

Dormice

Protected Species
Guidance Note: 2014

Survey Season Calendar

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
				Habitat suitability survey							
				Nut searches							
				Nest tube checks							

■ Optimal
 ■ Sub-optimal
 ■ Inappropriate



Why Survey?

The common or hazel dormouse is mainly restricted to the southern parts of the UK. This species has suffered a decline in distribution and numbers, largely due to habitat loss and fragmentation. This has led to its listing as a European Protected Species. A predominately nocturnal species, favouring hazel coppice and ancient woodland habitats, it also requires good 'aerial' habitat linkages (e.g. hedgerows and shelterbelt strips). However, it is important to stress that they can be found in any woody habitat, hedgerow or scrub, even if it is considered to be sub-optimal, especially if this habitat is linked to other good areas. This species is most vulnerable to inadvertent disturbance during winter hibernation. If you are planning any works involving the loss, degradation or felling of potential dormouse habitat in known dormouse regions, or of ideal habitat elsewhere, then a survey must be completed first.

SERVICES:

- Habitat suitability surveys and mapping
- Nest tube installation and monitoring
- Habitat enhancement works
- EPS license applications



Methodology

Habitat suitability surveys can be undertaken throughout the year. This involves mapping all patches of suitable terrestrial vegetation (coppice, woodland, scrub) whilst searching for evidence in the form of characteristically gnawed nut remains on the woodland floor. Any intrusive survey techniques must only be undertaken by a Natural England dormouse survey licence holder. Breeding surveys should only be undertaken during spring and summer months. The installation of nest tubes upon suitable tree branches, which are checked fortnightly for a designated period (between March and November), is a very useful method of establishing population estimates, but an expensive way of determining presence. Hair tubes are a less expensive method to prove presence of this species, which can yield results very quickly. However, even when used in areas where dormice are abundant, their success rate is often very low. Combining survey techniques depending on the specific habitat is recommended.

Mitigation

Mitigation will require a dormouse license holder applying for a mitigation licence. Once this has been granted, mitigation can commence. Strategies often aim to prevent or limit the destruction and disturbance of known dormouse habitat, by altering the design proposals. Where this is not feasible, other measures include hand-searching of suitable habitat immediately prior to clearance, and habitat creation (planting of native species that are beneficial to dormice for food and shelter). New habitat created is usually required to be of a greater value and area than that being lost. Other forms of mitigation can involve providing new linkages to existing adjacent habitats, by planting new hedgerows, woodland strips, or installing green 'rope' bridges.

