

Places to be: the Garden Dormouse (*Eliomys quercinus*) in south-western Germany

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Abstract

In Germany the Garden Dormouse (*Eliomys quercinus*) is assumed to have one of its main distributional areas in the south-western federal state of Baden-W  rttemberg. However, recent and detailed information from this area was lacking. In order to describe the actual distribution of the Garden Dormouse, and to characterize suitable habitats in this region, a monitoring study was conducted within the national biodiversity project "In Search of the Garden Dormouse" in 2021. Footprint tunnels and wildlife cameras were used to systematically investigate the occurrence of the species on 136 plots distributed over Baden-W  rttemberg. The data set was combined with Garden Dormouse records from a citizen science online reporting tool, registered between 2019 and 2021. The Garden Dormouse was found most frequently in the mountainous, conifer-rich Black Forest and in the settlements of the Mannheim-Heidelberg region. Another type of habitat was the dry deciduous forests bordering the river Rhine in the Southern Upper Rhine Valley. Only two isolated occurrences were detected in the eastern part of Baden-W  rttemberg. The results of this study show, that the distribution of the Garden Dormouse in South-West Germany is more limited than previously assumed. However, the diversity of the detected habitats is considerable, ranging from coniferous forests in higher altitudes to urban areas and almost sub-mediterranean deciduous forests. Further studies will focus on the ecology and biology of this species in the latter. For Germany this is an exceptional, but also threatened, habitat which may serve as a stepping stone to recolonize suitable forest habitats in the Rhine valley.

Keywords

Garden Dormouse, monitoring, habitat, Baden-W  rttemberg, In Search of the Garden Dormouse

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