

Dartmoor Species Action Plan for Dormouse

The dormouse has a widespread distribution within enclosed farmland on Dartmoor, appearing in a range of habitats such as hedgebanks, oakwoods, wet woodlands, Rhôs pastures and plantation fringes (see *The Nature of Dartmoor: A Biodiversity Profile*). The *Devon Biodiversity Action Plan* also contains a general account of the ecology of the dormouse. The objectives and targets set in national and county action plans are reflected in this plan, which also includes more specific, local targets and actions for Dartmoor.

Current status

Recent records for the dormouse within the National Park area are shown on the map overleaf. This shows a lack of records on the western fringes of the moor, which may be due to a more Atlantic climate thought to be less favourable to dormouse survival. However, in the absence of systematic survey data, the map does not represent a complete picture of the distribution of dormice on Dartmoor. In addition, there is a bias towards areas with extensive hazel, where the opened nuts provide an easy source of positive records. The species has declined markedly in recent decades,

although nationally the rate of decline appears to be slowing down due to concerted conservation efforts. Devon is regarded as a national stronghold for this internationally

threatened species. It is included in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan

priority list, Annex IVa of the Habitats Directive, Appendix 3 of the Bonn Convention and is protected under *Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act*.

Current factors affecting the species on Dartmoor

Fragmentation of suitable areas of scrub, hedgerows and woodland is likely to be the most important factor within the National Park, which contains numerous patches of potentially usable habitat.

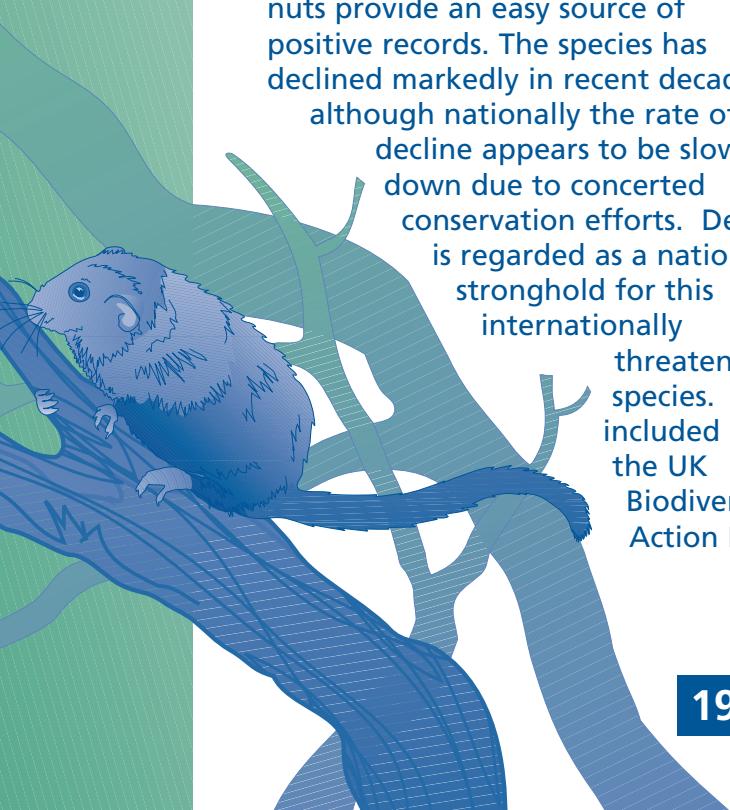
At present, many sites are not suitable for dormice and could be improved by managing to encourage the development of a shrub layer with a good diversity of woody species.

Climate change, particularly warmer winters, may be having a so far unquantified effect on the population.

Current action on Dartmoor

Since 2000 three new dormouse monitoring schemes have been established at Hembury Wood, East Park Copse and in Meldon Wood as part of the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme.

Action for Wildlife: the Dartmoor Biodiversity Project is running an annual public participation survey of dormouse-eaten hazelnuts to improve the knowledge of dormouse distribution on Dartmoor. Action for Wildlife is also developing a community based dormouse survey and conservation project in the Walkham Valley.



Dartmoor Dormouse Distribution Map



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The Dartmoor ESA, launched in 1994, has now established agreements over 65% of the enclosed farmland. The new Entry Level and Higher Level Environmental Stewardship schemes support hedgerow restoration, and encourage woodland management which should benefit dormice.

The Devon Hedge Group, which has been running since 1994, promotes the appreciation and conservation of hedges. Demonstration sites and numerous events have taken place and much progress has been made in raising the profile of hedges and their management.

Over 50 management agreements between Dartmoor National Park Authority and individual landowners encourage management which is sympathetic towards dormice.



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Dormouse

Additionally, DNPA owns a number of woodlands, which are sympathetically managed for dormice.

Dormouse Key Conservation Objectives and Targets

Dormouse Objectives

Objective 1

Ensure that Dartmoor remains a stronghold for the dormouse.

Dartmoor target

- A** Maintain dormouse presence across the current range of 140 occupied kilometre squares (1990 - 2006).

Objective 2

Achieve a better understanding of the distribution of, and habitat use by, dormice on Dartmoor.

Dartmoor targets

- A** Obtain a more accurate distribution on the western fringes of Dartmoor National Park by 2008.
- B** Support research on dormice, especially habitat preferences and use of different types of hedges.

Objective 3

Raise awareness of dormice and their habitat requirements on Dartmoor amongst landowners and the general public.

Dartmoor target

- A** Promote dormouse conservation within Dartmoor National Park through at least one guided walk, organised event or media article per year.

Actions for Dormouse on Dartmoor

Monitoring responsibility: Dartmoor National Park Authority

| Action | Meets Objective/ Target | Deliverer | | Complete by | | | | | Date achieved |
|---|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|------|------|------|----------|---------------|
| | | Lead | Partners | 2007 | 2008 | 2011 | 2016 | On-going | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| Policy and Legislation | | | | | | | | | |
| Include protection policies in all relevant statutory plans when reviewed | 1A | DNPA | | | | | | ● | |
| Site Safeguard | | | | | | | | | |
| Safeguard sites against direct threats through planning controls, hedgerow regulations and other consultation procedures | 1A | DNPA | FC, NE | | | | | ● | |
| Habitat Management | | | | | | | | | |
| Encourage maintenance of suitable scrub, woodland and hedge habitats in conditions suitable for dormice through the HLS and other support schemes | 1A | NE, DNPA, FC | | | | | | ● | |
| Encourage at least three planting schemes with a good diversity of tree and shrub species and at least 20% native shrubs, especially hazel, hawthorn and honeysuckle where these provide links between existing populations | 1A | DNPA, NE, FC | | | | ● | | | |
| Species Management and Protection | | | | | | | | | |
| Undertake surveys of at least three new potential dormouse localities within DNP to improve the knowledge of dormouse distribution | 2A | DNPA | NE, NT, DWT | ● | | | | | |

(cont.)

Actions for Dormouse on Dartmoor (cont.)

| Action | Meets Objective/Target | Deliverer | | Complete by | | | | | Date achieved |
|--|------------------------|---------------|----------|-------------|------|------|------|----------|---------------|
| | | Lead | Partners | 2007 | 2008 | 2011 | 2016 | On-going | |
| Advisory | | | | | | | | | |
| Promote the updated Dormouse Conservation Handbook to conservation advisers, foresters and land owners/managers | 2A | DNPA | DWT, NE | | ● | | | | |
| Circulate the results of recent research on hedges as suitable dormouse habitats through the ESA/ES Newsletter | 1A | DNPA, NE | | | | | | ● | |
| Research and Monitoring | | | | | | | | | |
| Ensure continuation of at least one monitoring scheme as part of the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme within DNP | 2A | DNPA | | | | | | ● | |
| Develop a pilot monitoring scheme of 10 sample 1 km squares known to be occupied by dormice during the 1990s to assess population change | 1A | DNPA | | ● | | | | | |
| Review and implement the outcomes of the pilot monitoring scheme and the need for further work | 1A | DNPA | | | ● | | | | |
| Communication and Publicity | | | | | | | | | |
| Produce at least one walk/event/article per year to promote dormouse conservation on Dartmoor | 3A | DNPA, DWT, NT | AFW, NE | | | | | ● | |

Abbreviations used in this table:

AFW – Action for Wildlife, DNP – Dartmoor National Park, DNPA – Dartmoor National Park Authority, DWT – Devon Wildlife Trust, FC – Forestry Commission, NE – Natural England, NT – National Trust

