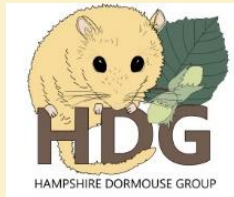




The Hampshire Dormouse Group County Survey

Identifying suitable dormouse habitat

The Hazel Dormouse



Tucked up inside a tree hollow, the hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* is a shy secretive species that spends its life in the tree and shrub canopy when active, and rarely comes to ground.

In winter dormice hibernate in nests tucked inside coppice stools or beneath the leaf litter on the woodland floor.

The hazel dormouse, is one of Britain's most endangered mammals and listed as vulnerable to extinction in the UK. Due to their rarity and specific habitat requirements, dormice are considered flagship species for woodland conservation as well as bio-indicators of habitat condition.

This makes them an ideal species to monitor to help assess both woodland reserves and living landscapes.



Dormice are a specialist species of early-mid successional woodland and hedgerow habitats .

They are arboreal, living up in the woodland canopy and rarely coming down to the ground. Dormice are reluctant to cross open spaces where they are vulnerable to predation. This means that they require interconnected woodlands, hedgerows and scrub.

High forests are less suitable since the dense canopy shades out the understory and the lower light levels means there are fewer flowering and fruiting shrubs; key food resources for this species.

One of their optimal habitats is coppiced woodland with sensitive management of rides and glades, together with rotational coppicing; this creates a suitable mix of early successional trees and shrub. They are also found in a variety of other scrubby habitats such as bramble banks and hedgerows.

Unfortunately, small woodlands cannot sustain healthy populations therefore connection with other woodlands is key.

