

## DORMOUSE



The dormouse is a tiny mouse – its body is only 8 cm long – that spends all of its life in trees and shrubs. The dormouse gets its name from the Latin word *dormire* meaning to sleep. This is because the dormouse spends its daytime asleep in its nest. At night the dormouse spends its time searching for food in the treetops. It is well equipped for its lifestyle having an excellent sense of hearing and two large round eyes – typical of many nocturnal (night-living) animals. The feet of a dormouse also have cushioned pads which help it to grip branches and twigs.

The dormouse sleeps through the winter in a nest it makes for itself. This special sleep is called hibernation. Hibernation lasts from October to April. To prepare for hibernation the dormouse eats lots of food – nuts, flowers and insects – and doubles its body weight. The reserves of fat it builds up through this over eating will be used up during the long sleep.



The dormouse is rare in Britain and as a result it is fully protected by law. They are found mostly in the southwest of England and Wales. Its decline is thought to be due to loss of ancient woodlands and hedgerows in the countryside.

