

Dormouse report for the Friends of Stara Woods. November 2021



Well, perhaps it was too much to expect a repeat of last year's numbers of dormice using our boxes. This year, the spring weather was out of kilter somehow with hot and dry weather in April so growth held back and then it turned wet and cold. The dormice we found in the first three months were in torpor, a deep sleep which saves energy but not as profound as hibernation.

The numbers seen were slightly down but we saw only one brood up in Colquite in August so numbers wise, an autumn crash happened in September and August.

This might sound a little despondent but the seed and fruit crop has not been great this year so it is sensible to survive as an adult for next year, hopefully a better season. And the sounds of the ash felling, may have moved the dormice along from the river and up to quieter corners.

We met with our first trainees at the start of April when we were able to replace nine old boxes and put up six new ones. The torpid dormice were a delight for them to see and weigh while they stayed fast asleep and we feel that they now have enough experience (including from other site) to apply for their licences. And they will be back because not all will be running sites like Stara and we did enjoy some lovely days.



Next year a new trainee will start who has been very much a part of Stara for a long time...



On the left is a photo of one of the beautiful nests we found in May when the hazel leaves were still too small to make their usual green leafy nests. So, they turned to using Tamarisk Moss which meant a journey down to ground level which is a bit risky. They also collected brown leaves and loosely wove it all together with last years leaves of the woodrush.

And then added the small hazel as a signature and crept in, shut the door and curled up to sleep...

Thank you to all who support our work and who keep their dogs on leads when they see the notice. And, as Anne already announced my award from the Cornwall Mammal Group for work in voluntary conservation, which I accepted on behalf of the dormice, I would like to say thank you for allowing the nest boxes in and for all your help. And remember that this is all under licence from Natural England.

Jen Bousfield, lead monitor.