

# Dormouse

## Dormouse facts:

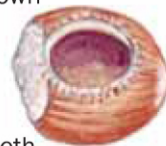
Dormice are endangered. In the last 100 years they have disappeared from over half of the areas they used to live. Often, this is because their habitat is lost when woodland is cut down and older trees with nest holes are removed. Putting up nest boxes has helped to bring them back in some areas.

Dormice are really cute with big eyes, a sandy-coloured coat and furry tails, sometimes with a white tip. If caught by a predator, the skin of the tail may come off allowing the dormouse to escape but it does grow back eventually. They are nocturnal and very shy so extremely hard to spot in the wild.



The name 'dormouse' comes from the same root as 'dormir', the French word for 'to sleep'. This is appropriate because they are one of only three species of British mammals that truly hibernate (along with bats and hedgehogs). Also, in early summer when there isn't much food available for them, dormice save energy by going into torpor, which is a very deep sleep. This is why the dormouse in Alice in Wonderland couldn't stay awake!

Dormice eat mainly flowers, nuts and berries so they love hawthorn, honeysuckle and especially hazelnuts - in some places they are known as Hazelmice. If you find a hazelnut shell with a round hole in it, you can find out whether a dormouse has eaten it by looking at the teeth marks around the edge of the hole.



Hazelnut image by Carol Roberts from *Guide to hedgerows* (© Field Studies Council). Available from [www.field-studies-council.org](http://www.field-studies-council.org)

Dormice weave a round nest, often out of honeysuckle bark, which they make in holes in trees. In recent years, many boxes have been put up for dormice and they will make their nests in these. They have only one or two litters a year, unlike woodmice which will have many litters in one year.



Hedgerows on organic farms are good places for dormice to feed and travel through, as they are not cut too often and produce lots of flowers and fruit.

Books about dormice:

The Dormouse by P Bright and P Morris, published by The Mammal Society  
Dormice by P Morris, published by Whittet Books

## Did you know...

Dormice live and forage in trees and avoid coming down to the ground except to hibernate. This makes it hard for them to be caught by predators so they can live for up to seven years, compared with mice or voles which rarely live more than six months.

## Your Pack challenge

Using this information, make a display about dormice and their conservation. You may want to find some pictures, as well as some honeysuckle, hawthorn, maybe a dormouse nest box (your local wildlife trust may have one of these) and some hazelnuts that have been eaten by dormice.



NB. Dormice are not found in Scotland. Instead of the dormouse, you may want to do a display about the pine marten or wildcat, both of which are endangered mammals found in Scotland. The Mammal Society produce cheap booklets about both of these, or you can look on the internet.

# cubs



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