on the Itchen, with 20 killed at Avington between 1782 and 1794, and 40 otters or 'oatters' paid at Easton between 1772 and 1800 (HRO 78M82/PW1, 77M70/PW1). The last killing of an otter in Hampshire parish records was at Holdenhurst in 1815 (9M75/PW6).

The killing of hedgehogs clearly became much more widespread and intense in the later eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. A reason for this may be the growing interest in shooting at this time and the fear that hedgehogs would eat the eggs of game birds like partridges and pheasants. In Alverstoke 59 were killed in 1793, in Ecchinswell 80 were destroyed in 1788 and in Bramshaw 78 eliminated in 1829. (PCRO CHU42/3A, HRO 147M82/PW1, 55M83/PV1) After 1825 they were being killed far more widely than any other animal.

Weasels also begin to appear more often among the victims, with 8 killed at Lymington in 1754 (HRO 42M75/PW3). The very few polecats killed in this parish suggest that perhaps stoats and weasels had more space to make their presence felt. The killing of the last three stoats was at Penton Mewsey in 1842 and the last ten weasels were rewarded in the same parish the next year (HRO 114M82/PW1).

More moles were also being killed. In Penton Mewsey Thomas Hopes was employed to kill moles for twenty years from 1829. Following a decade in which only a few moles were killed in a year, Thomas killed 318 in 1829 and a similar number the next year (HRO 114M82/PW1). At Silchester in 1774 and at Wootton St Lawrence in 1803 6d. payments were made for catching moles in the churchyard'. (HRO 28M69/PW1,

75M72/PW2). One suspects that other payments such as those for mole catching at Binstead and Sopley in the early nineteenth century were also for catching moles in the same place. (HRO 1M67/PW1, 53M80/PW1). Payments for killing moles continue after the repeal of the Vermin Act and perhaps reflect the growing pressure on space in churchyards in the nineteenth century as a result of the growing human population.

Gilbert White's brother Henry, the incumbent of Fyfield, records in his own journal that he killed a great many vipers in the early 1780's and the killing of snakes was also rewarded by churchwardens, especially in a group of parishes in that area. At Fyfield itself adders were killed between 1762 and 1764 at a cost of 6d each and the earliest overseers account at Kimpton in 1763 also includes payments for a dozen adders at the same price. At Vernham, now Vernham Dean, for eleven years from 1824 there were payments for 'serpents'. The payments are usually said to be for 'sparrows' and 'serpents' and the number is not given so it is not possible to say how many were killed or how much was paid for each. However in one year the serpents are described as 'vipers' and in the final year as 'adders', so there is little doubt that the churchwardens at least believed that they were paying for the extermination of England's only poisonous snake (HRO 110M70/PW1). There are also payments in the poor law accounts of the parish of Weyhill in the 1820's where four pence was paid per snake (HRO 59M78/PW1) and Penton Mewsey where the churchwardens made payments at a rate of 6d for 28 years between the 1820's and 1840's (HRO 114M8/PW1). Apart from these six neighbouring parishes in the north-west of Hampshire the killing of adders was only rewarded in two other parishes, both in the south-east - at Fareham (PCRO CHU43/2A1) and North Hayling. At North Hayling in the early nineteenth century adders were killed for over twenty years at a cost of 2d each, with no less than 222 being killed in 1816 and 126 in 1817 (Thomas 1961, 229).

Another animal whose destruction that had not been authorised by the Elizabethan Act, because the animal was at that time supposed to be kept only by gentlemen in conigres or warrens, was the rabbit. In Buriton, however, for eight years after

1809 rabbit payments of 1d per animal are recorded. Over 900 were killed in 1809 and over a thousand the next year with further payments till 1821, though in the last few years rabbits and sparrows are lumped together in one payment. While rabbits had been kept in warrens and farmed for their meat and fur, they had not been common in the wild. By 1800, however, many writers on agriculture were agreeing that better use could be made of land occupied by rabbit warrens. The French wars and inflation also persuaded farmers to convert their warrens to corn production. Consequently in the early nineteenth century the number of warrens declined and the rabbits were killed or allowed to escape. Some contemporary naturalists like Bewick believed indeed that rabbits would not be able to survive unprotected outside the large warrens. Contrary to his expectations, with the increased pressure on their predators and an increase in the amount of fodder crops during the winter, their numbers exploded in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Sheail 1971, 9). The Buriton payments reflect these changes.

The most striking point, however, that emerges from the churchwardens accounts from the second half of the eighteenth century is that most parishes began to pay for 'sparrows' and for very large numbers of them. In a dozen parishes in the eighteenth century and no less than twenty-eight parishes in the nineteenth century such payments were the only ones ever made. In East Meon, for example, payments for sparrows began in 1753 and continued until the end of the surviving accounts in 1814 (HRO 46M68/PW1). It is possible that the numbers of small birds in England had been increasing. There always had been many hedges, but their number was undoubtedly growing during the eighteenth century as a result of the long lasting enclosure movement with the breaking up of open fields and common land into smaller hedged fields so providing more opportunities for nesting birds. Modern comparative studies of those few parishes where the open fields have survived and neighbouring enclosed parishes have shown the much greater density of birds in the latter. The new farm buildings out in the fields also provided new shelter. As the *Journal of a Naturalist* recorded in

1829, the house sparrow 'becomes immediately an inhabitant of the new farm house in a lonely place or new enclosure'. (Jones 1972, 119). Elsewhere the new coverts for hunters of foxes and shooters of game also provided more habitats as did the building of canals. Apart from more cover, the increase in the amount of grain being grown also provided them with more food. Possibly in one or two places the attack on their predators helped them to flourish.

Whatever the reason, huge numbers of sparrows were killed. They are usually recorded in dozens, though sometimes only the total payment is written down. When this happens it is probably because a separate sparrow account was being kept. The only surviving example of such an account is one for 1832 for Whitchurch (HRO M76/PW1). In Warblington the total number of birds killed was entered by the wardens for the last few years of payments. During those last five years up to 1835 they paid out for 18,105 sparrows heads (PCRO CHU19/2 1). While this seems to be the largest number recorded in a single parish, large numbers were also being destroyed elsewhere in the early nineteenth century so that perhaps up to a quarter of a million birds were being killed in Hampshire every year. However opposition was growing to church rates and their use (Chadwick 1966, 81). In the 1830's 59 parishes ceased to pay for sparrows and another 22 parishes discontinued the practice in the 1840's. Seven continued to pay in the 1850's with Old Alresford, Preston Candover and Alton (where £1 5s was spent on 'sparrow heads and stamps') using the church rates to reward sparrow killers up to 1858 (HRO 43M74/PW1, 49M68/PW1, 29M84/PW2). The Elizabethan Act was finally repealed in 1863, by which time sparrow clubs had often been formed to keep down the numbers of sparrows.

WHO BENEFITTED FROM THE PAYMENTS

It is often not possible to say to whom the vermin bounties were given, because the churchwardens merely list the payments made. Sometimes, however, the names of the recipients are given and, much less frequently, details are given about

them. Uniquely in parishes like Eling, Minstead and Fawley in the New Forest in the late seventeenth century payments for foxes were made to the huntsmen of local landowners like Sir John Mills of Mottisfont Abbey and Richard Cromwell, the son of the Protector, of Hursley Park (Anderson 2003, xv). This may account for the very high amounts sometimes paid for foxes in the New Forest parishes.

At North Waltham in 1701 Goody Bonham 'for catching a poulcat' was paid the unusually large sum of 1s (HRO 41M64/PW1). Whether she was a specially deserving case, or the polecat had kittens, or it was a particularly destructive animal we shall never know. Quite often there is an entry 'to a man for a fox's head' showing that strangers as well as parishioners might be paid. Sometimes it is clear that the payments were being made to children. In Fawley in 1672 'Widow Webb's boy for killing a grey' was paid 6d. He was unlucky since this was half the going rate (HRO 25M60/PW1). In 1749 in Rockbourne 'Charles Gray's daughter for a 'stots head' earned 2d (HRO 39M68/14). In Milford in 1792 Young Knight, Young Angel and six others were all paid rewards for killing hedgehogs and sparrows (HRO 31M67/PW1). It has been suggested that such payments were a way for children to earn pocket money, but at a time when adult wages were so low it was more likely that they were supplementing the family income.

Those who were rewarded were not, of course, the only ones who benefited. In a rural parish at least, the churchwardens and overseers of the poor, chosen by the vestry from the substantial householders, were themselves likely to have been farmers. It looks suspiciously like a case of churchwarden farmers in some parishes using the church rates to finance the protection of the crops and stock of themselves and fellow farmers. This does not always follow. In Chawton the accounts record that in 1754 the rector nominated Farmer Andrews and Farmer Ball to be churchwardens, but the only payment in that year was for one fox (HRO 1M70/PW1). On the other hand in the same parish in 1798 when John and Andrew Andrews, perhaps relatives of Farmer Andrews, were churchwardens there was a sudden blitz on foxes and 15 were killed as well as the only

marten cat ever recorded in the parish. Sometimes payments were made to farmers's employees. In Lymington in 1728 there is a payment to 'farmer Curtis's man' (HRO 42M75 PW3). In Beaulieu the long years during which Joseph Biddlescombe of Warren Farm was a churchwarden marked an intensification of persecution of wild animals that only ended with the final payments made in the parish in 1779 the year before Joseph retired from his post (Beau Arch Book 3). In the Wootton St. Lawrence accounts in 1809 is the entry 'to farmer Pearce for 66 dozen sparrows heads 11s' (HRO 75M72/PW2).

THE SCALE OF PAYMENTS

The amount of attention devoted to the killing of 'noysome' birds and 'vermy'n' varied enormously between parishes. In some the accounts show that the churchwardens were mainly concerned with their religious duties providing for the church services and maintaining the church. In many others the secular duty of rewarding the killing of vermin seems to have been higher on their list of priorities. At Beaulieu from early in the eighteenth century, sometimes over half, and occasionally over three quarters, of the items of expenditure were on vermin. At Ellingham the proportion of vermin payments was also over half (HRO 113M87/PW2). In the late eighteenth century large numbers of payments appeared in many parishes. At Easton in 1783 22 out of 32 payments were of this nature (HRO 72M70/PW1). Occasionally as at Ellingham in 1750 the payments were transferred to the poor rates, perhaps because it was thought that such payments were more suitably paid from a secular rate. In other parishes like Weyhill sparrows, hedgehogs and adders were paid from the poor rate and most other vermin from the parish rate. In the early nineteenth century when the killing of animals, apart from hedgehogs, was becoming less common, the spending were even more dominated by payments for sparrows with occasionally page after page of some churchwardens accounts devoted to payments for sparrow killing.

More significant was the amount of money being spent. In Beaulieu over a third of the

churchwardens expenditure was sometimes on vermin before 1750 and in the second half of the century during the stewardship of farmer Biddlescombe this sometimes rose to half. For example, in 1779, the last year when payments were made for animals, £10 4s. 11d. was spent on vermin out of a total of £19 5s. 8d. In most parishes the amounts were proportionately less. In the nineteenth century as payments for animals became less common the proportion spent became less despite the numbers of sparrows killed. In Wootton St Lawrence in 1813, for example, the forty-five dozen sparrows killed cost only 11s. 3d. out of a total expenditure of £8 10s 8d (HRO 75M72/P24). On at least one occasion a decision not to pay any longer for sparrows was reversed. At Stratfield Saye, where only sparrows were ever killed, 'at a meeting held on the 4th day of October 1810 it was unanimously decided [by the six people present] that we will not pay for killing any sparrows after the above date' (HRO 15M83PW1). However on the first day of August 1833 a different nine parishioners decided with equal unanimity that 'we will pay for all sparrows killed in this parish from the present date namely 6d a dozen for Old Birds and 2d for Young Bird and eggs'. Again one suspects that particular interests were represented at the two meetings.

HOW FAR WERE THE VERMIN ACTS THE CAUSE OF THE DECLINE IN HAMPSHIRE'S WILD LIFE?

The zeal of some churchwardens in carrying out the Tudor Vermin legislation may at first give the impression that this was the major reason for the decline in wild life in Hampshire in the years up to the First World War. While it is probably a false impression that there were always more animals and birds in any stretch of countryside in the past than there are today, there were certainly fewer of some species by 1914, while others had disappeared. However, it must be noted first that, as we have seen, there were a few parishes where the Acts appear to have been wholly ignored and very many others where only some creatures were ever killed. This varied level of persecution meant that there were always reserves of wild life in neigh-

bouring parishes that could re-colonise parishes where there were intensive periods of persecution. Even when a whole range of animals were killed over a long period, as at Easton and Alverstoke, the fact that payment could continue to be made over a long period of years implies that the wild life population was able to support such a level of culling. This seems to be true even of the huge number of 'sparrows' that were killed.

Given that persecution was so sporadic, the conclusion must be that the enforcement of the Tudor vermin Acts by churchwardens had little long term influence on the decline of the wild life population of Hampshire, except perhaps to speed up the disappearance of marten cats and polecats. The real reason for that decline is almost certainly the appointment of gamekeepers (Langley and Yalden 1977, 113). Gamekeepers had begun to be appointed in the late seventeenth century and, very occasionally, they appear in churchwardens' accounts. In Thruxton in 1753 the churchwardens paid 2s. to 'Baker, Mr Smith's gamekeeper for two foxes' (HRO 78M71/PW1). At first lesser gentlemen and yeomen were appointed as the gamekeepers for manors, but by the early nineteenth century, with the rise of the sporting estate for game birds like pheasants and partridges and improved firearms, gamekeeping became a full time job. The process of enclosure also encouraged the fencing in of estates and the eradication of vermin within them. The new breed of gamekeepers was much more ruthless and efficient and gamekeepers' gibbets, rows of suspended corpses of dead animals and birds, became an accepted part of the country scene. With such determined killers of vermin at work there was no longer any need for churchwardens to offer rewards. The records of the licensing of gamekeepers show that, throughout the nineteenth century, Hampshire was one of the counties with the largest number of gamekeepers (HRO Q18). The increasing activity of gamekeepers in killing animals would also help to explain the switch of parish vermin spending to payments for killing sparrows. It has also been observed that ornithology at this time was almost synonymous with egg and skin collecting (Tubbs 1968, 197). It was also the period when no big house or museum was complete without its collection of stuffed animals and birds and in 1880 there

were no less than nineteen Animal and Bird Preservers advertising in Hampshire (Kelly 1880, 687). This put additional pressure on Hampshire wild life. The First World War saw a rapid decline in the number of gamekeepers as they were diverted to using their skills against the human enemy instead of the wild ones. There was then a recovery of wild life until, in the second half of the twentieth century, indiscriminate use of pesticides caused even more destruction, but that is another story. In the twenty-first century we can now welcome the growing presence in the Hampshire countryside again of what were once dismissed as 'noyfull fowles and vermyn'.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Beau Arch	Beaulieu Archives
St M L Mus	St Michael's Loft Museum, Christ Church Priory
HRO	Hampshire Record Office
PCRO	Portsmouth City Record Office
SRO	Southampton Record Office
VCH	Victoria County History

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Parish records of the following parishes include entries for rewards for the killing of vermin:

* denotes churchwardens accounts and + denotes overseers accounts.

Berkshire Record Office.

Coombe*, Stratfield Mortimer*.

Hampshire Record Office.

Abbotts Ann*, Alton*, Ashley*, Andover*, Ashley*,
 Avington*, Barton Stacey*, Bentley*, Bentworth*,
 Bighton*, Binstead*, Bishopstoke*, Bishops Sutton*,
 Bishops Waltham, Boldre*, Bramdean*, Bramley*,
 Bramshaw*, Bramshott*, Broughton*+, Burghclere*,
 Buriton*, Burlesdon*, Chawton*, Cheriton*,
 Chilbolton*, Crawley*, Deane*, Dogmersfield*+,
 Durley*, East Dean*, East Meon*, Easton*, Eastrop*,
 East Worldham*, Ecchinswell*, Eling*, Ellingham*+,
 Elvetham*, Eversley*, Farley Chamberlayne*, Fawley*,
 Fordingbridge*, Froxfield*, Froyle+, Fyfield+,
 Goodworth Clatford*, Grateley*+, Greywell*,
 Hambledon*, Hartley Mauditt*, Holdenhurst*,
 Hordle*, Houghton*, Hurstbourne Tarrant*, Ibsley*,
 Itchen Abbas*, Itchen Stoke*, Kilmeston*, Kingsclere*,
 Kimpton+, Kingsley*, Kings Sombourne*, Kings
 Worthy*+, Knight's Enham*, Lasham*, Lechford*+,
 Longparish*, Longstock*, Lymington*, Lyndhurst*,
 Mapledurwell*, Marytyr Worthy*, Micheldever*,
 Michelmarsh*, Milford*, Minstead*, Monxton*, New
 Alresford*, Newnham*, Newton Valence*, North
 Baddesley*, Northington*, North Waltham*, Nutley*
 Odiham*, Old Alresford*, Old Baring*, Otterbourne*,
 Overton*, Ovington*, Owlesbury*, Penton Mewsey*,
 Petersfield*, Preston Candover*, Privett*,
 Rockbourne*, Romsey*, St Mary Bourne*, Selbourne*,
 Shalden*, Sherbourne St John*, Sherfield English*,
 Sherfield Loddon*, Shipton Bellinger*, Silchester*,
 Soberton*, Sopley*, South Wamborough*, Sparsholt+,
 Steep*, Stockbridge*, Stoke Charity*, Stratfield Saye*,
 Stratfield Turgis*, Tadley*, Thruxton*+, Tichbourne*,
 Titchfield*, Upham*, Up Nately*, Upton Grey*,
 Vernham Dean*, Warnford*, Wellow*, West Meon*+,
 West Tytherley*+ Weyhill*+, Whitchurch*, Wield*,
 Winchester St Bartholemew*, Winchester St Michael*,
 Winchester St Peter Chesil*, Winslade*, Wooton St
 Laurence*, Yateley*.

Portsmouth City Record Office.

Alverstoke*, Bedhampton*, Blendworth*,
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