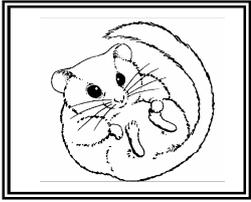


WARWICKSHIRE DORMOUSE CONSERVATION GROUP  
'providing homes for dormice'

© Guy Troughton



## Newsletter No2 February 2010



**We are in the news already!** At a regional level anyway, with the following item from the February newsletter of the West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership (WMBP):

*"The actions in the **Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan** are delivered by a wide range of organisations, all working hard to secure the future for biodiversity in the sub-region. A new voluntary organisation can now be added to that list – the **Warwickshire Dormouse Conservation Group**, which has been created to support the objectives of the **Common Dormouse Action Plan**. The group will assist with monitoring known populations, carrying out woodland surveys and providing advice on site management".*

### Our first meeting took place on January 17<sup>th</sup> 2010 at the 2009 PTES reintroduction site

- a report by Jennie on behalf of Vicky, Helen, Freddy, John, Stacey, Ian and Louise.

"After all the snow we had had it was nice to wake up on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> January and find it had all disappeared, leaving a beautiful crisp morning, and what better way to spend it than helping with a bit of dormouse conservation. So off to join the first event of the Warwickshire Dormouse Conservation Group and meet several other volunteers who had also been kind enough to sacrifice their lie-in for the sake of a small rodent that was probably snoring away in a nearby teapot.

After a quick introduction from the landowners, Val and Derry, we were led into their woodland and on such a beautiful morning, what a privilege this was. It was easy to see why this site was suitable for dormouse re-introduction, being a lovely species-rich broad-leaved woodland with a dense understory of hazel coppice. There was also an unusually large amount of healthy pools scattered around, which, I was told, were bomb craters originating from the Second World War. Apparently there was a bogus Spitfire factory as a decoy to the real one in Castle Bromwich and thus the area was heavily bombed; despite their dubious origins it all adds to the biodiversity of the site. Our mission for the day was the relocation of 100 nest boxes that had originally been positioned in twenty transects, each of five boxes, but these had been difficult to find again when the time came to check them. The aim was to reposition them in two parallel transects of 50 boxes, making it easier to keep the access paths clear and check the boxes. In two groups, each armed with slashing equipment, we began our task of cutting the new transects. This was easier said than done and after the difficulty of locating many of the boxes it was clear to see the reason behind the task. Moving the boxes just involved untwisting the wire fixing them to the tree but it was exciting, with each box approached with anticipation as to what it might contain. We checked before removal in case they contained bats - if so they would be left to avoid disturbance – and there were warnings of yellow-necked mice and other small rodents. Unfortunately for me no such creatures were encountered and I found only the nests of two wood mice and a lot wood louse frass.

Nevertheless it was a job well done with all boxes repositioned with tightened wire on equally suitable trees in their new transects, all completed in a few short hours. Time for us to head back to the car park and the promise of cakes and biscuits after a great morning and a super first meeting. If we get doughnuts and chocolate hobnobs again I shall definitely look forward to the next one".

- A big thank you to Jennie for the article – great style, setting a high standard for future articles about our activities! RM



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### FORTHCOMING MEETINGS IN 2010

- **February 10<sup>th</sup>:** Stacey's hedgerow walking in the Princethorpe area – now fully staffed - report in next newsletter.
- **May / June / September / October:** box checking at the new release site if more help is needed by the PTES team.
- **From May, alternate months to November:** tube checking in hedgerows in the Princethorpe area with Stacey.
- **November:** checking Ruth's nest tubes in 3 woodlands.

# WARWICKSHIRE DORMOUSE CONSERVATION GROUP

## 'providing homes for dormice'

### Project 2010 – finding Warwickshire's dormice!

We now have 300 nest tubes, thanks to a grant from **People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES)** which bought us 100 new tubes and to Richard and Nick at **Countryside Recreation** for cutting the plywood platforms for 200 more tubes. These are being made by Ruth, helped by Stacey, out of Tetrapak cartons collected by staff at **Ecology and Archaeology Field Services** - many thanks to all of them!

**Ruth's** programme will be based on information from the *Warwickshire Dormouse Survey 1999* and the subsequent *Strategy for the Conservation of Dormice in Warwickshire 2001*, both by **Dr. Stefan Bodnar**. She plans to install 225 tubes in three of the most suitable woodlands with the help of members in March and April (see separate email for provisional dates). The tubes will be left undisturbed until November when dormice (if there are any) will have hibernated so there will be no need for licensed members to be present (date to be arranged). If we find evidence of the presence of dormice from nest material we will look to installing wooden nest boxes next year. We will then need our licence holders for box checking!

### 'Hedgerows for Dormice'

Data collected by the **National Dormouse Monitoring Programme** carried out by **PTES** over the last 21 years, is being used to create dormouse 'hot spots' as foci to extend suitable dormouse habitat ( see the article in **British Wildlife** : December 2009).

A 3-year initiative funded by **Natural England** through a **Countdown 2010** grant is helping land managers to increase connectivity between existing sites to allow dormice to disperse. It involves the identification of priority hedgerow corridors which can be improved through the planting of new, and rehabilitation of old, hedgerows to link existing and potential dormouse sites. The initiative will also encourage local projects to increase the area of suitable habitat for dormice. In Warwickshire **Butterfly Conservation (West Midlands)** is already undertaking connectivity work for woodland species.

Members will be pleased to know that some of the fieldwork planned for this year to help **Stacey** will be supporting this initiative! A Coventry University student in her 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a B.Sc. Sandwich Course in Conservation and Geography, she is doing her placement with Ecology Field Services. During her 9 months there gaining experience in planning and biological recording, she will be writing a dissertation, part of which involves finding out if the connectivity between three woodlands in the Princethorpe chain can be improved and making recommendations to the **Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Forestry Commission** and land owners. Her conclusions will be based on the results of fieldwork including the use of nest tubes installed by members in March and April (see separate email for provisional dates); these will be checked in alternate months until November with the help of our licensed members (dates to be arranged).

### Members' section – post your message here (as space allows)!

- **We have 5 new members** since the last newsletter – to save space, please refer to my email for their email addresses:
  - **Louise Sherwell** is an assistant ecologist at the **WCC Ecology unit** but wants to be a member in her own right! Although she has yet to survey for dormice, she has experience surveying for other small mammals. She would like to learn more about the conservation of dormice and help them spread out in Warwickshire so would like to help as much as possible and get a handling licence so she can be of a greater help!
  - **Louise Hamilton** is also in **WCC Ecology unit**. She thinks the group is a brilliant idea and wants to be a member in her own right too! Although she has done only one day of dormouse field work in the past, by working in the Ecology unit she is in the right area. She is happy to help in any way possible.
  - **Camille Newton** works at **Ecoline** (a local ecological consultancy) as an Assistant Ecologist. She has been carrying out Phase 1 surveys, as well as surveying for badgers, bats and great crested newts amongst other things. Previously she worked for the Countryside Agency and most recently in WCC Ecology department, as an Ecological Assistant under the Heritage Lottery Funds LEMUR scheme. She hasn't done any dormouse work before and hasn't ever seen one so is looking forward to get involved and working at a local level.
  - **Jackie Underhill** works as an ecological consultant in the Midlands. She has a keen interest in all mammal species and would very much like to improve her knowledge and experience of dormice particularly to help in the training courses she currently runs for the Mammal Society and Field Studies Council. She originally did a dormouse course with the late Doug Woods but regrettably was not able to follow it up at the time. She would like to work towards obtaining a handling licence.
  - **Andrea Wilcockson** is a senior consultant ecologist at **SLR Consulting** in Redditch where she has been for 6.5 years. She has held a dormouse licence for four years and conducts field surveys for a range of species - plants as well as mammals. She also produces ecological statements for Environmental Impact Assessments and has carried out field studies from Lands End to John O'Groats.
- **Coventry CC Parks Service Rangers** – confusion in the last newsletter – **Michelle Tyrntania** and **Corinne Muir** are both part of the same team.
- **Toby Woodhams** reminds members that *"records of all mammals are welcome and that any identified whilst dormousing, or other hunting, will be most useful as a new reporting cycle is approaching and he will need a new set of ticks in the grid squares."*
- **Dormouse Handling Licences** – we have 4 licensed members now – they are so valuable! – but we will need more for checking boxes in the future so work towards yours now! The **Mammal Society** runs courses – contact Ruth Moffatt for details.