

Dormouse Distribution in Oxfordshire

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Introduction

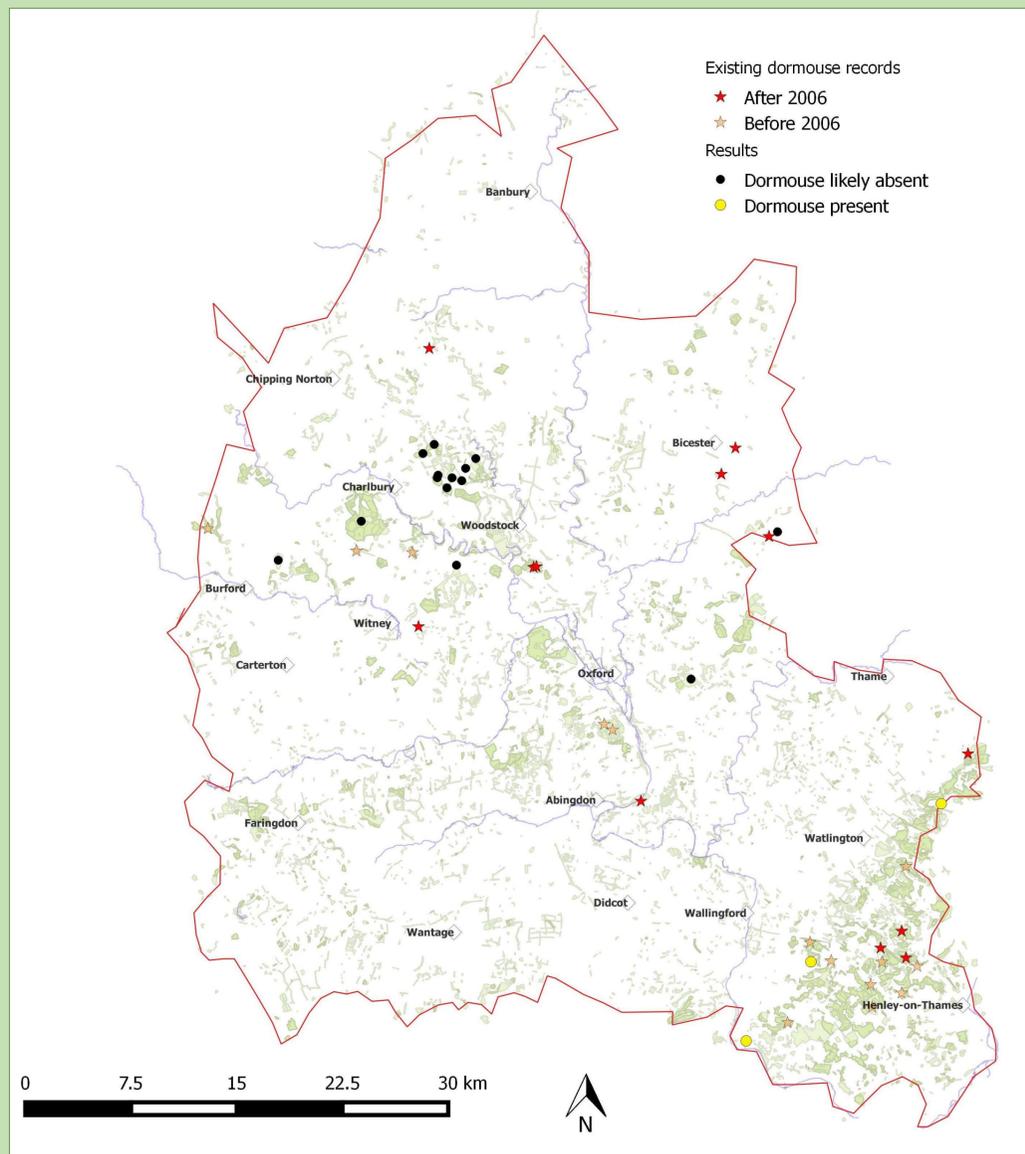
Within Oxfordshire dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* are under-recorded. It is uncertain whether this is down to a lack of survey effort or unsuitable habitat/ local extinctions.

This project aims to expand the current knowledge of dormouse distribution within the county, to inform conservation efforts for this species.



Methods

- Existing records were collected from the local record centre to add to Oxfordshire Mammal Group's existing knowledge.
- 16 woodlands were surveyed in areas of the county with no recent records of dormice.
- Survey methods followed the Dormouse Conservation Handbook¹.
- In each woodland 50-100 dormouse tubes or boxes were installed and checked monthly during the survey season in 2015. In 2016 the tubes were checked twice (April/ May and September/ October).
- A nut hunt was completed in 14 of the woodlands.



Results and Ongoing Work:

- Dormouse presence was proven in two woodlands without previous records, and one woodland without records since 2003.
- Dormice are assumed to be likely absent in the remaining woodlands.
- New woodlands will be surveyed in 2017 onwards.
- New survey methods, including camera traps and footprint tunnels, will be tried in future years in both likely absent woodlands and those with proven presence.
- A total of 62 volunteers helped out, giving a total of 754 volunteer hours.
- Landowner liaison is being undertaken, including contributing to woodland management plans, installation of nest boxes and ongoing dormouse conservation advice.
- Public engagement is being undertaken to increase awareness of dormice in Oxfordshire and to encourage incidental records and targeted nut hunts.
- Potential dormouse reintroduction sites in Oxfordshire are being discussed for the future conservation of this species.