

The contribution of dormice monitoring to the assessment of the conservation status of species in Latvia in accordance with IUCN criteria

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Abstract

In Latvia, four dormouse species have been recorded. In 2016 an annual monitoring of the Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) and Forest Dormouse (*Dryomys nitedula*) was commenced within the national *biodiversity monitoring* programme to obtain data that would allow assessment of the conservation status of those species and their habitats.

The nestbox method was used for the surveys, as it is equally suitable for collecting data on all four species of dormice. Since 2016, 133 temporary study plots with 5–15 nestboxes each, were established all over the country to record species presence. Seven additional permanent study plots collected data on population dynamics, each consisting of at least 50 nestboxes placed within a grid system at 50 m intervals.

No Garden Dormice (*Eliomys quercinus*) were recorded, supporting the presumption that this species has vanished in Latvia. A new location for Edible Dormouse (*Glis glis*) has been discovered. The Forest Dormouse is found exclusively in a small area near the Latvia-Belarus border, but Hazel Dormice found in Latvia are probably part of a metapopulation located to the south. No overlapping of distribution areas of species was found.

The previous assessment of dormouse species, according to outdated IUCN criteria, was done 20 years ago. Re-assessment according to current IUCN criteria, and using monitoring data, is now carried out within the recently commenced LIFE FOR SPECIES project (2021–2024). Preliminary assessments indicate that each dormouse species will be classified in different categories - ranging from Least Concern to Regionally Extinct.

Keywords

dormice, monitoring, IUCN, Latvia

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