

Dormouse News

February 2020



HAMPSHIRE DORMOUSE GROUP

Out and About

2019 saw a busy year with members of the group involved in dormouse surveys, events, training days and practical work.

Back in September we were flying the dormouse flag at the Zionhill Copse Community Woodfair. The event enabled us to raise awareness of our work and engage with the public, young and old.



We had a successful and fun practical day at Ridgeway Woods back in December, focusing on an area of hazel coppice, which was in need of opening up to let the light back in and encourage new growth. Further work is planned for later this month, so do come along and lend a hand.

January this year saw the success of the 11th Briddlesford Woods Volunteer

weekend on the Isle of Wight, run by the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species, involving an incredible 46 volunteers. A phenomenal amount of work was achieved over the weekend, with weather on the side of the chainsaw workers, fence builders, hedge restorers and box fixers. Well done to all involved, and we look forward to hearing how the dormouse population benefits in the coming years.

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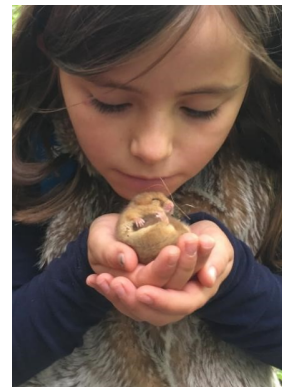
Surveys across the County, carried out by licenced dormouse group members and volunteers, produced a mix of results. Dormice continued to be recorded at Ridgeway Woods during 2019, with a maximum count of three dormice in both May and September. Breeding dormice

were recorded at both Old Winchester Hill and Beacon Hill. Ash die-back on both of the National Nature Reserves is beginning to influence the woodland structure in a positive way, with visible regeneration of the understorey. Perhaps all is not lost?

Two sites managed by Hampshire Countryside Services: Ashford Hangers and The Warren, saw the reintroduction of dormouse monitoring in 2019. After setting up the surveys in Spring, we were excited to discover a group of healthy and lively dormice on both

sites in November. It's encouraging to know that dormice are continuing to use the sites.

We continue to look for dormice on the New Forest around the Beaulieu area and remain hopeful of finding evidence of dormice this year.



A helping hand from the next generation of dormice

Test Valley Dormouse Project



The project is now in its fourth year, with continued strong links with farmers and landowners across the project area, thanks to local knowledge and well-established relationships.

Having started life with a focus on woodland planting, the project is now moving more towards improving the hedgerow network, which provides critical foraging, nesting and dispersing habitat for dormice. By gapping-up hedgerows where opportunities arise and by encouraging a move towards less frequent cutting and development of taller, denser hedgerows, dormice and

other wildlife will benefit greatly.

Dormouse surveys within the project area have been slow to yield results, but finally last year we recorded dormice on one of our sites. With a good mix of woodland and hedgerow habitats across the farms, two NDMP sites have now been established.

We continue to carry out nest box and nest tube checks, with the recent addition of footprint tunnel surveys, to compliment the other survey techniques.

A hedgerow event was held in December, led by Francis Buner of the Game and

Wildlife Conservation Trust. This provided an opportunity to bring farmers and landowners together to raise awareness of dormouse and the importance of hedgerow management for wildlife.



Footprints Have The Answer

Traditionally dormouse surveys have involved using nest boxes or nest tubes, which are checked by a licensed dormouse surveyor. These surveys rely on a dormouse building a nest or staying home for us to know they are there!

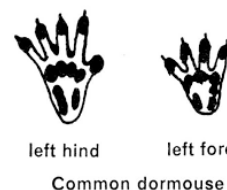
The use of footprint tunnels, however, is a relatively new survey method, which utilises ink pads and records the

footfall of small rodents passing through. Because this method uses a 'tunnel' which is open at both ends, dormice do not use it as a place to rest for any length of time, or in which to build a nest. Dormouse presence is instead determined by the record of their footprints, which are distinctive, and are left behind after the dormouse itself is long gone. The card inserts, which are placed inside the

footprint tunnels, are checked and collected at regular fortnightly intervals for evidence of dormouse prints. Because the risk of disturbance to dormice is low, these surveys can be carried out by a non-licensed individual.

Research carried out in conjunction with Suffolk Wildlife Trust has shown that this non-invasive survey method has the benefit of an increase in

the speed at which dormice are detected. Later this year sees the welcome release of the new dormouse conservation handbook, which will include the use of footprint tunnels as an approved survey technique.



Hampshire Dormouse Survey - 2020 and beyond



We are excited to announce the launch of the Hampshire-wide dormouse survey this year. This is an exciting time to be a "Dormouser" in Hampshire and will bring plentiful opportunity to get involved with site reccies, habitat surveys and dormouse footprint tunnel surveys, to help increase our knowledge of dormouse distribution across the County.

This is just the beginning; we are in the early stages of project development, but we can't do it without YOU!!

Keep an eye out for more information via the googlegroup email, website and Facebook page, and please, do get involved and be a part of this exciting new project.

A Big Thank You



And last, but by no means least, a huge THANK YOU to all involved in the group; for your continued support through membership, help at events and box checks, getting stuck into practical work, and for spreading the word about our precious dormouse. Please continue to SHOUT LOUD and be the voice of this small and elusive creature, which struggles on in an ever challenging world.

Keep up to date

hampshiredormousegroup.co.uk

find us on facebook @hampshiredormousegroup

2020 Looking Ahead

February:

11th - Annual General Meeting
7.30pm Animal Management Centre
Sparsholt

29th - Practical Day
10am to 2pm Ridgeway Woods

March:

7th - HBIC Recorders Forum

April:

20th & 21st - Dormouse Ecology &
Conservation Training Course
6-9pm each day
Sparsholt College, Winchester

May:

24th - Nature 300 Festival
Gilbert White's House, Selborne

September:

5th - Zionshill Copse Community
Woodfair

November:

21st - County Dormouse Confer-
ence (Venue TBC)