



The dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* is a small mammal that predominantly lives in semi-natural species-rich woodland usually with hazel coppice as an important component, but not vital. It can also be found in various habitats from hedgerows, to scrub and reed bed.

Dormice need an energy-rich diet of pollen, insects, fruit and nuts according to season and therefore survive best where there is a good variety of trees and shrubs. Breeding takes place once, or sometimes twice in a year depending on weather and food availability. There are usually 4 – 6 young in a litter. A good crop of fruit and nuts is important in the autumn so that dormice can put on weight before hibernation over winter. Recent flailing of hedges in late summer whilst there are still berries present is a contributing factor in their demise.

Dormice are a protected species and it is an offence to intentionally disturb them or their habitats without a licence from Natural England. Formerly widespread through England and Wales, the dormouse is now an endangered species and extinct in some Counties. Herefordshire is a stronghold with populations throughout the county, their distribution reflecting that of ancient semi-natural woodland and associated hedgerow-rich field patterns.

Threats

- Fragmentation of habitats leaving isolated, non-viable populations
- Loss or inappropriate management of habitats
- Deer and grey squirrel damage to shrub layer and coppice regrowth
- Decline of coppicing and other woodland management
- Lack of knowledge of the range of habitats used
- Possible direct or indirect threat from climate change

Current Action

- 15 sites within the county under the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme
- Habitat management for dormice and provision of nest boxes under agri-environment schemes
- Public awareness and education, and the training of new licensees to do surveys and monitoring (HMG)
- Managing Woodlands in the Presence of European Protected Species 2015 training program (BCT, FC)
- EPS check lists in conjunction with forestry operations. Updated for dormice June 2016

| | Objective | Action |
|---|--|--------|
| A | Locate and map existing populations | 4,7 |
| B | Monitor populations | 1 |
| C | Increase sympathetic habitat management including programmes of coppice restoration and improving habitat connectivity | 3,5,7 |
| D | Control deer and red squirrel damage | 6 |
| E | Manage known colonies through targeting funding and protection through site designations | 2 |
| F | Increase awareness of habitat requirements and full range of habitats used | 5 |

| | Actions | Target |
|---|--|--------|
| 1 | Monitor populations annually through nestbox schemes | Annual |
| 2 | Maintain existing populations and increase numbers through DEFRA funded projects | Annual |
| 3 | Increase food sources by increasing structural management of woodland and by planting food plants | Annual |
| 4 | Survey new areas and resurvey sites where there are historic records. Map distribution and publish in BAP atlas | 2020 |
| 5 | Publicise habitat requirements to landowners and advice on beneficial management | 2020 |
| 6 | Control deer and grey squirrel populations to achieve balanced ecological system | 2020 |
| 7 | Identify known populations that could be linked by hedgerows to form a metapopulation, and encourage landowners to do this wherever possible | 2020 |

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| Lead Partner | HMG |
| Key Partners | HWT, FC, PTES |