



The Dormouse Initiative
National Key Site Monitoring Scheme
Newsletter no.1



Sept 1992

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this long-term study of the dormouse. It is intended that data collected from a wide selection of localities will (in time!) provide a basis for regional comparison of the relative success of this species. For example, do those in the north breed later and what are average litter sizes for this species? Regular monitoring will also allow collection of data on comparative body weights and growth rates, related to habitat. This will be important information to guide future conservation measures. In particular it should also help provide a better idea about whether reintroductions to northern counties are likely to fail because of climate.

This year (1992) we have established 24 Key Sites in 10 counties, ranging from Kent to Cornwall and Cumbria. A map is shown overleaf. All are in good dormouse habitat with at least 50 nest boxes in place. A few of the sites have had boxes present for over a year and they are already providing valuable information. Everyone has been most helpful and we are very grateful to the many volunteers who are participating in this project.

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you informed of what is going on and to explain what we would like you to do next please. It's mainly intended for those who are managing a new site; if you are dealing with an established site, thank you and keep up the good work! If you are already checking nestboxes monthly, please ignore the enclosed forms and send in the ones you have already got, after your last nestbox check. The enclosed forms are really only intended for new sites and we should all be operating on the same system from next Easter.

It is important that nestbox checks are synchronised otherwise comparisons become invalid.

So, please would you visit your site(s) between October 15-25th

Complete the nestbox monitoring forms and return them as soon as possible. Please don't delay as it helps a lot if we can get all the data put into the computer at once!

If you do not already have a licence to 'disturb dormice in the nest', you will need to get one before next Easter. It is not necessary for the first nestbox check as we don't know yet that there are any animals present. If you haven't got a licence, please do not attempt to complete the data sheets fully (recording weight etc), but simply note which boxes contain nests and count any dormice seen. However, the sooner you apply for a licence the better. Write to the Licensing Section, English Nature, Northminster House, Peterborough, PE1 1UA. It's free and will probably take a few weeks to arrive. You will need to cite a referee, and may use one of us if you want.

If you have not handled dormice before and would like an opportunity to gain some experience, please get in touch as soon as possible. If you phone Paul Bright (0272 272 300), he can put you in touch with an established dormouse worker in one of the western counties and you can arrange to go and see what is involved. Alternatively, telephone Pat Morris (0784 435551) soon to organise a visit to a site near Basingstoke in late October (probably the 24th, or perhaps a weekday preceding that date).

The next step will be to analyse the returns we get this autumn and send out a newsletter reporting the results. This will be done next Easter to serve also as a reminder to check the boxes again in May. More instructions will then be given concerning weighing and detailed recording.

If there is any problem or you need further information, please get in touch with one of us. Please make copies of your recording sheets and send in one set as soon as possible. Add any comments you have about using them. Maybe we could design a better one? Suggestions are welcome!

Many thanks for your help,

Pat Morris & Paul Bright

The Key Site Series

Exact sites are not named.
We think this should be general
policy unless locally decided
otherwise

