



**Hazel Dormouse Survey**

Petersfield Heath

July 2019

## Hazel Dormouse Survey

Petersfield Heath

10/07/2019

South Downs National Park Authority

Western Downs Area Office

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## Non-technical Summary

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This dormouse survey report forms part of a suite of protected species surveys undertaken by Phlorum which were commissioned by the South Downs National Park Authority across land at Petersfield Heath, Hampshire. This survey assessed the land at Petersfield Heath for signs indicating the presence or absence of hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) and was carried out over the survey period between July 2018 and May 2019.

The survey site is situated at Petersfield Heath, Hampshire, to the south-east of Petersfield, approximately 1.3km south-east of Petersfield town centre. Suitable habitats within Petersfield Heath were surveyed for signs of hazel dormice. The survey area extended over approximately 23 hectares (ha).

The main findings of the survey are as follows:

- The habitat suitability assessment categorised on-site woodland areas and on and off-site hedgerows as Grade 2 and Grade 3 habitat, offering **medium** to **low** potential to support hazel dormouse.
- During the six survey visits completed, no evidence of hazel dormice within the site have been observed.
- Following current guidance, a search effort score of at least 20 must be achieved for the survey, to assume absence. The six surveys completed provide a search effort score of 21.
- Based on the results of the survey, lack of secondary signs and the medium to low suitability of the habitat present, it is considered that hazel dormice are not present on the site.
- Larger adjacent areas of woodland and connecting hedgerows provide some potential for dormouse within the wider landscape. The recommendations section includes some management recommendations to increase the chances of hazel dormouse being able to reach the site and breed there.

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# 1. Introduction

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## Background

- 1.1 This hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) survey forms one of a suite of protected species surveys undertaken by Phlorum Ltd which were commissioned by the South Downs National Park Authority across land at Petersfield Heath (hereafter referred to as "the site").
- 1.2 The report provides an interim assessment of the status of hazel dormouse at the site, providing information on the presence / likely absence and distribution.
- 1.3 The survey was carried out during suitable survey months between July 2018 and May 2019.

## Site Description

- 1.4 The survey site is situated at Petersfield Heath, Hampshire, to the south-east of Petersfield, approximately 1.3km south-east of Petersfield town centre. The site can be accessed on foot from many points but the car park is situated to the south of the site and accessed via the B2146 Sussex Road.
- 1.5 Habitats within Petersfield Heath were surveyed for signs of hazel dormouse. The site comprised of Heath Pond in the south-west of the site together with some amenity grassland, scattered trees, heathland, woodland, scrub and ditches. Buildings within the site area included the Plump Duck Coffee shop, Little School by the Lake day care centre and a building associated with a cricket pitch.
- 1.6 Within the immediate surrounds the site is predominantly encircled by residential properties forming the outskirts of Petersfield. At the southern corner of the site lies Petersfield pay and play golf course with some adjacent heathland and to the east there is arable land.
- 1.7 The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is SU75493 22929. The site extends over approximately 35.6 hectares (ha).

## 2. Methodology

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### Data Search

- 2.1 Records for hazel dormouse from within a 2km radius of the site were obtained from the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) (HBIC, 2019).

### Hazel Dormouse Survey

- 2.2 On-site habitats with potential to support dormice were included in the habitat suitability assessment and nest tube survey.

#### **Habitat Suitability Assessment**

- 2.3 An assessment of habitats with potential to support dormice was carried out. This assessment was based on habitat structure and connectivity. Habitats such as woodland and dense and mature scrub are considered more suitable to support dormouse than other habitats that lack arboreal linkage, such as grassland or scattered trees (Natural England, 2006). In addition, Ordnance Survey maps and aerial maps were used to establish the connectivity of on-site woodland and hedgerows to any large areas of off-site woodland and significant hedgerow networks within the surrounding landscape. The aim of this was to identify off-site habitat (in particular ancient woodland) that had the potential to support core populations of dormice. The habitats on site are more likely to be used by dormice if they are connected or adjacent to areas that support large self-sustaining populations. Therefore, identifying areas of off-site habitat with suitability for large dormouse populations helps to identify the potential value of on-site habitats for the species.
- 2.4 The 'value' placed on each habitat type was partly dependent upon its linkage to other suitable habitat of adequate size to support a viable dormouse population. It is thought that even within good habitat, woods smaller than 20ha are less likely to contain dormice than larger sites, unless they are linked to other areas of suitable habitat (Natural England, 2006).
- 2.5 All this information was used to score woodland and hedgerows within the site with an evaluation of 'high' (Grade 1), 'medium' (Grade 2) or 'low' (Grade 3) value, according to their suitability for dormice (see Figure 1 – Appendix A). The habitat suitability assessment cannot be applied to areas of scrub therefore on-site scrub have been omitted from the habitat suitability assessment although these areas were included in the nest tube survey.

#### Grade 1 Habitat

- 2.6 Woodland with the following features:

- High species diversity for food provision including an abundance of fruiting hazel and a wide range of other broadleaved species that provide soft mast fruits throughout summer months (must contain at least three species from hazel (*Corylus avellana*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and oak (*Quercus* sp.);
- Species-rich edge strips or ride sides which are known to be important localities for nesting;
- Good structural diversity and density for the provision of shelter and protection, including woodland with a wide age range of trees and a species-rich scrub layer (with hazel, honeysuckle or bramble present); and
- Good arboreal connectivity between adjacent suitable habitat and of a viable size to support dormouse populations, i.e. at least 20 ha in size or smaller woodlands that have good connectivity with adjacent woodland.

2.7 Hedgerows with the following features:

- At least a 3m width and preferably 4m to 5m in height (Bright & MacPherson 2002);
- No active yearly management, as hedgerow management has a strong negative effect on dormouse density (Bright & MacPherson, 2002);
- A high shrub diversity (5+) with a varied production of nuts and soft mast; and
- Good connectivity to adjacent hedgerows and areas of woodland and good continuity (i.e. no gaps in the hedgerow).

Grade 2 Habitat

2.8 Woodland with the following features:

- Medium species diversity for food provision, including some limited fruiting hazel, honeysuckle, bramble and /or oak; and/or dominated by one of these four species with the other species occurring occasionally;
- Absence of species-rich edge strips or ride sides;
- Moderate structural diversity and density for the provision of shelter and protection with either:
  - 1) Species rich scrub layer, dominated by immature trees providing little structural diversity with occasional mature oak standards; or
  - 2) A wide age range of trees but little understorey due to dense canopy cover and shading effects; and
- Limited arboreal connectivity between adjacent suitable habitat and of a restricted size to support dormouse populations, i.e. between two and 20ha in size or interlinking fragments of woodland that equate to this size.

2.9 Hedgerows with the following features:

- Of less than optimum height and width for dormice, averaging between 2m to 3m in width and 3m to 4m in height;

- No active yearly management but there with evidence of recent historic management: Even cutting at 5-year intervals may remove most of the fruiting hazel (Natural England, 2006);
- A medium shrub diversity, especially those recently planted and dominated by hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), which reduces food availability across summer months; and
- Some connectivity with adjacent hedgerows and but only connected to small areas of woodland and /or the hedgerow contains some gaps of 2m+.

### Grade 3 Habitat

2.10 Woodland with the following features:

- Limited species diversity for food provision, including no fruiting broadleaved trees and hazel, honeysuckle, bramble and oak all very occasional or absent;
- Absence of species-rich edge strips or ride sides;
- Poor structural diversity and density for provision of shelter and protection with either:
  - 1) Dense even aged canopy cover with heavy shading preventing species from fruiting and/ or
  - 2) Species poor scrub layer with no understorey and high visibility; and
- No arboreal connectivity between adjacent suitable habitat and less than 2 ha in size.

2.11 Hedgerows with the following features:

- Less than optimum height and width for dormice, averaging between 1m to 2m in width and 2m to 3m in height;
- Active yearly management;
- A poor shrub diversity, dominated by one species (in particular hawthorn) and lacking alternative feeding opportunities for dormice; and
- No connectivity with adjacent hedgerows or small areas of woodland and / or some connectivity but hedgerow contains gaps of 2-6m.

### **Nest Tube Survey**

2.12 The survey protocol followed accepted standards for dormouse surveys as set out in The Dormouse Conservation handbook (2006) and Natural England (2015).

2.13 The survey involved installing a series of nest tubes throughout all potentially suitable on-site and immediately adjacent habitat where access permitted.

2.14 A total of 100 nest tubes were distributed on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2018 throughout areas of potentially suitable habitat, including hedgerows, trees and areas of scrub. Nest tubes were of standard design, sourced from a wildlife survey equipment company and secured in place using cable ties. These were spaced out at approximately 15m intervals within each discrete area of suitable habitat (See Figure 1 – Appendix A).

- 2.15 A score can be devised using the index of probability devised for nest tube surveys as an indicator of the thoroughness of a survey. This index provides a 'value' associated with the different months for surveying, based on 100 nest tubes being used at the site. This is shown in Table 1 below.
- 2.16 A search effort score of at least 20 is required in order to be able to satisfactorily assume absence.
- 2.17 A total of six survey visits were undertaken once a month during suitable survey months between July 2018 and May 2019 in order to ensure a sufficient level of search effort. Nest tubes were checked during appropriate weather conditions, that is, checks avoided heavy rain immediately prior to, during or immediately following the survey.

**Table 1: Index of probability of finding dormice in nest tubes in any one month**

Month	Index of Probability
April	1
May	4
June	2
July	2
August	5
September	7
October	2
November	2

## Constraints

### Data Search Constraints

- 2.18 It is important to note that, even where data is held, a lack of records for a defined geographical area does not necessarily mean that there is a lack of ecological interest; the area may be simply under-recorded.

### Hazel Dormouse Survey Constraints

- 2.19 The survey was carried out in accordance with current survey guidelines and was considered sufficiently rigorous to determine the presence/likely absence and distribution of the hazel dormouse within the proposed development site at that time.

- 2.20 During the course of the survey it was not possible to survey some tubes due to vandalism and destruction by a fire on the heathland in the summer of 2018. It was estimated that vandalism and fire damage caused up to 20% of tubes to be excluded from the survey.

## 3. Results

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### Data Search

- 3.1 The data search commissioned as part of the initial habitat survey returned results for hazel dormouse within 2km of the site. There were 6 recent records within 2km of the site between 2010 and 2017, but as these records are location sensitive the location and distance from the site are not known.

### Overview

- 3.2 Suitable dormouse habitat within the site included woodland blocks containing a mixture of species which included oak (*Quercus* sp.), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) in the canopy. The understorey component of these woodland blocks was extremely variable, from no significant understorey in the strip of woodland to the south west of Heath Pond to a dense understorey of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) in the north east of the site. The ground flora was variable, and in places dominated by ivy (*Hedera helix*).
- 3.3 Woodland habitat in Petersfield Heath supported medium species diversity for food provision and was considered to provide moderate structural diversity for nesting and foraging due to a patchy shrub layer. Unfortunately there was no arboreal connectivity between the woodland on site and other woodland blocks surrounding the site, the closest blocks of woodland to the site are Nursted Copse approximately 700m south west, and riparian woodland adjacent to the River Rother approximately 830m north east of the site.
- 3.4 The hedgerows present along parts of the northern and eastern boundary of the site were generally considered to be of low species diversity and lacked an abundance of the species more favoured by dormice. In addition to this they were too disconnected from woodland blocks in the wider surrounds, too narrow and too frequently cut to offer suitable habitat for dormice and they were therefore not included in the survey.

### Habitat Suitability Assessment

- 3.5 Within the site the woodland blocks were often small and poorly connected.
- 3.6 The results of the habitat suitability assessment identified the on-site woodland blocks as being of Grade 2 and 3 habitat considered to offer **medium** and **low** potential respectively to support hazel dormice. These grades were derived essentially from the size of these woodland blocks despite the fact that their medium species diversity and moderate structural diversity structure offered reasonable dormouse habitat.
- 3.7 There was no Grade 1 habitat of more than 20 hectares (ha) in extent on site.

- 3.8 The largest woodland block was Grade 2 habitat in the north eastern corner of the site which covered approximately 4ha. Two other blocks of Grade 2 habitat are present in the south eastern part of the site, one adjacent to Heath Pond covering approximately 2.7ha and one adjacent to the eastern site boundary covering approximately 2ha.
- 3.9 The remaining six areas of woodland surveyed varied in size from 0.07ha up to 1ha and were all Grade 3 habitat.

### **Nest Tube Survey**

- 3.10 During the six survey visits completed no evidence of hazel dormouse was found. Survey results are provided in Appendix C.
- 3.11 Yellow-necked mouse (*Apodemus flavicollis*) were recorded on two visits (August and September 2018) using the tubes.
- 3.12 On the November 2018 visit the remains of a leafy nest were found, this was not typical of a dormouse nest and was considered more likely to be the nest of a yellow-necked mouse or wood mouse (*Apodemus sylvatica*).
- 3.13 Some tubes were also used by birds, droppings and feathers were frequently seen, and two nests with fledglings, possibly blue tit (*Parus caeruleus*) were recorded during the 6<sup>th</sup> visit in May 2019.
- 3.14 During the course of the survey it was not possible to survey some tubes due to vandalism and destruction by a fire on the heathland in the summer of 2018. It was estimated that vandalism and fire damage caused up to 20% of tubes to be excluded from the survey.

## 4. Discussion and Recommendations

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### Discussion

- 4.1 The habitat suitability assessment categorised on-site woodland areas as Grade 2 habitat and Grade 3 habitat, offering medium and low potential to support hazel dormouse.
- 4.2 During the six survey visits completed, no evidence of hazel dormice within woodland habitats within the site have been observed. Two yellow-necked wood mice were recorded on two separate visits but no nests were recorded. Nesting birds, possibly blue tits, raised fledglings in two of the nesting tubes.
- 4.3 Based on current guidance, a search effort score of at least 20 must be achieved for the survey, to assume absence. The surveys carried out at Petersfield Heath in July, August, September and November 2018 together with those in April and May 2019 provided a total score of 21.
- 4.4 Based on the results of the survey and the medium to low suitability of the habitat present, it is considered that hazel dormice are not present on the site.
- 4.5 Larger adjacent areas of woodland and connecting hedgerows provide some potential for dormouse within the wider landscape.

### Recommendations

- 4.6 The hazel dormouse is protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (For further relevant legislation see Appendix B).
- 4.7 The best dormouse sites are usually found in extensive ancient semi-natural woodland with a dense shrubby understorey and a relatively open canopy. Within such woodland a selection of rides and glades edged with fruiting trees and shrubs offering a diversity of both species and structure provide optimum conditions for dormice. Particularly valuable food sources are provided by hazel (*Corylus avellana*), oak (*Quercus* sp.), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*). Along rides and footpaths there should be frequent narrower points where trees touch from either side, approximately every 75-100m, providing a network of arboreal routes allowing the free movement of dormice without them needing to come to the ground. Dormouse do not normally travel more than 70m from their nests and an average density is between 1.75-2.5 adults per hectare. Small woods will contain few individuals, perhaps not enough for a viable population unless the site is connected to a larger area of suitable habitat.
- 4.8 Good existing dormouse features already present on site include:
  -  Frequent mature, ivy clad and rotten trees offering nesting holes;

- The presence of the majority of tree and shrub species considered to be valuable to dormice;
  - A wide age range of trees; and
  - Species-rich edge strips;
- 4.9 Dormice are particularly sensitive to habitat and population fragmentation and there is likely to be more than one reason why dormice were not found during this survey at Petersfield Heath. Some of these reasons could include:
- Dormice are easily overlooked even where present;
  - The woodland blocks present are generally too fragmented and small;
  - The site is somewhat isolated from woodland blocks beyond the site by the busy roads on the site boundaries;
  - The risk of hibernating dormice being trampled by visitors and dogs; and
  - Squirrels may be out-competing dormice for food at this site.
- 4.10 Habitat management to increase the chances of dormice being able to reach the site and breed there could include:
- Management to allow existing woodland blocks to merge, either through fencing areas off and through a lack of management allowing them to follow the natural stages of succession towards woodland; or by the strategic planting of native tree and shrub species already present here to merge woodland blocks into larger areas;
  - Management to retain glades and pathways to provide edge structure and allow fruiting trees and shrubs to thrive in these unshaded areas.
  - Management to enhance the existing hedgerows on site by planting up gaps and encouraging a mixture of at least five tree and shrub species including hawthorn, hazel, honeysuckle and bramble. Management to encourage trees within the hedgerow would also offer opportunities to create aboreal links with trees outside the site.
  - Encourage management of trees and hedgerows beyond the site to provide suitable corridors for dormouse enhancing connectivity between the site and larger woodland areas in the wider landscape.

## 5. Conclusions

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### Conclusions

- 5.1 The habitat suitability assessment categorised on-site woodland areas as Grade 2 and Grade 3 habitat, offering medium to low potential to support hazel dormouse. Hedgerows were considered to be unsuitable for dormouse habitat.
- 5.2 During the six survey visits completed, no evidence of hazel dormice within the site have been observed.
- 5.3 Following current guidance, a search effort score of at least 20 must be achieved for the survey, to assume absence. The six surveys completed provide a search effort score of 21.
- 5.4 Based on the results of the survey and the medium to low suitability of the habitat present, it is considered that hazel dormice are not present on the site.
- 5.5 Larger adjacent areas of woodland and connecting hedgerows provide some potential for dormouse within the wider landscape. The recommendations section includes some management recommendations to increase the chances of hazel dormouse being able to reach the site and breed there.

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- Natural England (2015). *Natural England Standing Advice—Standing advice for local planning authorities to assess the impacts of development on hazel dormice*. Peterborough: Natural England.
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## Figures and Appendices

## Appendix A

### Hazel Dormouse Survey Map



**Legend**

- **Site Boundary**
- **Grade 3 - low**
- **Grade 2 - medium**
- **Dormouse tubes**



**Figure 1: Dormouse Survey, Petersfield Heath**

Drawn by: HF  
 On the: 10/07/2019  
 Not to Scale  
 Job No. 7826



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## Appendix B

### Legislation

## Legislation

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This section contains information pertaining to the legislation and planning policy applicable in Britain. This information is not applicable to Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands. Information contained in the following appendix is provided for guidance only.

### Species

The objective of the EC Habitats Directive<sup>1</sup> is to conserve plants and animals which are considered to be rare across Europe. The Directive is transposed into UK law by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) (formerly The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) and The Offshore Marine Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2007 (as amended).

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) implements the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) and also implements the obligations set out for species protection from the Council Directive 2009/147/EC (formerly 79/409/EEC) on the Conservation of Wild Birds (EC Birds Directive) in Great Britain.

Various amendments have been made since the Wildlife & Countryside Act came into force in 1981. Further details pertaining to alterations of the Act can be found on the following website: [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk). Key amendments have been made through the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000) and Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

There are a number of other legislative Acts affording protection to species and habitats. These include:

-  Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000;
-  Deer Act 1991;
-  Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;
-  Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and
-  Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.

### Hazel Dormouse

The hazel dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) is fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 through its inclusion on Schedule 2. Regulation 41 prohibits:

-  deliberate killing, injuring or capturing;

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<sup>1</sup> Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora.

- deliberate disturbance as to impair its ability:
  - (i) to survive, breed, or reproduce, or to rear or nurture young; and
  - (ii) to hibernate or migrate.
- deliberate disturbance as to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species;
- damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place; and
- keeping, transporting, selling, exchanging or offering for sale whether live or dead or of any part of this species.

The hazel dormouse is also currently protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) through its inclusion on Schedule 5. Under this Act, this species is additionally protected from:

- intentional or reckless disturbance;
- intentional or reckless obstruction of access to any place of shelter or protection; and
- selling, offering or exposing for sale, possession or transporting for purpose of sale.

A European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) Licence issued by Natural England will be required for works liable to affect dormouse breeding or resting places (N.B. this is usually taken to mean dormouse 'habitat') or for operations likely to result in a level of disturbance which might impair their ability to undertake those activities mentioned above. The licence will allow derogation from the relevant legislation but will also to enable appropriate mitigation measures to be put in place and monitored.

## Appendix C

### Survey Data

**Dormouse Survey Form: Survey 1**

Date:	16 July 2018		
Job Number:	7826	Surveyor:	Hayley Fuller
Site/Reference:	Petersfield Heath	Weather:	24°C, no rain, 1/8 cloud cover 3- Beaufort
Nests recorded	No	Details N/A	
Dormouse found	No	Details N/A	
Comments:	All tubes were empty.		

**Dormouse Survey Form: Survey 2**

Date:	22 August 2018		
Job Number:	7826	Surveyor:	Hayley Fuller
Site/Reference:	Petersfield Heath	Weather:	24°C, No rain, 6/8 cloud cover 3 - Beaufort
Nests recorded	No	Details N/A	
Dormouse found	No	Details N/A	
Comments:	1 Yellow Necked Mouse in tube but no nest.		

**Dormouse Survey Form: Survey 3**

Date:	24 September 2018		
Job Number:	7826	Surveyor:	Hayley Fuller
Site/Reference:	Petersfield Heath	Weather:	15°C, no rain, 1/8 cloud cover 3 Beaufort
Nests recorded	No	Details N/A	
Dormouse found	No	Details N/A	
Comments:	1 yellow neck mouse in tube, no nest.		

### Dormouse Survey Form: Survey 4

Date:	30 November 2018		
Job Number:	7826	Surveyor:	Hayley Fuller
Site/Reference:	Petersfield Heath	Weather:	10°C, no rain 1/8 cloud cover 3 Beaufort
Nests recorded	No	Details N/A	
Dormouse found	No	Details N/A	
Comments:	Tube 10 contained lots of acorns, some eaten. None indicated the presence of dormouse.		

### Dormouse Survey Form: Survey 5

Date:	10 April 2019		
Job Number:	7826	Surveyor:	Hayley Fuller
Site/Reference:	Petersfield Heath	Weather:	13°C, no rain 1/8 cloud cover 2 Beaufort
Nests recorded	No	Details N/A	
Dormouse found	No	Details N/A	
Comments:	Tube 10 contained lots of acorns, some eaten. None indicated the presence of dormouse.  Many tubes contained bird feathers and droppings.		

### Dormouse Survey Form: Survey 6

Date:	9 May 2019		
Job Number:	7826	Surveyor:	Eddie Burns
Site/Reference:	Petersfield Heath	Weather:	13°C, some rain at end of survey 4/8 cloud cover, 4 Beaufort
Nests recorded	No	Details N/A	
Dormouse found	No	Details N/A	
Comments:	Tubes 23 and 84 : Birds nests with fledglings, possible Blue Tit.		

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