

Dormouse Survey Information

Habitat

The 'optimal' habitat for dormice is perceived to be mixed deciduous woodland, coppiced hazel woodland with a long rotation and species rich hedgerows. However, dormice can also occur in species poor habitats and are known to inhabit conifer plantations, wet woodland, dense rhododendron, blackthorn scrub and reed beds.



Hazel dormouse ©Lorna Griffiths

Survey Techniques

A survey to determine present or likely absence of dormice should not be limited to 'optimal' habitat. Any projects that are within known dormouse range, and where woody habitat is to be affected should be surveyed for the presence of dormice.

Nut Hunt

Where hazel is present nut hunts can be undertaken to determine dormouse presence. This method involves searching five 10m x 10m quadrats for twenty minutes for gnawed hazelnuts or alternatively collecting 100 nuts that have been opened by small rodents. Unlike other small mammals dormice do not leave any transverse tooth marks across the rim of the nut shell, therefore dormouse opened nuts can be easily recognizable.

Nut searches should not be used as evidence of likely absence of dormouse.

Dormouse-chewed hazel nuts have a smooth inner rim with tooth marks at an angle to the hole on the nut surface and look a little like a clog.



Vole-chewed hazel nuts have teeth marks across the inner rim of the nut but don't leave any marks on the surface, around the edge of the hole.



Wood mouse-chewed hazel nuts have teeth marks both on the inner rim of the nut and also on the surface, around the edge of the hole.

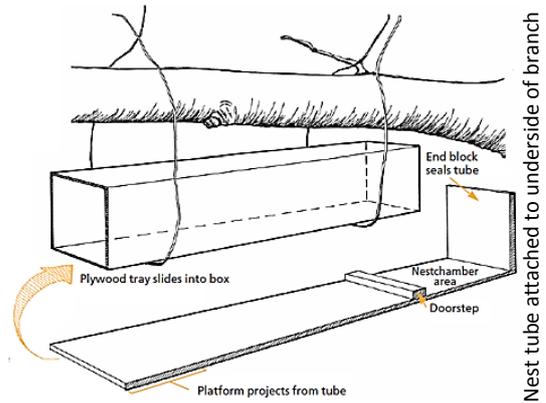


As squirrels and birds are larger and stronger than smaller rodents they simply crack a hazel nut open, shattering the shell.

Unique marks left by small mammals

Nest Tube Surveys

This technique involves deploying nest tubes within all suitable habitat on site, by attaching them to the underside of horizontal branches.



Using 50 nest tubes as a standard and the table below as an index of the 'value' of different months for surveying, a score can be devised as an indicator of the thoroughness of a survey. A sufficient number of tubes should be deployed over a time period to reach a probability score of 20, where possible in that season. Thus, 50 tubes left out for the whole season scores 25 (the sum of the indices for all 8 months), but 50 tubes left out in April, May and June scores only 7.

Likely absence should not be assumed on a score less than 20.

Month	Index of probability
April	1
May	4
June	2
July	2
August	5
September	7
October	2
November	2

Probability index of finding dormice in nest tubes in any one month

Survey Timing

The dormouse activity period is usually April to November. Ideally, nest-tubes should be in place as early as possible and throughout the active season to cover peak activity times.

To prevent the nuts from losing their diagnostic integrity nut hunts should ideally be undertaken between late August and December.

Dormouse Development Licence

If works are likely to damage or disturb dormice or their habitat a European Protected Species (EPS) licence is likely to be required. The EPS licence application requires the production of a method statement, completion of an EPS Application Form and the completion of a reasoned statement in support of the application. The method statement will require site specific mitigation.

Further information is available on our website at www.emec-ecology.co.uk.



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