

# The Dormouse Monitor

Newsletter of the  
National Dormouse Monitoring Programme  
April 2001

## An uncertain start to this year's work

Thank you to everyone who took part in the monitoring programme last year. All the data you collect are invaluable additions to the huge dataset that has been put together over the last few years. In addition to the work she wrote about in the last edition of *The Dormouse Monitor*, Fiona Sanderson is also setting about the task of analysing the dataset to see what lessons can be learnt for the future and if, and how, woodland management can be improved to benefit dormice. It had not been possible to do this before for several reasons. Firstly, all the available data hadn't been collated and entered onto the computer. Secondly, and quite simply, it's a very time consuming process analysing a large dataset and neither Pat Morris nor Paul Bright had been able to find time in their busy schedules to do so. There is likely to be a lot of useful information locked away in the data we've all worked so hard to collect. PTES is, therefore, providing funding to allow Fiona to carry out this essential work over the next three years.

The Dormouse Re-introduction Programme will continue this year with re-introductions in two counties, Cambridgeshire (where the first re-introduction was made in 1993) and Worcestershire. Suitable sites have been located and, at the time of writing, local teams are being assembled to help with the practical work on site. This year, for the first time, PTES will be organising the releases and co-ordinating all the activities, working at all times under the expert direction of Paul and his team. PTES and English Nature will be jointly funding the work.

After many years of sterling work Pat and Mary Morris have now decided to take a back seat as far as everyday activities go. Pat will still be keeping a watching brief and giving everyone the benefit of his unique experience!

This newsletter is intended as a two-way vehicle for communication. Please keep your questions coming and we will print a selection of them next time, together with



answers from the experts. If you have any news you would like included that you think would be of interest to others, please let us know. Also, we would like to receive articles from individual surveyors about the sites they monitor and their experiences while out in the field. Please may we have all contributions by the end of August 2001.

Finally, if you know anyone who you think might like to receive a copy of *The Dormouse Monitor* and who doesn't currently receive it, let us know and we will make sure they are on the circulation list for next time.

## Foot and Mouth Disease

At the time of writing (end April) restrictions are in place across the country to control the spread of this disease. These have resulted in the closure of many public rights of way, all NNRs, some local Wildlife Trust reserves and many other areas. The situation may be clearer by the time the nestbox checks begin in earnest in May, but do please check with the managers of the wood that you monitor. On no account should you visit any sites against the advice or wishes of the owners or managers. You may also find it helpful to seek up-to-date advice from your local English Nature or Wildlife Trust office.

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The National Dormouse Monitoring Programme is funded by English Nature and the People's Trust for Endangered Species.

The scientific work is based at Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX and the organisation is carried out by PTES. *The Dormouse Monitor* is compiled by Valerie Keeble & Susan Sharafi.

## Information on recording in 2001

We are enclosing this year's recording forms with this spring edition of *The Dormouse Monitor*. As last year, please do send in all your records for this year by 30th November using the enclosed stamped addressed envelope. It's very important to get all the forms back to us in good time, so that Paul Bright and Fiona Sanderson can analyse all the data in time for us to report back to you all as fully as possible next spring.

As the programme has developed, a lot of thought has gone into revising the recording forms each year. You will note that this year, for example, we have asked for the start time that you begin the check but it is no longer necessary to record the temperature at the beginning of each check. This is because we can now get the data directly from the Met. Office rather than troubling you.

So please, before you go out on your box checks, take a few minutes to read the recording forms and survey guidelines thoroughly. When you have checked each box, make sure you have completed the relevant parts of the form before moving on to the next box. If you do not, vital details will be lost. After all, if we disturb the dormouse why not get as much useful information as we possibly can?

Tony Mitchell-Jones, English Nature

### Example of a completed recording form

2001 Date (15-25th) 20<sup>th</sup> July 2001

National Dormouse Monitoring Programme  
DORMOUSE RECORD FORM



Recorder: A Monitor Place: Hazel Wood Total No of boxes checked: 50 Start time: 9am End time: 11am

Box No. Time	No. Dormice (No. or NEST)	Sex (M or F)	Weight (in g)	Torpid or Active (A or T)	Breeding Condition (NB, TS, P, L or PL)	Young (PINK, GREY, EYES OPEN)	Comments
3	1	M	20	A	NB		White tip to tail
9.10							
20	5	F	19	A	L		
9.50		M	9	A	NB	EYES OPEN	
		M	8	A	NB	EYES OPEN	
		F	8	A	NB	EYES OPEN	
		M	8.5	A	NB	EYES OPEN	
29	NEST						
30	NEST						
46	NEST						

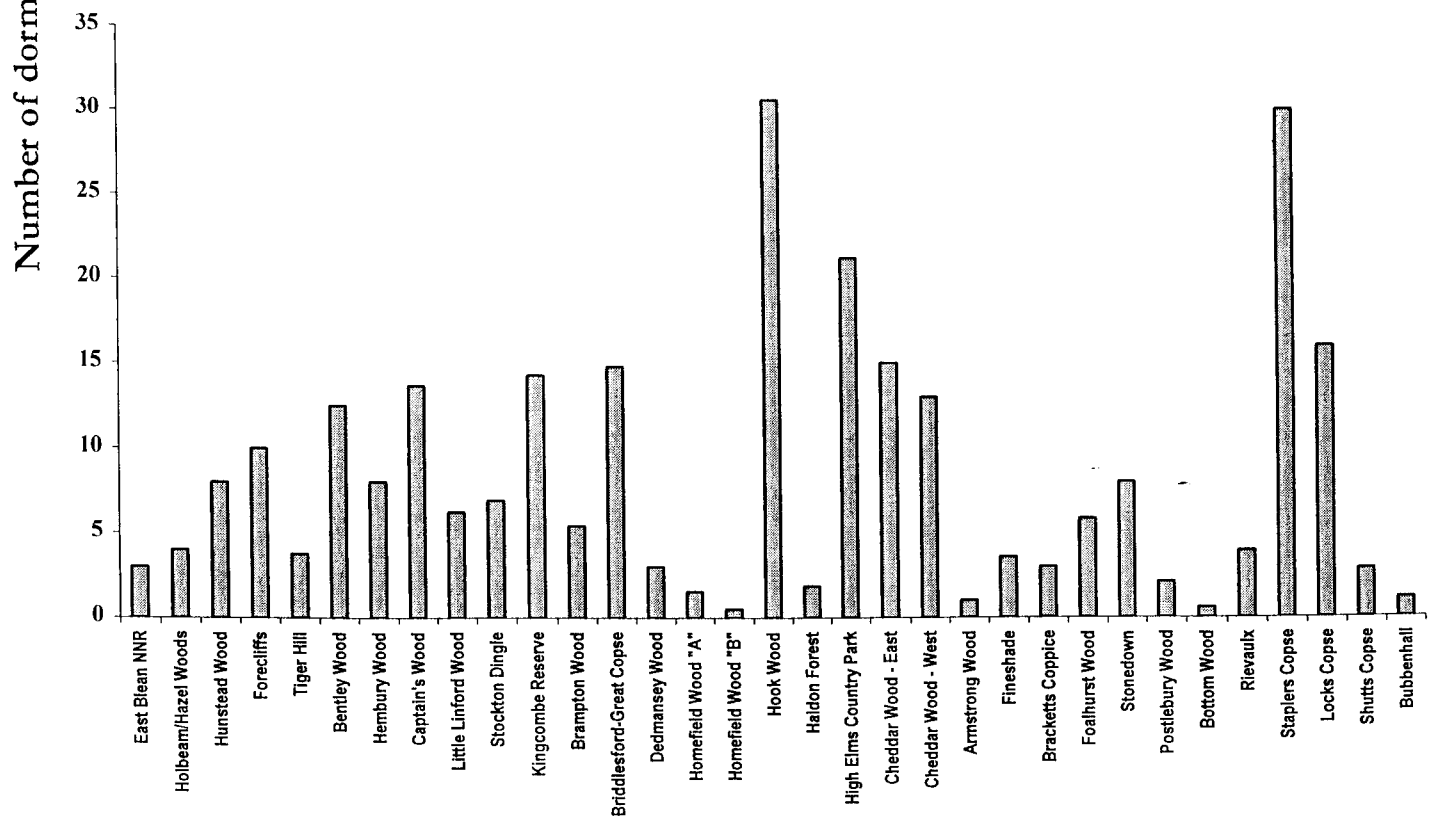
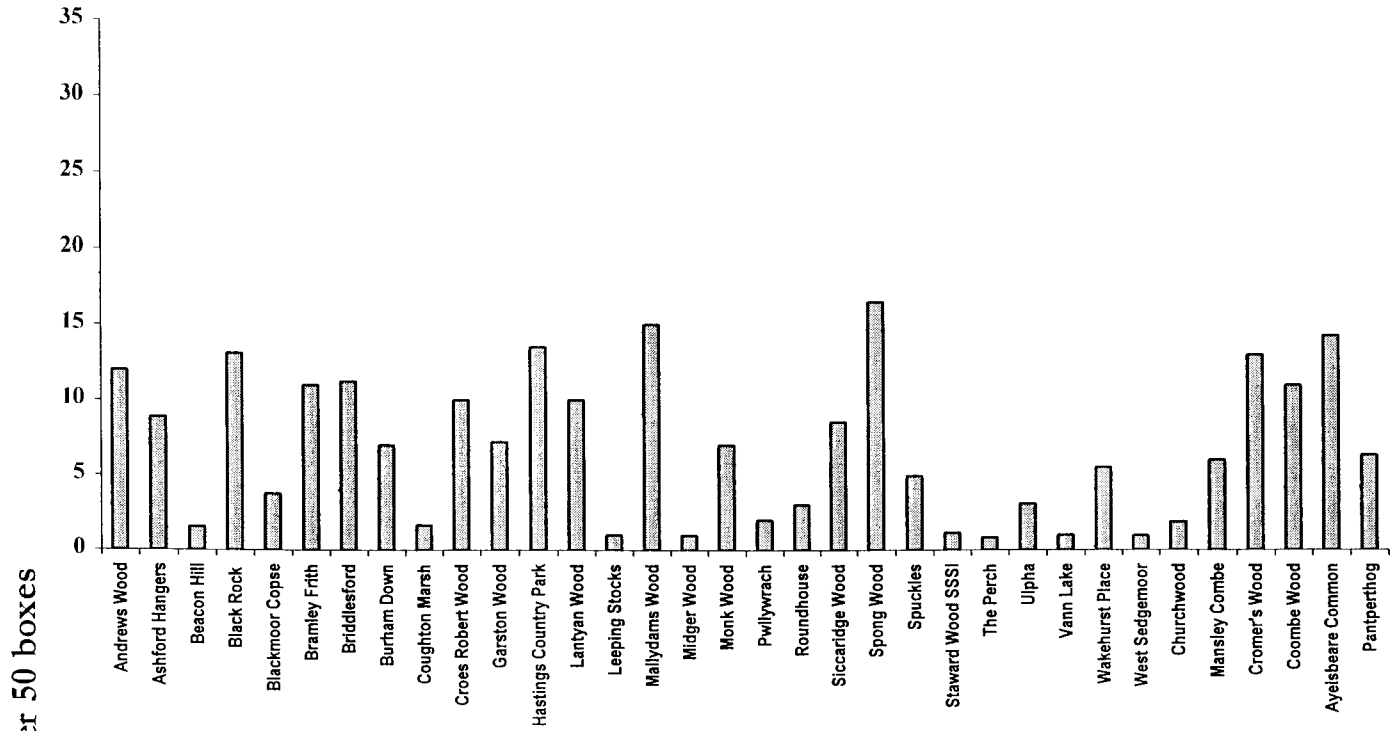
Please keep a copy and return your records in October/November to:  
Dr Paul Bright, School of Biological Sciences, Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey TW20 0EX (Telephone: 01784 443777)

## 2000 Records

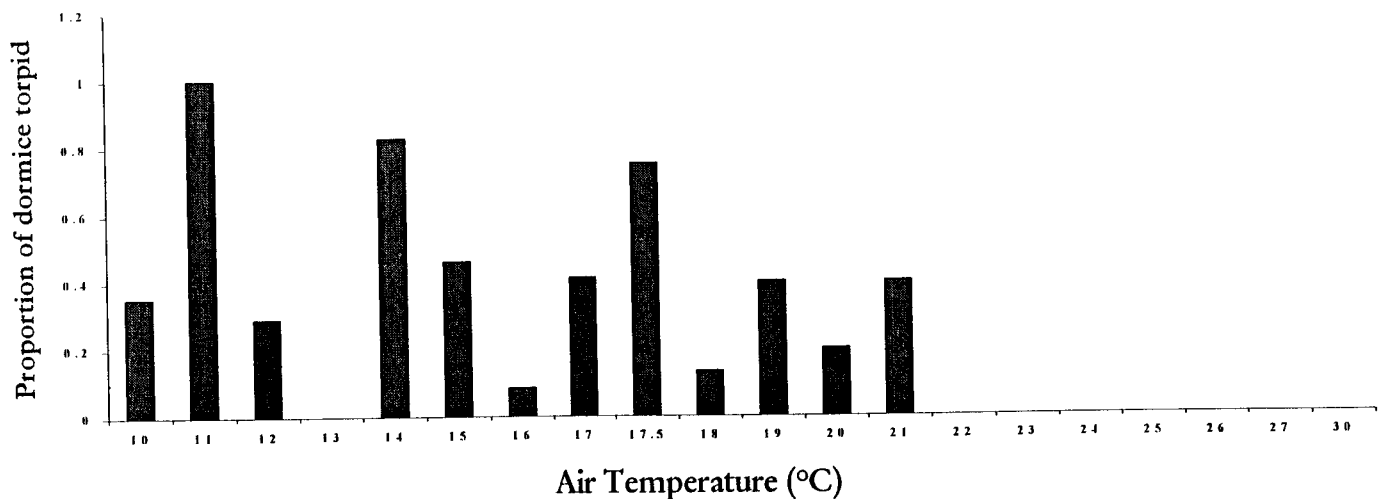
The records for 2000 have now been entered into the database. There were 822 visits to nearly 140 sites and 3879 individual dormice were recorded. This adds up to a huge amount of time and effort that you have spent on monitoring dormice. We thank you enormously for all your sterling work.

The two bar charts on the opposite page show a comparison of how many dormice weighing 7g or more were found at each site in October, expressed as numbers of dormice per 50 boxes. The charts do not include sites where no dormice were recorded. Larkey Valley in Kent is not included as, once again, this site had a very surprisingly high number of dormice (on average more than one dormouse per box) and if included would have distorted the charts.

Number of dormice (7g or over) per 50 boxes in October 2000



## Proportion of dormice torpid in June at different temperatures



The above bar chart shows the temperature against the proportion of dormice torpid in June. The 0 values at high temperatures are genuine rather than an artefact of not having any data. Therefore this shows that dormice are not normally in torpor above 22°C.

### The Common Dormouse Captive Breeders' Group

At the last but one meeting of the group, which was held in November at the Cloisters in London, Neil Bemment from Paignton Zoo Environmental Park took the chair for the first time. One of the first acts of the meeting was to formally record the group's appreciation of the enormous contribution Pat Morris has personally made to the success of dormouse conservation work since it first began.

The first item on the agenda was to review progress on implementing the dormouse BAP. Tony Mitchell-Jones of English Nature reported that all is on course to achieve the targets it sets. Neil Bemment suggested that a member of the Captive Breeders' Group should, in future, participate in BAP Steering Group meetings and this was formally agreed.

The application to EN for funds to continue the work of the group had been successful and EN will provide £2000 each year for the next three years.

Each member reported on the number of dormice they are likely to have available for re-introductions. Breeding was so successful in 2000 that it will be possible to carry-out two re-introductions this year.

The heaviest dormouse in October 2000 was recorded at Black Rock Drove, Cheddar. It weighed in at a hefty 37g.



Nest of young dormice

Pre-release health screening was discussed at some length. Considerable concern was expressed by some members about the length of time many of these arboreal animals had to spend in small cages while health checks were carried out. The possibility of health screening taking place where the animals were bred rather than at veterinary centres was raised. After discussion it was agreed that, in future, breeders will collect faecal samples from animals nominated for release and send them to the zoo for analysis. Physical health checks and TB testing will be carried out at the breeders' location during the period leading up to the release date.