

Edible Dormouse

Species Description

Scientific name: *Glis glis*

AKA: Fat Dormouse, Spanish Rat, Sleeper, Pathew Tew (Welsh)

Native to: Continental Europe

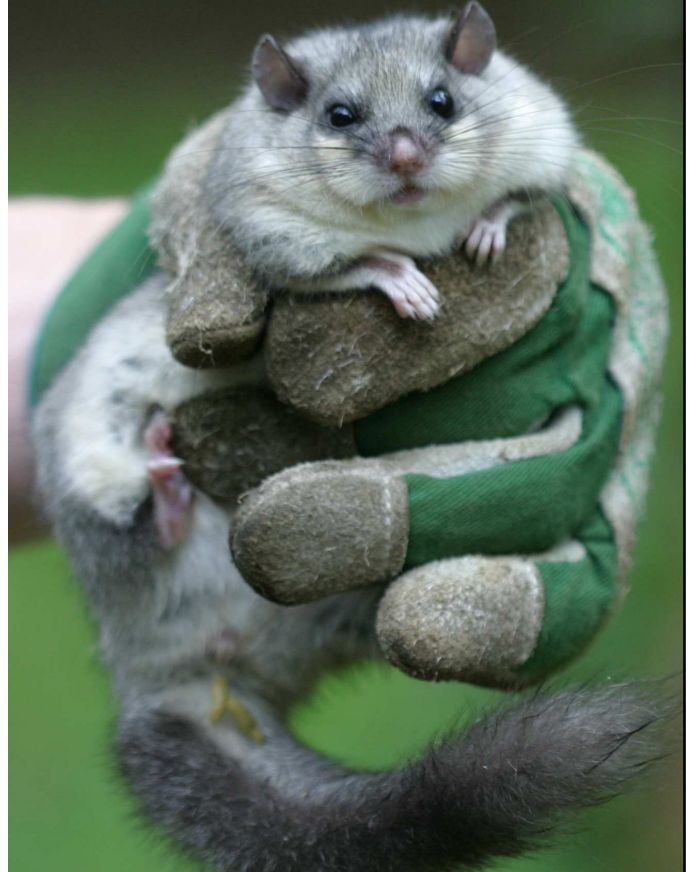
Habitat: Mature deciduous and mixed woodlands, gardens and orchards

Field signs are important in aiding identification as this is not an easy rodent to see due to nocturnal nature. The most likely species to confuse it with is the grey squirrel. It is quite dissimilar from the native common dormouse.

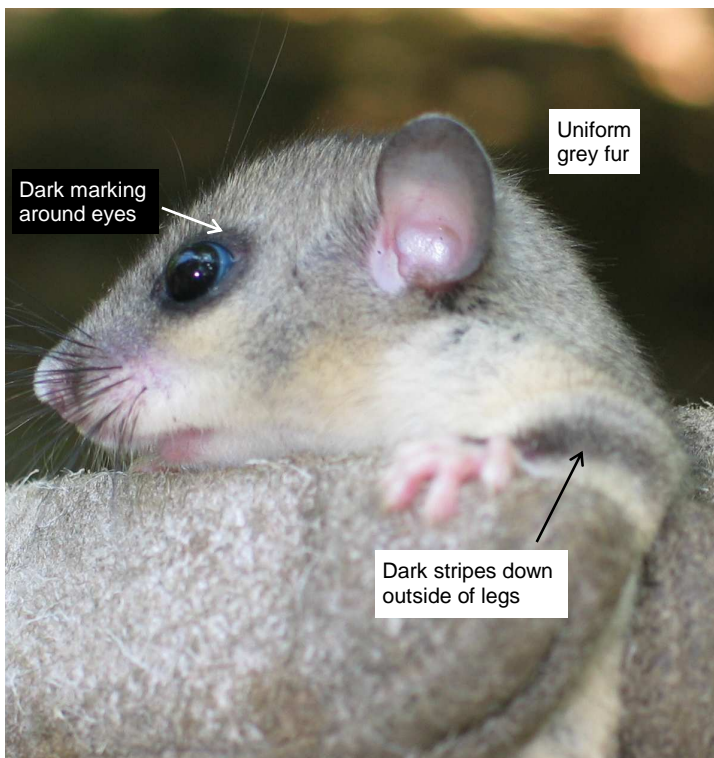
The core population in the UK is centred round the Chiltern Hills in Bucks and Herts, where it was first released in 1902. Only rarely found outside of these areas. Spreads through connecting woodlands, or through human capture and release. Negatively impacts forestry due to its ring barking of trees, also causes problems in houses fouling and gnawing rafters and pipes.

Edible Dormouse is listed under Schedule 9 to the Wildlife and Country Act 1981 with respect to England, Wales and Scotland. As such it is an offence to release or to allow the escape of this species into the wild.

For details of legislation go to www.nonnativespecies.org/legislation.



Key ID Features



Identification Throughout the Year

Identification varies little year round. Hibernates underground and in attics between October and May when they are unlikely to be seen.

Field Signs

- Tree damage, e.g. chewed bark and buds, gnawed shoots
- Damage inside buildings (sheds, roof space and lofts) e.g. gnawed woodwork
- Scuttling noises in lofts or roof space at night
- Calling from trees including loud wheezing, whistling, grunting and churning noises

Nest not elaborate, made from mosses and fibres, mostly in tree, rock or wall cavities, sometimes in climbing plants, also in nest boxes. Hibernates under ground as far as 600mm down under tree roots or in the rotting wood of a hollow tree, sometimes in cellars and attics.

Bark damage caused by edible dormouse



Distribution

Only in the Chiltern Hills and a few outlier records due to releases into woodlands, slowly spreading outwards from original release point.

Source: NBN Gateway. Check website for current distribution



Similar Species

Grey Squirrel
Non-native
(*Sciurus carolinensis*)

Grey squirrel is active during the day unlike the nocturnal edible dormouse

No dark fur around the eyes

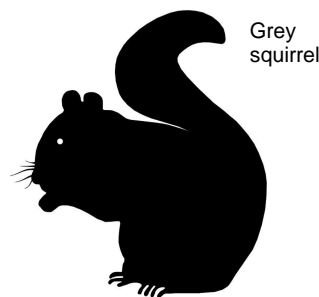
Fur a multicoloured mix of grey, brown and white unlike edible dormouse which is grey

No stripes down legs

Tail bushier and multi-coloured with white tipped fur



Edible Dormouse
For comparison



Grey squirrel

Grey squirrel holds tail over head whereas edible dormouse holds tail flat



Edible dormouse

Grey squirrel is slightly larger than edible dormouse

References and further reading:

Lever, C (1979) "The naturalised animals of the British Isles". Paladin

MacDonald, D (2005) "Collins Field Guide to the Mammals of Britain and Europe". Harper Collins

Morris, P (2004) "Dormice". Cromwell Press

Sterry, P (2005) "Collins Complete British Animals". Harper Collins