

The Perch – Dormouse boxes
Shipham Gorge, Cheddar, Somerset
Kier

BIG Biodiversity Challenge Award category: Small Scale Permanent

Project overview

The aim of the project was to provide new and replacement nest boxes for dormouse in a woodland study area to provide information for the National Dormouse Monitoring Program.

The nest boxes in the study area are surveyed during the breeding season to record the number animals found and to micro chip the adults.

Nigel Beaver was asked to make new and replacement boxes for The Perch using a mixture of new and second hand wood.

What were the biodiversity conditions on site, prior to the enhancement?

Some of the original dormouse boxes made for the study area were decaying allowing rain to ingress into the boxes and therefore deterring dormouse from breeding in the boxes.

Were there any specific conditions that led to you carrying out this work?

Jamie Edmonds (Kier Environmental Manager) who helps manages The Perch needed to replace the defective boxes and install additional boxes to encourage dormice to breed in the study area. In addition to providing valuable information for the Somerset Wildlife Trust dormouse database, erecting the boxes also assists the population of dormice in Shipham Gorge to increase in numbers.

Dormouse numbers have been decreasing over a number of years due to a loss of habitat because of land required for development and changing farming practices.



Dormouse boxes being made by Nigel

What were the biodiversity measures taken?

Nigel Beaver has made circa 50 new and replacement dormouse nest boxes in his spare time using a mixture of new wood and wood which had previously been used on building projects.

Using a design recommended by the Peoples Trust for Endangered Species the boxes are made in his garage during the autumn and winter months and erected by volunteers in the early spring prior to the dormouse emerging from hibernation.

The nest boxes provide ideal locations in which dormice can breed in safety protected from their natural predators such as owls, foxes and weasels.



Dormouse boxes being checked during survey

How would you best describe the project?

Enhancement

Further information

The surveying and encouragement of dormouse to breed in Shipham Gorge is a long term project which contributes to maintaining a healthy breeding population in the area.

Hazel dormice are rare and vulnerable to extinction in the UK. They are a priority species in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. They are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

What was your personal motivation for carrying out the enhancement?

My motivation was that I had the opportunity to use some of the skills I have learnt to benefit wildlife in the area in which I live.



Dormouse found in nest box