



THE TEENY TINY

Hazel Dormouse

Have you ever heard of a hazel dormouse? If not, it's no surprise as they're actually a really rare sight! Tiny, adorably cute, these mini mammals spend much of their lives asleep or high up in the trees and they only come out at night - which is why they're so tricky to spot!

Hazel dormice belong to the dormice family (no surprise there!), known as gliridae. Their scientific name is *Muscardinus avellanarius* - pretty big fancy name for a tiny creature, hey?!

What do hazel dormice look like?

Well first of all, they're teeny tiny! With a body that's only 6-9cm long (and a feathery tail that's about the same length), it's no wonder they're quite hard to see in everyday life! Check out the ruler below - we've marked the actual, real-life size of a hazel dormouse!

They have big, beautiful black eyes and lovely soft, golden brown fur. They weigh about the same as a small egg (up to about 40g) - so they're not only small, but light too!



6cm long



9cm long



Where do they live?

One of the reasons you're unlikely to see a hazel dormouse is that they spend most of their lives (when they're awake!) up in the tree canopy. They prefer deciduous woodland (for example, oak, maple and birch trees) and hedgerows and often nest in hollow tree branches, mostly only coming down to the ground to hibernate. They can be found mainly in the south of England, but with some also living in the Midlands, Lake District and Wales.

DID YOU KNOW?

In colder spells when they're out of hibernation, hazel dormice save energy by dropping their body temperature and going into a deep sleep known as 'torpor'!

What do they eat?

These cuties have quite a varied diet, depending on what time of year it is. When they're gearing up for winter hibernation in autumn, they need to put some fat on to survive the winter - that means eating lots of yummy berries, nuts (hazelnuts being their favourite) and seeds. At other times of the year, they enjoy munching on blossoming flowers and insects, too.

So, hazel dormice hibernate?

They do! Like many small mammals, they hibernate for the winter, settling down for their long sleep in logs or leaves at the base of trees, or in tightly woven nests. They curl up in a ball with their feathery tail wrapped around them to stay cozy and warm, whatever the weather.

FUN FACT!

With hibernation and spells of torpor, hazel dormice can spend around seven months of the year asleep!

FUN FACT!

Hazel dormice are known to snore!