

# THE SOUTH WALES DORMOUSE SURVEY 2007



Dormouse © Kate Merry

## *The Dormouse*

*Dormice are small, nocturnal mammals weighing about the same as two £1 coins. Bright golden in colour, with a thick furry tail and large black eyes, they are easily distinguished from other small mammals.*

*Dormice are mainly ancient woodland specialists, preferring mature deciduous woodland with a wide variety of tree and shrub species. In South Wales they are often found in other habitats, including mature hedgerows, reedbeds, heathland and scrub.*

*They feed on flowers, pollen, fruit, insects and ripe nuts, and require a continuous availability of food throughout spring and summer; therefore hazel, honeysuckle and bramble are particularly important sources of food.*

## Why carry out a survey?

South Wales and the South West of England appear to be national strongholds for this species, although our knowledge of their distribution at a local level in South Wales is still quite poor.

By finding out where the dormice are we can focus action to protect their habitat. We can also try to improve this habitat by carrying out woodland management, linking up existing areas of good habitat or creating new areas.

## How to survey

Dormice are nocturnal and elusive so you are unlikely to come across them on a walk in the countryside. The easiest way to survey for them is by looking for hazelnut shells which have been opened by dormice. Although many other animals eat hazelnuts, dormice open them in a distinctive way. Use the 'nibbled nut' guide provided in this survey pack to identify the characteristics of opened nuts, and with little practice you should be able to identify nuts opened by dormice. Don't worry if you're unsure about the identification as you can send the nuts to an expert in your local area to check.

## What to do

- Identify an area of habitat which contains hazel bushes (see p.4 for help with identifying hazel). This may be a woodland, hedgerow or scrub area.
- Ask the landowner for permission to carry out the survey. Even if the area has a public footpath you should still ask for permission. We cannot use records obtained without the landowners consent.
- Search the ground underneath hazel bushes thoroughly for hazelnut shells. Collect all the shells you can find (children are particularly good at this bit) and bag them up for examination at home. Please remember to label the bag clearly so you know which site the nuts were from - this is really important.
- Use the guide and photographs provided to see if dormice have eaten any of the nuts you have collected. (You may find a hand lens useful for this).
- If you think any of the nuts you have collected have been eaten by dormice, send them to us for confirmation. If you are not sure, send them anyway and we will check them and let you know.
- When you post us your opened nuts, put them in something that will stop them getting crushed, such as an old film canister or matchbox. Send the survey form along with the nuts in a clearly labelled container.
- Don't leave the nuts too long before posting them as they will begin to rot.
- We will contact you to confirm whether any of the nuts you sent were opened by dormice.

# Dormouse Nut Survey Form

## Site details

*(If you are sending nuts from multiple sites, please ensure that nuts from each site are clearly labelled)*

Date of survey	
Name of survey area	
6 figure OS grid ref	<i>(Please send a sketch map if unable to supply a grid reference)</i>
Nearest town/village	
Habitat: Hedgerow / woodland / other (please describe)* delete as appropriate	

Please tick here to confirm that the landowner's permission was granted

*Please note that we can not use records unless consent was given for the survey.*

*All of our dormouse records will be shared with the South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre and the West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre.*

## Your details

Name	
Address (optional, to help us verify records)	
Postcode	
e-mail/Tel	

Gwent Wildlife Trust would like to send you information about their work and future public surveys. We may occasionally send you information about events, appeals, membership and other projects we undertake. Please tick here if you do not wish to receive this information.

Please send any hazelnuts you think may have been opened by dormice to:

*Caerphilly, Cardiff, Bridgend, Rhondda-Cynon-Taff, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath-Port Talbot, Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan.*

South Wales Dormouse Survey, Sarah Mellor, Bridgend Biodiversity Officer, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB.






*Blaenau Gwent, Newport, Brecon Beacons National Park, Monmouthshire and Torfaen.*

South Wales Dormouse Survey, Sorrel Jones, Gwent Wildlife Trust, Seddon House, Dingestow, Monmouth, NP25 4DY

*Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion*

South Wales Dormouse Survey, Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales, Welsh Wildlife Centre, Cilgerran, Cardigan, SA42 2TB.

## A guide to identifying nibbled nuts

Picture	Description	Identification
	The hole has a neat inner rim and the toothmarks are at an angle to the hole on the nut surface	Dormouse
	Neat parallel toothmarks on the inner rim of the hole but no toothmarks on the nut surface	Bank Vole
	Parallel toothmarks on the inner rim of the hole and rough marks on the nut surface	Woodmouse
	Nuts opened leaving jagged edges and half shells	Squirrels & birds
	Small hole less than 2mm across ( $\frac{1}{10}$ of an inch)	Insect



Wildlife Trust/R. Knott



bottom - squirrel, centre - dormouse, top left - bank vole and top right - woodmouse © Mike Clarke



Hazel © BCBC



Hazel Coppice © BCBC

## Information for landowners (*Optional*)

Thank you for granting permission for a dormouse survey to take place on your land. The cooperation of landowners is crucial to the success of the South Wales Dormouse Survey and your assistance is very much appreciated.

If you would like to receive more information about dormice and how to manage your land to benefit dormice, please fill out this form and return it to one of the addresses below.

Name	
Address	
Postcode	
e-mail/Tel	

*Your personal details will be held on internal databases only and not disclosed.*

***Caerphilly, Cardiff, Bridgend, Rhondda-Cynon-Taff, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath-Port Talbot, Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan.***

South Wales Dormouse Survey, Sarah Mellor, Bridgend Biodiversity Officer, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB.

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