

National Dormouse Monitoring Programme Preliminary 2007 Results

May, June and July 2007 were the wettest months in England and Wales since reliable records began in 1776. The extreme rainfall caused the Don, the Severn and the Thames to overtop their banks and caused widespread flooding in Tewkesbury, Gloucester, Oxfordshire and parts of northern England. 49,000 households were flooded and major infrastructure was disrupted. Amidst all the chaos, how well did the dormice fare in 2007? Overall the answer would have to be very well, thank you.

188 sites were checked in 2007, which was 23 down on the previous year but these sites were visited with a greater frequency. Are the abandoned 23 sites those where few, if any dormice had been recorded for a while and the monitor's interest has waned? If so, do we need to consider revisiting these sites to confirm whether the resident dormouse population has become locally extinct or have they moved to an area of more suitable area? It appears that most of the dormouse monitors enjoy their monthly vigil in the woods as 5 or 6 checks are undertaken at the majority of the NDMP sites.

Year	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
Sites	188	211	178	167	159	141	139
Visits	1065	1088	971	890	919	875	810
Ave visits per site	5.7	5.2	5.5	5.3	5.8	6.2	5.58
Dormice recorded	4752	4881	3155	4296	3099	2644	2646
Ave Dormice recorded per visit	4.5	4.5	3.2	4.8	3.4	3.0	3.3

In total 4752 dormice were handled and recorded in 2007, and this total can be split into 3285 adults, 1294 juveniles and 69 found dead in the boxes. Undoubtedly a number of these animals were recaptures but the crude statistical measure of average dormice recorded per visit is the same as the previous year.

Unsurprisingly the most common mammalian occupant of boxes other than dormice were wood mice with 2032 records, yellow necked mice were recorded on 742 occasions, bat species 178 times, common shrews 16 times and bank voles 14 times. Our smallest terrestrial mammal, the aptly named pygmy shrew was recorded 145 times. In total 4752 dormice and 3178 other mammals (and 1 toad!) were recorded in boxes in 2007; dormice are clearly making a greater use of the boxes than other mammal species although perhaps if bird occupancy of boxes were included, the most common user would be blue tits.

The New Year started off generally mild with a few cold spells and a heavy downfall of snow in early February. This didn't appear to trouble some of the dormice on the Isle of Wight when three animals, two torpid and one active, were discovered on a trip to clean boxes at the PTES site at Briddlesford in February. An active dormouse was also found on a similar expedition to clean boxes at a site in Kent.

Early spring was warm and dry and the weather only began to become more unsettled during May. Six sites recorded the presence of young pinkies in May and three of these were reintroduction sites; an indication that the ongoing reintroduction programme is generally successful. In the June 2007 check, Cromers Wood in Kent recorded 21 dormice per 50 boxes and managed to knock Bontuchel off the top spot from the same month in 2006. By early July the first blackberries were appearing in the hedgerows on the eastern part of the country and these were followed by hazel nuts in Kent in the middle of the month.

The summer of 2007 was wet and unsettled, with lower temperatures than average and periods of rain in September. September also brought the heaviest dormouse of the season weighing in at 39g – and some large litters. Three sites recorded nine young in September and two sites recorded ten pinkies in a box in the same month. At one of these sites, the box also contained two females so it was probably a crèche of

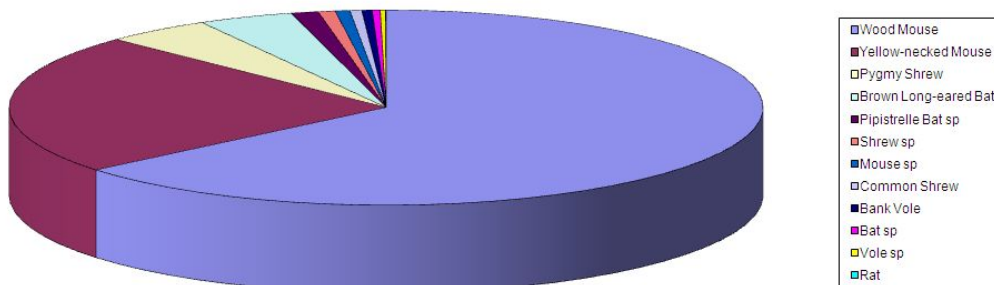
two litters. However at the other site the box appeared to house one litter of siblings. Is this some sort of record? – It certainly was for the reintroduction site where they were found.

In October 2007, two sites, the established Larkey Valley Wood site in Kent and the new Hadleigh Great Wood site in Essex, both recorded an average of more than one dormouse per nest box. Larkey Wood retained its top spot from 2006, but in that year it had been the only site with more than 50 dormice per 50 boxes. However in spite of two sites recording very high dormouse numbers, in general the number of high density sites was lower in 2007 than 2006. In October 2006 there were 19 sites with more than 15 dormice per 50 boxes but in 2007 this had fallen to only eight sites. There had also been 52 sites where up to 4 animals per 50 dormouse boxes had been recorded and 40 sites where more than 5 animals had been recorded. A fuller analysis will need to be undertaken on the NDMP data to determine whether 2007 was a good year or just an average year.

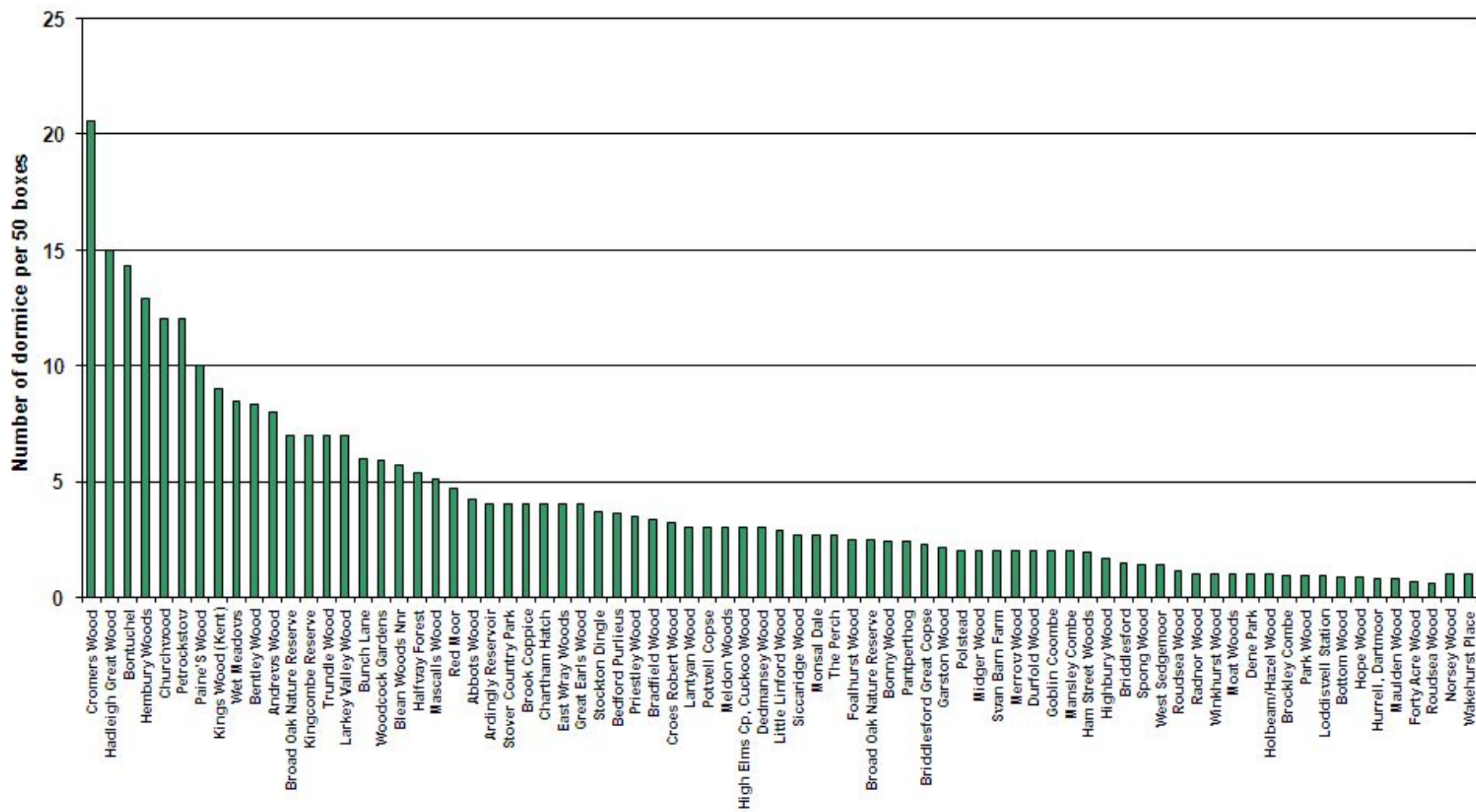
Ian White
Dormouse Officer
People’s Trust for Endangered Species

Other Mammal Species Found on Nest Box Checks 2007

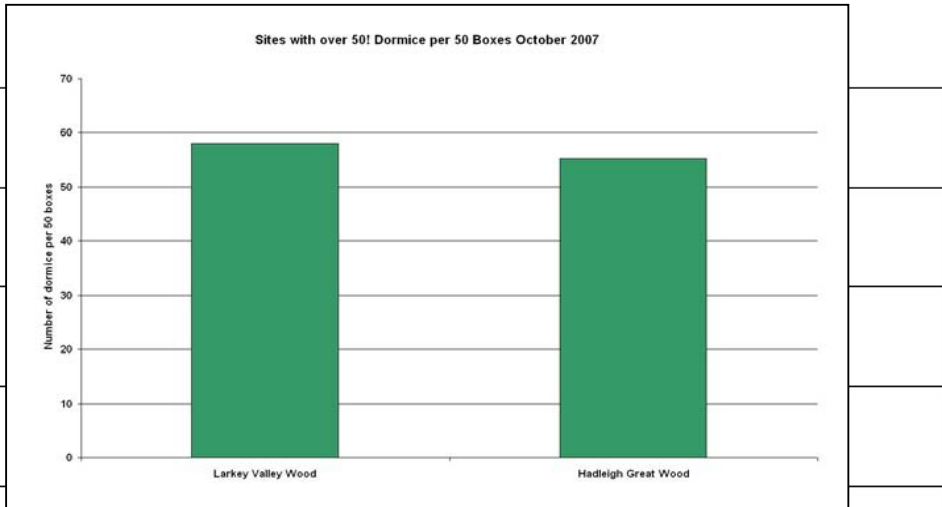
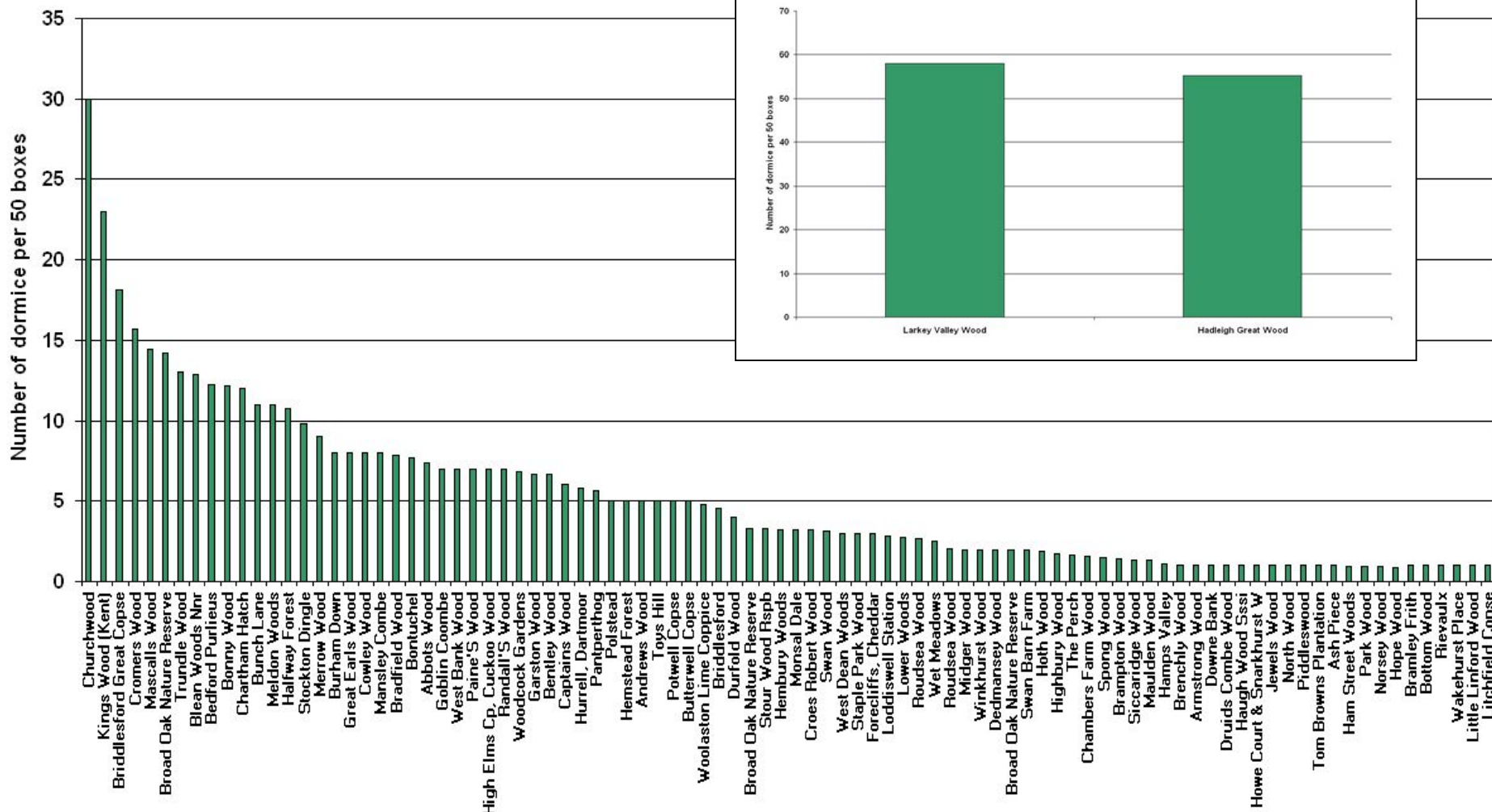
Wood Mouse	2032	64%
Yellow-necked Mouse	742	23%
Pygmy Shrew	145	5%
Brown Long-eared Bat	130	4%
Pipistrelle Bat sp	37	1%
Shrew sp	23	1%
Mouse sp	20	1%
Common Shrew	16	0.5%
Bank Vole	14	0.4%
Bat sp	11	0.3%
Vole sp	7	0.2%
Brown Rat	1	0.03%
Total	3178	



Number of Dormice per 50 Boxes June 2007



Number of Dormice per 50 Boxes October 2007



Plea for Poo!

Dear Dormouse Monitors

I am starting a PhD on dormouse conservation. Part of my project is dietary analysis of dormouse droppings. These will be examined under a microscope for any recognisable food remains, such as parts of insects, pollen and other plant parts.

Dropping analysis on bats and dormice in other projects have provided excellent results. I am hoping to compare the diet of dormice in different habitats and answer questions such as do dormice eat more insects in some habitats compared to others?

So, what I really need is dormouse poo! And that is where I hope that you can help? I would be really grateful if you could collect any dormouse droppings you come across during your usual monitoring and then send them to me.

I have been out helping with dormouse monitoring and had a lot of success; 5 out of 12 individuals provided samples in one day! The poo is often attached to them when torpid or the animals defecate whilst in the plastic bag.

If you are willing to collect and send samples to me, just let me know your address and I will send you sample bags, stamped SAEs and recording forms (a few details such as date and location are needed for each sample).

You can email me at: cherylmillsuk@yahoo.co.uk
or call me on: 01326 374 243 or 07962432524

Thank you and I look forward to receiving any dormouse droppings, as well as letting you know about my findings.

Cheryl Mills

The Seventh International Dormouse Conference



More than 120 people from 18 different countries are currently booked on the conference and there will be a range of interesting and varied papers as well as a day in the field. For more information about the programme (including a list of papers) and to make a late booking, contact:

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Programme

Thursday 25 September

Registration and welcome meal in evening

Friday 26 September

Session A: Population Studies

Session B: Predation and Parasites

Session C: Energy Consumption, Hibernation & Development

Saturday 27 September

Session D: Dormouse Monitoring

Session E: Workshop on monitoring of dormice for reporting to Brussels

Session F: Translocation, Reintroduction and Habitat Creation

Pig roast in evening

Sunday 28 September

10.00 - Field trip on Mendip Hills to look at various dormouse projects

Monday 29 September

Session G: Genetics

Session H: Nest Use and Ecology

Session I: Workshop on good practice guidelines for woodland management in relation to dormice.

Farewell meal in evening

Wednesday 1 October

Field meeting at edible dormouse project at Tring/Whipsnade