

## **Dormice in Danger**

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust  
January 2018



Immortalised as the sleepy tea-party guest in Lewis Carroll's children's classic *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the hazel dormouse is a shy creature which is facing an uphill struggle to survive. Classified as a Priority Species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, over the last 20 years we've seen numbers plummet by a staggering 72% (Goodwin et al 2011), despite species protection.

One of the main reasons for this is the decline in its natural habitat over the past century: ancient woodland and hedgerows have been destroyed. This has resulted in fewer ways in which the dormice can move between populations to breed. Eventually each population becomes isolated; and more often than not it dies out.

The way woodland is managed has had a huge impact, as the hazel dormouse needs a varied habitat in order to thrive. The biggest contributor to this has been reductions in the practice of traditional coppicing (the careful cutting and pruning of trees and shrubs to encourage new growth). This has resulted in less of the diverse environments dormice need to survive.

### **What we plan to do**

We are first focussing on our nature reserves in Golden Valley, the Wye Valley, the Kilcot Valley and the Golden Triangle where we have small dormouse populations to:

- **Install nest boxes:** an initial priority is to put up more nest boxes in these locations. These warm and cosy boxes will be positioned about four feet up on tree trunks, providing ideal places for dormice to give birth and raise their young;
- **Restore coppicing:** by coppicing and fencing areas of woodland, the structure of the woodland will include younger and smaller trees and bushes which will provide space for other species to grow and for suitable habitat and food resources for the dormice; and
- **Manage hedgerows:** hedgerows between the nature reserves need to be carefully managed to make them more suitable for the hazel dormouse to spread and breed.

We are grateful to The Naturesave Trust for their support to help the humble dormouse.