



people's trust for
**endangered
species**

Dormouse conservation in England and Wales

the role of People's Trust for Endangered Species

The hazel dormouse is Britain's only native dormouse species. For a rodent it has an unusually long lifespan of up to five years, half of which is spent in hibernation. Dormice are endearing animals, with large eyes and a honey coloured coat. They are the only small mammal in Britain to have a furry tail. Once widespread throughout much of England and Wales, the range of the hazel dormouse has diminished significantly over the past century. Their distribution has generally been reduced to the southern parts of England and Wales due to changes in woodland management and farming practices, loss of hedgerows and the fragmentation of both woodland and countryside.

People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) has been working on dormouse conservation for over 20 years. In partnership with Natural England (NE) we run the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme (NDMP), and the National Dormouse Database (NDD). In collaboration with Paignton Zoo, the Zoological Society of London and the Common Dormouse Captive Breeders group we also manage the dormouse reintroduction programme.

Dormouse nest boxes provide shelter for hazel dormice and offer a way of detecting these rare creatures who spend much of their active life high in the tree canopy. Dormice normally build their summer nests in tree holes or thick bramble, but the boxes provide an artificial nesting place. Large numbers of boxes can boost populations and be used as an effective monitoring and survey method.

This leaflet details our dormouse conservation work and explains how you can get involved. **Please remember that it is illegal to deliberately disturb dormice or to damage their resting places without a licence from Natural England or Natural Resources Wales.**



The National Dormouse Monitoring Programme

The NDMP was set up in 1989 at five sites. About 350 woodlands are now surveyed by dedicated 'dormouse monitors' every year and the data are collated to show the national population trend. Analysis of the NDMP has shown that there has been an ongoing decline in the dormouse population over the past 20 years although recently this appears to have slowed. There is an NDMP email forum where monitors can share their experiences and ask for advice.



The National Dormouse Database

The NDD was originally set up by Natural England to record anecdotal records of dormice. These records could be from members of the public – perhaps from cat prey items or a nut record - or from consultants who have surveyed an area on behalf of a developer and have several one-off records to submit. This information improves our knowledge of the distribution and abundance of dormice.



The Dormouse Monitor

The Dormouse Initiative was first published in 1992 to support early dormouse monitors. The publication, whose title has changed to *The Dormouse Monitor*, is published twice a year and includes research news and updates from around the world to inform local volunteers and the international dormouse community.

Reintroductions

Reintroductions have been carried out in partnership with Natural England annually since 1993 in order to re-establish dormouse populations from captive bred animals to counties where they had previously been lost. Five years ago we began a project to expand the available habitat surrounding dormouse release sites and to increase connectivity to neighbouring woodland by encouraging landowners to plant hedgerows and woodlands.



Public involvement

Go Nuts for Dormice was launched in 2009 to raise awareness of the hazel dormouse and its decline. It also encouraged the public to hold a dormouse tea party in order to fundraise for dormouse work at PTES. *The Great*

Nut Hunt survey involved asking the public to get out and about in local woodlands and search for dormouse chewed hazel nuts.

Advice and training

Our *Managing Small Woodlands for Dormice* leaflet explains dormouse ecology and offers simple best practice guidance for woodland management. It summarises the dormouse handbook and simplifies the European Protected Species legislation. It is a good source of contacts for grants, practical help and advice about other woodland species. Dormouse training material in the form of videos, presentations and notes are available on the PTES website www.ptes.org



Reserves

PTES owns Briddlesford, a beautiful ancient woodland on the Isle of Wight, home to both dormice and red squirrels. We have over 500 dormouse nest boxes that are monitored several times a year. We involve volunteers and students in monitoring and practical woodland management and twice a year we hold events where the public can join us and see dormice first hand. Training for dormouse handling is also held here.



Courses and events

Every year we arrange a programme of events to see a variety of wildlife including dormice. A one-day course, *How to Manage Woods for Dormice*, is led by dormouse expert Dr Pat Morris. Courses on *Dormice Ecology and Conservation* are given nationally by PTES Dormouse Officer, Ian White. We also visit fairs and shows around the country where we talk about all aspects of our work including dormouse conservation and woodland management.



Grants

PTES has awarded grants to support many dormouse projects over the years including the Common Dormouse Captive Breeder's Group and the North Wales Dormouse Project. Our mammal internships have recently funded two graduates to carry out dormouse research. We also have a special fund for local mammal groups or keen individuals who want to put up nest boxes in order to monitor a woodland.





How to get involved

Dormouse sightings - have you seen a dormouse? If so please visit www.ptes.org/dormousemonitoring

Go on a nut hunt - take your family for a leisurely stroll in the woods and while you're there search for signs of dormice. For more info email susan.sharafi@ptes.org

If you think you have dormice in your wood - contact PTES for more information about our nest box fund and advice on how to monitor your woodland.

Manage your woodland for dormice - if you own or manage a small woodland email laura@ptes.org to receive a copy of our advice leaflet.

Become a dormouse monitor - we want to increase the number of woods that are regularly monitored and need dedicated, licenced volunteers to help - contact PTES for advice.

Organise a dormouse training course - if you already have a dormouse licence and would like to share your knowledge through organised training courses contact ian.white@ptes.org for details

Join your local dormouse group - contact susan.sharafi@ptes.org to see if there is a group near you.

Experience a *Wildlife Encounter* - not just dormouse events. Visit www.ptes.org/events for more information and to book your place.

Support PTES - we rely heavily on public donations to continue with our dormouse work. Become a regular supporter to receive our biannual magazine *Wildlife World*.

