



THE NATIONAL TRUST

INFORMATION SHEET

MANAGING RISK – European Protected Species Hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*

Status and distribution

UK	Native, patchily distributed in England and Wales. Vulnerable and locally endangered; declining. Priority Species in the UKBAP. Protected Species under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and CroW Act 2000.
EU	Annex IVa Habitats & Species Directive, Appendix III Bern Convention.
IUCN	Lower risk (near threatened).

Hazel dormouse does not occur in Scotland or Ireland. In Wales, there are few known populations and in England it has become extinct in up to seven counties (comprising half its former range) in the past 100 years. It is absent from the north, except for small populations in Cumbria and Northumberland and although still widespread in southern counties (Devon to Kent), it is patchily distributed.

Hazel dormice are found in deciduous woodland (often ancient woodland), dense shrubbery, coppices and dense species-rich hedgerows. It is particularly associated with an abundance of trees with edible seeds such as hazel, sweet chestnut and beech, together with arboreal pathways formed by climbing plants and sprawling coppice. It will use tree holes and hollow branches for nesting and use holes in coppice stools or between tree roots for hibernation. It is primarily nocturnal and occurs at low population densities (less than 10 adults per hectare, or 4 per acre, even in good habitats), so can be easily overlooked even where it is known to be present.

Presence within NT properties

In the last decade, hazel dormice have been recorded from NT properties in Cornwall, Devon, Northumbria, Dorset, Somerset, East Sussex, West Sussex, Cumbria, Hertfordshire, Essex, Isle of Wight, Worcestershire and Surrey (Cirencester Recorder Database, 2002).

Threats and risks

There is a chance of encountering known or unknown populations of hazel dormouse whilst undertaking works on NT land anywhere in England and Wales, where there is ancient woodland and/or species-rich hedgerows. Any work that may disturb hazel dormice must only proceed under licence or with advice from EN and CCW. Not only must the Trust abide by the law, but as partner to the UKBAP, the Trust should also ensure that it maintains all populations of this species occurring on its land.

Maintenance of populations in all counties where hazel dormice still occur is a target within the UK Action Plan.

Examples of works likely to affect hazel dormice and their habitat, and which may require safeguards such as licensing include:

- Woodland management works.
- Hedgerow management.
- Hedgerow removal.
- Any works in which you need to disturb or move dormice e.g. if coppicing is taking place on coppice with rot holes where they were found to be hibernating during an initial survey. If the work is essential, a licence from DEFRA will be required to translocate the dormice to a safe location.

References and further information

Bright, P. Morris, P & Mitchell-Jones, T. (1996). *Dormouse Conservation Handbook*. English Nature, Peterborough.

DEFRA (2002). *European Protected Species Guidance Note. (WLF 11 (5/02))*. DEFRA, Bristol. www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/regulat/forms/cons_man/wlf11.htm

Macdonald, D.W. & Tattersall, F (2001). *Britain's Mammals: The Challenge for Conservation*. Peoples Trust for Endangered Species, London.

Action Plan for Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*): www.ukbap.org.uk

Hazel dormouse



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