Hazel dormice show signs of recovery

LEVEL A2/B1


Photo: Nik Demidko / Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. What small wild animals live near your school?
2. Do you like forests, parks or beaches most? Why?
3. What animal would you love to see in the wild?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

- **dormouse** — a small mouse-like animal that sleeps for long periods
- **mammal** — an animal that drinks milk from its mother when young
- **fluffy** — soft and light, like fur or feathers
- **decline** — a fall in number, size or strength over time
- **increase** — a rise in number or amount
- **data** — information collected to study or measure something
- **hedgerow** — a line of bushes or small trees along a field or road
- **protect** — to keep someone or something safe from ha

III. READING

Hazel dormice, one of Britain's tiniest mammals, may be making a comeback in England and Wales. The hazel dormouse is known for its fluffy tail and love of long naps. For years, their numbers went into decline and the animal disappeared from many places.

Since 1998, the conservation charity People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) has collected data and monitored dormice in England and Wales. Their research showed a long fall: since 2000, numbers have dropped by almost 60%. But new findings suggest an increase of almost 10% between 2020 and 2025.

Researchers say there is still some uncertainty about this estimate. Scientists think recent warmer, drier springs and summers helped dormice survive by boosting food and reducing the time they slept. Even so, conservationists say the job is not finished.

To protect the species for the future, caring for woodlands and maintaining hedgerow networks remain essential.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News:** *"Tiny dormice make a big comeback!". Original article linked at* theenglishwire.com.

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which animal is this news story about?
2. Who has monitored dormice since 1998?
3. What change is suggested for 2020–2025?
4. By how much have numbers dropped since 2000?
5. What do experts say is essential now?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Why should people protect small animals like dormice?
2. Does warmer, drier weather help or harm wildlife near you?
3. What could your school do to help local nature?
4. Which wild animals have you seen recently, and where?



VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Past simple

Use the past simple for finished actions in the past. Form: regular verbs + -ed (planted) and irregular forms (saw, made). Time words like yesterday, last week, or in 2020 often show it.

"For years, their numbers **went into decline**.*"*

"In 1998, PTES **began** *monitoring dormice."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete the sentences with the past simple form of the verb.

1. Last weekend, our class (build) ___ a small hedgerow path.
2. In 2023, students (organise) ___ a dormouse survey.
3. Yesterday, my friends (find) ___ tracks near the wood.
4. Two days ago, the team (design) ___ a dormouse badge.
5. Last month, our club (learn) ___ why caring for woodlands matters.

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.



Photo: Nik Demidko / Unsplash

I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 8 minutes vocabulary, 10 minutes reading, 10 minutes comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check: dormouse, mammal, decline/increase, data, hedgerow, protect. Show a photo of a hazel dormouse to spark interest.
- Run the reading in pairs: student A reads paragraph 1, B reads 2–3, then swap summaries. Sensitivity: climate and nature can feel personal; keep discussion on local wildlife actions rather than big political debates.
- Differentiation: stronger students explain two reasons for the change using evidence; others highlight the sentences with key numbers, then take a quick class vote on the most important fact.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Elicit reasons first, then ask for examples from local parks or school grounds.
2. If answers split, list helps and harms on the board and compare seasons.
3. Brainstorm easy actions (bird feeders, planting). Pairs choose one and explain why.
4. Do a quick class map of sightings; prompt for details like time and weather.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Survey: In groups, design a 6-question poll about local wildlife and ask 10 classmates; report results in 5 minutes.

Writing: In pairs, write a 70-word post for the school website on how to protect dormice habitats near you.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Past simple

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

TEACHERS ONLY

These answers are for teachers only. Please do not share this page with students.



Photo: Nik Demidko / Unsplash

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which animal is this news story about?
   The hazel dormouse.
2. Who has monitored dormice since 1998?
   People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES).
3. What change is suggested for 2020–2025?
   An increase of almost 10%.
4. By how much have numbers dropped since 2000?
   By almost 60%.
5. What do experts say is essential now?
   Protecting woodlands and hedgerows.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete the sentences with the past simple form of the verb.

1. Last weekend, our class ___ a small hedgerow path. **built**
2. In 2023, students ___ a dormouse survey. **organised / organized**
3. Yesterday, my friends ___ tracks near the wood. **found**
4. Two days ago, the team ___ a dormouse badge. **designed**
5. Last month, our club ___ why caring for woodlands matters. **learned / learnt**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use the past simple for finished actions in the past. Form: regular verbs + -ed (planted) and irregular forms (saw, made). Time words like yesterday, last week, or in 2020 often show it. (Example 2 constructed.)

"For years, their numbers **went into decline**.*"*

"In 1998, PTES **began** *monitoring dormice."*