

Historical distribution of the Garden Dormouse in Poland

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Abstract

The Garden Dormouse (*Eliomys quercinus*), is the rarest species of the Gliridae family in Central Europe. So far, information on the occurrence of this species in Poland is based mainly on historical data in the literature. The presence of the Garden Dormouse is additionally confused by the occurrence of the Forest Dormouse (*Dryomys nitedula*) of similar appearance. The range of both species overlap in Poland, and they have often been distinguished incorrectly.

The aim of the research was to critically analyse the known localities of the Garden Dormouse in Poland, using both literature data and museum collections. The analysis of museum collections indicated errors in species identification, where specimens of the Forest Dormouse were usually described as a Garden Dormouse. New, previously unknown, localities have also been found. Most numerous in the collections are specimens from the vicinity of Babia Góra (Western Carpathians), where 5 individuals were caught in the early 1960s. Another occurrence of the Garden Dormouse in the Carpathians was recorded in Zakopane in the second half of the 19th century. Another region of the species' occurrence is the area of Lusatia, in the lowland, western part of the country, where one specimen was found. The last specimen was found in Silesia in the first half of the 20th century. The remaining literature information should be considered uncertain. The last certain information about the occurrence of the Garden Dormouse in Poland comes from the 1960s from Zawoja (vicinity of Babia Góra) and since then, despite intensive searches in the 1970s and 1980s, this species has not been found in the localities where it was captured earlier. There have been significant changes in the landscape in the areas where the species historically occurred. The mosaic of mountain pastures, arable fields and small spruce forests, constituting a favourable habitat for the Garden Dormouse, has been replaced by beech forests, which are currently dominated by the Edible Dormouse (*Glis glis*).

Keywords

Garden dormouse, historical distribution, museum collections

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