

Title: Distribution, abundance and conservation status of dormice (*Myoxidae*) in Lithuania, *Hystrix*, 1995

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Background to study

Four species of dormice occur in Lithuania and their distribution and conservation status is largely undetermined. Reviews on dormouse distribution, abundance and conservation status have recently been carried out and are presented here.

Method

- Information on dormouse distribution and abundance, where available, were obtained from scientific publications, zoological collections, personal communications, media articles and expeditions across Lithuania checking nest box occupation by dormouse species.

Key results

- Edible dormice occur in mature forests with old oaks and hazel and in deciduous forests in river valleys in Lithuania, the northern edge of the species distributional range. Their distribution is suspected to be historically more widespread but between 1990 and 1993 6 sites occupied by edible dormice. Animals were found in nest boxes, garden houses and a bee hive. All records were located within the Vilnius and Kaunas regions. Five localities are in protected areas.
- Forest dormice are found in mixed forest with Scotch pine, birch, Norway spruce and buckthorn in Lithuania, the northern border of the species range. A historical specimen was found in Jonava (1934) and surveys from 1985 to 1993 recorded breeding individuals in the Sakiai district only.
- Garden dormice have been observed in dry Scotch pine forest with juniper and a ground cover of moss and lichens. They are only found in southern Lithuania in Varena district where breeding has been observed. It is suspected this species should be more widespread.
- Common dormice occupy mixed and deciduous forest, notably with hazel understorey. They are widespread in Lithuania occurring in 32 of 44 districts, notably where this habitat prevails. It is most common in central and northern Lithuania, elsewhere it is less common or unobserved.
- Population density of common dormice is comparatively low ranging from 0.4-1.5 individuals/ha in spring and 0.9-3.8 individuals/ha in autumn.

Key messages to landowners and managers derived from these results

- Increased effort for determining distribution of all dormouse species, especially the edible, forest and garden dormouse is recommended. Erecting nestboxes in suitable habitat is the most promising method for determining presence.

Key words/phrases

Dormice; *Myoxidae*; Lithuania; distribution; status