SUMMER 2004

The Dormouse Monitor

Newsletter of the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme

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Reintroduction to North Yorkshire

ENGLISH NATURE
Royal Holloway University of London
PEOPLE'S TRUST FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES
ZSL LIVING CONSERVATION
TRACKING Mammals PARTNERSHIP

Welcome to The Dormouse Monitor

The Dormouse Monitor is a little later than usual coming through your letterbox and there are several reasons for this! First, as the number of sites continues to increase (almost 200 now) it takes us longer to enter the data onto the computer and second, we had to be very patient waiting for some of the contributions to arrive. We cannot do very much about the latter, but we hope to have at least a partial solution to the former before too long. Many of you, we know, have computers, so we hope that you will shortly be able to send us your data on-line directly into a database, rather than our having to type it in here in the office. But, there will, of course, still be paper copies of the recording forms if you prefer. The more data we receive on line, the quicker we can give you the national picture.

Do have a good look at Fiona Sanderson's article. Her results are the culmination of four year's hard work at Royal Holloway studying for her PhD. Hers is the first in-depth study of the results of the monitoring programme over the last ten years.

And finally, you should have received your recording forms for this year's work by now. If you didn't please get in touch with us and we will send out some more. We have still not made a final decision about whether or not to hold a Monitors' Day this year. Do let us know if you would like to meet up with other monitors and researchers later in the year.

Best wishes,

Valerie Keeble

Dr Valerie Keeble
People's Trust for Endangered Species

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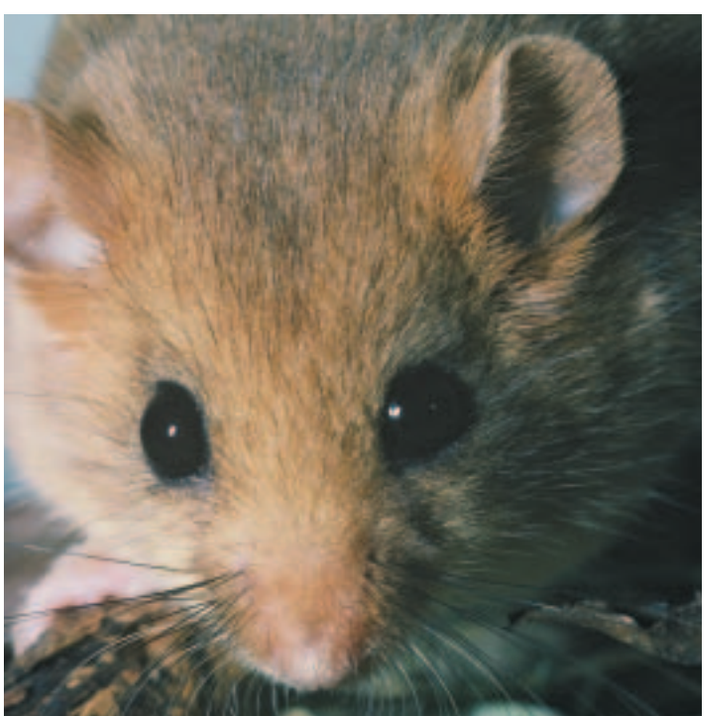
The National Dormouse Monitoring Programme is funded by English Nature and the People's Trust for Endangered Species. The scientific work is based at Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX and the coordination of the programme is carried out by PTES.
The Dormouse Monitor is compiled by Valerie Keeble and Susan Sharafi. Designed by Clare Bowen and Nida Al Fulaij. Pictures kindly provided by Pat Morris, Paul Bright, Nida Al Fulaij, Tom Maddock, BCT, The Mammal Society and PTES. Printed by NPL Printers on environmentally-friendly paper.

Weather, habitat and population trends – the good, the bad and the ugly for Britain's dormice

Since May 2000, my life seems to have revolved around dormice – a feeling that many of you may be familiar with! I've spent the last four years working on my PhD on the monitoring and population ecology of the dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*. The main findings are summarised here.

The fact that dormouse distribution declined by almost half in Britain during the 20th century is often quoted – one of the primary reasons that we monitor dormice is to detect any further change in their abundance. We can then see whether any management implemented to benefit dormice is affecting their populations, or if they continue to decline and we need to be more aggressive in our conservation strategy. Many dormouse monitors have commented over the years on the fact that they haven't seen any results from all this monitoring. This is because dormouse populations fluctuate enormously from year to year in response to factors such as weather, so short-term results over a few years, although very interesting, don't provide much information about long-term trends.

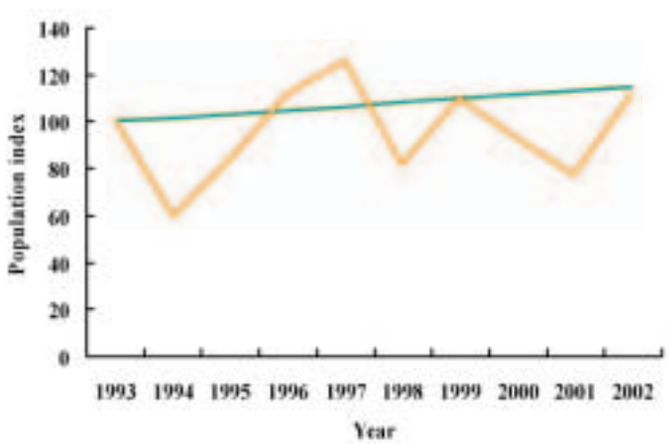
Large fluctuations in dormouse abundance also make it difficult to see long-term trends, as the directional trend is obscured (see graph 1). The first question I wanted to answer, therefore, was whether



the NDMP can detect population change of conservation significance, or whether we need to add more sites to the scheme. Fortunately, I found that we have nearly 100 sites that we can use long-term data from. With the remarkable growth of the scheme, there will be many more in a few years. When I looked at the ability of the NDMP to detect a national decline of about 27% over 10 years (the equivalent to 50% over 25 years, the "red alert" decline figure used in bird monitoring in the UK), I found that with 100 sites this trend could easily be detected. We may need more sites in particular regions (especially in the north), but the NDMP is powerful enough to detect significant national trends.

Nationally Dormice Still Declining

The next question to address was whether there had been any trend in dormouse abundance over the last few years. As you can see in the graphs, there have been major changes in abundance, but the trend is quite different in different parts of the country. Nationally and in regions like the north, dormouse abundance is unfortunately still declining, but in southern England abundance is stable. Why do dormice continue to decline, and why are there different trends in different regions?



Graph 1. This graph shows how inter-annual fluctuations in population size can conceal the overall trend in a single county (Kent). The orange line shows the fluctuations; the green line the underlying trend. The population index is calculated as a percentage of the population in year one (1993).

To answer this question, I looked at the effects of weather and habitat on dormouse abundance. Dormice are extremely sensitive to the effects of weather, and as habitat specialists, they are also likely to be sensitive to changes in the quality of their habitat.

Weather can affect populations in different ways at different times of year. Dormice need cold, dry winters in order to hibernate successfully. If the temperature warms sharply and suddenly in winter, they wake up, but there is no food available for them, so they run the risk of starvation. However, in summer, dormice need hot conditions, both to encourage the fruiting and flowering of food plants, and to keep them awake, feeding and breeding instead of being cold and sleepy.

The Influence of the Weather

I found that weather affects dormice at most times of year. Cold dry winters act as a predictor of larger dormouse populations in subsequent years, as do warm springs. Hot summers are strongly related to productivity - the number of young dormice per female born that year. However, warm springs and hot summers only benefit populations in woods which have food plants – such as oak trees, which support large numbers of insects – that provide food early in the breeding season. Hot spring and summer weather does not have the same impact on dormouse populations that breed later in the year. This means that the same weather has different impacts upon different populations. Unlike dormice in Europe, from Lithuania to Italy, British dormice usually only have a single litter each year. Their breeding success is therefore very vulnerable to cold, wet weather at peak breeding times, which can send them into torpor and reduce the fruiting and flowering of their food plants. Climate scientists at the University of East Anglia have found that there is an ongoing increase in temperature and winter precipitation in Britain, with a marked increase in winter precipitation in north-west England. There is also an increase in spring days with high rainfall in all regions where dormice occur except parts of south-east England. Changes in weather may therefore explain the changes seen in dormouse populations.

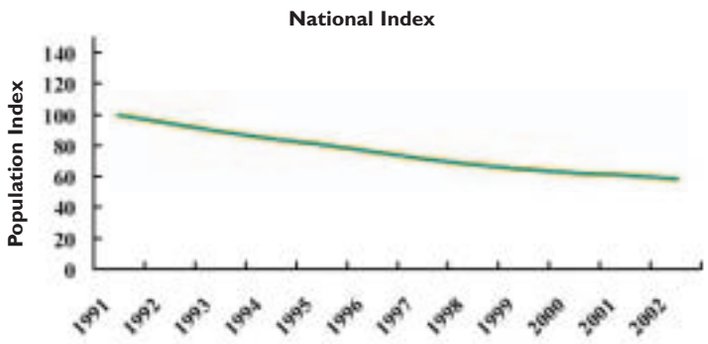
However, after this it got a bit more complicated. Our summer weather seems to be getting hotter – so shouldn't this mean more dormice being born? Not so – at many sites, the number of juveniles born per female has actually declined since 1993. The observed population decline has to be driven by one or both of two demographic mechanisms – increased mortality or decreased productivity.

Decreased productivity may be partly to blame – but the mystery was the environmental factor causing it.

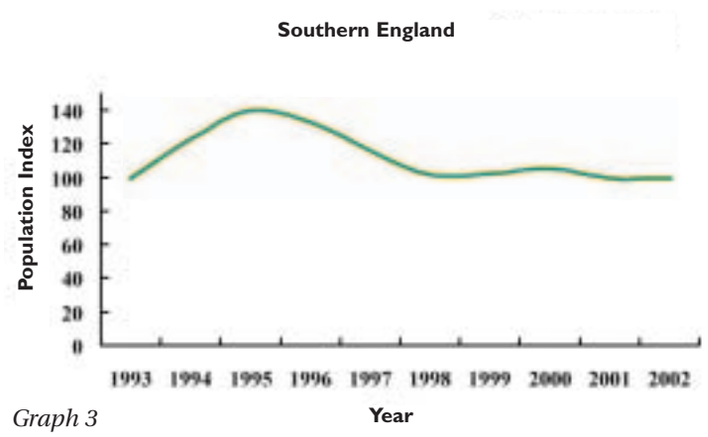
The Influence of Habitat on Dormice

As I said before, dormice are very sensitive to small changes in their habitat. High plant diversity, an abundant field layer, broad and spreading shrubs and plenty of spring-flowering plants are all aspects of the woodland environment that benefit dormice. There have been major and ongoing changes in our woods that may be detrimental to dormouse conservation. Increased deer populations and the ingress of sheep into ancient woods may lead to browsing of important field layer food plants and trampling of others. The well-documented changes in woodland management, such as coppicing, can also impact upon dormice. Targeted management could help to reverse these effects and conserve dormouse populations. I found that retaining a high proportion of mid-aged hazel coppice (between 6 and 25 years), and increasing the proportion of the site containing coppice of this age from 10% to 50% could increase dormouse populations by over 50% – but only in woods where the hazel had stopped fruiting abundantly. Where the hazel was still fruiting abundantly, coppice management was related to a decrease – possibly temporary – in populations. Dormice can be very sensitive to disturbance and coppicing, however necessary, is a form of disturbance.

So dormouse populations are highly sensitive to the effects of climate, of habitat change, and the interactions between the two. Dormice are classic habitat specialists. Some species are generalists and can live anywhere, and can be less sensitive to the impact of habitat change on their populations, as they can adapt. These species are also less sensitive

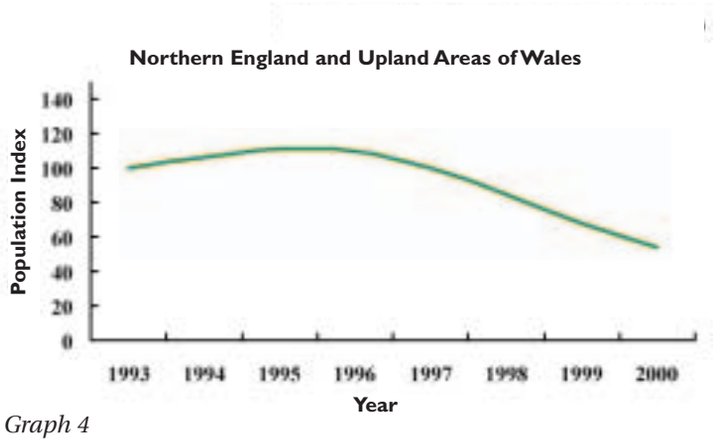


Graph 2



Graph 3

to climate change, as they can colonise new areas and a variety of habitats and therefore change latitude in response to climate change. Entomologists, when looking at Britain's butterflies, have found that, whilst butterflies are expected to expand their range in response to the increased spring and summer temperatures in Britain, it was mainly habitat generalists that did so – most habitat specialists decreased their range. Dormouse populations are extremely sensitive to both climate and habitat quality. They are one of the species that



Graph 4

Graphs 2-4. The national index of population change from 1991 to 2002, and separate indices of population change for southern England and for northern England and parts of Wales (marginal upland areas). All indices are calculated as a percentage of the population in year one. There were not enough data to calculate regional indices prior to 1993, or an index for northern England and Wales since 2000.

we desperately need to monitor in a changing world.

Reintroductions a Great Help

Fortunately, it's not all doom and gloom for the dormouse, as the ongoing reintroduction programme is highly successful. Of the 12 reintroductions carried out so far, 11 sites are known to still have dormouse populations. Of six reintroductions carried out before 2001 that I studied in 2002, four populations have begun spreading into the woods and hedges around their release site, forming larger and more secure populations that are likely to be around for many years to come. These releases take place in prime dormice habitat, which may be the secret of their success. A further reintroduction successfully took place on 14 June this year. More good news - the information we've gained over the past few years has led to the production of a set of new management recommendations to benefit woodland dormice, which should be published by the Forestry Commission later this year as part of their "Woodlands for Mammals" booklet, and has prompted English Nature to investigate the plight of dormice in Cumbria, and track down all dormice sites in the county to see if the decline at long-term monitoring sites is mirrored across the county.

Carrying out research on the dormouse has been a fascinating experience and I've learned a great deal, not least from the many interesting and knowledgeable dormouse monitors I've met in the course of my work. I'm a little sad to be moving on, but I'll be keeping in touch with the dormouse world. I thank you all for your hard work and continued enthusiasm, without which none of the work mentioned in this article would have been possible.

Fiona Sanderson
Population Ecologist
Royal Holloway, University of London

National Dormouse Inventory

Over the past few years Tony Mitchell-Jones at English Nature has been compiling an inventory of sites with records of dormice. This includes sites from the two Great Nut Hunts, sites from research projects and casual records acquired from a variety of sources. Although the inventory is by no means complete, it is probably the largest single collection of dormouse records, with 868 records currently in the database. These data have recently been transferred to the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) gateway and can be searched at www.searchnbn.net. The dataset is called the 'Dormouse site inventory'. There are also dormouse records from several other datasets on the NBN gateway and these can all be used to make an interactive distribution map. The easiest way to do this is to type 'dormouse' into the search box on the introductory page and then select 'interactive distribution map of *Muscardinus avellanarius*' on the next page.

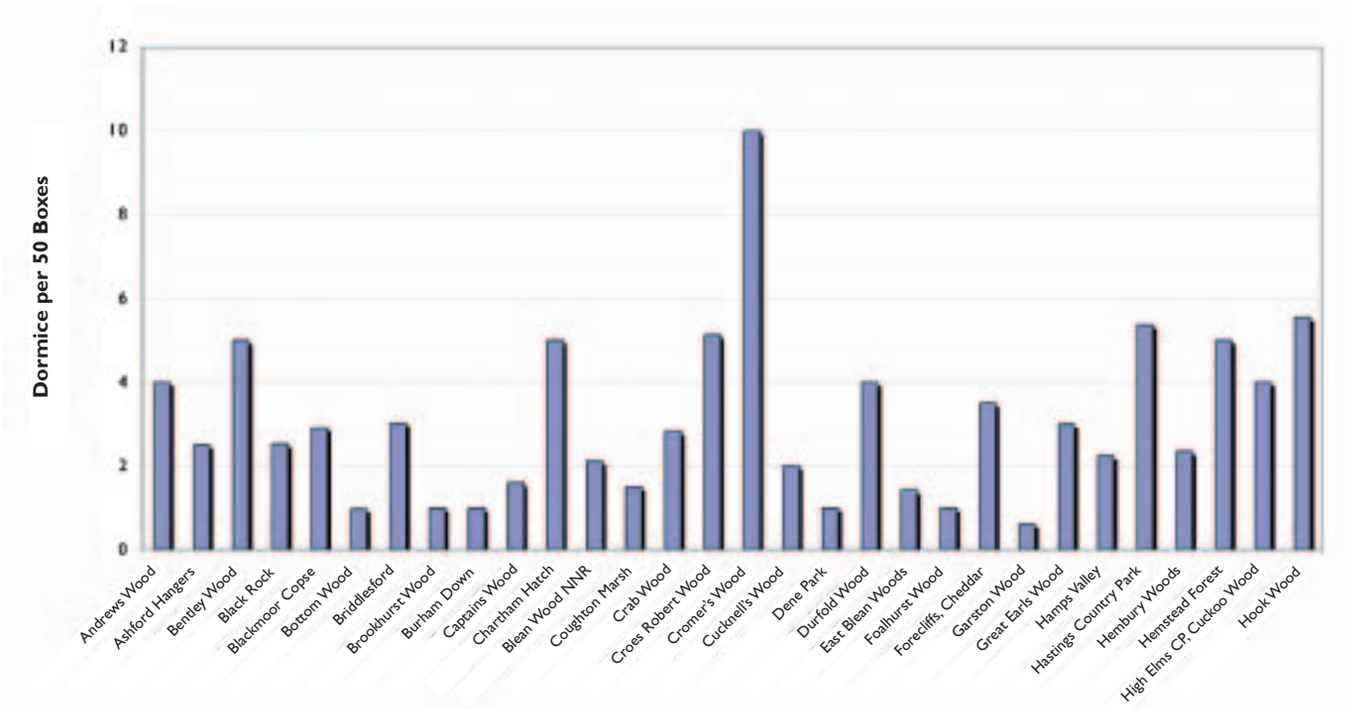
If you have records of sites with dormice, Tony is always pleased to receive them. You can contact him on 01733 455250, or by emailing him at tony.mitchell-jones@english-nature.org.uk or by writing to English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough PE1 1UA.

2003 National Dormouse Nestbox Records

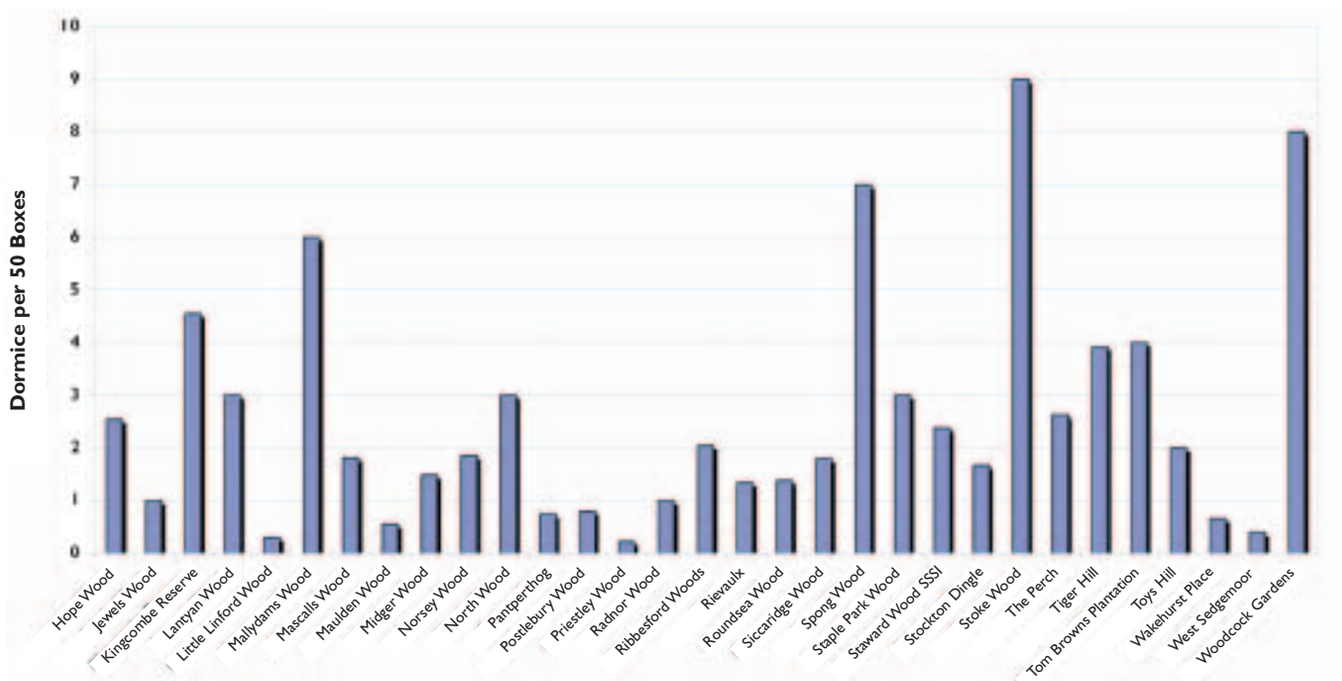
A big thank you to all monitors who sent in their records for 2003. We are extremely grateful for your willingness to continue with this long-term monitoring programme. As you can see from Fiona Sanderson's article, the large amount of data that you have collected over the years is extremely valuable. Also, monitoring dormice by monthly nestbox checks has made dormice a high profile species. This leads to site protection and management practices being put into place, which benefit both dormice and a whole range of other woodland species.

In 2003, 919 visits were made to 159 sites; this includes visits when no dormice were recorded. A total of 3099 dormice sightings were recorded. This is down on the number found in 2002. Many of us expected to find more dormice due to the exceptionally warm summer but this doesn't appear to have been the case. Perhaps the young

Number of dormice (7g or over) per 50 boxes in June 2003



Number of dormice (7g or over) per 50 boxes in June 2003



born last year will have a better chance of survival due to last summer's good weather and this year we may see good numbers recorded.

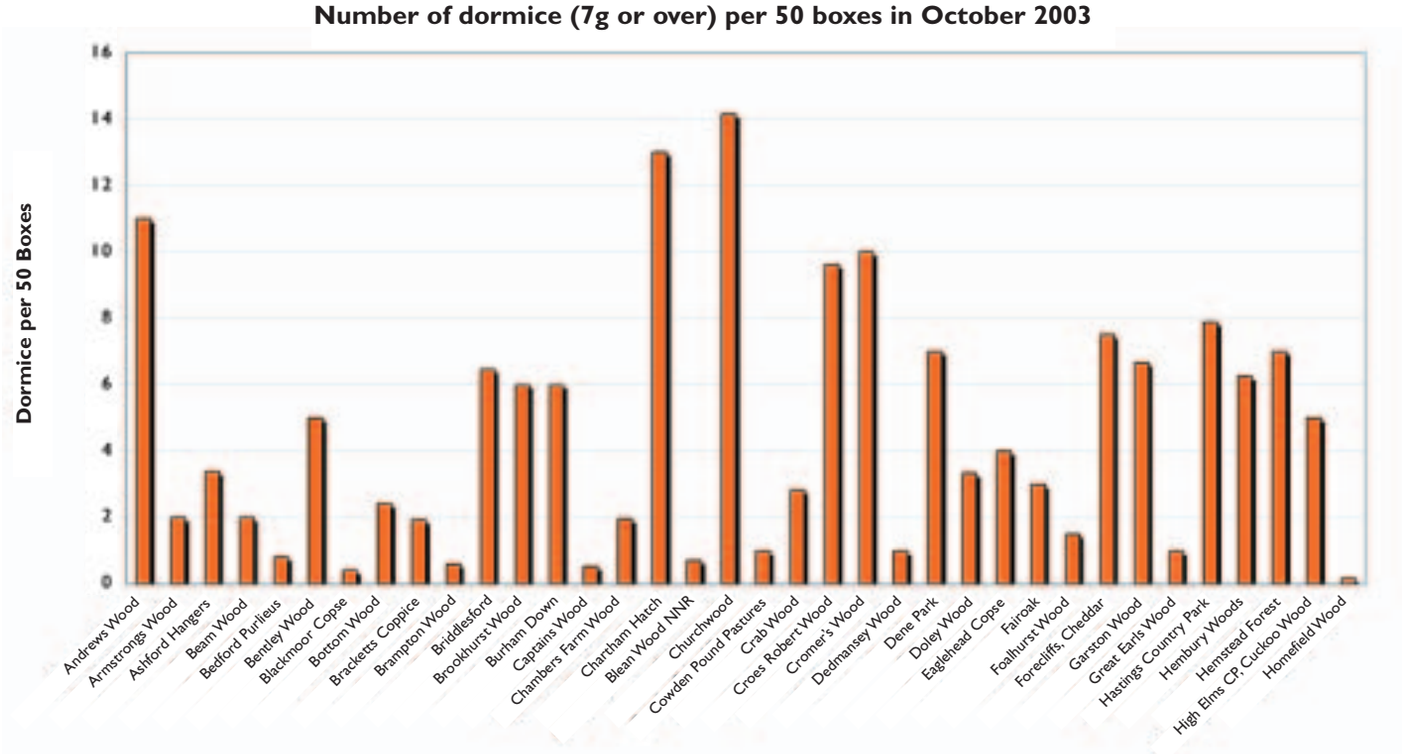
As well as the typical type dormouse nests, dormice were also found in nests made of bracken, grass, loose leaves, ivy, moss and brown leaves. At one site two nests were found in the same nestbox, with one adult in each nest. One adult was with a single juvenile and the other adult was with several much smaller young. The heaviest dormouse weight recorded in October 2003 was 37g.

We have produced bar charts showing our customary comparison of how many dormice weighing 7g or more were found at each site in both June and October 2003, expressed as numbers per 50 boxes.

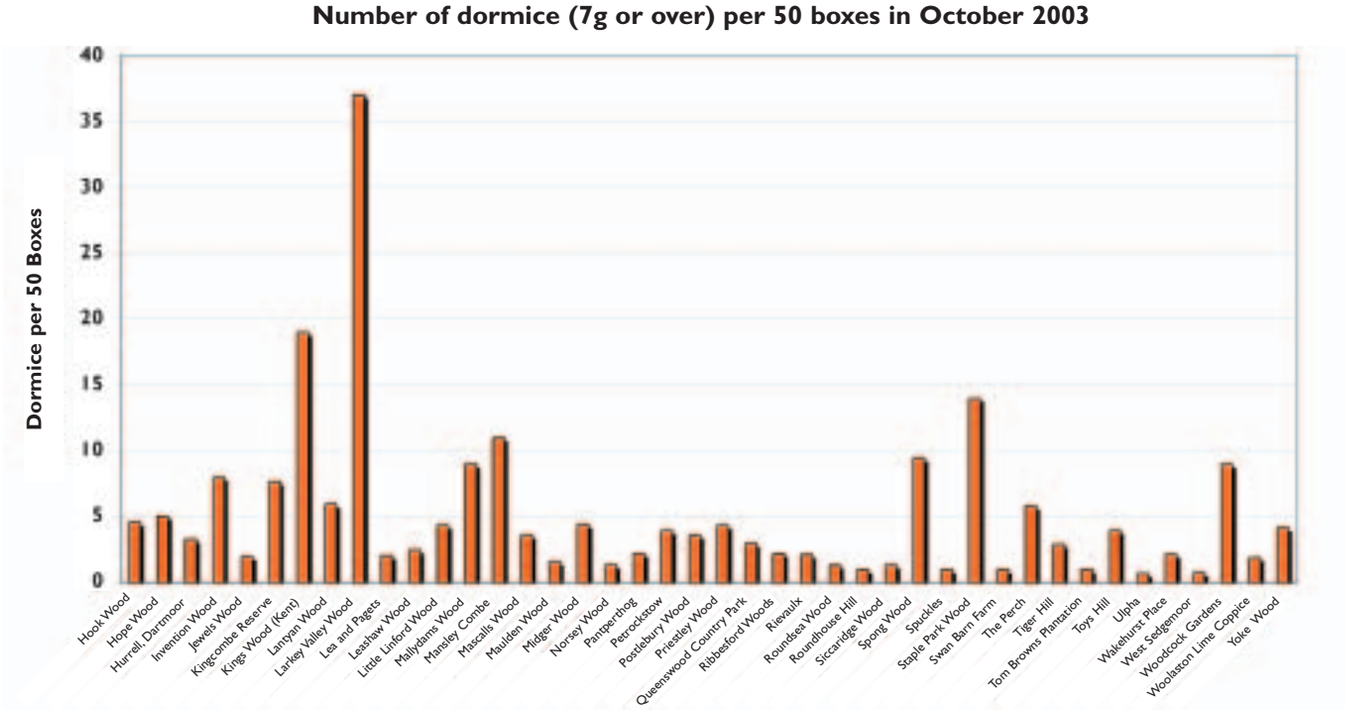
If you have any questions regarding the 2003 records please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to receiving your 2004 records at the end of November. Good luck with this year's monitoring.

Susan Sharafi, PTES

Number of dormice (7g or over) per 50 boxes in October 2003



Number of dormice (7g or over) per 50 boxes in October 2003



Get involved with other Mammal Monitoring

The National Bat Monitoring Programme(NBMP) Bat Hibernation Counts

During January and February the NBMP's hibernation surveyors were busy scouring sites such as caves, mines and tunnels in search of hibernating bats. Their data has been steadily coming in and the records received so far have included some rare species. Barbastelles were found at sites in Devon and Essex, while Bechstein's bats were found at two sites in Kent. Another unusual find in Devon was a pipistrelle bat hibernating in a tunnel. Despite the common and soprano pipistrelles being our commonest bat species they are rarely discovered at hibernation sites. This is because in the winter they tend to roost in crevices in buildings and trees where their presence is difficult to detect.

Roost Counts

In June female bats form maternity roosts, often in very confined spaces around the edges of buildings. This is when the NBMP summer survey season begins. Last year 395 volunteers carried out surveys at 639 maternity roosts. These roost surveys are fun and quite easy to carry out: they simply involve standing outside a roost on two evenings in June and counting the bats as they emerge. If you would like to take part but don't know of a roost in your area we might be able to allocate one to you or put you in touch with your local bat group.

Sunrise Survey

Alternatively, you could try to find some new roosts yourself by taking part in the Sunrise Survey. This involves visiting an area of your choice just before sunrise to look for bats swarming outside their roost entrances. It's an excellent way for people with no previous survey experience to make a useful contribution to bat conservation. However, if you do have some experience and you have access to a bat detector then we need your help with our field surveys. These are important because data collected at bats' foraging sites gives us particularly reliable indicators of changes in bat populations. But all our surveys provide vital information on the UK's bats and we are grateful to everybody who takes part.

For more information on the NBMP and how to take part in bat surveys contact The Bat Conservation Trust on 0845 1300 228 or e-mail nbmp@bats.org.uk

Mammal Society Surveys Water Shrew Survey

Water shrews are one of Britain's least known mammals and there is concern that they may be undergoing a decline in numbers and occurrence as a result of habitat loss, pollution and pesticide use. One of the reasons so little is known about water shrews is that they are small and unobtrusive. They are rarely seen in the wild and their field signs – footprints and droppings – are not easily found.

For its national survey The Mammal Society is using small plastic tubes as bait stations. Volunteers will place these near water bodies for two weeks. Shrews are naturally inquisitive and will enter the tubes to eat the bait and deposit droppings. We can then examine the droppings to see if they were left by a water shrew or by other shrews or rodents such as mice and voles.

Pick up a Polecat!

The Polecat Distribution Survey is a 3 year project being run by The Mammal Society and The Vincent Wildlife Trust. We are using road casualties to record the current distribution of the polecat in Britain and identify any continued expansion of its range since the last survey (1993-1997). If you see a dead polecat on the road please contact us for further instructions.

Winter Mammal Monitoring

This is an ongoing pilot project being run by The Mammal Society together with the British Trust for Ornithology with funding from Defra. We are investigating the techniques that can be used to monitor several species of land mammal at the same time over winter. Participants are asked to walk a line across a 1km square of land near their home noting down any mammals or signs that they see.

To take part in any of these projects contact: The Mammal Society, 2B Inworth Street, London SW11 3EP or T: 020 7350 2200 E: surveys@mammal.org.uk W: www.mammal.org.uk

Mammals Trust UK Surveys

Mammals on Roads

This year is the last year of this pilot project. The surveyors record all the mammals they see either dead or alive on roads while making journeys of at least 20 miles on single-carriageway roads. As a result of previous years' work, Dr Paul Bright has been able to reveal that in some areas of the UK hedgehogs have probably declined by up to 50% in the last ten years. The results of last year's field season are now ready and available online at www.mtuk.org. Please call us if you would like a paper copy of the feedback letter to volunteers or if you would like to take part in the survey this year.

Send in this year's data on line

This year, for the first time, volunteers will be able to send in their data on-line by visiting the MTUK website. This will obviously speed up the rate at which the data gets into the database for analysis and reduce the length of time volunteers wait for feedback. And, of course, very importantly, it should reduce our costs and make us more efficient!

Living with Mammals

Last year, for the first time, we carried out a new survey trying to find out how mammals use the built environment. We asked people to choose a site within two hundred yards/metres of a building and spend some time there each week for at least eight weeks in spring recording all the mammals they saw. In all, 870 people took part and 90% of them saw at least one mammal. There was a good geographic spread nationally with 19 of the 22 government regions represented. A total of 24 species of wild mammal or groups of species were seen. Grey squirrels were the most commonly recorded species. Many of the species seen are legally protected, including bats, shrews and badgers. There were also records of species of high conservation concern, including water vole, brown hare, red squirrel and hazel dormouse. Interestingly, the highest number of species were recorded from wasteland or derelict land.

Gardens, not surprisingly, were the main type of site that the surveyors chose. However, records were submitted from parks, commons, wasteland, churchyards, playing fields, golf courses, allotments, railway embankments and riversides. These sites made up 30% of the total number.

A unique feature of the survey is that it is recording observer effort. It is important to record how much time is spent looking and at what time of day. There was a clear relationship between recorder effort and the number of mammal sightings for at least some of the species recorded. Recorder effort was correlated with maximum numbers of sightings for hedgehog, fox, grey squirrel, badger, mice and cats. It was not correlated with sightings of roe deer muntjac, rabbits, voles, brown rats and shrews. The reasons for these differences are as yet unclear; but we hope to be able to estimate regional abundance of different species much more accurately by taking the recording effort into consideration.

To take part in any MTUK survey or find out more about our work, please contact us on 020 7498 5262 or visit our website www.mtuk.org

Deer Accident Records Required

Road traffic accidents involving deer are a major problem in the UK, but until now there has been no systematic recording and the true extent of the problem is unknown The Deer Initiative, a partnership of voluntary and private interests, is working to develop a national database for all traffic collisions involving deer. They are keen to hear from anyone who has been involved in such an accident or seen dead deer at the roadside. ***If you can help log on to www.deercollisions.co.uk. Alternatively you can telephone David Hooton on 01842 890798 or write to him at PO Box 465, Bury St Edmunds, IP28 6XD.***

National Key Sites for Water Voles

Fourteen extensive wetland sites in England and Wales have now been designated by the UK Water Vole Steering Group as National Key Sites for water voles. Monitoring at all these sites is being carried out annually by volunteers trained by Jenny MacPherson. Survey data for the first three years suggest that water voles are generally increasing in distribution and abundance within the Key Sites, although it is too early to say whether this represents a real trend. Jenny is planning to set up more sites in the coming year and will be looking for more volunteers soon! ***Contact PTES for more details on 020 7498 4533 or email enquiries@ptes.org***

Doug Woods, an appreciation

Doug Woods will be known to almost everyone interested in dormice in Britain and to many living abroad as well. My own involvement with him began some 20 years ago when I went to Somerset to give a lecture for his local group and jokingly asked what he could show me that I hadn't already seen before. He suggested dormice. I was very sceptical because in those days nobody simply went out and saw dormice; it just didn't happen. They were rare and elusive, to the point of being almost mythical. In fact many naturalists never saw one in their whole life. But we did see them, and without going out of sight of my car!

It was Doug's idea to build special nestboxes to attract these rare and appealing animals. This was a simple idea, but the best ideas are usually simple-once someone else has thought of them. In this case it was a real breakthrough. It's hard to think of many other ideas that have so revolutionised fieldwork on a mammal species. It was those nestboxes that had allowed Doug to show me dormice, to order as it were, and to do the same for so many others. We joined forces, using his nestboxes to allow dormice to be sampled regularly for the first time. We were able to collect basic biological data that had been available for other small mammals for over half a century, and for the first time establish the seasonal variation in wild dormouse body weights, litter sizes and breeding dates. Doug's agreement to allow his idea to be developed as part of my dormouse research project made a huge difference to studying these formerly elusive animals that previously hardly anyone ever saw alive.

With Doug's support, we installed Paul Bright at Wellington Farm to carry out the exhaustive fieldwork needed to unravel the secrets of dormouse ecology. Doug and his wife Olive were always very generous with their hospitality when my wife Mary and I went down to Somerset to see how the fieldwork was progressing. There seemed to be no limit to the help Doug could call upon locally, where his friends and contacts seemed to be endlessly supportive. Need a place to park a caravan?- no problem. Need 100 nestboxes – OK, when do you want them? One day I suggested we could do with a few plastic pots. Within days a gross of them appeared on the doorstep!

The dormouse research project was a huge success.

Full Circle

In Elaine Hurrell's monogragh 'Dormice' (Sunday Times 1962) she described observations she and her father, H. G. Hurrell, had made of captive dormice at their home on Dartmoor. These led at first to a tentative conclusion, and later to the fully confirmed one that dormice open hazel nuts in a very characteristic manner. She also described as 'very difficult' their efforts to observe dormice in a wood nearby. Elaine and H.G, as he was known, were my mentors in subsequent observations of dormice in the same hazel woodland.

My photograph shows a wild dormouse coming to bait on a platform there in July 1975. H.G. would place the bait earlier in the day for my photo session at dusk.

Elaine with Gill McIntosh published The Mammal Society Dormouse Survey in the Mammal Review 1984,Vol 14, No.1 and this was regarded as the first Great Nut Hunt. Its success depended on the characteristic opening of hazel nuts as evidence of their presence – 'by far the most useful method of detecting…dormice'. 473 records were received to substantiate the largely southerly distribution of the dormouse. When the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme began in 1992 Elaine was responsible for checking the first monitoring site at Andrews Wood, South Devon. After she retired in October 1999, Gordon Waterhouse and I took over these checks.

It was my good fortune to be awarded a Millennium Fellowship in 2001, which was partly linked to these dormouse studies. I spent two weeks in Ankarafantsika National Park, Madagascar with an American Earthwatch team led by Luke Dollar.

He was researching another elusive, arboreal, nocturnal, endangered mammal of deciduous forest – the Fossa

Previously there had been only three scientific papers on British dormice published in the last hundred years. Now we have a very extensive literature, including a paper with Doug as joint author. Today there are thousands of dormouse nestboxes in place throughout England and Wales, enabling many hundreds of people to see these animals, greatly adding to their interest in mammals generally.

Thanks to Doug's support, the dormouse is now one of Britain's most thoroughly understood small mammals, allowing an extensive national conservation programme to be based on a sound scientific footing. Planning law has even been amended to take account of dormice, greatly influencing the way that roads and major infrastructural building is carried out. Dormice focus attention on the way that woodlands should be managed to benefit wildlife, and they highlight issues to do with management of the countryside in general, because what is good for dormice is good for many other species too.

Doug's special nestboxes not only helped to boost the numbers of dormice but now also form a basic tool for monitoring their populations, nationwide.

The dormouse thus became the first terrestrial British mammal for which a national monitoring programme was established, comparable to the monitoring of birds that is now so widely accepted. Doug himself, despite his advancing years, played a very active role in checking nestboxes and running dormouse training days to help hundreds of others to become involved. He was also very successful in breeding these animals in captivity. His 'dormouse factory' in the garden of his Somerset home was the principal source of animals for our first reintroduction of dormice in 1993, re-establishing them in Cambridgeshire for the first time since 1908. He contributed to most of the subsequent releases that have helped to restore this species to areas where it has been extinct for more than 50 years, a lasting memorial to his efforts. These and other dormouse related activities now mean that this animal is one of the most publicised of British mammals, getting on radio and TV and receiving full page treatment in the national press- not bad for a mouse!

Doug was a retired tradesman rather than an academic biologist, and came to natural history late in life. Yet he made a much greater contribution to British mammals that many full-time professional biologists ever did. Apart from dormice, he was also active in his local badger and bat groups, and frequently went out to rescue snakes and other wildlife from farmers and householders who would otherwise have killed them. It's hard to think of another person who, beginning only after he retired from work, contributed so much and with such conspicuous success. He leaves a legacy which cannot be overlooked or forgotten and of which he could be justly proud. His death last November was a shock to us all, taking away a significant personality from British natural history, and also an ebullient, generous and enthusiastic friend.

Pat Morris

Dr Pat Morris

(Cryptoprocta ferox). But there the resemblance to a dormouse ends, for this pum a-like carnivore is almost a metre long with a metre of tail, and preys on lemurs. It is, weight for weight, one of the most ferocious animals on the planet. It was a very special moment to see my first, and only, wild specimen and even comparable with the excitement of photographing wild dormice. The other half of the award, fully funded by the Millennium Fund, was a community project to provide 60 dormouse boxes in the Dartmoor wood where Elaine and H.G. began their dormouse studies some 50 years ago. It seems wholly appropriate to call the site 'Hurrell'. We sited the boxes in May 2003.

On our first check in October 2003, with my wife Olive and cousin Walter House, we recorded four adult dormice and three nests. Indeed the dormouse pictured could be their great, great, great……grandparent. Elaine was told these results as soon as the check was complete. How encouraging to think that these four dormice are, quite possibly, the direct descendants of the mice which prompted the first Great Nut Hunt and the activities of numerous recorders throughout the U.K.

With my special thanks to the Millennium Fund and Earthwatch for making this Full Circle a reality.

Tom Maddock

NEWS IN BRIEF

Dormouse Day Update

Last year, as many of you will remember, Mammals Trust UK and the Wildlife Trusts organised a day devoted entirely to the hazel dormouse. Speakers included Pat Morris, Michael Woods from The Mammal Society and Tony Sainsbury from the Zoological Society of London. To view their papers visit MTUK's website at www.mtuk.org and click on the conferences' section. If you do not have access to the internet call Susan Sharafi on 020 7498 4533 for copies of the papers.

Nut Hunt in Germany

Sven Buchner, a keen German naturalist who has studied dormice a lot in his spare time, is organising a Great Nut Hunt in Germany this autumn. It's being held between the 9th and 11th of September near Dresden. Sven hopes to find out if people in Germany will respond to the call to "go nuts" collecting data for distribution maps, in the same way as they do here. Without the data, of course, dormice can't be properly protected. We look forward to hearing about how it goes and we wish him every success.

Training Day – How to Manage Woods for Dormice

We have been lucky enough to persuade Dr Pat Morris to run this popular training day again for us this year. It will be held on Wednesday 6th October at Bramley Frith Environmental Educational Centre near Basingstoke in Hampshire. Pat will be assisted by Andrew Cleave, the Head of Centre at Bramley. Andrew has been managing the site for dormice for over 10 years and is a very experienced dormouse worker. The day will consist of talks by Pat in the classroom followed by an afternoon in the wood to discuss the best ways to manage woods for dormice. For more details contact Susan Sharafi at PTES on 020 7498 4533 or email susan@ptes.org.

2004 Reintroduction to North Yorkshire

On 14th June 60 captive-bred dormice were released at a secret location in North Yorkshire. The release site found for this year's reintroduction was so large and of such good quality that a double release was carried out. Fortunately, there is a very enthusiastic local mammal group in North Yorkshire. They worked tremendously hard to get the chosen site ready. Their tasks now include feeding the animals in the next few weeks and monitoring 400 nestboxes to see how the newly-released animals fare in the future.

Nestbox Upkeep

Are your nestboxes old, damp and tired-looking? If so dormice will be less inclined to use them in this state and they probably need replacing. If you have difficulty meeting the costs of replacing old nestboxes PTES may be able to help. For a funding application form contact Susan Sharafi at the PTES office or email susan@ptes.org. We will obviously have to look carefully at all the requests and, at least at first, list them in order of priority. We'll be asking Paul Bright and Tony Mitchell-Jones at English Nature to help us make the best use of the funds available for new nestboxes.