

Ian Brooker

Surveying the dormice in Meldon Woods.

We're involved with a National Dormouse survey scheme there, their territories have reduced over the years, woodlands have become neglected, certain habitats have been lost and the good old dormouse is very susceptible to change in climate as well, so their numbers have reduced. But its nice to be part of that scheme, there are 50 boxes that are put up on the trees, they're regularly monitored once a month to see what's using them, what sort of young are being produced each year. But of course they are a protected species so you have to have a licence to do this work, but we've involved local children in looking at those, we've involved local people coming to give us a hand doing the survey work and its helped the Parish Council understand how important that woodland is. And the joy from our point of view is you can actually look for their food supply, which is mainly the hazel nuts, they do eat flowers and fruits as well, but they eat them in a certain way and that means we can actually tell the good old dormice are here, because most of the time they're nocturnal, they're out at night when you don't see them, so having the dormice scheme we tend to see them in their wonderful torpid state, when they're actually curled up into little balls with their lovely furry tails wrapped round them, and people love that, its great, it's the sort of thing you see in Alice in Wonderland