

30 years of Dormouse Monitoring

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Abstract

The People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) owns a private woodland on the Isle of Wight (IoW) that is managed predominantly for woodland bats, Red Squirrels and Hazel Dormice. Dormice are considered to be widespread across the island in suitable habitat. The IoW is different from the mainland as it has no wild deer species. PTES has been monitoring dormice in its woodland since 1992, when nest boxes were first put up by Paul Bright. However, in spite of appropriate woodland management for dormice at the reserve, dormouse numbers there appear to be declining. This raised the question: “Is the apparent decline in dormice recorded in nest boxes, real or perceived?” If the decline was real, it may be necessary to reconsider management advice that we give for dormice. If the decline was perceived, then it may be necessary to reconsider advice that we give for monitoring dormice. The first challenge was to identify what the woodland may have looked like 30 years ago and identify why high numbers of dormice were recorded. We could then apply the known woodland management that was done in the intervening years, to determine why dormouse nest box occupancy changed by varying amounts in different parts of the wood. We were able to check some of our ideas using data from footprint tunnels and this work is ongoing in 2022. This talk will discuss woodland state, woodland management and dormouse nest box occupancy in a dormouse hotspot in southern England.

Keywords

Hazel Dormice, woodland management, nest box, footprint tunnels

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Conflicts of interest