

spring 2009

the dormouse monitor

the newsletter of the national dormouse monitoring programme

people's trust for **endangered species** |



INSIDE

21st birthday of the NDMP

Transylvanian dormice recent work in Romania

Dormice on film new work in Surrey

Welcome



Welcome to the spring issue of *The Dormouse Monitor* packed full of all things dormouse. We hope you enjoy reading it.

Nest box checks are now well under way and this year is showing signs of being a promising one for dormice. Summer is currently forecast to begin on a warmer than average note with temperatures widely above the norm for the time of year and rainfall near or below average. Hopefully, this prediction will hold true as the last two years of dreary, wet summers have not benefited dormice. Last year was particularly poor with dormouse numbers down at many monitoring sites.

You should have all received the 2009 recording forms by now, if you have not please let us know. Records can now be entered online, we hope you find this an easy and useful way of submitting your data. If you would like to register to enter your data online please email Susan at susan@ptes.org. This year we also asked if you could complete a habitat survey for your site. We would be most grateful if you could do this as we would like to build up a year on year picture of the condition of the woodland the nest boxes are in.

Best wishes

Nida Al Fulajj (nida@ptes.org) & Susan Sharafi (susan@ptes.org)

People's Trust for Endangered Species

Contents

Dormice in the oak forests of Transylvania	3
North Wales Dormouse Project 2008	4
<i>Go nuts for dormice</i>	5
NDMP 2008 data analysis	6
Twenty one years of the NDMP	7
Genetic diversity of south-west dormice	8
Filming dormice in Surrey	9
Hazel dormouse Biodiversity Action Plan	10
<i>Reconnecting the Countryside</i> award	11
Training courses and news	12

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Dormice in the oak forests of Transylvania

In 1981 we began studying the dormice of the Târnavă Plateau, in the hilly central Romanian province of Transylvania. We found hazel, forest and edible dormice – there have been no signs of garden dormice in the area for 25 years. Using a variety of methods to find and monitor the dormice, we looked for natural nests in shrubs, searched tree hollows and fallen trunks, gathered chewed hazel nuts and also set traps.

Our results showed that the habitat preferred by edible dormice is old oak forests whose trees contain many hollows. Most of the nests we found were in these hollows but we also found nests in wild cherry, lime, trembling poplar or aspen tree, wild pear, common maple and beech. The summer nests made by these dormice tended to be in old woodpecker holes (woodpeckers make new holes each year). Their nests were made up of moss, feathers, hair, fresh leaves and grass. We didn't find many animals. Last summer we were also lucky enough to watch an edible dormouse's night time activity. Its nest was in a *Pyrus sylvestris* hollow and the animal would come out, a couple of times, for several seconds, at the hollow entry.

This would happen about half an hour before sunset, just after the bats had flown out. Eventually the dormouse would leave its nest very quickly, jumping onto the tree bark, always keeping to the same side.

Hazel dormice were found in several different habitats, though predominantly in shrubby hazel bushes. The dormice we found, particularly the juveniles, were about 9-12cm in size. Their summer nests are usually made of two layers: an outer layer of leaves glued together with saliva and a thinner inner layer which is made up of the soft fluff of *Cardus* seeds, *Graminaceae* stalks, pieces of feather and down and wool. The nests are built at different heights above ground, from 10-15cm to 2.5m. However, most nests are built lower than 1.2m above the ground. The dormice are found in small hollows, under the tree stumps, under the bark or even in food cans. It seems that 4 – 6 year old coppiced woodlands, invaded by blackberry and hazel shrubs and various herbs and clinging woody plants, provide the best habitat, ensuring protection and food.

Forest dormice tend to live in less oak-dominated forests with a greater variety

of grass and shrub species. The most frequent shrubs we found these dormice in were the wayfaring tree, guelder rose, dogwood, wild service tree and the bladdernut. During 1981-1997 we captured 21 specimens. We tended to find these animals in oak hollows, though in two cases we found them in wild pear hollows, and we also found a mother with young under a stump in Cerghid Forest. The summer nests of forest dormice are usually set up in hollows, though not as deep as those of edible dormice which build larger nests. We found two large nests in April, twenty years ago, on the edge of Târnaveni Forest. They were made of moss and twigs, about 20cm in size, and were found hanging from the branches of a thorny young tree, possibly hawthorn, 3-4m above the ground and from a wild pear, 10m from the ground. These dormice sometimes set up their nests among the tree roots or in old mouse galleries.

Our work continues and we will send updates soon.

Dr Petru Vasile Istrate
University of Medicine and Pharmacy Targu Mures

BELOW: a juvenile edible dormouse found in October 2008. The nest was built inside a hollow which had two entrances.



BELOW: Petru and his team found this hazel dormouse nest - fully occupied!

North Wales Dormouse Project 2008

The Dormouse Project, being carried out by the North Wales Wildlife Trust in conjunction with CCW, has been gathering pace with even more volunteers helping out and new sites being surveyed and monitored.

In 2008 38 volunteers made over 400 new nest boxes, with wood donated from Sharp UK. Some volunteers were provided with the uncut wood and did everything themselves, whilst others were provided with packs containing wood cut to size from which they constructed the boxes. Nest box making volunteer days were also organised including a box making event in collaboration with the Friends of the Alyn Valley Group. Three types of boxes were made: traditional wooden boxes, drain pipe boxes and canopy boxes.

In total we made 470 boxes for sites across North Wales. These woods were chosen for numerous reasons, 11 of them are in close proximity to Bontuchel, which has the largest dormouse population in North Wales. The habitat in each of these woods is varied with the majority being broadleaved woodland, but some being coniferous. All these woodlands showed potential for dormouse habitation.

50 canopy boxes were erected with the help of the Forestry Commission climbers in three woodlands; Coed Y Pennant, Bontuchel and Coed Tre Parc. At Hafod Wood we worked in partnership with the BASC Green Shoots Project. This wood has historical records of dormice. In the Chwiler Valley nest boxes were

placed in close proximity to existing dormouse sites. New sites were located to ensure nesting habitat was continuous from Coed Bron Fadog and Y Ddol Uchaf all the way to Coed Y Mynydd.

We erected all the new boxes in April and dormice have now been found in six of the sites. October was the first time we had any signs of dormice in any of the boxes. It was interesting that dormice were found in both the drainpipe boxes as well as the traditional wooden box. Also almost all of the individuals found were juveniles suggesting that they 'discovered' the boxes whilst dispersing. This is a positive result especially as the boxes were only erected in April. We know there are dormice in one of the other woodlands, however only one dormouse nut was found at this site so a thorough nut hunt would be of use.

As the canopy boxes were erected later than planned and relied on the help of forestry climbers, the boxes have only been checked once in 2008, in October. So far nothing has been found at two of the sites, the third site is still waiting after severe winds on the planned day. It is interesting that in all three of the canopy box sites, dormice have been found in the low boxes.

Rhian Hughes
North Wales Wildlife Trust



The canopy boxes, made of drainpipes with wooden lids, were erected in beech, cherry, rowan and pine trees up to 10m high. Encouragingly over 50% of boxes checked in November had dormouse nests in them.

RHIAN HUGHES

NORTHWEST DORMOUSE PARTNERSHIP TALES

We have been monitoring the dormice of Bontuchel Wood (see map left) in north Wales



for five years now. Some of our dormice have been caught many times over several years. Here is just one example of how using micro-chips can reveal the lives of our dormice: female 301489 was first chipped in June 2005, during the first monitoring session we did at Bontuchel. At that time she was sharing nest box 818 with two other dormice, female 294489 and male 302924. This male was still in the same box in July, and was found nearby in September and October, but was not found in later years.

Female 301489 was not seen again until June 2006, when she was in the adjacent box 817, and appeared to be pregnant. She was now sharing with another male, 521147, who we had not seen before. In September 2006 she was in box 861, accompanied by two juveniles. She was seen once in 2007, in September when she had a litter of four brown young. Of these, one was found on his own in October, having almost doubled his bodyweight in a month, and another was found about 100m away in June the next year. 301489 was seen three times in 2008; by now she had survived a minimum of four winters, so she is one of our oldest dormice. In June she was in 861 again, on her own. In September she was back in 818, sharing it with two juveniles, a male and a female. Finally, in October she had moved to 861 again, weighing 36g so well prepared for the coming winter.

THE NORTH WEST DORMOUSE PARTNERSHIP

Go nuts for dormice

There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep, and the other two were using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head. "Very uncomfortable for the Dormouse," thought Alice; "only as it's asleep, I suppose it doesn't mind."

This famous and evocative quote suggests that the dormouse was sufficiently prevalent in Victorian times for Lewis Carroll to characterise it as the sleepy visitor at the Mad Hatter's tea party in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, confident that the reader would be familiar with the animal and its habits. Unfortunately, as we all know, that is not likely to be the case today. But with your continuing help PTES is hoping to change that.

In the last edition of *The Dormouse Monitor* we mentioned that we were planning to *Go Nuts for Dormice* this year in order to raise awareness of the momentous effort that is the NDMP. After all, 21 years of dormouse work requires celebration! Firstly, and most importantly, we would like to celebrate all your efforts over the years. As a token of our appreciation we would like to give you a *Go Nuts for Dormice* commemorative 'bung'. These are only available for the NDMP monitors – very exclusive! We look forward to trying them out at our site, Briddlesford Woods.

Secondly, we have been inspired by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and created the dormouse cookie cutter that you have received with this edition of the monitor.

We would like to ask you to help raise funds by holding a Mad Hatter's tea party. You could hold one at work, at your local school, Brownies or W.I. group. Bake dormouse shaped biscuits, take part in our national nutty quiz, drink tea and be merry! We are declaring September 'dormouse month', so we are hoping there will be loads of Mad Hatter's tea parties all over the country then. We hope to raise enough funds to keep the NDMP going for another 21 years.

Don't forget that in autumn 2009 we will launch the third *Great Nut Hunt* together with our partners, Natural England, which has kindly provided some extra funding. We want to check sites identified previously that are not yet in the monitoring programme to see if there is still evidence of dormice there, so that we can bring them into the programme. And we are hoping to identify even more dormouse sites. More about that soon.

For more fundraising ideas and a calendar of dormouse events up and down the country, organised by us and others, please visit www.ptes.org/gonutsfordormice

MAD HATTER'S TEA PARTY

On our website we have some tasty biscuit recipes to bake for your Mad Hatter's Tea Party, or maybe you could try a recipe of your own. It's a great way of raising money for dormice so don't forget to use your dormouse cookie cutter! I'm sure they will go down a treat with your guests!

Gingerbread dormice

Ingredients (makes 20-24):

50g caster sugar
75g butter, softened
250g plain flour
2 egg yolks
50g golden syrup
1/2 tsp bicarbonate of soda
1/2 tsp ginger, 1/2 tsp cinnamon

Method:

Beat together the softened butter with the caster sugar until creamy. Stir in bicarbonate of soda, golden syrup and the egg yolks. Sift in the plain flour and ground cinnamon and ground ginger then bring together with a wooden spoon. Shape into two balls, knead until the dough comes together, then chill for 30 mins. Heat oven to 180C/fan 160C/gas 4. Roll out each ball to about 2 x £1 coin thickness. Stamp out dormice with the cutter. Place on greased baking sheets and bake for 10-12 mins until slightly risen and golden. Cool on a wire rack.



SIR JOHN TENNIEL

NDMP 2008 data analysis



RHYS OWEN-ROBERTS

The project started by Pat Morris, Paul Bright and Doug Woods has now been running for 21 years. Thank you for all the hard work you have put in over the years, both in checking dormouse boxes and raising the profile of this charming and rare animal.

The winter of 2007/08 was warmer than usual and although the country as a whole had more rain than usual much of this was confined to northern England and Scotland. It may have been the milder weather that caused some of the dormice to awake early from their hibernation, unfortunately they didn't survive and when we cleared boxes at Briddlesford Woods on the Isle of Wight in March we found five dead dormice, all in different boxes – not a good start to the year.

Spring 2008 was warmer than usual and much wetter in the south. At Stover Country Park in

Devon, where the dormice had woken early, they had clearly managed to find enough food as one litter was found in a box as early as 22nd May.

The May and June counts are used to look at the national trends in the dormouse population as these pre-breeding figures are considered to give the most accurate representation of the current state of the species. Due to the wide variation in the numbers of boxes used at different sites a standardised count of dormouse numbers per 50 boxes is used. Last year Haliki in Dorset recorded dormice in more than 50% of their boxes in May and June, although this was from a small number of boxes. The standardised count has greater validity if the number of boxes checked is at least 50; hence we try and encourage sites to put up at least that number to join the

NDMP. Haliki clearly has a good dormouse population but out of 165 sites where dormice were recorded last year in May and June, only eight recorded dormice in more than 20% of their boxes, 29 recorded dormice in 10-20% of their boxes, 83 sites recorded some dormice and 45 sites recorded no dormice at all.

In general the summer of 2008 was warm and wet with significant regional differences chiefly in terms of where the rain fell. Much of south Devon had more than two thirds their usual annual rainfall whereas Kent had less rain than usual. We would expect more dormouse activity in Kent as a consequence of the drier weather if the long perceived wisdom that dormice don't feed in the rain, is true. A very crude measure can be taken where the number of dormice recorded over the summer months of June, July and August, is divided by the number of boxes checked. However the activity from both regions was similar last summer – more investigation is needed!

In contrast to the previous year there did not seem to be much fruit or many hazel nuts in the hedgerows or in the woodlands. Records on the UK phenology website showed that the first blackberry was two weeks later in 2008 than in 2007 and the first hazel nut was almost one month

later. It would be useful to know just what impact later or reduced fruiting has on dormice numbers.

In spite of a generally wet and warmer year there were no surprises in the autumn and September and October were comparable with previous years. In spite of a seeming lack of food some of the dormice managed to feed up quite well for their winter hibernation with 12 dormice recorded in excess of 35g and one male at Lady's Wood in Devon weighing in at a whopping 41.8g. In October both Lady's Wood, Chartwell in Kent and Coed Bron Fadog in Wales had more than 50% occupancy in their boxes. Some good news for the ongoing reintroduction programme was that there was a successful reintroduction in 2008 at Freeholders Wood in Yorkshire and at Bedford Purlieus, the 2001 site, they recorded their highest ever dormouse numbers.

We are now trying to get more information out of the NDMP without making the job that the monitors do any harder. We have added habitat data this year and made it possible to enter data online. Thanks to all the monitors for their work over the last 21 years; we've achieved great things, let's celebrate that and look forward to the next 21.

Ian White
Dormouse Officer, PTES

	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
Number of sites monitored	210	199	215	183	169	158	141	139	123
Number of visits made	1198	1129	1113	977	895	912	880	813	810
Average visits per site	5.7	5.7	5.2	5.3	5.3	5.8	6.2	5.8	6.6
Number of dormice recorded	3986	5088	4930	3159	4357	3098	2644	2304	3876
Average no. of dormice per visit	3.3	4.5	4.4	3.2	4.9	3.4	3	2.8	4.8

Twenty one years of the NDMP

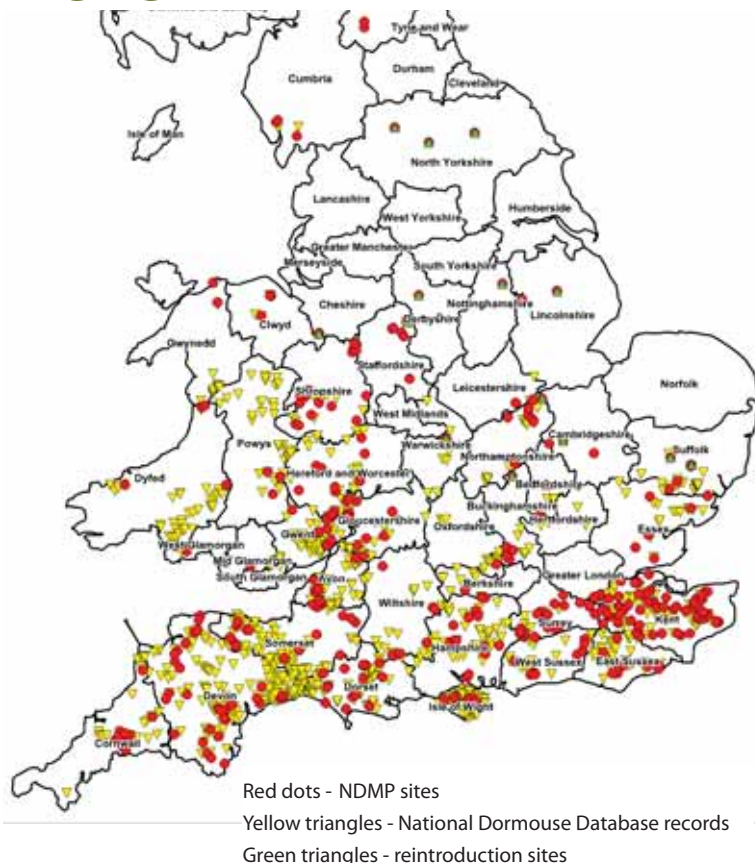
An analysis of data up to 2008 shows that although dormice are still a threatened species the decline appears to be slowing down markedly. It is clearly too early to be totally confident about the long term future of the species, but we have reason to be optimistic that conservation efforts are repaying dividends after more than two decades of dedicated effort

We asked Steve Langton, a statistician, to look at the NDMP data and to construct an index with which to assess the conservation status of the population. Overall the index shows a decline in dormouse numbers of 39% between 1993 (the first year when there were sufficient records to begin the analysis) and 2008. However a closer look at the data reveals that whilst the decline between 1993-2002 was 31%, between 2002-2008 it had slowed to 9%, indicating a less drastic decline over the last six years.

Dormice populations are very vulnerable to climatic changes, in particular wetter

springs and summers, when foraging for food becomes harder and when warmer winter temperatures interrupt successful hibernation. Unlike other small mammals who are able to breed prolifically, dormice usually have only one litter a year, sometimes two, which means that a poor breeding year can have a heavy impact on a population. Therefore several continuous years of unsettled weather can be catastrophic. Hence why long term monitoring of dormouse numbers is so important, so that trends over many years can be revealed and conservation efforts targeted efficiently and to maximum effect.

The effects of weather are compounded by a lack of food and nesting sites in lower quality habitat, so the corollary is that improving management of woods and hedgerows for dormice can increase the availability of resources and protect populations from the detrimental effects of sustained periods of poor weather. In addition increasing connectivity between dormice habitat

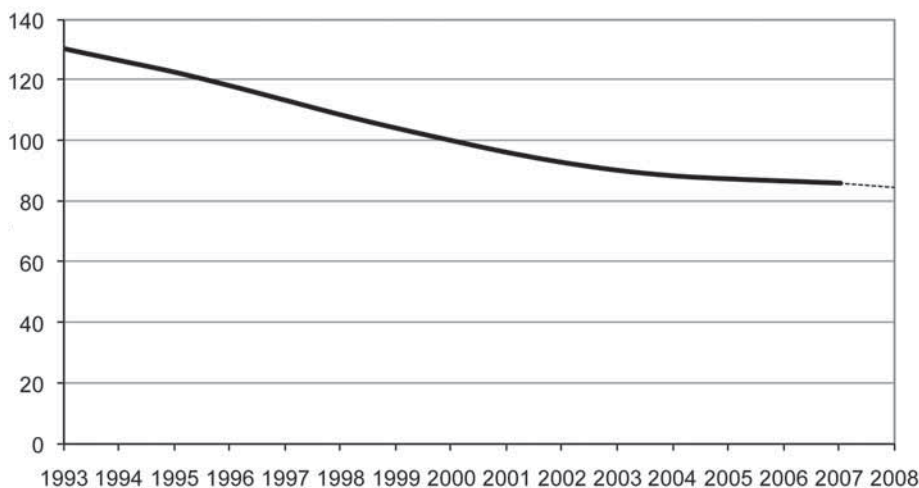


allows dormice to disperse to areas where the environment offers them a better chance of survival.

Although collecting data on declining dormouse populations can be discouraging when you don't find any animals, we need these data in order to measure population change at all. We are

therefore really grateful to those of you who continue to check your boxes where dormouse numbers are very low or even when you don't find any at all. We need counts from as many sites as possible - good and bad - so that we can be confident that our estimates of population change are accurate.

Nida Al Fulajj, PTES



This graph shows the national index of dormouse abundance in woodland sites from 1993 to 2008. The index is set at 100 in the year 2000, which illustrates why we remain concerned about dormice, as the overall woodland population as measured in 2008 has declined to 84.5% of that in 2000.

The final year is shown as a dotted line to indicate that it is provisional and liable to change markedly when the next year's data is added.

Genetic diversity of south-west dormice

In January PTES funded Cheryl Mills, based at Exeter University, Cornwall Campus, to begin a study on habitat fragmentation, dispersal and population genetics of the dormouse in south-west England, which comprises a major part of her three year PhD.

Cheryl will compare the genetic diversity of dormice at different geographical locations within the south-west. She will also analyse the genetic data to infer how widely the dormice are dispersing between areas to verify how important connectivity is between woods and other habitats that support dormouse populations.

Cheryl and her team are predicting that the different populations of dormice will show a varying degree of genetic diversity which will be influenced by various factors, including the extent of habitat fragmentation in their area and population density. Habitat fragmentation, through habitat loss and degradation, produces islands of suitable woodland or hedgerow habitat that are isolated in distance from each other. This isolation restricts the ability of dormice to move between these areas of suitable habitat. Additionally the remaining

patches are smaller and so due to inbreeding and chance events, these small populations are more likely to become extinct. Highly fragmented habitats are likely to result in lower genetic diversity than those populations found in comparably larger habitat patches that are well connected. It is thought that habitat fragmentation will compound the problems created by low population densities and low reproductive potential, to result in low genetic diversity within dormouse populations. This in turn is likely to result in populations less able to adapt to new pressures such as environmental change. Such adaptability is particularly important for species such as the dormouse that hibernates and has specialist habitat requirements.

In order to collect the genetic material, during the next three field seasons Cheryl plans to survey numerous nest box sites in the south-west. She will visit established box schemes with the help of NDMP monitors as well as set-up some new sites. Then she will take hair samples from any dormice found during the monthly box checks. Once collected the hair will be stored and later analysed,

POO APPEAL 2009

The dormice are waking up, so it is that time of year for me to ask all monitors to please look out for and collect any dormouse droppings you come across! Last year I had a fantastic response and received about 100 dormouse droppings! Thank you to everyone who sent in samples. The dormice often proved to be very accommodating, by pooping in the weighing bag or even hand. I will be analysing all the dormouse droppings in order to compare diets at different locations in the UK and throughout the active dormouse season. I am in the process of determining the best method to use for the laboratory analysis, but in the meantime I still need more droppings. Please pack each individual animal's droppings separately in a small bag and then keep them as dry and cool as possible until you can post them to me. Please also record:

- Date
- Location name and type (with grid reference if possible)
- Survey type (eg nest box, nest tube, captive etc.)
- How you found the poo (eg on animal, found in handling bag, in nest box with dormice etc. this is so I can know how likely it is to be dormouse poo)
- Standard info on the individual: sex, age, torpid/active, weight
- Your name and contact details in case I have any questions

For recording forms, sample bags and SAE please email me at cm271@exeter.ac.uk or call me on 07962 432524.

Thank you Cheryl Mills, PhD student, University of Exeter, Cornwall Campus

which will involve using genetic markers recently developed by the University of Liverpool.

The results of this study will allow the conservation implications of an increasingly fragmented landscape to be identified, to see to what extent habitat quality and genetic diversity are linked, and to discover how dormice disperse throughout their range. This will help us all to prioritise our conservation efforts,

identifying subpopulations that have critically low genetic diversity, and inform habitat management. This information would also help to target reintroduction efforts.

If you monitor a wood with dormice in the south-west and would be interested in allowing Cheryl to visit the site with (or without) you a few times each year to take hair samples, please email her at cm271@exeter.ac.uk or call 07962 432524.

The amount of connectivity between different dormouse populations could have a serious impact on their genetic diversity.

Filming dormice in Surrey



SURREY DORMOUSE GROUP

Last summer the Surrey Dormouse Group (SDG) started a wild hazel dormouse filming pilot at an NDMP site that they regularly manage. Led by Dave Williams, the Mammal Officer at Surrey Wildlife Trust, a small infrared motion detect camera was installed in a secret location near to a nest box and attached to a small video recorder powered by 12 volt batteries. The aim was to learn more about how dormice use the nest boxes as they go about their nightly activities, whilst making sure the presence of

the camera did not disturb or influence the dormouse behaviour.

Having tried all summer to capture an animal on film, we hit the jackpot in September when a dormouse moved into the 'big brother' nest box and was successfully filmed for two months. The little movie star was a young male who seemed completely unphased by the camera and would sit on the nest box wire, looking at the surrounding woodlands before heading out for the night.

The infrared camera is triggered by motion and records ten second videos. Hundreds of video clips were generated every night, many by wind movement, spiders and other insects so it took a considerable amount of time to review them all and document the dormouse activities. One of the biggest challenges to overcome was providing a constant power source for the equipment. So the

filming team worked a rota to change and recharge batteries and swap over memory cards every few

days. It took 148 hours of volunteer time to support the project and deliver some exciting results.

The pilot was a huge success and produced over 250 fascinating dormouse film clips. It has also provided a new form of visual documentation showing how and when the dormouse leaves and returns to the nest box during the night. With the video capture times being documented it is clear to see that the dormouse initially goes out and finally returns in the morning at times that correspond very closely to sunset and sunrise. The footage also clearly demonstrates just how much leaping between tree canopies is undertaken, and at great speeds. Sometimes the male dormouse would be filmed jumping straight up into the canopies and other times appearing to head downwards. He adopted a forward rolling technique to get in to the box and was also filmed taking hazelnuts and blackberries back in with him.

After four weeks a wood mouse started to use the nest box for short periods even though the dormouse was still resident. As the nights progressed the footage shows the wood mouse and dormouse actively using the box on the same nights but coming

and going at different times suggesting some tolerance between the species.

Eventually the dormouse finally leaves for good and the wood mouse takes over the box.

Some of the video clips were shown informally to a number of delegates at the International Dormouse Conference in Sept 2008. There was a general consensus that this is the first time that a wild hazel dormouse using a nest box has been successfully filmed in the UK. Delegates were also amazed at the level of achievement from such low cost filming equipment.

Having learnt so much we are extending the project during 2009 to include measuring a number of environmental variables to build a greater understanding of dormice in the wild. The SDG are now using their filming knowledge to offer training and provide equipment hire for other projects to raise funds for additional equipment to extend the dormouse filming project.

If you have any questions about the dormouse footage or the SDG training and equipment hire please contact Dave.Williams@surreywt.org.uk

Louise Taylor
Surrey Dormouse
Group



NEIL JARVIS



The Surrey Dormouse Group set up a small infrared motion detect camera, attached to a small video recorder, to record the night-time antics of dormice in their wood.

Hazel dormouse Biodiversity Action Plan

In June 1992, the Convention of Biological Diversity, or Rio Convention, was signed by 159 governments at the Earth Summit, which took place in Rio de Janeiro. It was the first treaty to provide a legal framework for biodiversity conservation, calling for countries to create national strategies and action plans to conserve, protect and enhance biological diversity. Within two years the UK government had consulted over 300 organisations to produce the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Together they identified 1,250 species of conservation concern, of which 391 were given action plans.

Now 15 years later, a review has taken place of the species and habitats

that are deemed priorities for conservation, and the targets and action plans drawn up for each of them have been reviewed. The hazel dormouse has been a BAP species since this process began. Most of you will be familiar with some of the actions below and involved in carrying out the work to achieve some of them. We thought you would be interested to see the revised actions in full:

Action 1: Ensure woodland and hedgerows in landscapes where dormice are present are retained and managed to maintain and develop features important to the species. Ensure that forestry practices sympathetic to dormice are adopted as good practice.

Action 2: Carry out one reintroduction a year in either a county with no known natural populations, which are adjacent to counties within the core range and are within the known historical range of the dormouse, a county with isolated populations, which require strengthening or with a county with scattered populations, where some gaps may exist (subject to suitable sites being identified and suitable captive bred dormouse availability).

Action 3: Maintain and enhance the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme, ensuring that the data collected are representative of a range of sites and that there are sufficient data collected to produce population trends for England. Maintain

a national inventory of dormouse sites, in partnership with Local Record Centres. Make data available through the NBN Gateway.

Action 4: Publish and promote good practice advice on woodland management for dormice aimed at woodland owners and managers.

Action 5: Implement a licensing system to ensure that appropriate and proportionate mitigation is in place to avoid loss of dormouse habitat. Ensure dormice are taken into account when planning large infrastructure projects, so as to avoid habitat loss or fragmentation.

For a full list of the UK Priority Species and Habitats go to www.ukbap.org.uk



Woodland management advice will include thinning standards to allow more light through the canopy.

Dormice under threat from holiday village near Winchester
13th May 2009
The Hampshire Chronicle/ Thisishampshire.net
Rachel Masker

Under the recent EU regulations protecting dormice and their habitats it looks as though the species presence in a woodland could block plans for a multi-million pound log cabin holiday village in Hampshire. A 130-cabin village has been planned at Black Wood, Micheldever, near Winchester by developer Forest Holidays. Black Wood is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation and half of it is ancient woodland. Natural England is among more than 100 objectors to the planning application. They said disturbance, from construction noise, increased number of visitors, barbecues, campfires and dogs could result in dormice leaving the woodland. Black Wood is owned by the Forestry Commission and currently managed as a commercial plantation with some recreation. Forest Holidays, a joint venture between the Forestry Commission and the Camping and Caravanning Club, say the scheme could create 65 new jobs and pump £5m a year into the local economy.



WENDY NOVELLE

Reconnecting the countryside award

Last spring we launched the *Reconnecting the Countryside* competition to encourage farmers and landowners to carry out active conservation work that will connect up or create areas of woody habitat beneficial to dormice and other wildlife. Post-war agricultural intensification resulted in the removal of many hedgerows and the fragmentation of woodland. Changes in management practices mean that the habitats that remain are of reduced value to wildlife.

With this innovative award, PTES is trying to promote filling in the gaps and creating habitat connections between isolated patches of woody habitat together with reintroducing management regimes that benefit wildlife throughout the countryside. We are also aiming to provide sound management advice for landowners and encourage the public to become involved in conserving this flagship species. The award seeks to champion people who, in the last twelve months, have either planted new hedgerows, filled in gaps in existing hedges, undertaken

to lay existing hedges, thinned standards in woodlands to allow more light through the canopy or to set up a hazel coppice regime within their woodland. We are asking people to plan for the future of the countryside and its wildlife. The habitat does not need to be mature enough to support dormouse populations at the present time providing that in the long-term it will become suitable. Amongst other criteria we will be judging which of the entrants has created or linked up good quality habitat culminating in the largest continuous cover of dormouse friendly habitat. The winner will receive £1,000 with second and

third place receiving £500 and £250 respectively.

April was the deadline for the competition and we were delighted to have 12 entrants from all over the country (see map below). We will be calling up everyone who has entered the competition to interview them and ask them in more detail about the work

they've carried out. After interviewing everyone we will shortlist five applicants and visit their land to see the work they've done and meet the landowners. By the autumn edition of *The Dormouse Monitor* we will be able to report back to you about the three winners and what they've done in their area to help dormice and other wildlife.

Thank you to all those who have taken part.

Nida Al Fulajj, PTES



Entrants to the competition have come from all over the countryside and include livestock and arable farmers.

Landowners have been encouraged to increase the species diversity of their hedgerows to help dormice and other wildlife.



Training courses and news

• TRAINING COURSES

PTES is holding a dormouse training day 'How to Manage Woods for Dormice' at RSPCA Mallydams Wood, nr Hastings, East Sussex on Tuesday 20 October. The course tutor will be Dr Pat Morris. For further details and a booking form please contact Susan at susan@ptes.org or call 020 7498 4533.

The Mammal Society *Dormouse Ecology and Conservation* day courses are being held on 8 & 26 June, 18 July, 15 August, 18 & 19 September and 16 October in Somerset, Kent and Devon. For further details and to book a place telephone 0238 0237874.

Janice Whittington is running three *Dormouse Ecology & Conservation Courses* on 2 June, 2 & 28 September in Devon. For more details contact Janice at: Watertown Farm, Landcross, Bideford, Devon, EX39 5JA. Tel 01237 459679 janwhittington@yahoo.co.uk

• CHUCK THE NUTS

PTES staff have been ingeniously spreading the word about dormice with our new *Chuck the nuts* game for children. To find out what shows and games we'll be taking the game to please email us at enquiries@ptes.org.



PTES



• DORMOUSE DNA

It would be useful to know if our existing native dormice population had originated from just a few pairs that had crossed the land bridge from the continent or whether it had a larger population base. If the former were true small, isolated populations may survive in suitable habitats with little consequence of inbreeding. Recent work undertaken at the University of Liverpool by Phil Watts has identified useful genetic markers that can be used to investigate the origins of our native dormouse population.

• DISCUSSION FROM THE FORUM

The nest in the first photo is identical to a nest found (complete with dormouse peering out) a few years ago just 15yds away. The photo is taken from the track that runs past our office barely 5yds away; consequently there is a great deal of disturbance from vehicles and pedestrians. It's surprising in that the nest is only 6 - 8" off the ground; vulnerable to predation? The second is next to the same track about 100yds away and only a few feet from a marker post to a self-guided nature trail; again lot of disturbance. We're not too sure of its former occupant as it has an obvious entrance; wren? It's not apparent from the photo but it does seem

rather small for the latter; any suggestions?

I would suspect harvest mice for the first nest, and possibly wren for the other?

I'd say both were dormice. Summer nests I've seen always seem loose like (1), perhaps because other animals have squeezed in and expanded them. Was it built at that height, or just dropped with the brambles? (2) appears to have leaves that were green when they were incorporated. Again the hole may have been enlarged by interlopers...

The second nest looks like a dormouse nest: very densely woven, laying on top of the bramble stems, and with dormouse nests the entrance is sometimes like this (especially with the larger reproduction nests, where the young go in and out without closing the entrance). The first nest is probably of dormouse or harvest mouse. It looks a bit messy, so it may be an old harvest mouse nest or an old dormouse nest that has fallen down, since dormouse nests often lay just on top of the bramble stems, without being fastened like harvest mice do with their nests (their nests are usually twined with thin grass stems around some larger stems of grass, bramble, nettle or other plants), and easily fall down when not used any more. A difference between nests of dormice and harvest mice is that the latter are less solid and thus can be squeezed more easily. Wren nests are larger, even more solid and usually made with lots of moss.

With harvest mouse nests



MARK RAWLINS

the entrance hole is always on the top. Has anyone ever had a dormouse nest completely made of moss? I found a nest a few weeks back that was completely made of moss and it had a roof (which dormice do). Can't think of a bird that would do this and there were no eggs inside or any sign of any bird activity

We have had three nests made completely of moss for the last few years high up in bat boxes where there is mainly the moss at the tops of the trees as a source material. I know they are dormice, as dormice are usually occupying when we look in. Boxes near the ground (in dormouse boxes rather than bat boxes) do not tend to have any moss in them. However, the last breeding nest in a round bat box last year had no moss in it, so not sure if moss nests high in trees is a pattern or just a preference by a few individuals.

To join in the dormouse forum contact Susan on susan@ptes.org.