

# The Dormouse Reintroduction Program in the UK

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## Abstract

Hazel Dormice have been lost from 17 English Counties over the past 150 years and the population has declined by 51% since the year 2000. The dormouse reintroduction program has been running since 1993 with the aim of restoring dormice to their native range in the UK. In the early years, a single dormouse population was released in a suitable woodland with the hope that it would occupy all available habitats in the release site and then start to disperse into the wider countryside. While this approach did have some successes, it also had some failures. The program was reviewed in 2014 and some amendments were proposed to the original protocol. A key amendment was to identify at least two woodlands at a site, in relatively close proximity, each suitable for a dormouse release and to undertake at least two reintroductions in an area. Further to the dormouse reintroductions, a landscape project would be established to improve connectivity between the woodlands. The longer-term aim is now to facilitate the creation of a dormouse metapopulation in an area rather than just hoping it would happen. This talk discusses the advantages and difficulties of this new approach and its successes and failures.

## Keywords

Hazel Dormouse, reintroduction, landscape connectivity, metapopulation

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## Conflicts of interest