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**DORMOUSE BOX SCHEME**

At the Annual General Meeting of the Mammal Society held at Hereford between 10th and 12th April 1987 a number of sessions were devoted to the common dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*. At one of these sessions, Paul Bright, a research assistant based at the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, London University, along with Doug Woods of Axbridge, Somerset, described a nest box scheme for this predominantly nocturnal and arboreal rodent. Doug Woods, of the Somerset Wildlife Trust, took the initiative and began erecting these boxes in Trust woodland reserves in the Mendip Hills. Soon, over half the boxes erected were used by the dormice in the summer months, but all were deserted in the winter months, for these animals seem to hibernate elsewhere. Subsequent mark, release and recapture field work in these areas, carried out under licence, under the provision of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, by Paul Bright, showed that the box experiments were increasing the local populations of dormice. Similar work, on the dormouse populations, has been carried out by S. Whitbread (Morris and Whitbread 1986) on the Isle of Wight using a simple galvanised iron wire cage trap.

Gordon Woodroffe and myself were present at this A.G.M., and were most impressed by this dormouse box scheme. We decided that we would like to launch a similar scheme in Yorkshire. Identifying the dormouse and its whereabouts in the field is extremely difficult, and, according to Doug Woods, the box scheme is one way of establishing the fact that the mammal is in an area. According to Colin Howes (1985), one of the traditional sites for the dormouse in Yorkshire has been in the North York Moors districts, especially on the Corallian limestone escarpments, where hazel woodland is still to be found. The hazel nut, along with acorns and chestnuts, are an important source of food prior to hibernation (Corbet 1977).

Accordingly, we approached the warden of the National Trust property at Rievaulx, Graham Tooze, who was delighted to cooperate in the dormouse box scheme. It was decided to erect boxes in the woodlands of the Terraces overlooking the Abbey, an area in which, according to Roy Brown (pers. comm. 1987), the dormouse is to be found. On 12th November 1987, we, along with Nigel Robinson, erected 7 boxes as a pilot scheme. The boxes, constructed with wood provided by the National Trust, were made by patients at Clifton Hospital's rehabilitation centre, under the supervision of Mr Hickman. Dormouse nest boxes look like bird boxes, but the entrance hole, which is much larger than that on a bird box, is on the reverse side of the box. The hole is held away from the tree trunk by two wooden batons, thus the dormouse gains access from behind the box. The Rievaulx boxes, which are all south facing, are attached to mature trees about 1.5 metres from the ground and several metres apart from each other. The boxes are not accessible