



Mendip Hills
National
Landscape



Champion Species Fact Sheet

Hazel Dormouse
Muscardinus avellanarius



mendiphills-nl.org.uk/caring/nature-recovery-plan

Why a Champion Species?

- UK population has seen a 72% decline in last 50 years alone.
- UK and European Protected Species and S41 Threatened Species.
- They are a key indicator of a healthy ecosystem, their habitat and feeding needs are really varied and so their presence reflects this diversity. Their cuteness helps with public engagement!

Preferred habitat

- Deciduous woodland with understory.
- Hedgerows.
- Mixed scrub including hazel.



Best time to see

- As they are nocturnal (awake at night) and arboreal (tree top dwelling), you are unlikely to spot an active dormouse.
- They also hibernate for the winter, from late October through to the end of April.

Points of interest

- Although called the hazel dormouse, it has a very varied diet, from flowers and leaf buds to insects and rosehips. Hazel nuts are a food the dormouse eats in autumn to gain fat to survive winter.
- The way a dormouse opens a hazel nut is very distinctive and can be used to identify dormouse presence in a woodland. They use a twisting motion to gnaw through the shell and this leaves a distinctive braided pattern on the edge of the opened shell, and the hole is always circular!

Key threats

- They live at very low population densities and one female only has up to 4 young a year – unlike other mice! They are therefore very susceptible to loss and fragmentation of habitat through flailing or removing hedges, scrub clearance, and development of scrubland and roads, which lead to breaks in habitat connectivity.
- Poor woodland management (loss of coppicing, over clearance of understorey,
- deer browsing).
- Pesticide and herbicides use reduce invertebrate numbers and reduce foraging opportunities.

Where to find them



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