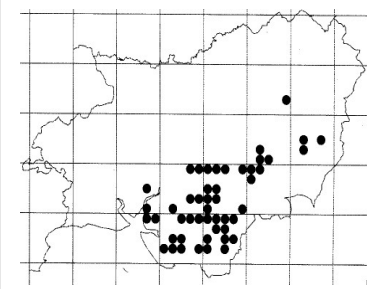
CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

DORMOUSE/ *MUSCARDINUS AVELLANARIUS*



Conservation objectives:
• Maintain and enhance dormice populations throughout its Carmarthenshire range.

What you can do to help:
• Report all signs of dormice to the county mammal recorder n.matthew@ccw.gov.uk.
• If you manage woodland in areas where dormice are known – seek advice on management for the species.
• Link up suitable habitat with species-rich hedgerows.

Further information:
www.mammal.org.uk/dormouse
www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk

In east Carmarthenshire the local Welsh word for dormouse is 'Pathor' and there is Welsh saying 'cyn dewed â pathew' – 'to be as fat as a dormouse'.

Ecology
The dormouse is a small nocturnal mammal that feeds mainly on nuts, fruit, flowers and insects, living almost all the year above ground in the canopy. They are typically associated with ancient coppiced woodland and small copses linked by species-rich hedgerows. Recently, however, they have also been recorded in coniferous plantations that have broadleaved trees, especially alongside watercourses. Dormouse numbers have declined significantly during the last 100 years.

Hazel nuts in particular are an important food that enables the mouse to put on weight prior to hibernation (from October to April in nests on the ground). The distinctively opened hazel nuts allow us to detect the presence of a dormouse.

They readily use nest boxes in the summer and this provides a good means of monitoring the animals in a specific area.

Distribution in Carmarthenshire
The county is something of a stronghold for dormice, especially in the coalfield area in the south east, where agriculture is less intensive and the habitat that dormice prefer occurs. Although the woodlands here are generally small, they are often linked by species-rich hedgerows, areas of scrub or riverine trees, allowing the dormice to move around and colonise new sites.

Legal status
Because of its vulnerable status the dormouse receives legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations 1994. This makes it illegal to kill, disturb, injure, capture or possess a dormouse, and to damage or destroy its nesting place.

Why is it in decline?
* Population isolation through habitat fragmentation/destruction.
* Decline of woodland management (particularly coppicing) and use by stock, which can damage the understorey vegetation and trample hibernating animals.
* Decline in traditional hedgerow management as well as hedgerow removal.

What is being done locally
* Nest box and habitat management project underway in county.
* Survey work being undertaken by Forestry Commission.

Where you can find dormice
Look for signs in woods and copses with well-developed understorey vegetation and species-rich hedges.

Cyngor Sir Gâr Carmarthenshire County Council
Bioamrywiaeth Cymru Biodiversity Wales
Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru Countryside Council for Wales
Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Welsh Assembly Government