

Hazel Dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) on the move in Nottinghamshire, England: A reintroduction success

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Abstract

Historical records from 1885 suggest that the Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) was once present in Nottinghamshire. However, the species was thought to have become locally extinct as recently as the 1950s. After a failed attempt in 1994 to reintroduce Hazel Dormice back to the county, the species was finally returned to three neighbouring woodlands in north Nottinghamshire as part of a three-year project in 2013/14/15, Treswell Wood, Eaton Wood, and Gamston Wood, respectively. Data collected as part of the National Dormouse Monitoring Programme (NDMP) indicate a stable population in all three of the Nottinghamshire reintroduction woodlands, whereas dormouse declines have been reported in many southern populations. The Nottinghamshire Dormouse Group employ a range of survey techniques to monitor the populations and surveys in neighbouring habitats have confirmed that the dormice are steadily dispersing into the wider landscape. Dormouse presence has now been confirmed in two additional woodlands, including one approximately 600m from the closest reintroduction site. Dormice have also been recorded inhabiting nestboxes within trackside vegetation along the East Coast Railway line, including a dormouse nest on the far side of the high-speed (100mph) railway line, confirming that at least one dormouse has crossed over the track. A 5-year, landscape-scale PIT-tagging project commenced in September 2021 with the primary aim of investigating the dispersal capabilities and seasonal movements of the dormice. The project scope will include the three reintroductions woodlands, all woodlands in between and the connecting hedgerows. The data will be used to inform future dormouse reintroductions.

Keywords

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